

PŪRVĀPARAPRAJÑĀBHINANDANAM
EAST AND WEST, PAST AND PRESENT

**Indological and Other Essays
in Honour of Klaus Karttunen**

EDITED BY

BERTIL TIKKANEN & ALBION M. BUTTERS

STUDIA ORIENTALIA 110

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WAR AND PEACE: SEMANTICS OF *SAṂDHI* AND *VIGRAHA* IN THE *ARTHAŚĀSTRA*

Patrick Olivelle

The technical terms *saṁdhi* and *vigraha* occur as the first two members in the enumeration of the sixfold strategy (*ṣāḍgunya*) of foreign policy of the ideal ancient Indian state, an enumeration given both in the *Arthaśāstra* (7.1.1–10) and in Manu (7.160). The *Arthaśāstra* passage reads:

संधिविग्रहासनयानसंश्रयद्वैधीभावाः षड्गुण्यम् इत्याचार्याः ॥

Kangle translates this as follows:

“Peace, war, staying quiet, marching, seeking shelter and dual policy constitute the six measures”, say the teachers.

The parallel in Manu reads:

संधिं च विग्रहं चैव यानमासनमेव च ।
द्वैधीभावं संश्रयं च षड्गुणांश्चिन्तयेत्सदा ॥

Bühler translates this as follows:

Let him constantly think of the six measures of royal policy (*guṇa*, viz.) alliance, war, marching, halting, dividing the army, and seeking protection.

Kangle translates *saṁdhi* as ‘peace’ and Bühler as ‘alliance’, while both translate *vigraha* as ‘war’.

The importance of these two terms in ancient and medieval Indian political science and governance is indicated by their incorporation into titles given to or arrogated by important ministers: *sāṁdhivigrahika* by Hariṣeṇa the author of the Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta (335–376 CE),¹ and *mahāsāṁdhivigrahika* eight centuries later by Lakṣmīdhara, the 12th century author of the encyclopedic treatise *Kṛtyakalpataru*.² It appears that these two

¹ See Sircar (1986: 262–268).

² Given in the colophons to the *Kṛtyakalpataru*.

terms were a short-hand for the totality of state policy falling under the *śāḍgunya* of the *Arthaśāstra*. In this paper I want to subject these two central concepts of ancient Indian statecraft to a close analysis that will hopefully demonstrate that their translation as peace and war are inadequate at best and misleading at worst.

The thesis I want to propose today is that *vigraha* and its verbal equivalents do not mean war, attack, fighting, or combat, and that *saṁdhi*, as also its verbal equivalents, do not mean peace or even a peace accord, at least in the modern sense of this expression. The terms used for warfare in the *Arthaśāstra* are the verb *yudh* and the noun *yuddha*, as well as other terms such as *abhi-han* and *abhi-yuj*. Thus, for example, we have expressions such as: *aśvayuddha* ('cavalry charge': AŚ 10.5.53), *hastiyuddha* ('attack with elephants': AŚ 10.5.54), and the like, but never an *aśvavigraha*. The actual march into battle is always called *yāna*, along with its verbal equivalents. The suspicion that *vigraha* does not refer to actual warfare is further confirmed by several significant usages of this term, especially in its verbal forms, that I will examine below. The term *saṁdhi*, on the other hand, does not imply a state of peace between two kingdoms or even a formal peace treaty, but a temporary and focused contract between two parties aimed at accomplishing a specific goal, such as attacking a common enemy. While that contract or pact lasts, naturally, the two sides will be in alliance rather than at war with each other. In what follows I will attempt to substantiate my understanding of these two terms.

In Chapter Four of Book Seven of the *Arthaśāstra*, there are four Prakaraṇas or Topics (103–106) that have these significant and puzzling titles: *viḡrhyāsanam*, *saṁdhāyāsanam*, *viḡrhyayānam*, *saṁdhāyayānam*. Scharfe (1993: 97) notes Renou's comments on these curious compounds with the gerund as the first member, which Scharfe prefers to call "phrasal compounds" rather than true compounds. The activity indicated by the second member follows the activity indicated by the gerund. Looking at the first and third, we see that the king and his army remain stationary or marches into battle *viḡrhyā*, that is, *after doing viḡraha*. How could this be if *viḡraha* means war? How can one wage war and remain stationary at the same time? It gets even more interesting in the body of the text. Let us examine a few sentences:

यदा वा पश्येत् उत्साहयुक्ता मे प्रकृतयः संहता विवृद्धाः स्वकर्माण्यव्या-
हताश्चरिष्यन्ति परस्य वा कर्माण्युपहनिष्यन्ति इति तदा विगृह्यासीत् ॥ AŚ 7.4.6

Alternatively, if he were to foresee: “My constituents³ are energetic, harmonious, and prosperous, and will carry out their activities unhindered or wreck the activities of my enemy,” then he should do *vigraha* and then remain stationary.

Later the *Arthaśāstra* gives the opposite, when the king and the army are advised to do *vigraha* and then march into battle:

यदा वा पश्येत् व्यसनी परः, प्रकृतिव्यसनं वास्य शेषप्रकृतिभिरप्रतिकार्यम्
स्वचक्रपीडिता विरक्ता वास्य प्रकृतयः कर्षिता निरुत्साहाः परस्परद्व
भिन्नाः शक्या लोभयितुम् अग्न्युदकव्याधिमरकदुर्भिक्षनिमित्तं
क्षीणयुग्मपुरुषनिचयरक्षाविधानः परः इति तदा **विगृह्य यायात् ॥**
AŚ 7.4.15

Alternatively, if he were to foresee the following:

My foe is facing a calamity.
Or, the calamity affecting a constituent of his cannot be remedied by the remaining constituents.
Or, his subjects are oppressed by his army and are disaffected; they are weakened, bereft of energy, or are divided the one from the other. They are thus able to be enticed.
My enemy’s draught animals, men, stocks, and defenses have become weakened as a result of fire, water, disease, epidemic, or famine –

he should do *vigraha* and march into battle.

I can multiply these examples from the *Arthaśāstra*, but the point is made. What does the gerund *vigryhya* mean in these contexts? Clearly, the marching into battle and staying put occur *after* the action denoted by the gerund *vigryhya*, and thus it cannot mean simply waging war or launching a military attack. After the activity indicated by *vigryhya*, there are two alternatives: remaining stationary (so no combat) or marching into battle. In either case, *vigryhya* cannot mean combat or warfare, which in the second example follows the activity indicated by *vigryhya*. Kangle translates these expressions thus: ‘he should make war and stay quiet, or march’. This translation does not clear up the problem because it is unclear what he means by “make war”. I propose that *vigryhya* in this and similar contexts

3 On the seven constituents (*prakṛti*) of a kingdom, see AŚ 6.1.1: स्वाम्यमात्यजनपददुर्गकोशदण्ड-
मित्राणि प्रकृतयः ‘King, minister, countryside, fort, treasury, army, and ally are the constituent elements of the state.’

means either a formal declaration of war against another kingdom or the initiation of hostilities against it. In either case, after *vigṛhya* the two kingdoms are in a state of war, even though no actual fighting is taking place. Thus *vigraha* is a political strategy rather than actual warfare.

The first meaning, namely the formal declaration of war, is supported by a statement of the *Arthaśāstra* (2.10.2) dealing with the composition of edicts:

शासनप्रधाना हि राजानः, तन्मूलत्वात्संधिविग्रहयोः ॥

For kings mostly rely on edicts, because on them are based *saṃdhi* and *vigraha*.

We can understand that *saṃdhi* as a contract would require a formal and signed document. Here, however, *vigraha* is treated similarly, implying that *vigraha* is also viewed as a formal and written declaration of war. It is unclear whether this *śāsana* is a mere declaration or whether it was officially dispatched to the king against whom war has been declared.

The *Arthaśāstra* (7.1.7) at one point gives a formal definition of *vigraha*, which, although not very helpful with regard to the precise meaning of the term, indicates that *vigraha* may have been done also without a formal edict. The definition reads: *apakāro vigrahaḥ* (*vigraha* is hostile action). This probably means that any kind of hostile or unfriendly act against another kingdom would constitute *vigraha* and would automatically plunge the two kingdoms into a state of war.

Taking both these situations into consideration, we will not be far wrong in defining *vigraha* as the initiation of hostilities between two kingdoms. The two are now in a state of war, even though no battle may actually have taken place. It is important to remember that *vigraha* is actually a part of foreign policy and does not always necessitate actual fighting. Indeed, the policy attempts to avoid war unless necessary, given the uncertainty of its outcome. Manu (199) is clear: “Victory and defeat in battle are uncertain for the two combatants; he should, therefore, avoid war.” Outsmarting the opponent is better than defeating him in battle. We can now understand how a king may use the policy of *vigraha* against another king, and then remain in one place without actually waging war – *vigṛhyāśīta*.

This meaning of *vigraha* makes it easy to understand some strange compounds we come across in the *Arthaśāstra*, such as *vigrahābhiyuktaḥ* (AŚ 6.2.38) which would then mean someone who is ‘attacked during a time of war’. A king who is in a state of war, whether the war is initiated by himself or by another, is called *vigṛhīta*. That this is a strategy is indicated by the fact that under certain condition, such a king is advised to enter into an alliance with the other king:

विगृहीतश्चेत् परप्रकृतयो लुब्धक्षीणापचरिता विग्रहोद्विग्ना वा मां नोपगच्छन्ति इति पश्येज्ज्यायानपि संधीयेत्, विग्रहोद्वेगं वा शमयेत् ॥ AS 7.3.14

When in a state of war, if he foresees: “My enemy’s subjects, being greedy, destitute, or rebellious, or being alarmed at war, do not come over to me,” then he should enter into a *sandhi* even if he is stronger; or he should assuage the alarm caused by the state of war.

Indeed, a state of *vigraha* may not result in actual fighting, but rather weaken the enemy by one’s ability to resist his attacks and by destroying his sources of income, much like today’s special operations. Thus, the *Arthaśāstra* (7.1.33) states:

यदि वा पश्येत् आयुधीयप्रायः श्रेणीप्रायो वा मे जनपदः शैलवननदीदुर्गैकद्वारारक्षो वा शक्यति पराभियोगं प्रतिहन्युम्; विषयान्ते दुर्गमविषह्यमपाश्रितो वा शक्यामि परकर्माण्युपहन्तुम्; व्यसनपीडोपहतोत्साहो वा परः संप्राप्तकर्मोपघातकालः; विगृहीतस्यान्यतो वा शक्यामि जनपदमपवाहयितुम् इति विग्रहे स्थितो वृद्धिमातिष्ठेत् ।

Alternatively, if he foresees one of the following:

My country has preponderance of soldiers – or of corporate troops – or is protected by a single entry point consisting of a hill-fort, a forest-fort, or a river-fort. Thus it will be able to repel an enemy attack.

Or, taking refuge in an impregnable fort at the edge of the territory, I will be able to wreck the activities of my enemy.

Or, my enemy, with his efforts undermined by the havoc resulting from calamities, has reached the point when his activities face devastation.

Or, when a war is being declared against him by someone else, I will be able to plunder his country.

he should promote (his own) prosperity by resorting to *vigraha*.

Turning now to the companion term *sandhi*, we see that it also entails a strategy to overcome and outwit another king rather than the initiation of a time of peace or the conclusion of a peace accord. The *Arthaśāstra* (7.1.6) defines *sandhi* as *paṇabandhaḥ*, that is, a negotiated agreement. That *sandhi* is a tactic is made clear at AS 7.4.17–18:

यदा वा फलमेकहार्यमल्पकालं पश्येत् तदा पाष्णिग्राहासाराभ्यां विगृह्य यायात् ।
विपर्यये संधाय यायात् ।

If he were to foresee that the result can be secured alone and within a brief period of time, then he should initiate hostilities (*vigṛhya*) with the rear enemy and his backer and march into battle (*yāyāt*). Under circumstances opposite of the preceding, he should enter into a compact (*saṃdhi*) and then march into battle.

In a footnote to this passage, Kangle comments in surprise: “this is downright duplicity, making peace and then attacking the enemy when he is least expecting such an attack.” But that is the whole point! One should not be surprised; *saṃdhi* is as much a strategy seeking tactical advantage over other kings as *vigraha*. That it is so is explicitly stated in a long passage stating the conditions under which a king should resort to *saṃdhi* (AŚ 7.1.32):

यदि वा पश्येत् 'सन्धौ स्थितो महाफलैः स्वकर्मभिः परकर्माण्युपहनिष्यामि; महाफलानि वा स्वकर्माण्युपभोक्ष्ये, परकर्माणि वा; संधिविश्वासेन वा योगोपनिषत्प्रणिधिभिः परकर्माण्युपहनिष्यामि; सुखं वा सानुग्रहपरिहारसौकर्यं फललाभभूयस्त्वेन स्वकर्मणां परकर्मयोगावहं जनमास्रावयिष्यामि; बलिनातिमात्रेण वा संहितः परः स्वकर्मोपघातं प्राप्स्यति; येन वा विगृहीतो मया संधत्ते तेनास्य विग्रहं दीर्घं करिष्यामि; मया वा संहितस्य मदद्वेषिणो जनपदं पीडयिष्यति; परोपहतो वास्य जनपदो मामागमिष्यति, ततः कर्मसु वृद्धिं प्राप्स्यामि; विपन्नकर्मारम्भो वा विषमस्थः परः कर्मसु न मे विक्रमेत; परतः प्रवृत्तकर्मारम्भो वा ताभ्यां संहितः कर्मसु वृद्धिं प्राप्स्यामि; शत्रुप्रतिबद्धं वा शत्रुणा संधिं कृत्वा मण्डलं भेत्स्यामि, भिन्नमवाप्स्यामि; दण्डानुग्रहेण वा शत्रुमुपगृह्य मण्डललिप्सायां विद्वेषं ग्राहयिष्यामि, विद्विष्टं तेनैव घातयिष्यामि' इति संधिना वृद्धिमातिष्ठेत् ।

Alternatively, if he foresees one of the following:

By resorting to a compact (*saṃdhi*), I will wreck the activities of my enemy with my own activities bearing copious fruit.

Or, I will enjoy my own activities bearing copious fruit or those of my enemy.

Or, by creating confidence through a compact (*saṃdhi*), I will wreck the activities of my enemy by employing secret activities and clandestine means.

Or, I will easily lure away the people who can carry out the activities of my enemy facilitated by benefits and exemptions and by providing them with a greater allotment from the profits of my activities.

Or, by entering into a compact (*saṃdhi*) with an excessively powerful king, he will suffer the wreckage of his activities.

Or, when, during a war waged against him by some king, he enters

into a compact (*saṃdhi*) with me, I will ensure that his war with that king is protracted.

Or, he will harass the country of the king who hates me but has entered into a compact (*saṃdhi*) with me.

Or, people of his country, oppressed by his enemy, will come to me; thereby I will achieve prosperity in my activities.

Or, given that my enemy finds himself in a difficult situation with his activities in ruins, he cannot threaten my activities.

Or, initiating my activities far away and entering into compacts (*saṃdhi*) with both, I will achieve prosperity in my activities.

Or, by entering into a compact (*saṃdhi*) with my foe, I will split off from him the circle that is loyal to the foe, and, once it has split off from him, I will secure it for myself.

Or, when his enemy is attempting to overpower the circle of kings, he should create hostility towards him by supporting him with the supply of troops; and once he faces hostilities, he should get him killed by the same circle.

he should promote prosperity through a compact (*saṃdhi*).

That *saṃdhi* is a strategy and not a lasting peace treaty is indicated by the related term *ati-saṃ-dhā* (*atisaṃdhāna*, *atisaṃdadhyāt*). Although this term is used in a variety of contexts, its central meaning appears to be that one king employing what is apparently a *saṃdhi*, namely an alliance or pact, is actually outmaneuvering, outwitting, outsmarting the other and will ultimately defeat the other. The clearest statement linking *atisaṃdhāna* with *saṃdhi* is in AŚ 7.6. Here the opening sentence states:

विजिगीषुर्द्वितीयां प्रकृतिमेवमतिसंदध्यात् ॥

The seeker after conquests [that is, the king to whom the text is addressed] should outwit (*atisaṃdadhyāt*) the second constituent of the circle (i.e. the *amitra* or enemy) in the following manner.

It is interesting that in these passages the *saṃdhi* is done with the *amitra*, one's natural enemy, rather than with an ally. So if we translate *saṃdhi* as alliance, as is often done, we should be careful to distinguish such an alliance from the *mitra*, the natural ally of a king within the ideology of the *maṇḍala* (circle of kingdoms). After this initial statement, the text details how this can be done. A *saṃdhi*, it says, could be with or without conditions. In the first case, the king should make conditions that are favorable to him and unfavorable to the enemy with whom he has entered into *saṃdhi*. Here is one example (AŚ 7.6.8):

यदि वा मन्येत शैलवननदीदुर्गमटवीव्यवहितं छिन्नधान्यपुरुषवीवधासारम-
यवसेन्धनोदकमविज्ञातं प्रकृष्टमन्यभावदेशीयं वा सैन्यव्यायामानामलब्धभौमं वा देशं
परो यास्यति, विपरीतमहम् इत्येतस्मिन् विशेषे परिपणितदेशं संधिमुपेयात् ॥

If he were to think: “My enemy will march into a region containing hill-, forest-, and river-forts; separated by forest tribes; cut off from grains, men, supplies, and reinforcements; bereft of fodder, firewood, and water; unfamiliar; distant; with a hostile population; or without land for military operations. I will march into a region with the opposite characteristics” – in this sort of a situation, he should enter into a compact (*saṃdhi*) with conditions relating to region.

Basically, the king is outwitting the opponent by stipulating that the latter’s troops will march along unfavorable terrain while his own troops will march along favorable terrain. A king could also forge a *saṃdhi* without explicit conditions, but in both cases the ultimate aim is to vanquish the other. The *Arthaśāstra* (7.6.13) states this explicitly in its description of a *saṃdhi* without conditions:

व्यसनत्वरावमानालस्ययुक्तमज्ञं वा शत्रुमतिसंधातुकामो देशकालकार्याणामनव-
स्थापनात् संहितौ स्वः इति संधिविश्वासेन परच्छिद्रमासाद्य प्रहरेदित्यपरिपणितः ॥

When he wishes to outwit (*atisaṃdhātukāmaḥ*) an enemy who is corrupt, hasty, disrespectful, and lazy or who is ignorant, he should tell him “We have entered into a compact (*saṃdhi*)” without fixing the region, time, or task. Through the confidence generated by the compact, he should find out his vulnerable points and attack him – that is a compact without conditions.

So, far from being a peace treaty, *saṃdhi* is a strategic move on the part of a king, either because he is in a difficult position and wants to buy time or because he thinks that such a pact could ensure victory either over the king with whom he is entering into the pact or over another king whom he wants to attack with the support of his new ally. Another point to remember is that an alliance formed through a *saṃdhi* is temporary and has nothing to do with the ally/enemy (*mitra*, *amitra*) configuration coming from the theory of the *maṇḍala*, the circle of kingdoms, where the contiguous kingdom is one’s natural enemy and the one beyond that is one’s natural ally. These allies and enemies result from the very nature of territorial contiguity. As we have seen, one can indeed form a *saṃdhi* with one’s natural enemy. On this point, *saṃdhi* is very similar to another form of compact or contract, namely *saṃbhūya*, the coming together of individuals to join forces and to combine resources in order to accomplish a particular task (AŚ 7.4.19–22).

A final point regarding the verb *vi-grah*: we have seen the gerund of this verb used in interesting compounds in the *Arthaśāstra*: for example, *vigṛhyāsanam* (7.4.13–14) and *vigṛhyayānam* (7.4 title). Our study of the meaning of this term may help us understand other usages of the gerund in compounds. Thus in Manu (4.72) we have *vigṛhyakathā*, meaning combative discussion or argument. Even more interestingly, in the context of public debate, the *Caraka Saṃhitā* (Vimānasthāna, 8.16) gives two kinds of *vāda*: the first is friendly debate called *saṃdhāyasambhāṣā*, reminding us of *saṃdhi*, and the second is hostile debate called *vigṛhyasambhāṣā* (and *vigṛhyajalpatā*, 8.21). Actually Caraka defines *vāda* this way: *vādo nāma yat pareṇa saha śāstraṇpūrvakaṃ vigṛhya kathanam* (8.28: ‘Now, debate is the talk with an opponent after taking a hostile stance, talk that is based on śāstras’). Here, as in the *Arthaśāstra*, the adversary is *para*, which frequently means not just the other but an adversary or enemy. And as in the *Arthaśāstra*, the final aim is, according to the *Nyāyabhāṣya* on *Nyāyasūtra* 4.2.51, the desire to conquer, *vijigīṣā*. I think both in the political strategy of the *Arthaśāstra* and in the Nyāya tradition of debate, *vigraha* indicates a condition of aggression, hostility, and conflict, whereas *saṃdhi* indicates a condition of harmony and collaboration.

Thus, we need to see these two terms, *saṃdhi* and *vigraha*, not as simple statements of facts – the states of war or peace – between kingdoms or states, but as deliberate political and military strategies employed by states against each other. The one that is able to execute them better will outsmart the opponent, as we see splendidly laid out in the drama *Mudrārākṣasa*, where Cāṇakya (the reputed author of the *Arthaśāstra*) is depicted as employing these strategies to the fullest in defeating the Nandas and installing Candragupta as king.

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