

Health Metaphors in the Public Discourse of Kerala

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Abstract

Metaphors occupy an inevitable part in our discourse irrespective of their kind. The Theory of conceptual metaphors, conceived and developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson(1980/2003) has been used as theoretical frame work for analyzing the sample data of BODY-HEALTH-ILLNESS metaphors evident in the dailies and periodicals in Malayalam of popular interest from a Cognitive Linguistic perspective.

This paper argues that health metaphors are used in various domains in the public discourse of Kerala.

The analysis shows that almost all aspects of the source domain BODY-HEALTH-ILLNESS are employed in public domain. The point put forward is that society is considered as a human corpus and it can have all physical and mental possibilities that a human body can have. Based on this concept formed all the health metaphors of public domain. Metaphors such as *talavēdana* [headache] as in *vidyābhyāsam līginā vīṅṭum talavēdana* [Education happens to be a headache for the League again] and *cikitsa* [treatment] as in *cikitsa tēṭi hōmiyō āfupaṭri* [Homeopathic hospital needs treatment] are examples of mental mapping between source domain [health] and target domain[public institution]. The paper also focuses on conventionalized and novel metaphors of health domain.

Health Metaphors

Metaphors whose source domain is body, health or illness are referred to as Health metaphors. Several examples of health metaphors can be drawn from the dailies and periodicals of popular interest in Malayalam. A few of them are:

- a) *vidyābhyāsam līginā vīṅṭum talavēdana* (Malayala Manorama, 19.08.'14, 6).
- b) *kēra[am matabhṛāntanmāte ālayamō?* (Mathrubhumi, 18.05.'14, 4).
- c) *bāskatbō[il intyaykkum talavēdana* (Malayala Manorama, 26.09.'14, 18).
- d) *grūppuka[kkā viyōjippā; kōṅgrass punasamghatana muṭantunnu*(Malayala Manorama, 21.09.'14, 9).
- e) *cikitsa tēṭi hōmiyō āfupaṭri*(Mangalam, 26.09.'14, 4).
- f) *rūpa vīṇu; parikkā gurutaram*(Malayala Manorama, 29.08.'13, 7).
- g) *intya 5.6% va[arcca nēṭum*(Malayala Manorama, 08.10.'14, 14).
- h) *samgham ta[aranniṭṭilla*(Mathrubhumi, 16.05.'14, 4).
- i) *niṅṅa[kkunṭō sāmṭattika ārōgyam?*(Sambadhyam, October, 2014).
- j) *naṭika[ute garbham oru talavēdana tanne*(Grihalakshmi, October 1-15, 2014, 99).
- k) *heltti kiccan*(Vanitha, October 1-15, 2014, 118).
- l) *ōhari k[linik*(Sambadhyam Ohari Plus, October 1, 2014, 12).
- m) *samsāram nalloru marunnāṇa*(Vanitha, October 1-15, 2014, 58).

(a) means education happens to be a headache for the league, “league” refers to the Muslim League of India, Kerala Chapter. The target domain is the political setup of Kerala. (b) is a social statement conveying the anxiety “Is Kerala an asylum of fanatics?” (c) means Basketball had become a headache to India too. (d) says that Groups disagreed; Congress reorganization is limping. Here, groups refer to the internal subgroups inside Indian National Congress, the political party. (e) means Homeopathic hospital seeks treatment. Rupee fell down; the injury is critical, says (f). (g) means India will attain 5.6 % growth. (h) says *Samgham* is not yet tired, *samgham* refers to the *raaṣṭrīya svayam sēvak samgh*, a political association. (i) means Do you have economic health? (j) says Actresses’ pregnancy is definitely a headache. (k) and (l) are columns from different magazines. (k) refers to healthy kitchen and (l) refers to share-clinic. According to (m), converse is a good medicine. The above examples include both conventionalized metaphors (a, b, c, g, h, j, k, and m) and novel metaphors (d, e, f, i, and l).

In Political Domain

Sentences (a), (d) and (h) carry politics as their target domain. In (a), it is said that education happens to be a headache for the league. Here the League/political (social) association

is considered as human body which has illness. The sentence as a whole conveys that education matters have become troublesome to the Muslim League of India, Kerala Chapter. The use of *talavēdana* (headache) as a metaphor is conventional. It is derived from the mental mapping between source domain and target domain that headache affects the functioning of the whole body.

In (d), the Indian National Congress, a political party in India is given the status of a human body and its sub parties are considered as the organs of the body. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “limp” is to walk in a slow and awkward way because of an injury to a leg or foot. Limp is caused to the living being that has legs. In the example presented here also, the political association is considered as a living body. It is said that just as a lame person walks the Congress Party also limps. To walk or to walk with limp is always recognized with living organisms. Here, the same status is ascribed to the political association.

In sentence (h), the political association is again given the status of a human body which can be affected by tiredness. The conceptual metaphor *ta/arca* (tiredness) is acquired in reference to the human trait that it will get tired becoming older or working harder. The same logic is employed in all the above cases too. That is, political associations are not mere entities rather they share all the characteristics of a human body and can get affected by illnesses or becoming older.

In Economic Domain

Sentences (f), (g), (i) and (l) share their target domain as the economy. In (f), the former part is an example for orientational metaphor and the latter part is important in this analysis. Here, the Indian currency, Rupees is given the status of a living organism. It is said that Rupees got severely injured due to a fall. Injury, again, happens only to living beings.

(g) is a prediction on India’s expected growth rate. *va/arcca* (growth) is a conventionalized metaphor depicting the progress of something. The mental mapping behind this metaphor is traces the social, political, cultural or economic entity as a process found in a living organism which can take birth, grow, get sick and die. In this case, a country, say, India, is given

the status of a living body. The economic progress it can attain is blended to the life cycle of a living organism and is metaphorized as *valarcca*.

(i) is a question addressing the public and individuals at the same time. *sāmpattika ārōgyam* is a metaphorical coinage. It is derived from the conception that health is primarily the state of wellbeing. Economic health can be related to many other aspects of health such as lack of illness, higher immunity power, absence of pain, disease, injury, etc., i.e., economically healthy means economically well off as well as secured. Here, a family/family economy is considered as a body and its fitness is referred to as health.

Consider sentence (l). Clinic is a healthcare facility primarily devoted to outpatients. *ōhari kīnik* is a column in an economic monthly magazine in Malayalam through which an expert advises the readers on shares/stocks. In this case, society/individuals are given the status of body which is sick and needs to be consulted by an expert physician.

Other Domains

Extremist view of religion is always described as madness in a metaphorical manner. This conventional metaphor is used in (b) i.e., *matabhrāntā*. It emerges from the concept that society is a body and anything and everything beyond normal state of being is madness.

In (c), the field of sports is the target domain. Here, India is again given the status of a body which got affected with *talavēdana*.

(e) is an interesting coinage. A hospital is a place on which sick people depend for the treatment of their illness. (e) says the homeopathic hospital itself seeks treatment. i.e., the hospital, which can be either the institution or the building, is in need of treatment. Here, the institution/building is given the status of a living body (patient).

Sentence (j)'s target domain is entertainment business. It is said that actresses' pregnancy is a headache for the public. Here also, the public/society is given the status of a living body.

In (k), healthy kitchen is similar to the usage, healthy mind. In this sentence, family is considered as a body and kitchen an important organ of it. Health is the wellbeing of every organs of the body. Based on this concept, this metaphor is formed.

Finally, in (m), metaphor *marunnā* is employed. This is also a conventional one. Medicine is needed only when there are illnesses and diseases and where there are cuts, wounds, burning sensations, swellings, burns, etc. Here also, society is considered as a body and human relationships as its organs. When an organ (here, a relationship) gets sick, medicine should be availed. Based on this knowledge, the mental mapping between the source and target domains is derived here.

Conclusion

This was a brief study searching the nature of distribution of health metaphors employed in the public discourse of Kerala. It is evident that our conceptualization of society/any entity is blended with BODY, HEALTH and ILLNESS. This enables us to draw a conclusion that every human conceptualization related to him as a part of it, is based on his knowledge of a human body that it can suffer from diseases and illnesses. And also, it is always prone to disease and illness.

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Sample data are collected from the following popular Periodicals:

1. Grihalakshmi(Fortnightly Women's Magazine): Kozhikode

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2. Malayala Manorama(Daily): Kottayam.
3. Mangalam(Daily): Kottayam.
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5. Sambadhyam (Monthly): Kottayam
6. Sambadhyam Ohari Plus(Monthly Supplement with Sambadhyam): Kottayam
7. Vanitha(Fortnightly Women's Magazine): Kottayam

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