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THE PERFECT BODY OF THE JINA AND HIS IMPERFECT IMAGE

Phyllis Granoff

1. Introduction

The nature of the divine body was of major concern in each of India's classical religious traditions, Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism. And with few exceptions, in each of these traditions images were made that were intended to represent the unusual body of the Buddha, Jina, or Hindu deity. Fundamental to the belief in an embodied god, and here I use the term broadly to include the Buddha and Jina as well as the Hindu deities, was the need to distinguish the divine body from our own mortal bodies with all their imperfections. Equally important was to clarify the relationship between an image and its prototype. In this paper I explore some quandaries that arose from these two endeavors in Jainism. In Jain hymns images are considered to be an exact likeness of the Jina; the hymnist addresses the Jina image as the Jina himself. In particular the image is said to be the Jina at his *samavasaraṇa*, the magical preaching assembly that the gods make for him at the moment of his Enlightenment. The familiar triple umbrella over the heads of the Jina and the gods with garlands carefully depicted on Digambara and Śvetāmbara sculptures are clear indications that this is the Jina at the moment of his Enlightenment and first preaching; in these details the image has been made to conform to standard literary descriptions of the Jina on his Enlightenment.¹ Numerous miracle stories of wonder-working images confirm what we learn from the hymns, that the images of the Jina are the Jina himself. They could not possibly be simply lifeless stones, for they are imbued with powers that can only belong to the Jina.²

Distinguishing the body of the Jina from the body of an ordinary mortal in written sources involved listing its unusual attributes. The body of the Jina was lovingly and elaborately described throughout the history of Jain literature. One of the earliest descriptions

¹ For details see Balbir 1994. Throughout this paper when discussing images I am speaking of the Mūrtipūjaka Śvetāmbaras, but for convenience sake I use the term Śvetāmbara alone.

² I have written previously on these issues. See Granoff 1998, 2001, 2012. On image worship in Jainism see John Cort 2010.

occurs in a long passage in the Śvetāmbara *Aupapātikasūtra*.³ The Jina is exceedingly tall (*sattahatthūssehe*) and his body is perfectly proportioned (*samacauraṃsasamaṇṭhāṇasaṇṭhie*). The arrangement of his bones is of a rare type, affording him the extraordinary strength required for him to endure all sorts of attacks, supernatural, natural and manmade, and to practice the extreme austerities required to burn off his karma (*vajjarisahanārāyaṇasaṃghayaṇe*). Unlike us, his digestion is always perfect and he never suffers from gas (*anulomavāyuvege*) or diarrhea (*kaṇṭakaggahaṇī*), and like a bird he can digest anything, even stones (*kavoyapariṇāme*). He has perfect teeth (*akhaṃḍadaṃṭe*); his shoulders are broad (*paḍipuṇṇaviulakhaṃdhe*) and his chest is marked with the Śrīvatsa sign (*sirivacchaṃkiyavacche*). He has a charming line of hair on his belly (*ramaṇijjaromarāī*) and his genitals are concealed, like those of a fine stallion (*varaturagasujāyagujjhadese*). The bottoms of his feet are red like a lotus and soft, like its leaves (*rattuppalapattamauiyasukumālakomalatale*). Every limb is radiant with light (*chāyāuijjoiaṃgamamge*). The description continues, leaving no part of his body untouched. Another list of the extraordinary qualities of the Jina body highlights ten features that the Jina is born with, as opposed to special qualities that he achieves on Enlightenment. Not all of these ten qualities are found in the *Aupapātikasūtra*. According to the Digambara tradition, the Jina does not urinate or defecate; he does not sweat. His blood is white and his body is perfectly proportioned, while his bone structure is of the strongest type. The Jina is strikingly handsome and his body is fragrant. He has every auspicious mark and possesses infinite strength, while his speech is always sweet.⁴

Although their lists may differ, both Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras would seem to have had no difficulty in describing the perfect body of the Jina. It was less easy, however, to reconcile this understanding of the perfect body with the second strong belief in the image as its exact reflection, and particularly with certain ways in which the image was ritually treated. The Śvetāmbara monk Meghavijaya (c. 1653-1704) wrote a long text, the *Yuktiṭṭrabodha*, to refute the views of the layman Bāṇarasīdās (1586-1643), who began a movement in Jainism that rejected many external forms of worship and concentrated on study and meditation on the soul.⁵ One of Meghavijaya's many points of disagreement with Bāṇarasīdās is over the ornamentation of images. Meghavijaya strongly advocates for the ritual ornamentation of the

³ *Aupapātikasūtra*, sūtra 10, pp. 81-89.

⁴ These ten are among the standard list of the 34 *atiśayas* or superior qualities of the Jina. Kundakunda, *Bodhapāhuḍa*, verse 32, p. 122. Kundakunda mentions them and the Hindi translator lists them in detail.

⁵ A section of the text has been translated by Jaini 1991.

Jina image, for the practice of crowning the image and covering it with jewels and flowers.⁶ In what follows I review their arguments, which focus on the issue of how best to make an image the exact representation of the Jina, with his marvelous body and extraordinary spiritual accomplishments, and whether such a goal is even possible. To Meghaviṣaya, ornamenting the image is the only way to capture one of the attributes of the Jina body that was highlighted in the *Aupapātikasūtra*: that his every limb is radiant with light. By contrast, for Bāṇarasīdās adorning the image of the Jina with jewels when the Jina had renounced worldly wealth makes it absolutely impossible for anyone to see the Jina image as an exact representation of the Jina. In fact it does violence to the true nature of the Jina. In the course of their arguments we are able to see the problems inherent in the idea that the Jina body is radically different from our bodies and at the same time that the Jina image is an exact likeness of the Jina. We witness the inevitable collision between the literary descriptions of the wonderful body of the Jina and the inherent limitations of its visual representation, and equally vividly we witness a confrontation over exactly what the Jina image is supposed to depict: the physical or the mental superiority of the Jina, or both, for the physical beauty of the body itself is held to be the natural outcome of spiritual perfection.⁷ I turn now to a summary of the debate, confining myself to the arguments that highlight the difficulties in creating visual representations of the unique Jina body.⁸

2. The Debate

Meghaviṣaya begins with a simple statement that Bāṇarasīdās, relying on Digambara texts, rejects categorically the practice of adorning the body of the Jina image with jewels and flowers. Throughout the passage Meghaviṣaya will marshal evidence to support his own

⁶ It is difficult to say when this practice began in Jainism and when it began to be the focus of sectarian disputes. In his article, “Le Bouddha Paré” Paul Mus (1928) suggested that crowned images of the Buddha in Pala art depict the Buddha in worship; crowning the image and adorning it with jewels were central to worshiping the Buddha. Citing the records of the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang, who saw images of the Buddha gorgeously adorned, Mus traces the practice to a relatively early period. His complicated analysis, in which he sees the practice of placing jewels on the image as a reflection of the desire to see the present and future Buddha together in the image, is not relevant for us here. The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* describes Rāvaṇa and his followers honoring the Buddha and the monks by adorning them with jewels (1.25-26) and the Buddha graciously accepting their worship (1.27). Such offerings are most likely simply offerings and do not require the complicated explanations that Mus offers. For a more recent discussion see Bautze-Picron 2010.

⁷ See, for example, the passages cited in my paper, “Bewitching Beauty”, cited in note 1.

⁸ The section in which arguments over the ornamentation of the Jina appear also deals with the ritual of anointing the image with turmeric powder. I leave those arguments aside in the present paper.

views from a wealth of texts, including Śvetāmbara and Digambara hymns, the Digambara *purāṇas*, and the *Aṣṭaprabhṛta* or *Pāhuḍa* of Kundakunda and its 15th century commentary of Śrutasāgara. Among the hymns he cites most frequently are the *Bhaktāmarastotra* of Mānatuṅga, the *Ekībhāvastotra* of Vādirāja, the *Jinacaturviṃśatikā* of Bhūpāla, and verses of praise by Vāgbhaṭṭa from his *Vāgbhaṭṭālamkāra*.⁹ Since Bāṇarasīdās is reliant on Digambara sources in his own arguments, Meghavijaya not unnaturally focuses on Digambara texts, of which he has a remarkable knowledge for a Śvetāmbara monk.

Meghavijaya first has Bāṇarasīdās state his position. Bāṇarasīdās asks why the image of the Jina should be worshipped by covering it with jewels and clothes and offers six possible reasons, each of which he says is incorrect. 1) Should the image be covered in jewelry and cloth because this leads to pious thoughts in the mind of the person who sees it? 2) Because the Jinās actually did wear clothes? 3) Because such an act is an act of devotion? 4) Because doing so allows the image to represent a particular stage in the life of the Jina? 5) Because the Jina required these things to be beautiful? Or finally, 6) Because such a ritual is enjoined in the scriptures?¹⁰ Bāṇarasīdās rejects all six putative reasons for adorning the Jina; Meghavijaya, in turn, will accept them all.

Bāṇarasīdās begins with the idea that the Jina should be adorned because this will cause a viewer to entertain pious thoughts (*śubhadhyāna*), that is, to meditate on the greatness of the Jina and his teaching. To the contrary, he says, the ritual of adorning the Jina image should not be performed because an adorned image in fact can only cause the viewer to have worldly thoughts that are an impediment to spiritual progress (*durdhyāna*). The image must be shown to be without any possessions; only such an image can indicate that the Jina was beyond any desire (*vītarāga*) and thereby lead to a mental state of abandonment of desire in the viewer (*śubhadhyāna*). He compares the adorned image of the Jina to sculptures of women, which show them clothed and with jewels, in other words, with possessions. The fact that the sculptures of the women depict them with jewels and fancy clothing implies that the women themselves have desires for such things, and seeing their state of desire leads the viewer into a similar spiritually unproductive state of attachment to worldly goods (*durdhyāna*). Furthermore, Bāṇarasīdās argues, the fact that the Jina is without clothing and without weapons at once makes known his difference from the Hindu gods, who are clothed,

⁹ The hymns have been published in the *Kāvyaṃālā*, Vol. 7, Bombay: Nirṇaya Sagara Press, 1890. The text of the *Vāgbhaṭṭālamkāra* is on Jain-elibrary. This is the edition in the Vidyābhavan Saṃskṛta Granthamālā, No. 33, Varanasi: Caukhambā Vidyābhavan, 1957.

¹⁰ Page 58: *tatprekṣakabhavikaśubhadhyānahetutvaṃ vā? Bhagavataḥ sacelatvaṃ vā? Bhaktimātratvaṃ vā? Avasthāviśeṣatvaṃ vā? Śobhākāritvaṃ vā? Āgamoktatvaṃ vā.*

bear arms and are shown with women. This distinction in the way that the Jina is represented is essential to announce to all who behold the Jina image that the Jina is totally different from any other deity and that he is the only one among them who is worthy of worship.

Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras shared the idea that the physical appearance of the Jina image was so distinctive that it could lead the viewer instantly to an awareness of the truth of the Jain doctrine. Among the most famous Śvetāmbara hymns are two by Hemacandra, the *Anyayogavyavacchedikā* and the *Mahādevastotra*. In both of these Hemacandra stresses that it is from the distinctive way in which the Jina's image is fashioned that we recognize the special status of the Jina and therefore the truth of his teaching. In particular, the fact that the Jina is shown without weapons and unaccompanied by a wife was said immediately to distinguish him from the Hindu gods; it makes known that the Jina is without anger and without desire.¹¹ Meghaviḷaya has Bāṇārasīdās cite the hymns of his Śvetāmbara opponent in his argument, just as Meghaviḷaya will seek proof of his position against Bāṇārasīdās from the Digambara hymns, which Bāṇārasīdās presumably would have regarded as authoritative.

Bāṇārasīdās then insists that reason 2, because the Jinas themselves wore clothes, is blatantly false. As a follower of the Digambaras he believes that the Jinas were always without clothing. He counters the third possibility, that one must adorn the Jina image out of a sense of devotion, by insisting that devotion is only to be displayed as long as the act of devotion does not lead to improper thoughts. And seeing an adorned image, he has said, leads to improper desires for worldly goods in the viewer.

In refuting the fourth possibility, that the adorned image refers to a particular stage in the life of the Jina, perhaps his coronation as king, Bāṇārasīdās argues that this stage in the life of the Jina is no more to be depicted than is the Jina's marriage; both stages involve a desire for worldly pleasures and thinking about them leads a person into a state of similar desires.

Bāṇārasīdās in turn rejects alternative 5, that the image requires jewels and clothes to be beautiful. The image of the Jina is naturally beautiful and does not require anything to beautify it. As proof of this, he cites verse 19 of the *Ekībhāvastotra*,

“Only someone who is not naturally beautiful would yearn for externals, like clothes and jewels to beautify himself; only someone who could be beaten by a foe would take up weapons. Every part of your body is exquisitely beautiful and

¹¹ For translations of the relevant verses see Granoff 2012.

no enemy can defeat you. What need have you of jewels, clothes or flowers? What need have you of threatening weapons?"¹²

He also cites the opening line of verse 97 in the *Vāgbhaṭṭālaṃkāra*, which describes the Jina as “beautiful without ornaments.”¹³ As is often in the case in the arguments here and in the hymns themselves, the distinction between image and prototype is blurred. As Meghavijaya will make clear, some of the adjectives can only refer to the Jina himself and make no sense as descriptions of the Jina image. Bāṇārasīdās adds that adorning the image can damage it and thus even if it does make the image more beautiful, it should never be done. Finally, Bāṇārasīdās rejects the sixth possibility, that the ritual adornment of the image is enjoined in the scriptures.

Although Bāṇarāsīdās raises many issues in his refutation of the six reasons, his main point is that adorning the image does violence to the Jina by misrepresenting him as having possessions and therefore not being beyond worldly desire. He concludes, “The Blessed One is without desire, without possessions, without worldly goods and his image should be made in exactly that way.”¹⁴

Meghavijaya in his rejoinders utilizes two diametrically opposed strategies. On the one hand he cites Digambara texts to demonstrate how precisely the adorned image corresponds to textual descriptions of the Jina himself. And here it will be important to Meghavijaya that the image depicts the Jina in his *samavasaraṇa*, for it is at the time of Enlightenment and First Preaching that the Jina is said even in the Digambara texts to sit on a gorgeous jeweled throne, under a triple umbrella, while he is being fanned by chauries. He is said to be splendid beyond all conceivable splendor.¹⁵ As proof that the Digambaras agree that the Jina in the *samavasaraṇa* is gloriously radiant, Meghavijaya will cite among other hymns the famous *Bhaktāmarastotra* of Mānatuṅga, which both Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras revere. Thus he cites verse 37:

¹² *Yuktiṛabodha* page 60, *Ekībhāvastotram* verse 19, page 21:

*āhāryebhyaḥ sprhayati param yaḥ svabhāvād ahṛdyah
śastragrāhi bhavati satataṁ vairiṇā yaśca śakyah
sarvāṅgeṣu tvam asi subhagas tvam na śakyah pareṣām
tatkim bhūśāvanakusumaiḥ kim ca śatrair udastraiḥ*

¹³ *analamkārasubhagāh*

¹⁴ Page 61: *tasmān nihsprho nirgrantho vītarāgaśca tadbimbam api tathāiva kāryam,*

¹⁵ Page 61.

“No one else has the splendor that you have, O Lord of the Jinas, as you teach the dharma. After all, how could the radiance of the sun, which destroys the darkness, be shared by even the brightest star?”¹⁶

Meghavijaya musters evidence from Digambara texts like this to corroborate his view that the adorned image, with light radiating from all the jewels, reflects most perfectly the Jina himself and that seeing the image therefore leads the viewer to pious thoughts of the Jina’s greatness and the truth of his teaching. More interesting, however, is a second strategy that he pursues. He cites an equally wide range of texts to prove the exact opposite: that an image of the Jina can never correspond to the real Jina; images are always very different from the textual descriptions of the Jina and a choice has to be made about what attribute or attributes of the marvelous Jina body the image should capture. But he begins his rejoinder with the first, less controversial, strategy.

Meghavijaya directly counters Bāṇarasīdās’ contention that a Jina image that is clothed and decorated with jewels implies that the Jina had desires for worldly goods and that seeing such an image would lead to improper desires for worldly goods in the viewer. He relies here on the correspondence between image and prototype. We have seen that both Digambara and Śvetāmbara texts tell us that the Jina in the preaching assembly was exactly as he is shown in his image, with the umbrella, fancy throne and chauries. Now, Meghavijaya argues, these wondrous accoutrements are as much “possessions” as are the clothes and ornaments that the Śvetāmbara places on the images. And yet everyone agrees that seeing the Jina in this way undeniably led those present at the preaching to meditation on the Jina’s virtues and the truth of the Jain doctrine (*śubhadhyāna*). That being the case, seeing the adorned Jina image should do the same. Meghavijaya further argues that the Digambaras in fact make offerings to the image, which they place at the side of the image. Their image thus is also shown to have things. It is wrong, he continues, simply to equate nakedness with a lack of desire for or abandonment of worldly possessions; a king when naked does not immediately thereby become a renunciant. And if Bāṇarasīdās should argue that this is because the king does not abandon desire for worldly goods, Meghavijaya answers that an image, being insentient, cannot have desires, and thus it should make no difference whether the image is naked or clothed and adorned.

Meghavijaya also summarily rejects the argument that whenever a person sees a sculpture of a woman dressed in fancy clothes and wearing jewels he immediately falls into

¹⁶ For the status of the *Bhaktāmarastotra* in Digambara and Śvetāmbara Jainism, see Granoff 2010, and the references there.

thinking bad thoughts, or *durdhyāna*, and is filled with desire. Those who have conquered their desires are unmoved, while those who have not are filled with even greater lust when they see an image of a naked woman. Clothes and jewels are not what is important in predicting the reaction of the viewer.

Meghavijaya raises another issue, which this time implies that there is a substantial difference between the Jina and his artistic representations. The Jina image is housed in an elaborate temple that is like a lofty palace: such temples have exquisitely carved windows, turrets, even moats, but the Jina never dwelt in a structure like that. If placing the Jina image in such an environment, which Digambaras indeed do, does not signal that the Jina has a desire for worldly goods, why should adorning him with jewels do so?¹⁷

In the course of these arguments, Meghavijaya also directly engages in the only debate over the meaning of a scriptural passage that can be found in this section of the *Yuktiṛabodha*. Bāṇarasīdās had cited a verse in Kundakunda's *Bodhapāhuḍa* with the commentary of Śrutasāgara in support of his position that images of the Jina must never be adorned. Verse 10 defines what a proper image is in Jainism and uses the word *niggaṃttha* to refer to the image. The debate will focus on the meaning of this term. Here is a loose translation of the verse.

“The appropriate immobile object of worship in the Jain path is an image of those who are of pure conduct, with perfect knowledge and belief, who are ‘niggaṃttha’ and have no desires. Images of other groups (or images made by those Jains who do not properly consecrate their images) are not to be worshipped.”¹⁸

After some discussion about the necessity for an image to be consecrated with the right ritual sequence, Śrutasāgara rejects the rituals of consecration in which clothing and ornaments are placed on the image.¹⁹ Here, in support of the fact that such behavior is not appropriate, Śrutasāgara cites a verse by the great sage Gautama. Bāṇarasīdās is allowed to cite in its entirety this verse, which he describes as a paraphrase of Kundakunda's own verse; he does so to provide scriptural proof that images should never have jewels or other

¹⁷ Page 61.

¹⁸ *saparājaṃgamadehā daṃsaṇaṇāṇeṇa suddhacarāṇāṇam
ṇiggaṃthavīyarāgā jīṇamagge erisā paḍimā.* 10

The translation relies on the interpretation of the commentary of Śrutasāgara, beginning on p. 153.

¹⁹ This was only one debate about the way an image should be installed. For another, see Paul Dundas 2009.

ornaments on them.²⁰ Gautama's verse is unequivocal and here I paraphrase: the Jina image is beautifully radiant without ornaments; it is naked since the Jina has no desire for worldly possessions; it is lovely, since the body of the Jina is naturally perfect; it is without weapons and displays no hint of fear, since the Jina is beyond any trace of involvement in the cycle of violence; it depicts the Jina as perfectly satisfied, without any desires, because he has destroyed all the various sensation-making karmas.

Bāṇārasīdās continues to cite the commentary of Śrutasāgara, which lists images made of gold and emerald, of crystal and sapphire, of rubies and coral, of sandalwood. When he comes to the word “*niggamṭṭha*”, Śrutasāgara describes the “*niggamṭṭha*” or “*nirgrantha*” as *vastrābharaṇajāṭāmukūṭāyudharahitā*, “without weapons, matted locks, jewelry and clothes.”

Meghavijaya in his refutation first suggests that Kundakunda's verse lacks authority; it is *aprāmāṇya*.²¹ Even if it is to be taken as authoritative, he proceeds to argue, it does not prohibit the ornamentation of images. The word “*nirgrantha*”, he offers, means someone who is without the many different kinds of attachment (*caturviṃśatibāhyābhyantaraparigraharahitā*), and since attachment is a function of desire and an insentient image can never have desire, the word cannot be applied directly to an image. As his own proof text, that this is what *nirgrantha* really means, he cites the very next verse in the *Bodhapāhuḍa* and the commentary by Śrutasāgara. Śrutasāgara offers there as the definition of “*nirgrantha*” exactly what Meghavijaya has just given, that is, *nirgrantha* means someone who is without the twenty-four kinds of attachments. This means that *nirgrantha*, and the description applied to *nirgranthas*, that they are without ornaments and clothes, must be taken to refer to the Jina himself and not to his image. Meghavijaya also refutes the idea that Gautama's verse expresses that the Jina image is radiantly beautiful without any ornaments. I will return to this below in the discussion of point 5, that an image requires adornment to make it beautiful.

Meghavijaya's interpretation of the verses from the *Bodhapāhuḍa* and its commentaries relies on a rejection of the equation of the image with the Jina himself, something that is so common in Jain hymns. He argues that it makes no sense to speak of the image as “satisfied and without desires”; this can only refer to the Jina himself. The other adjectives must similarly apply to the Jina and not to the image. The two are different. Meghavijaya thus

²⁰ *nirābharaṇabhāsuram vigatarāgavegodayān*
nirambaram manoharam prakṛtirūpanirdoṣataḥ
nirāyudhasunirbhayaṁ vigatahiṁsyahiṁsākramān
nirāmiṣasutrptimadvividhavedanānām kṣayāt
(Bodhapāhuḍa, p. 156 and Yuktīprabodha, p. 59).

²¹ Page 62.

concludes that Gautama's verse says nothing about an image of the Jina necessarily being without ornament.

In further response to Bāṇarasīdās's insistence that seeing an adorned Jina provokes the wrong ideas in the viewer, Meghaviṇaya notes that Muslims or *mlecchas* when they see the naked Jina image do not react with religious feelings toward the Jina. Nakedness is therefore no guarantee that seeing the image will lead to pure thoughts.

Bāṇarasīdās is allowed to return that these Muslims lack the required attributes necessary for the correct response to the naked Jina image, and Meghaviṇaya sarcastically retorts that Bāṇarasīdās must be the same: he too must lack the required attributes necessary for the correct response to the adorned Jina image. Such is not the case, he concludes, with most people, and here Meghaviṇaya returns to the correspondence between image and the Jina in the preaching assembly. When people see the adorned Jina image, they immediately marvel at the greatness of the Jina and think:

“How great is the Jina, he is the highest god, devoid of desire, the cause of putting an end to transmigratory existence. He has destroyed all his obstructing karmas and now displays the eight great miraculous traits; he is worshipped by gods, asuras and men; his body is incomparably radiant, as if he were covered with jewels, as he sits in the middle of his wondrous preaching assembly.”²²

Meghaviṇaya does admit that it is a seeming paradox that the Jina who is a renunciant is resplendent with jewels, but, he adds, it is a paradox that even the Digambara authors acknowledge. He cites the Digambara *Bhūpālastotra*, which celebrates the unfathomable greatness of the Jina, who though a renunciant, sits on a throne of precious gems, while the rays coming from the crest jewels of the worshipping gods add to the brilliant splendor of the Jina.²³ Another quote is taken from the Digambara *Ādipurāṇa*, extolling the wonderful fact that the Jina is the perfect exemplar of someone who is without desire for worldly things at the same time as he possesses the splendor of the eight miraculous traits.²⁴ These citations actually occur in the course of Meghaviṇaya's refutation of point 2, where Bāṇarasīdās had argued that the Jinas go naked and therefore putting clothes and jewelry on the Jina image

²² Page 62: The eight great miraculous traits or *aṣṭaprātihārya* are: the throne, divine music, chauries, the halo of light, the rain of flowers from heaven, the sound of divine drums, an *aśoka* tree and the triple umbrella.

²³ Page 63: *ūhātigas tvādrśas sarvajñānadṛśas caritramahimā lokaśa lokottaraḥ*

²⁴ Page 63: *prātihāryamāyīm bhūtim dadhāno py ananyagām/vītarāgo mahāṃścāsi jagaty etaj jinādbhutam.*

cannot be justified on the grounds that the Jinas wore clothes. What prompts him to offer these verses at this particular point in the text is a debate over whether the Jina could accept gifts, including clothing from the gods. These verses, taken from Digambara sources, describe what wondrous things the gods do create for the Jina at the time of his Enlightenment.

Bāṇārasīdās had rejected point 3, that adorning the image is an act of devotion, by insisting that devotion is only to be displayed when it does not lead to spiritually unproductive consequences. The adorning of the image is thus a failed act of devotion, since adorned images lead those who see them to desire worldly goods. Meghavijaya replies with a quote from the Digambara *Ādipurāṇa*, which explicitly describes the worship of the Jina with jewelry and unguents as an act of deep devotion:

“Though your body is naturally fragrant without the use of unguents and beautiful without the need for jewels, out of devotion we still worship you with jewels and fragrant substances.”²⁵

He then turns to the question of whether the image should be adorned in order that it be seen to represent a certain stage in the Jina’s career. Bāṇārasīdās had suggested that the adorned image, whatever stage it represents, is like the depiction of the marriage of the Jina, which, being a state of worldly entanglements and desires, cannot lead anyone on seeing it to thoughts of renunciation. Meghavijaya agrees that it is not proper to depict the marriage of the Jina, but that this is not the case with another stage in the life of the Jina, where he is adorned and bathed and rubbed with scented substances. This is at the time of his birth, when the gods bathe the newborn Jina. Both Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras celebrate the five *kalyāṇakas* or auspicious events in the life of the Jina, of which the birth celebration is the first.²⁶ Meghavijaya has a long section of citations from Digambara texts that describe the first bath of the Jina and how the wife of the god Indra placed jewelry on the baby Jina. Meghavijaya even suggests that an image might be adorned not only in the celebration of the birth of the Jina, but even to represent the Jina’s royal consecration or *rājyābhiṣeka*. He argues that this does not show the Jina as subject to desire and is not like the wedding of the Jina. Being subject to desire, *sarāgatvam*, involves desire for a woman, and when the Jina is

²⁵ The verse 35, chapter 14, p. 307 in the edition of Pandita Pannala Jain, is from a hymn that the gods recite at the time of the bath of the newborn Jina: *avilīptasugandhas tvam avibhūṣitasundaraḥ/bhaktair abhyarcito ‘smābhir bhūṣanaiḥ sānulepanaiḥ*

²⁶ Page 64.

crowned as king he is not accompanied by his wife.²⁷ Meghaviṣaya adds that in fact even in the stages of life when the Jina is not adorned, for example when he is practicing austerities as a renunciant or when he achieves Enlightenment, he appears to be adorned because of a wondrous power that he possesses. For this reason, too, the Jina image should be adorned.²⁸ He also cites textual passages in which the kingly state of the Jina is singled out for praise. Bāṇarasīdās is allowed to interject that the bath ritual that is carried out for the image has nothing to do with the birth bath of the Jina; it is simply done nowadays to clean the stone and wood images. In the olden days, when images were made of gold and jewels, it was unnecessary. Meghaviṣaya retorts that in the olden days images were also made from stone and wood. The logic behind Bāṇarasīdās's strange assertion that the bathing of the image does not commemorate the first bath of the Jina is that he wants to insist that the image always represents the Jina as a monk, both before and after Enlightenment. As a monk the Jina would not have worn clothes or jewelry. Meghaviṣaya points out that there are numerous inconsistencies in Digambara ritual treatment of the images if this is the case. To mention a few, the Enlightened One did not take food, but food offerings are made to the image. Food offerings are made for seated Jina images, but the Jina always ate standing. And why is the food not placed directly in the hands of the image, since the Jina always ate directly out of his hands?²⁹ And so Meghaviṣaya concludes, Bāṇarasīdās must accept that one worships the newborn Jina, and bathing him and adorning him are entirely appropriate.

Meghaviṣaya also rejects the contention of Bāṇarasīdās that the image of the Jina is naturally beautiful as it is, without any ornamentation. Meghaviṣaya in fact argues that the image of the Jina is not beautiful without ornaments, and in his arguments he takes us into an entirely different realm of speculation. The argument that the Jina/Jina image is naturally beautiful and therefore need not be adorned first occurs in the course of the discussion of point 1 and then recurs frequently. Point 1, it is to be recalled, asserted that the image should be adorned because an adorned image provokes the proper appreciation of the Jina in those who see it. Bāṇarasīdās in attempting to show that Jina images must never be adorned cited several passages that stressed the natural beauty of the Jina/Jina image. With the exception of the one debate about the meaning of the verses in the *Bodhapāhuḍa* of Kundakunda, in fact Meghaviṣaya's refutations in this entire section of the *Yuktiṛabodha* are often carried very simply, by means of a careful selection of passages from Digambara texts, by and large

²⁷ Page 65.

²⁸ Page 66: *bhagavataḥ śarīrasya sālankāratayā pratibhāsātīśāyād arcāsu tathātīśāyābhāvāt sālankāraḥ tvasya tathāivopapatteśca.*

²⁹ Pages 66f.

hymns and the Digambara *purāṇas*. His intention is to show Bāṇārasīdās that although he may think his view is the Digambara view, it clearly is not. Digambaras do in fact adorn their images in certain rituals, like the celebration of the birth festival of the Jina, and they do describe the Jina as marvelously splendid, aglow with light and seated on a jeweled throne at the time of his Enlightenment and First Preaching.³⁰ Meghavijaya expends considerable energy in offering quotes from Digambara texts to prove to Bāṇārasīdās that in fact it is only the adorned image that accurately depicts the Jina himself and that both Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras worship an adorned image. Thus he cites numerous passages that describe the Jina in the preaching assembly with jewels on and ablaze with light. Perhaps nothing makes Meghavijaya's point that Digambaras too celebrate the radiance of the Jina more strongly than a verse that he cites from the famous Digambara philosopher Amṛtacandra in his *Samayasāraśaṭka*, which explicitly highlights the radiant beauty of the Jina body no fewer than three times in a single verse:

“Praise be to the Jinās, who bear eight thousand auspicious marks! Truly worthy of our praise, they bathe the universe with their light; with their glorious radiance they surpass the light of even the brightest heavenly bodies. They steal the minds of the people with their physical beauty, while their divine words drip the nectar of immortality into the ears of all who hear them, bringing them joy.”³¹

But Meghavijaya introduces another strategy in his rebuttal of the notion that an image is beautiful without added adornment, jewelry, clothes and flowers. He does something very different. He turns from text to experience. Viewers, he insists, do not experience a plain unadorned stone image as beautiful. This means that the image alone is not a sufficient representation of the glorious Jina. Bāṇārasīdās had said that only the sight of the naked image can lead to reflection on the greatness of the Jina and his teaching. Meghavijaya argues that the opposite is true: an image alone, even or perhaps especially, a naked image cannot lead a viewer to the higher contemplation of the Jina's greatness. The statement that a plain stone image is by itself radiantly beautiful and therefore able to lead the viewer to a religious experience, he says, is simply contradicted by perception.³²

³⁰ For the rituals see page 64.

³¹ Amṛtacandra, *Samayasāraśaṭka*, verse 24. Cited on p. 62.

³² Page 62: *pratyakṣaparāhatam*.

Meghavijaya has a different understanding of what happens when a person sees an image of the Jina; the experience of the image is part perception, part imagination or meditative projection. Every unadorned and unclothed image, he maintains, must first be mentally covered with jewels, clothes, and flowers by the person who sees it. He insists that Bāṇārasīdās accept this; how else can Bāṇārasīdās explain the fact that upon seeing a bare stone image a person is led to contemplate the glorious extraordinary body of the Jina, which is said to be bright as a thousand suns? Given that the stone lacks any such shining luster, one has to assume that the viewer mentally supplies it in the form of gold and jewels that he mentally heaps on the stone image.³³

When Meghavijaya comes to support suggestion 5, that we should adorn the Jina image to make it beautiful, he repeats many of these points he had made in the discussion of suggestion 1.³⁴ Here too he must counter Bāṇārasīdās's idea that the Jina body and Jina images are naturally beautiful and deal with the texts that Bāṇārasīdās cites that seem to say that the Jina/Jina image is so beautiful that it does not need ornament. Meghavijaya argues that we must distinguish between the actual body of the Jina and his image. The hymns, like the *Ekībhāvastotra* and Vāgbhaṭṭa's verses that describe the natural beauty of the Jina, refer only to the Jina himself and not to his images. He calls attention in Vāgbhaṭṭa's verse to the fact that one of the attributes in the verse is that the Jina has great knowledge without the need to study. Clearly, Meghavijaya says, this can only apply to the actual Jina and not to his image. And he adds, just as the Jina himself has the eight wondrous attributes that make him so glorious at the time of his first preaching, so the image must have jewelry, clothes and flowers to make it beautiful.³⁵

The discussion shifts to the question of whether the image should be smeared with unguents like saffron paste. As expected, Bāṇārasīdās rejects this and Meghavijaya endorses it. In the course of the arguments Meghavijaya has much to say that is relevant to the issue of adorning the image. Recall that for Bāṇārasīdās adorning the image does violence to the real Jina because it misrepresents him. He offers the same argument against anointing the image. This leads Meghavijaya into a detailed discussion of the many ways in which the image of the Jina does not reflect the actual appearance of the Jina himself. He attacks the very heart of the argument of Bāṇārasīdās. Bāṇārasīdās, remember, is concerned that decorating the image

³³ Page 62: *katham anyathā tavāpi dārṣadādipratimāyām divakarasaahasrabhāsuraparamaudārikaśarīrasya bhagavato dhyānam samgacchate. Tatra tathāvidhakāntyabhāve 'pi mānasa eva tadāropa iti nyāyāt.*

³⁴ This begins in the middle of page 67.

³⁵ Page 67.

with jewels will lead to the wrong response in a viewer because it incorrectly depicts the Jina with possessions. Meghaviṣaya now argues that it is the naked Jina image that wrongly depicts the Jina and could cause improper thoughts in the viewer. Might not a woman, looking at the naked Jina and seeing his *liṅga* have improper thoughts? Bāṇārasīdās replies that this cannot be avoided. The image is simply representing the Jina as he is. But Meghaviṣaya rejects this; recall that one of the attributes of the Jina's body is that his *liṅga* is not visible. Showing the *liṅga* as is done on Digambara sculptures in fact is an inaccurate representation of the Jina body. This is why, he continues, texts on iconometry do not give measurements for sculpting the *liṅga*, saying it is this long, this wide. Meghaviṣaya expands the argument to show that there are many features of the Jina body that find no parallel in the image. Furthermore, he asks, if you insist that the image correspond in every particular to the actual body of the Jina, why do you not depict hair on his head, on his eyebrows, on his body? There follow several quotes to prove that the Jina is said to have hair.³⁶ And there is this added problem. Some Jinās achieved Enlightenment while seated in meditation, while others achieved Enlightenment standing. The tradition of image making does not preserve this distinction. Here too image and prototype are at variance with each other. And if there is such concern that the image be exactly like the Jina, why are images made of all different sizes? Why shouldn't all images be the same size as the Jina? And more: the body of the Jina on Enlightenment is supposed to be like pure crystal. Why is the Jina Nemi made blue? And why are not all Jinās shown as four-headed, which Digambaras consider to be one of the results of the destruction of all obstructing karmas? Why is Pārśva still shown to have snake hoods over his head, when he does not have them at the time of Enlightenment? And, he returns to this one feature, what about the shining glorious body of the Enlightenment Jina, who is said even in Digambara texts to be aglow with light at the time of his Enlightenment? Surely only by adorning the Jina image can that aspect of his real form be represented. This is why, he asserts, in his tradition every effort is made to make images that resemble the *nityapratimās*, the eternal jeweled images of the Jinās that exist in the marvelous jeweled temples at special places in the universe.

For Meghaviṣaya, in the traditions of image making, a total correspondence between image and prototype is never observed. A choice has to be made where the correspondence should be, and for him the most important point of correspondence is in the fabulous light that emanates from the Jina and must emanate from his image.³⁷ As he concludes his arguments, Meghaviṣaya stresses that given that the Jina body is so radiant and the matter that

³⁶ Page 68.

³⁷ I omit the discussion of the sixth issue, scriptural support or the lack of it, for the adornment of images on pages 74 and 75.

makes up stone lacks any luster, the practice of providing the radiance with jewels and gold that are placed upon the image allows the image to approximate this wondrous quality of the Jina body.³⁸

3. Conclusion

It is possible to extract from this debate about adorning the Jina image a number of important questions. One is, what does the image of the Jina depict? The Jina as monk? As king? As newborn? As Enlightened Being? We have seen that Meghavijaya gives no single answer to this; none of these alternatives is necessarily ruled out. The only stage in the life of the Jina that his image cannot depict is his marriage. In the course of his arguments Meghavijaya also suggests that there is a complicated relationship between our understanding of what the image represents and how we treat it ritually. For example, we have seen that if the image represents the Jina as Enlightened being, food offerings and their placement are a problem. A further question that is raised has, I think, far reaching implications for our understanding more broadly of images and how they function. This is the question, to what extent was it deemed possible or even desirable to make an image that is an exact replica of the Jina himself? Granted that the Jina body is so extraordinary, can an image even point us towards the correct recollection of the Jina's wondrous attributes, and if so, what kind of image can do that? The main point that Bāṇarasīdās adduces in his favor is that the Jina was a renunciant; adorning his image with jewels violates that most fundamental fact about him and furthermore leads to the wrong kind of contemplation in the person who views the image. Meghavijaya has many answers to this. One is that the body of the Jina is different from ordinary bodies - it is ablaze with light. The only way to make this apparent is to cover the image in jewels. Even an image not physically covered in jewels must be mentally covered in jewels in order for the viewer to move from bare stone to an idea of the glorious Jina body.

But then Meghavijaya does something else; he argues against Bāṇarasīdās that there is an unavoidable disjunction between image and prototype. The image can never fully depict the Jina body as it is described in words in the texts. He cites, of course, disjunctions between the Jina image and the Jina body in the Digambara tradition, but one could easily argue the same in Meghavijaya's Śvetāmbara tradition. The Śvetāmbaras also do not depict the line of hair on the Jina's body, nor do they make images that are the same size as the Jina. Meghavijaya's arguments imply an awareness of the impossibility of artistic representation as

³⁸ Page 73: *dārśadādīpudgalānām tathāvidhakāntyabhāvena suvarṇamaṇimayaparidhāpanikayā bhagavato yathāsthitiakāyakānteḥ kathamcit pratibhāsenā sutarām tadunnayanāt.*

anything more than an approximation of the original. Here Meghaviṣaya is radical as he emphasizes that there is always an unbridgeable gap between image and prototype. His arguments imply a keen awareness of the impossibility of artistic representation as anything more than an approximation of the original. For Meghaviṣaya the image cannot be like the lists in the text; it is more like a figure of speech, a synecdoche, in which one attribute is made to stand for the whole. For Meghaviṣaya this attribute is his blazing light, which encapsulates all of the Jina's wondrous physical and spiritual qualities. Meghaviṣaya was not alone in regarding images as inadequate to depict the Jina; Buddhaghosa much earlier had come to the same conclusion about images of the Buddha. In his gloss of the phrase “*apaḍiṃo*”, “without equal”, Buddhaghosa, relying on the meaning of *paḍimā* as “image”, remarked, “The images of the Buddha that men make, of gold and silver and other substances, are absolutely incapable of depicting anything that is in the tiniest bit like the Tathāgata's body.”³⁹

While it may seem obvious to us that a sculpture can never be the prototype, Meghaviṣaya's awareness of the inherent limitations of image making stands in stark contrast to the language of the hymns that he cites and the many stories of miraculous images with which he was no doubt familiar. The image is inherently not only inexact; the Jina body in the image is in fact an imperfect Jina body. And this could lead us to an entirely different topic, the unusual treatment of imperfect images in Jain stories and practice. Stories from Meghaviṣaya's time and the century immediately before him describe the restoration and worship of broken images, something that Indian image making traditions had generally not permitted, but that the numerous Muslim attacks on Jain temples no doubt necessitated.⁴⁰ In these Jain stories imperfect images may be unfinished or naturally flawed or they may have been deliberately damaged. Contrary to the more common insistence that an image must be perfect to depict the perfect Jina body, these imperfect images are described as having special powers. In fact, even a prescriptive text could permit the worship of damaged or improperly proportioned images as long as these images are miracle-working images. Thus the *Śrāvaka-cāra*, attributed to Umāsvāmin, tells us, “A badly worn image, even if it is broken, is to be worshipped, as long as it has magical powers. But an image that is headless should never be worshipped. It is to be discarded in a river or other places.”⁴¹ The Jain images in the

³⁹ *yāpi ca manussā suvaṇṇarajātādimayā paḍimā karonti, tāsu vālaggamattampi okāsaṃ tathāgatassa attabhāvasadisāṃ kātuṃ samattho nāma natthīti sabbathāpi appaḍiṃo* (*Aṅguttaranikāya*, *Ekapuggalavaṇṇanā*, Online Tipitika, www.tpitika.org, section 174). For further references to the relationship between the image of the Buddha and the Buddha himself, see my paper “Divine Delicacies” cited in note 1.

⁴⁰ I have discussed some of these stories in Granoff 1991: 189-203.

stories are in fact often headless, suggesting that even Umāsvāmin's daring remark may not have been daring enough to reflect the reality of practice.⁴²

Umāsvāmin was clearly going against the norm. It is stressed over and over again in texts that deal with image making that an image must be perfect. An image that is improperly proportioned is dangerous; an ugly image is unappealing to the gods but attractive to the demons. Indeed, a wrongly made image invites disasters, which are catalogued in the texts. If the face of the image is ugly or the limbs are too short, in either case the ruler of the kingdom will die. An image that looks emaciated will cause famine and poverty in the realm, perhaps one reason why images of a fasting Jina were never made and images of the fasting Buddhas disappeared so quickly from the repertoire of Buddhist sculpture.⁴³ Similarly, images that are damaged, cracked or weathered are considered dangerous. Such images are abandoned by the gods and can be taken over by goblins and demons with disastrous consequences.⁴⁴ As I conclude I would like to suggest that perhaps there is something in common between the Jain stories that sanction the worship of broken images and Meghavijaya's acceptance that every man-made image is of necessity an imperfect representation of the Jina's body.

⁴¹ *Śrāvākācāra*, vs. 111, p 161.

⁴² There are, of course, subtle indications that even those who told these Jain stories about miraculous broken images were not entirely comfortable with the idea of worshipping a repaired image. In the *Upadeśasaptati* of Somadharmagaṇi, composed in 1446 C.E. (p. 30) a story is told of an image of Pārśvanātha that is destroyed by five marauding Yavanas. The superintending deity of the image tells the horrified Jains simply to put the pieces back together. In an episode that closely resembles accounts of the image of Jagannātha at Puri, the image is to be placed in a closed room for seven days and no one is to look at it. Overly curious, someone breaks the rule and as a result the image is not completely restored. Marks remain where the nine pieces were joined together. Eventually the superintending deity tells the community to make another image. This broken image is to be placed to its side; known as Dādā Pārśva, "Granpa Pārśva" because of its age, it continues to be worshipped but not as the main image in the temple.

⁴³ These examples come from the *Vasantotsavamahākāvya* of Haladhara Miśra, p. 91 vs. 46ff chapter 8. The author, a famous *smṛti* writer, was active at the same time as Meghavijaya, 1611-1647.

⁴⁴ *Īśānaśivagurudevapaddhati*, chapter 64, verses 1-4.

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