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**Singing a(n) (a)laukika Body:
A Note on the Theorization of *utprekṣā* and Its Application in
the *Pāṇḍyakulodayamahākāvya****

SUMMARY: *Utprekṣā* or ‘ascription’ is one of the foremost devices in classical Sanskrit literature, with importance secondary only to *upamā* and *rūpaka*. In contrast to other figures extensively analysed by the theoretical treatises over centuries, it was characterised by a surprising uniformity in regard to its definition as offered by the *ālaṃkārikas*. The paper provides a brief overview of this device and its practical application in a 16th century *mahākāvya*, the *Pāṇḍyakulodaya*.

KEYWORDS: *alaṃkāraśāstra*, *Pāṇḍyakulodaya*, *mahākāvya*, Pāṇḍya dynasty, kingship, divinisation

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Introduction: an overview of *utprekṣā* in *alaṃkāra* texts

Dad, sagradas deidades de Helicon, /vuestro sublime aliento al pecho mío,
 para cantar al ínclito Fernando. /Llegue mi voz a la encumbrada zona
 del abrasado Sur al Norte frío, /su nombre por la esfera derramando,
 y la lira pulsando/en las alas del viento,
 el estruendo hervoroso/del mar venza mi acento,
 y el ronco trueno, y huracán silboso,
 y el nombre augusto de Fernando suena,
 y de un polo a otro polo el orbe llene.

Ángel de Saavedra y Ramírez de Baquedano (1791–1865), *Al Rey
 Nuestro Señor*

Rhetorical features and extensive employment of various kinds of embellishments are among the commonest trends of Indian classical literary production (*kāvya*). For centuries Indian theoreticians have engaged in debates about the nature and essence of poetic language, painstakingly categorising rhetorical devices employed to convey poetic message, thus engendering one of the most engaging and fruitful intellectual discussions on the very nature of human language. Eminent personalities like Daṇḍin, Bhāmaha, Vāmana or Rudraṭa have, in their *alaṃkāra* works, identified and theorised the ornaments of poetry—both related to the sound (*śabda*) and the meaning (*artha*)—as well as their features, conversing and criticising each other across the centuries, playing a continuous game of references and quotations, and bringing into being that which constitutes the very texture of the Indian ‘science of poetry’ or *alaṃkāraśāstra* (literally ‘the science of embellishment’).

Among the many devices analysed by the theoreticians over time, *utprekṣā*, or ‘ascription’¹ occupies a place of relevance in the *alaṃkāra* debate for several reasons. Firstly, unlike other *śabda*- or *arthālaṃkāras*,

¹ For the translation of the term *utprekṣā* in the present section I refer to definition given by Edwin Gerow in his monumental *A Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech* (Gerow 1971: 131). Monier-Williams (Monier-Williams 2005: 181) gave the meaning

the figure in question has always enjoyed foremost importance in the treatises, being second only to *rūpaka*, usually translated as ‘metaphor’, and *upamā* or ‘simile’. Secondly, the theoretical analysis of *utprekṣā* was distinguished by surprising unanimity evident in its treatment by several authors and the definitions they came up with (Gerow 1971: 132–133).

Starting with a close look at the *alaṅkāra* texts, Edwin Gerow defined the *utprekṣā* figure as ‘ascription’, giving the following explanation:

A figure in which a property or mode of behaviour is attributed to a subject literally incapable of sustaining that property, whereby an implicit simile is suggested whose subject (*upameya*) is the subject receiving the attributed property and whose object (*upamāna*) is the real basis of that property (Gerow 1971: 131).

Gerow noted also that ‘ascription’, contrary to the general understanding of *rūpaka*, is the only figure in Indian rhetorical production that comes close to the Western meaning of the term ‘metaphor’, distancing it thus from the general notion of ‘simile’ as well. In fact, translating *rūpaka* as ‘metaphor’ is vaguely reductive and lacks expressional potential the concept carries within itself. Gerow elucidated the matter stating,

We have (...) used the phrase “metaphorical identification” for *rūpaka*, in the sense that two ontologically unrelated things are treated grammatically as one thing or, in other words, are identified one with another. The relation of identification is of course directly from one term to another and does not require the interposition of properties, although these may implicitly substantiate the identification (Gerow 1971: 131).

Further, it may be noted that *utprekṣā* differs from *rūpaka* for two main reasons. The most immediate is the grammatical construction

as ‘act of disregarding, indifference’ or, rhetorically, ‘comparison’, ‘simile’. Apte (1965: 265) simply defined it as ‘poetical fancy’.

of the device: if the commonest morphological trend for the latter is a *karmadhāraya* compound with the ‘object of comparison’ (*upamāna*) as the last member—endowed thus with a complete grammatical freedom—*utprekṣā* conveys the ‘ascription’ of a property of the object applied as a subject in general terms, through predication or independent noun phrase affixed to a particular introductory morpheme (Gerow 1971: 132). Secondly, from the above explanatory note, we grasp the essence of *rūpaka* as an almost complete identification of the two elements of comparison, while ‘ascription’ functions rather through the translation of a property to a subject incapable of bearing such attribute.²

Furthermore, the main difference between simile and *utprekṣā*—which, as we have just seen, is then based on the ontological incompatibility of the subject and the property³—which gave rise to considerable confusion over centuries due to the employment of the particle *iva* by both figures was first glossed in one of the earliest *ālaṃkāra* texts, namely the *Kāvyaḍarśa* of Daṇḍin (c. 7th-8th century CE). In his “Mirror of Poetry”, the *ālaṃkārika* dealt with ‘ascription’ in the second *pariccheda*, in the section devoted to *arthālaṃkaras*, giving at first an introductory definition of the device which runs as follows:⁴

² Gerow exemplified the difference between the two figures as follows: “a *rūpaka* represents a total identification of two things; an *utprekṣā* is only a partial coalescence through the transfer of a characteristic property or function” (Gerow 1971: 132). In reality, the concept of “total identification” allows for some exceptions. According to the theoreticians, it cannot be the right basis for a *rūpaka* when it is an *ekadeśavivartirūpaka* (Bhāmaha, *Kāvyaālaṃkara* 2.22), an *avayavarūpaka* (Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaḍarśa* 2.72), an *ekāṅgarūpaka*, or a *rūpaka* made of more than one constituent (Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaḍarśa* 2.76), which involve only one part of both the subject and the object of comparison.

³ For instance, “as an *Alaṃkāra Upamā* is to be kept distinct from [...] *utprekṣā* wherein, in spite of the occasional presence of words like *iva*, the matter of the similarity is no *lokaprasiddha* but purely a creation of the poet’s imagination” (Raḍḍī and Belvalkar 1920: 82).

⁴ For the text of the *Kāvyaḍarśa* I refer to the edition of Böhrling (Böhrling 1890). All translations from Sanskrit are by the author of the paper.

*anyathaiva sthitā vṛttiś cetanasyetarasya vā |
anyathotprekṣyate yatra tām utprekṣāṃ vidur yathā || KĀ II, 221 ||*

When the nature of a sentient or inanimate object is settled in a different manner or it is conceived otherwise, [they] know it as ‘ascription’.

Daṇḍin’s definition orbited around the central term of the first *pāda*, *vṛtti*—‘mode’ or ‘nature’—which, independently from the subject which possesses it, constitutes the essential component of the stanza exemplifying the figure. Whenever this attribute or property is conceived *anyathā*, ‘otherwise’, the author stated that it is a case of ‘ascription’; elaborating further, we may assume that if a *vṛtti* is not only conceived ‘in a different manner’, but, more clearly, ascribed to a subject which is not compatible with it, such an approach is to be defined as *utprekṣā*.

Daṇḍin, after having illustrated in the next stanzas practical examples of this figure, treated the difference between the simile and the ‘ascription’ in these words:

*keṣāṃ cid upamābhrāntir ivaśrutyeha jāyate |
nopamānaṃ tiñantenety atikramyāptabhāṣitam || 227 ||*

Among certain [authors], it arises in this regard the false impression of simile—because (the comparative particle) *iva* is heard in that case—, violating the statement of the authoritative texts that “indeed, there is no object of comparison [realised] by a verbal form”.⁵

*upamānopameyatvaṃ tulyadharmavyapekṣayā |
limpates tamasaś cāsau dharmāḥ ko ‘tra samikṣyate || 228 ||*

Certain attribute (*dharmā*) is observed in these words *limpati* and *tamaḥ*, depending on the similar attributes between the object compared (*upameya*) and the object with which it is compared (*upamāna*).

⁵ *na tiñantena upamānam asti* is a quotation drawn from Patañjali’s *Mahābhāṣya* ad A 3.1.7.

The author of *Kāvyaḍarśa* traced the essence of simile to the similar quality—*dharma*—which must logically and ontologically join the *upameya* and the *upamāna*, namely the compared object and the object with which it is compared. Given this detail and expanding, by negation, Daṇḍin’s definition, it can be said that in *utprekṣā* there is no communing *dharma* between the focal points of the figure; the attributed *vṛtti* is in fact conceived *anyathā*, ‘differently’, and attributed to a subject which cannot sustain it.

Similarly, the Kashmirian theoretician Bhāmaha, in his *Kāvya-*laṃkāra** (7th century), defined the same features of *utprekṣā*, but enriched the debate by referring to the “junction of separate action and quality” in the second chapter of his treatise:⁶

avivakṣitasāmānyā kiṃcic copamayā saha |
atadguṇakriyāyogād utprekṣātiśayānvitā || KĀ II, 91 ||

[Even] with a generic property not intended to be stated, the ascription acquires eminence due to a [syntactic] connection with a non-proper quality or action but somewhat with [overtone of] resemblance, and sometimes together with simile.

Bhāmaha further clarified the central point of the definition of ‘ascription’ which we have already encountered in the survey of Gerow’s study on *utprekṣā*: the author put stress on *atadguṇakriyāyoga*, literally “the junction of a separate action and quality”, which clearly refers to the transfer of a property or *vṛtti* to a subject which is *atat*, ‘other’, ‘extraneous’.

Bhāmaha’s presentation was closely followed by Udbhaṭa (8th century), who, in his *Kāvya-*laṃkārasaṃgrāha**, not surprisingly, quoted almost *verbatim* his predecessor, reporting in the second *pāda* the very same

⁶ For the text of Bhāmaha’s *Kāvya-*laṃkāra** I refer to the Motilal Banarsidass edition (Naganatha Sastry 1970).

text of Bhāmaha. His explanations concerning the ‘ascription’ in the third *varga* runs as follows:⁷

sāmyarūpāvivakṣāyāṃ vācyevādy ātmabhiḥ padaiḥ |
atadguṇakriyāyogād utprekṣātiśayānvitā || KĀS III, 3 ||

The eminence of ‘ascription’ is acquired through connecting an extra-neous action and quality with the same parts of verse designated by *iva* and other [particles], in the connivance of a character’s identity.⁸

Vāmanācārya (8th century), in the typical laconic and compressed form of his *Kāvyaḷamkārasūtravṛtti*, expressed his theorisation of the figure in similar terms. In the fourth *adhikaraṇa* of the work, the *ālamkārika* put in words his concise notation on *utprekṣā*, which virtually lined up with those of his predecessors:⁹

atadrūpasyānyathādhyavasānam atiśayārtham utprekṣā | KĀS IV, 3.9 |

Ascription consists in the action of determining a non-proper form, aiming at denoting pre-eminence [of that object].

Similarly to the abovementioned explanations, the author exemplified the mechanism of ‘ascription’ in a *sūtra* which, apparently, seems to be indebted to Bhāmaha’s and Udbhaṭa’s illustrations: as in the definition in

⁷ I retrieve the text of *Kāvyaḷamkārasamgrāha* from the edition by Narayana Daso Banhatti (1925).

⁸ The same specification of the *utprekṣā* formation with the particle *iva*—as in the case of *upamā*—was recorded also in Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaḷadarśa* II, 227. According to Gerow (1971: 133), Udbhaṭa was the only theoretician who attempted a classification of varieties of the ‘ascription’ figure; in reality, in KĀS III, 4, he went further only in locating just two types (*bhāvābhāva*), which, as it seems, were not followed by other authors.

⁹ In regard to the text of the *Kāvyaḷamkārasūtravṛtti* I refer to the edition of the Caukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan (Dwivedī 1976).

the *Kāvyaḷaṃkāras*, Vāmana used the same term, *atiśaya*, ‘eminence’, specifying the same proceeding of ascribing a trend to a subject incapable of being described through it. Also, in this case the construction of *utprekṣā* is centralised by the employment of *anyathā*, impacting the determination of an ‘extraneous character’ (*atadrūpasya*; glossed in the *vṛtti* as *atatsvabhāvasya*).

Following the chronological criterion, next would be the great Kāśmīri theoretician Rudraṭa (9th century), who in his *Kāvyaḷaṃkāra* presented his resume of the device, giving his main definition of ‘ascription’ in the eight *adhyāya* of his treatise, together with examples covering stanzas 33–37. As previously observed by Gerow, the treatment of *utprekṣā* did not really differ from one theorisation to another, underlying the uniformity of opinions expressed by the *ālaṃkārikas*. A related passage from the *Kāvyaḷaṃkāra* indeed states:¹⁰

atisārūpyād aikyaṃ vidhāya siddhopamānasadbhāvam |
āropyate ca tasminn atadguṇādīti sotprekṣā || KĀ VIII, 32 ||

To what alien qualities and so on are attributed, establishing through the strong resemblance the identity admitted to be true state for the object (*upamāna*), this is *utprekṣā*.

As we have already seen, it appears that Rudraṭa basically did not implement the precedent theorisations of *utprekṣā* aligned to the tradition of Daṇḍin, Bhāmaha and the others.¹¹ This evidence corroborates indeed the surprising continuity and homogeneity in the description of the ‘ascription’ device in the *alaṃkāra* texts, testifying also

¹⁰ For Rudraṭa’s *Kāvyaḷaṃkāra* I refer to the *Kāvyaṃālā* edition (Durgāprasāda, Pansikar 1886).

¹¹ In reality, Rudraṭa gave six different definitions of *utprekṣā* in his *Kāvyaḷaṃkāra* (as in IX, 11–15)—which have been omitted in the present paper due to the fact that “these six types (...) involve no terminology and no important deviation from the general definition” (Gerow 1971: 133). The interested reader may find further details in Gerow 1971: 133–138.

to the unusual agreement between the theoreticians, as underlined by Edwin Gerow.

Lastly,¹² even Bhoja (11th century), in his encyclopaedic *Sarasvatī-kaṅṭhābharaṇa*, did not depart from the canonical theorisation of this device, offering a traditional, general description of *utprekṣā*. In the fourth *pariccheda* of his treatise, specifically in the section defined as *ubhayālaṃkāra*—‘both ornaments (of sound and meaning)’—the Paramāra sovereign described the ‘ascription’ thus:¹³

*anyathāvasthitam vastu yasyām utprekṣyate ‘nyathā |
dravyam guṇaḥ kriya vāpi tām utprekṣām pracakṣate || SKBh IV, 52 ||*

When a substance, a quality or even an action in a particular state is conceived otherwise this is called ‘ascription’.

Summing up, the close overview of the theoretical treatises has shown fundamental trends and nature of this particular device; so, we can assume that *utprekṣā* involves a property—or *vṛtti*—which is attributed to a subject which is not logically or ontologically able to sustain it, contrary to the *upamā*, which implies a total identification of the components of the relative comparison. Due to this element, I do believe that Gerow’s definition of *utprekṣā* is rather incomplete and underestimates the conceptual ground of the device itself as well as its potentiality. Given the specifics as they have been examined in the theoretical

¹² The *Pratāparudrayaśobhūṣaṇa* of Vidyānātha (14th century) defined the *utprekṣā* device in the same way, but contrary to his predecessors, the author theorised two kinds of ‘ascription’ in the section on *arthālaṃkāras* (before stanza 65), *vācyā* (‘directly expressed’) and *pratīyāmanā* (‘implicit’). The former, marked by the presence of introductory particles, was further divided into 14 sub-varieties, while the latter into 48. Despite this articulate elaboration, Vidyānātha’s definition did not deviate from those of the previous *ālaṃkārikas*. Given the uniformity in the definition of the device, later theorisations as those of Mammāṭa, Ruyyaka, Appaya Dīkṣita or Jagannātha have been omitted in order not to weigh down the present study.

¹³ For the text of the *Sarasvatīkaṅṭhābharaṇa* I refer to the new edition published under the egis of the IGNC (Siddharta 2009).

works, perhaps it would be more appropriate to translate the term *utprekṣā* as ‘trans-logical attribution’, a definition which emphasises the mechanism of ascription of a quality to a subject intrinsically unable to bear it, underlying the ontological dissociation between the elements of the figure.

Having said that, in the next section of the paper we shall take closer look at the practical exemplification of the device as it appears in a 16th century literary text and its impact on the description of the royal power.

A tour de force on the royal body

The *Pāṇḍyakulodaya* (“The Resurgence of the Pāṇḍya dynasty”) is an incomplete *mahākāvya* in 12 *sargas* (in about 700 stanzas),¹⁴ narrating the origin and establishment of the Pāṇḍya kingdom. The poem, in its actual form, retells the history of the dynasty right from the mythological beginnings to the times of King Campaka Parākrama, a.k.a. Jaṭāvarman Tribhuvanacakravarti Kōṇērinmaikoṇḍāṇ Parākrama Kulaśekhara (c. 1480–1508 CE), a later monarch of this royal line, whose reign from the capital city of Teṅkāśī constitutes the object of the fundamental *sarga* X–XII.¹⁵

¹⁴ The *mahākāvya* was edited in 1981 by K. V. Sarma, starting from 48 folios in *grantha* alphabet contained in a palm-leaf *codex*, bearing the signature no. 5966d, preserved at the Vishveshvaranand Institute of Sanskrit and Indological Studies in Hoshiarpur (Punjab). This manuscript ends abruptly at stanza 38 of *sarga* XII and presents several *lacunae* which, unfortunately, have been arbitrarily filled by the editor. It would be worth checking if other leaves transmitting the work are possibly available in the *codex*, in order to present a new critical edition of the complete text.

¹⁵ For the chronological division of Pāṇḍya history, I refer to the canonical periodisation into ‘early’, ‘medieval’, ‘imperial’ and ‘later’ phases as proposed by Nilakanta Sastri and Sethuraman (Nilakanta Sastri 1929; Sethuraman 1978; 1980). The reign of Jaṭāvarman Kulaśekhara is testified to by a dozen of unpublished records (ARE 1918, nos. 502–505, 508–510, 516, 524, 527, 534, 618); this epigraphical documentation gives king’s access to the throne as 1480. Record no. 618 testifies to the great patronage the monarch extended to temple building, just like his maternal uncle, Arikesari Parākramadeva (1422–1463), the founder of the Kāśīviśvanātar temple in Teṅkāśī. This inscription, dated to 1508, involves donations and maintenance of the Aḷagiya Cokkanār and Varamturam Perumāḷ temples in Kaḍayanallūr (Tirunelveli district).

Nothing is known about Maṇḍalakavi, the author of the *mahākāvya*, except for what he himself laconically stated in the colophons of the poem; for instance, the ending of *sarga* I:¹⁶

|| *iti kuṇḍinakulamāṇḍanasya maṇḍalakaviśvarasya kṛtau pāṇḍya-*
kulodaye prathamah sargah ||

Here [ends] the first canto in “The resurgence of the Pāṇḍya race”, composed by the Lord of poets Maṇḍala, the jewel of the Kuṇḍina (Kauṇḍinya) clan.

Apart from the *Pāṇḍyakulodaya*, no other work by Maṇḍalakavi has survived or is known even by its title, nor does any poet of this name seem to be mentioned in Sanskrit literature. Even a simple reference to the *New Catalogus Catalogorum* or Ludwik Sternbach’s catalogue (Sternbach 1978–1980) confirms this statement. Therefore, Sarma’s evaluation of the author appears convincing: “in view of the feeling bordering on adoration that the poet evinces in the depiction of the Pāṇḍya monarchy, it might be presumed that he was an admirer if not a *protégé* of the liberal Pāṇḍyan kings...” (Sarma 1981: LXXXIV). Given also the detailed and eulogistic description, in the last two cantos, of the figure of Jaṭāvarman Parākrama Kulaśekhara, it might be further assumed that Maṇḍalakavi was a contemporary of the king, probably his court poet and the official panegyrist of the Pāṇḍya splendour during the Tenkāśī Renaissance. This assumption would allow then to place the poet at the beginning of the 16th century.

As mentioned earlier, Maṇḍalakavi opened his narrative on the origin of the dynasty with the depiction of the mythical past, the foundation of the city of Madurai and a long series of connected episodes. It clearly appears, even at a preliminary reading, that the models for the first parts of the *mahākāvya* (*sarga* I–V) are drawn from a Tamil

¹⁶ Here and later on, I quote the text of *Pāṇḍyakulodaya* according to the critical edition (Sarma 1981).

heritage orbiting around the celebrated “Sacred Games of Śiva”, as, for instance, the *Tiruvīlaiyāṭarpurāṇam* by Perumparrapuliyyūr Nampi (probably late 13th century) and a Sanskrit version of this material, the *Hālāsyamāhātmya* (14th–15th century).¹⁷

Canto X of *Pāṇḍyakulodaya* describes the reign of the poet’s patron, Parākrama Kulaśekhara. After a lengthy depiction of the pregnancy of the sovereign’s mother, Abhirāmanāyikā (X, 11–42) and the future King’s childhood (43–64), Maṇḍalakavi, starting from stanza 65, described the anointing of the monarch (*rājābhiṣeka*) and portrayed the physical appearance of Jaṭāvarman Parākrama Kulaśekhara sitting on his throne in front of his acclaiming subjects. This ornate description, characterised by employment of many rhetorical embellishments, is relevant for several reasons. But it is enough to note for now that this description in eight stanzas is undoubtedly fundamental to the scope of our paper, due to its extensive use of *utprekṣā*, the ‘trans-logical attribution’, as we shall see in a moment.

The poet, in stanza 67, started with the tour across the King’s body, isolating one by one specific physical features described in a highly articulated way; below is the first verse:¹⁸

¹⁷ For the dating of the *Hālāsyamāhātmyā*—which depends on the *Tiruvīlaiyāṭarpurāṇam*—in the Vijayanagara era the reader may consult Wilden 2014: 248. Elaine Fisher (2017: 159–165) incorrectly dated the work to the 17th century.

¹⁸ In stanza 67 and others, the logical subject, the King, is expressed through the accusative case; this verse is in reality joined to the previous one (66) by a morphological *yugmaka*: *dhārayantam* in stanza 67 is related to the object in the above stanza, *pāṇḍyakulāvataṃsam āsīnam enam*. Given the thematic element of this description, Maṇḍalakavi, in the metrical asset of the canto, employed the *vasantatilakā* metre. According to Kṣemendra’s *Suṅṅṅatīlaka* III, 19a, this 14 syllables *vṛtti* is more suitable to evoke the *raudra* and *vīra rasas*, the aesthetic sentiments of fury and heroism (*vasantatilakām bhāti saṅkare vīraudrayoḥ*). Additionally, the *mahākāvya* is characterised by the massive employment of a particular rhetorical figure, the *anuprāsa*, which appears in almost all stanzas of the poem. According to Gerow 1971: 102–103, the ‘alliteration’ is a particular device consisting in the repetition of given phonemes or phonetic features in the verse in order to produce precise aural effects. It should not be confused with a different figure, the *yamaka*, namely the consistent repetition of verses or verse parts. In the *alamkārasāstra* tradition, *anuprāsa* has been extensively

*māṇikyapaṅktibhir alaṃkṛtaṃ aṅganeṣu
śṛṅgāritaṃ diśi diśi tridaśavratena |
atyutkaṭāṃśulaharīnibidaṃ kirīṭam
anyaṃ sumerum iva mūrdhani dhārayantam || PK X, 67 ||*

[The King] was wearing on his head a crown [which resembled] another Mount Meru, suffused with radiant rays of light, adorned in all directions with [representations] of the dominions of the thirty [Gods] and embellished on its parts by a row of rubies.

This stanza describes the sovereign's head and the precious crown placed on it; this symbol of the royal majesty is compared, through *upamā*, to Mount Meru, the mythical mountain which is traditionally conceived as *axis mundi*. The beauty of the bejewelled crown is further embellished by the depiction of the celestial worlds surrounding it, giving indeed the impression of a symbolical representation of the cosmos with the King's head at the centre.

Next in sequence, Maṇḍalakavi inserted the description of Parākrama Kulaśekhara's forehead:

*vāmālakānayanavañcanakhañjanāya-
mānaṃ pravīrabhujayor madanāyamānam |
prāleyadīdhitidalapratimallabhāsaṃ
bhāle praśastam agarudravam udvahantam || 68 ||*

[He carried] the auspicious *agaru* essence¹⁹ on his forehead, which appeared [as] a rival for a part of the moon for brightness, a bird [painted] on the arms of the mighty warrior and resembled the dark wagtail deceiving the eyes of beautiful ladies.

theorised and valued; descriptions of it can be found in Bhāmaha II, 5–8, Daṇḍin I, 52–59, Vāmana IV, 1, 8–10, Rudraṭa II, 18–32 and Mammaṭa 104–116.

¹⁹ According to Monier-Williams (Monier-Williams 2005: 4), the *agaru* (*Amyris agallochum*) is a flowering plant of the *citrus* family. Thanks to its renowned

Immediately after, the poet offered his description of King's face and eyes:

paryanta[em.; *paryaṅka* ed.]²⁰*kandalitapakṣmavanākṣivārdhi-*
madhyapradeśaparinīlimamādhavena |
mandasmitodayavaśīkṛtamartyaloka-
pālena vaktrakamalena parisphurantam || 69 ||

[The King] appeared effulgent with that lotus flower of a face, which captivated the [other] rulers enchanted by the raise of his gentle smile, with sweetness of deep blackness in the middle of the ocean of eyes, with a forest of blossomed eyelashes at its borders.

Finally, Maṅḍalakavi employed in this stanza the *utprekṣā* device to describe the King's *vaktrakamala*, literally 'the lotus flower of a face'. In this sequence, the eye's pupils are conceived as a condensation of colour black, while the eyes themselves are trans-logically supplied with the features of the ocean surrounded by vegetation, Kulaśekhara's eyelashes. The impossibility of ascribing such qualities and, by consequence, the presence of this figure, are moreover justified by the grammatical construction, where the long compound of the first *pāda* is a predicate of *vaktrakamalena*.

The poet resorted to the *utprekṣā* in the subsequent stanza as well, describing the sovereign's arms:

māṅkiyakunḍalamayūkhajalābhiṣekād
aśrāntakandalitapallavatallajena |
bhūpālakāṅgulimiśād adhikaṃ vibhāntam
atyantadīrghabhujakalpa[mahī]ruheṇa || 70 ||

properties, it is often used to extract essential oil and make perfume, soap and incense. In the Dravidic tradition, warriors used to paint figures of birds on their arms before going into battle; most probably, the poet's reference to this attire is employed to enrich the heroic depiction of his patron.

²⁰ The reading given in the edition, *paryaṅka*, is registered in Monier-Williams 2005: 607 with the meaning 'bed', 'couch', 'palanquin'. I have emended this to *paryanta*, 'border', 'limit' (Monier-Williams 2005: 607), more suitable with the general sense of the compound.

[He was] incredibly resplendent with his very long arms resembling the *kalpa* tree, with excellent sprouts continuously blooming under the guise of fingers, due to sprinkling with water and the rays of light from the ruby earrings.

Even here, Maṇḍalakavi built his sophisticated description of Kulaśekhara's arms through the 'trans-logical attribution'. The King's arms, whose strength and solidity are compared to the celestial *kalpa* tree, seem to be treated by the poet as vegetal organisms: the arms, like tree-branches, end up with the hand's fingers, which are attributed with the characteristics of sprouts blossoming thanks to water and the rays of light emanating from Parākrama's ruby ear-rings. The ascription of this specific *vr̥tti* in this example—the illogical 'property' of the King's fingers growing like well-watered and bathed in light branches—constitutes an even stronger symptom of the use of *utprekṣā* in the monarch's physical description.

The next stanza, unfortunately affected by an extensive *lacuna* in the second *pāda*, seems to be clearly devoted to the description of the Pāṇḍya King's necklace and chest; the Sanskrit text and the tentative translation read as follows:

nikṣipya bāhuśikhare nikhilāṃ dharitrīm
niśrāmyatā phaṇabhṛtā vipulakorāsīva[em.;*vipulayorasīva* ed.]²¹ |
hāreṇa bhuṣitam apā... [*lacuna*] || 71 ||

²¹ The reading given in the edition (and the manuscript?) presents some difficulties of interpretation. The compound seems to be formed by *vipulaya* ('to lengthen', 'make longer'; Monier-Williams 2005: 975) and the locative case of *uras*, 'chest', 'breast'. Instead of this, the first member of the compound—rather enigmatic—should be *vipula*, which, moreover, would be metrically incorrect. Given that it has not been possible to consult the manuscript, the emendation *vipulakorāsīva* is tentatively offered, correcting the first member of the compound in *vipulaka*, 'very extensive' (Monier-Williams 2005: 975). I thank Professor Lidia Sudyka for discussion on this point.

[He was] adorned with a necklace resembling the Great Serpent, which, having placed on the [King's] shoulders the whole Earth, took rest on his broad chest...(?)

Maṇḍalakavi, as this provisional interpretation of the stanza shows, conceived the garland worn by Kulaśekhara as the great snake which holds the universe; after having placed the universe on the King's shoulders, the divine bearer—coiled like a garland—took rest on Parākrama's chest. Even if the textual *lacuna* does not allow for a more in-depth consideration of the role played by *utprekṣā*, it is clear that in this case as well the poet employed the figure for the description of Parākrama Kulaśekhara's garlanded chest, too.

Immediately after that the poet continued with his literary tour across the King's body, describing in the following stanza his hands:

*keyūraratnakiraṇasphuraṇaprapannair
māṇikyāśailam iva mañjulapakṣmapuñjam |
ādhāriṇām parihasantam ivāmaradrum
māṇikyakaṅkaṇavatā karavārijena || 72 ||*

[He was] as mocking at the fixed coral tree with his lotus hands, which carried a ruby bracelet, a mass of charming flower filaments as a ruby mountain formed by the flashing of the jewelled row of the armllet.

As in the case of stanza 70, Maṇḍalakavi employed similar imagery to describe sovereign's hands, returning to the same floral and naturalistic mode already examined. Kulaśekhara's hands mocking at the *amaradru* tree,²² are conceived as flower *pakṣmas*, 'filaments', growing thanks to

²² The *amaradru*—or *pārijāta*—tree is botanically classified as *Erythrina indica* (or, more correctly, *variegata*; Monier-Williams 2005: 620; 1315), known in India as 'coral tree' and 'tiger's claw'. It is a highly valued ornamental plant, parts of which are also employed for medicinal uses.

the light flashing from his jewelled *keyūra*, ‘armlet’. As in the parallel stanza, also here we can perceive the influence and the impact of the ‘trans-logical attribution’ in the description of Parākrama’s hands.

More elaborate and subtle is the ingenious depiction of Jaṭavarman Kulaśekhara’s waist:

*śaṅkhapravālasarasīruhakalpavṛkṣa-
digdantidevahayacitritamadhyadeśam |
sambhogasambhramavaśāt parivartamānaṃ
dhātrīyā dadhānam iva sāgaram antarīyam || 73 ||*

[His] waist was adorned by [the marks of] heavenly horse, direction elephant, *kalpa* tree, lotus, coral and the conch, as [if], revolving due to the confusion of the amorous enjoyment, [the King] wore the Sea, the Earth’s garment.

In the traditional concept of Indian kingship, the king is often described as the ‘supporter of the Earth’ (*avanibhṛt*) or ‘the spouse of the Earth’. The stanza presents the description of a love scene: at the end of the amorous engagement with his wife, *dhātrī*, Parākrama Kulaśekhara covers his body, by mistake, with her garment, the ocean (*sāgara*), which, canonically, contains the marks of divine *drāvyas* or objects, as those mentioned in the first half of the verse. The poet conceived the monarch’s waist as adorned by elements whose intrinsic properties, together with the literal act of wearing the sea, are not compatible and thus settled through an illogical mechanism—the impossibility to attribute to the Pāṇḍya King the *vṛtti* of being able to actually cover himself with the ocean—thus revealing once again the role played by *utprekṣā* in this passage of the *Pāṇḍyakulodaya*.

The last stanza completing the physical description of Parākrama Kulaśekhara, involving the feet, is not marked by the employment of our device; but, in order to offer a complete overview, it is anyway quoted below:

*tādrkparākramanirodhavirodhaśāntyai
samprāptam aṅghrikamalaṃ kila cakravālam |
mañjīram ākalitamañjula[śiñja]puñjam
puñkhānupuñkhakiraṇasphuraṇam vahantam || 74 ||*

[The King] wore an anklet with lots of charming and tinkling pendants, the trembling rays of arrow after arrow, that was the circle of [other sovereigns], who, to pacify his hostility and limit such a power, fell to his lotus foot.

After our journey across the royal body, we may conclude that Maṅḍalakavi employed for his eulogistic and celebrative descriptions the ‘trans-logical attribution’, present in most of the analysed stanzas from the *Pāṇḍyakulodayamahākāvya*. However, thematically and conceptually speaking, such a significant occurrence of this device has its own consequences: making such an extensive use of the *utprekṣā* contributes to impacting the description of the poet’s patron with features of ‘illogicality’ and ‘lack of realism’ so to say, which are not to be confounded with the canonical exaggeration of the literary *praśasti*. Maṅḍalakavi, assigning in his stanzas incompatible *vṛttis* to his subject—Parākrama Kulaśekhara—offered a physical description of the King which is even more difficult to evaluate.

Moreover, these properties or ‘attributes’ refer to two separates ontological categories: the first, grouping all the natural elements employed in the ‘trans-logical attribution’, are linked to what may be defined as *laukika* sphere (‘worldly’, ‘temporal’; Monier-Williams 2005: 909). The second involves divine or generally ultramundane attributes (as the Mount Meru, the *kalpaka* tree, the Great Snake or the heavenly substances), belonging to *alaukika* category (‘supernatural’; Monier-Williams 2005: 95). Given the nature of the *vṛttis* employed in the *utprekṣā* construction, the portraiture of King Jaṭavarman Kulaśekhara seems to be suffused with uncertain and rather vague features describing his body, somewhat in between *laukika* and *alaukika* connotations.

In this regard there is another element that must be evaluated within the frame of our study of this particular passage, namely the ‘true identity’ of the Pāṇḍya monarch described in the tenth *sarga* of the *mahākāvya*.

The final part of canto IX (stanzas 32–38) and the first ten verses of the next are devoted to the description of God Dharma’s curious journey to Mount Kailāsa. As we gather from the reading of the relevant passage, Dharma, the personification of the Universal Law, distressed by the spread of evil, reaches out to Śiva for help. In Maṇḍalakavi’s narrative, Śiva himself decides to put a stop to the affliction of the world caused by Kālī; in stanza 7 of *sarga* X, Śiva commands Dharma to take birth in the Pāṇḍya dynasty:

*tava dharmā marmamathanam vitanvatā
kaluṣeṇa viśvam abhavat kdarthitam |
tad upehi janma bhuvī tārakadviṣā
samam adya pāṇḍyakula eva pāvane || PK X, 7 ||*

Oh Dharma, the violation of your inner being by rampant sin has made everything meaningless! So, take now birth in the world along with the enemy of Tāraka—Skanda—in the pure Pāṇḍya dynasty.

Dharma and Kārttikeya are to be incarnated as the future rulers of the Pāṇḍya kingdom in Teṅkāśī, Jaṭāvarman Parākrama Kulaśekhara, the poet’s patron, and his historical younger brother, Vīra. In the celebratory plan of the *Pāṇḍyakulodaya*, the sovereign is then conceived as a god, the incarnation of the universal order on earth. But Maṇḍalakavi’s conceptualisation is not simply confined to a merely celebratory statement as in stanza X, 7, but implemented through a specific and intentional literary strategy.

As the reader might recall, according to the canonical *kāvya dictamen*, the standard trend to describe the physical appearance of human beings is the procedure defined as *nakhaśikhavarṇana* or *pādādikesānta* (Lienhard 1984: 144), literally ‘description [starting] from the (toe)

nails to the head'.²³ When we take a close look at the *Pāṇḍyakulodaya* text, we realise that this procedure is not valid in the case of Parākrama Kulaśekhara's description: Maṇḍalakavi opened up his *tour de force* on the King's body starting from the head/crown (67), then went on to forehead (68), face (69), arms (70), chest (71), hands (72), waist (73) and, lastly, the feet (74). The significant order of the description of each physical unit shows how the poet violated the standard order of representation from the 'toe-nails' to the 'head' of the classical literature. But Maṇḍalakavi's depiction is actually of a different order: the poet portrayed the Pāṇḍya sovereign according to the classical dynamics used to describe gods, hence beginning with the head and reaching the feet only in the last stanza, so following a proceeding we could define as *śikhānakhavarṇana*. This procedure of describing a mortal man as a divine entity as it appears in the *Pāṇḍyakulodaya* is absolutely the first occurrence in the history of Sanskrit literature.²⁴

²³ One of the foremost and most celebrated description following this procedure can be traced in *Kādambarī* by Bāṇabhaṭṭa (III, 1–18). The *nakhaśikhavarṇana* was not an object of traditional theorisation and we do not possess any sources in this regard; it represents a poetic practice in literature.

²⁴ Taking into consideration more or less coeval Southern texts, the physical description of Parākrama Kulaśekhara is even more remarkable. In the *Madhurāvijaya* by Gaṅgādevī (14th century), the Vijayanagara authoress described the hero of the *mahākāvya*, prince Kumāra Kampaṇa, the son of emperor Bukka I (1356–1377) and the general who uprooted the Muslim Sultanate of Madurai in the campaign of 1365–1370, but he is still described according to the standard *kāvya* convention of the *nakhaśikhavarṇana* (III, 7–16; Sudyka 2013: 86–94). Similarly, Tirumalāmbā (16th century), the Vijayanagara princess who authored *Varadāmbikāpariṇayacampū*, gave extensive description of the appearance of Acyutadevarāya (1529–1542) employing the same order (prose passage after stanza 69–stanza 76). The same convention of portraying the sovereign as god can be traced once again in later times, in the 17th century Thanjavur: Rāmabhadrāmbā, consort of the Nāyaka king Raghunātha (1600–1634), described the hero of her poem according to the *śikhānakhavarṇana* dynamic (VII, 1–33). A more detailed survey of the topic of the divinisation of kings is unfortunately beyond the scope of the paper; it would be dealt with by the author in a forthcoming article. The interested reader may refer for now to Gonda 1966, Kulke 1978, Pollock 1984 and Narayana Rao et al. 1998: 169–188.

Given the presence of this fundamental data, we can perhaps assume that in this light, the rhetorical and conceptual impact derived from the employment of the ‘trans-logical attribution’ is somehow mitigated by its relation to the ‘description from head to nails’. Parākrama Kulaśekhara’s body, as described by Maṇḍalakavi through the extensive use of *utprekṣā* and constructed in our *mahākāvya* through attribution of both *laukika* and *alaukika* incompatible states, is the body of a God. The illogicality of bestowing both ‘mundane’ and ‘supernatural’ *vṛttis* to a subject unable to sustain such properties is conceptually withdrawn once this subject reveals itself for what it really is: a God-like monarch ontologically/rhetorically able to carry Mount Meru on his head, with arms like the *kalpa* tree and wrapped up in the Ocean’s mantle.

Conclusions

The introductory survey of the *alaṃkāra* texts defining the rhetorical device known as *utprekṣā* has shown the peculiar status this rhetorical figure has enjoyed in Indian aesthetics. As noted by Edwin Gerow, the ‘trans-logical attribution’, contrary to other *śabda-* or *arthālaṃkāras*, was distinguished by a surprising unanimity as to its definition, testifying to the unusual agreement shown by the theoreticians through centuries of debates and discussions.

A close study of the relevant passages from the theoretical treatises threw light on the character and scope of this device: *utprekṣā* is a figure in which a property—or *vṛtti*, using the term from Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaadarśa*—is ascribed to a subject literally incapable of sustaining the said property. Contrary to the *upamā*, in which the terms of comparison are ontologically identified, the ‘attribution’ is not characterised by the same identification, stressing the divergence between the ‘attribute’ and the ‘subject’, intrinsically distanced by the absence of a common *dharma*.

In the main portion of the present paper, we have examined the practical role assumed by *utprekṣā* in the physical description of the Pāṇḍya King Jaṭāvarman Parākrama Kulaśekhara (1480–1508) in *mahākāvya Pāṇḍyakulodaya*. The study of the stanzas devoted to

the portraiture of the monarch's body has shown the unquestionable employment of this embellishment. Taking into consideration the conceptual basis of the 'trans-logical attribution' and its rhetorical impact, we have seen how Maṅḍalakavi's depiction of his patron was permeated by attribution of properties which the subject of the description was literally unable to sustain. Moreover, we have noted how the *vr̥ttis* used in the *utprekṣā* construction in each stanza could be grouped in two distinct—and almost opposite—categories, defined as *laukika* (the standard terrestrial elements) and *alaukika* (divine or cosmic ones). The internal 'illogicality' derived by the employment of this figure was also put in relation to the new conceptualisation of the royal power as it appeared in the *Pāṇḍyakulodaya*, where the King is considered not just a static and purely celebrative manifestation of the divine, but, through the inversion of the *nakhaśikhavarṇana* convention, is stylistically portrayed and conceived as divinity proper. The revolutionary presence of this trend in the *mahākāvya* deeply impacted the new representation of the Pāṇḍya royal idiom, which might seem greatly surprising if we consider the reduced political status of the dynasty at the dawn of the 16th century. After having been driven from their historical capital of Madurai during the Muslim invasion of the South in the 14th century, the Pāṇḍyas were relegated to play secondary role and function as a kingdom in exile in the Tirunelveli area, while the whole Southern areas of the sub-continent remained under the undisputed dominion of the Vijayanagara empire (1336–1565).

The rhetorical and conceptual tension between the *utprekṣā* and the *śikhānakhavarṇana* in the physical description of the *Pāṇḍyakulodaya*'s hero seems to resolve in a delicate balance. The impossibility of attributing such 'properties' to an ontologically distant subject seems to be solved or attenuated by the ideological impact of the 'head to nails' depiction. The divinisation of the King levels the differences of *dharma* between the *laukika* and *alaukika vr̥ttis* attributed to the sovereign by the 'trans-logical attribution'. The result achieved by Maṅḍalakavi oversteps the rhetorical limit of the *alaṃkāra* definition: in these stanzas from the *Pāṇḍyakulodaya* what we read is the description of an apparently 'illogical' body of a *laukika* God.

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