

WORLDS IN CONFLICT
THE COSMOPOLITAN VISION OF YAŚOVIJAYA GAṆĪ*

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Two Ways of Worldmaking

Speaking of a multitude of irreducible “worlds”, Nelson Goodman draws our attention to the idea that there is no one unique way of describing, depicting, representing or otherwise capturing in thought the shared space we inhabit. Made worlds – versions, views, renderings – differ from one another as a novel might differ from a painting, or a poem from a news report. If that is right, and if we nevertheless want to be able to speak of conflict and consistency *between* worlds, then our standards of comparison and measures of rightness must appeal to considerations other than merely correspondence with the truth. Goodman therefore says that

“So long as contrasting right versions not all reducible to one are countenanced, unity is to be sought not in an ambivalent or neutral something beneath these versions but in an overall organization embracing them”
(Goodman 1978: 5).

Goodman’s notion of a made world performs some of the same conceptual work as is done by its counterpart in Jainism, the concept of a *naya*, a perspective, standpoint or attitude within which experience is ordered and statements are evaluated (cf. Matilal 1998: 133). With the Jainas too, a prominent thought is that conflicting right views are to be brought together not by trying to show that there is, after all, some single truth underneath, of which the views are but different modes of presentation, but rather that there is a coordinating unity above, to which each view makes a proper but partial contribution.

This familiar distinction between top-down and bottom-up models of unity is one much in evidence in recent discourses about cosmopolitanism. In favour of a top-

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the seminar *Jainism and Modernity: 9th Jaina Studies Workshop*, SOAS March 21st to 22nd, 2007. I am grateful to the organisers and participants, especially Peter Flügel, Jayandra Soni and Richard Gombrich, for their helpful comments and discussion. I am also grateful to the anonymous referees of this journal for their valuable feedback.

down approach, for example, it has been said that “transdisciplinary knowledge, in the cosmopolitan cause, is more readily a translational process of culture’s inbetweenness than a transcendent knowledge of what lies beyond difference, in some common pursuit of the universality of the human experience” (Pollock et al. 2002: 6f.). The idea that different view-points are co-inhabitants in a single matrix, and to that extent susceptible to syncretism, is what distinguishes the cosmopolitan vision from pluralism, whose cardinal tenet is that the irreconcilable absence of consensus is itself something of political, social or philosophical value.

In early modern India, these thoughts had a political as well as philosophical importance. For much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Sufi doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd* (‘Unity of Being’) guided a quest for a single spiritual vision underpinning all religions. Hindu texts were translated into Persian in the belief that, suitably decoded, they could be read as speaking about that divine unity which was the proper concern of the Islamic mystic. The thought that the texts of other religions are, in Carl Ernst’s (2003: 186) phrase, “hermeneutically continuous” with the Qur’ān, served as the guiding force in an extensive translational exercise patronised by the Persianate court from Akbar through to Dārā Shukoh (1615–1659). This project was certainly neither pluralist nor syncretic, but nevertheless recognised the existence of a common religious space available for joint occupation by a plurality of religions. It was a bottom-up approach to religious cosmopolitanism (see Ganeri, forthcoming).

The same period was also, and presumably not coincidentally, a period of extraordinary innovation and dynamism in the philosophical activity of indigenous Sanskrit intellectuals. In particular there arose a new school of logic, the Navyanyāya, whose methods and techniques were highly effective and much emulated throughout the world of Sanskrit scholarship. Training centres for Navyanyāya flourished in Varanasi, Navadvīpa and Mithilā, attracting students from all over the Indian continent, and perhaps even further afield.

Yaśovijaya Gaṇi

It is in the context of these political and philosophical movements that I would like to examine the work of one of Jainism’s great intellectuals, Yaśovijaya Gaṇi. Born in Gujarat in 1624, he died there in 1688 after a long and varied career. The Gujarat of his day was home to a diverse trading population, including Arab, Farsi, Tartar, Armenian, Dutch, French and English mercantile communities (Desai 1910: 54). Roughly speaking, Yaśovijaya’s intellectual biography can be seen as falling under three heads: an apprenticeship in Varanasi studying Navyanyāya, a period writing

Jaina philosophical treatises using the techniques and methods of Navyanyāya, and a time spent writing works with a markedly spiritual and religious orientation.

Yaśovijaya's extended stay at a Nyāya teaching centre or *maṭh* in Varanasi lasted perhaps twelve years (from around 1642 to about 1654); certainly, it was enough to provide him, according to his own testament, with a broad knowledge of Navyanyāya and to earn him the respectable title Nyāyaviśārada, "One who is skilled in logic" (cf. Vidhyabhusana 1910: 465). According to some accounts, he came to Varanasi in the company of his teacher Nayavijaya, both having disguised themselves as brahmins in order to gain admission to the maṭh. Since, however, there are reports of Buddhists from Tibet travelling to India to study Nyāya, and since, after all, teaching was the chief livelihood of the Nyāya paṇḍit, the veracity of this story is open to doubt. As for the identity of Yaśovijaya's maṭh, it has been conjectured that it was the one headed by Raghudeva Nyāyālaṅkāra, primarily on the basis of the fact that Yaśovijaya mentions him by name in one of his works, the *Aṣṭasāhasrīvivarāṇa* (Kaviraj 1965: 79; cf. Jain 2006: 134). Raghudeva did live in Varanasi and was a prominent public intellectual of the period. He was also, though, a Bengali and a pupil of the famous Bengali Harirāma Tarkavāgīśa. Yaśovijaya, on the other hand, frequently evinces a critical attitude towards the founding figure of Bengali Navyanyāya, Raghunātha Śīromaṇi, even repeating a piece of derisive slang about him: "Cursed is the province of Bengal, where there is the one-eyed Śīromaṇi" (*Nyāyakhaṇḍakhādyā*, fol. 43). I think that his teacher is as likely to have been another prominent Varanasi Naiyāyika of the same period, Rudra Nyāyavācaspati. Rudra belonged to the family of a renowned Varanasi scholar whose views Raghunātha had criticised, Vidyanivāsa (as Rudra's brother, Viśvanātha Pañcānana, tells us). The antagonism between this influential family of Naiyāyikas with strong ties to Varanasi and the followers of Raghunātha's new school is perhaps evident in Yaśovijaya's attitudes.

At a later stage in his career, Yaśovijaya began to write increasingly spiritualistic religious treatises, and I will shortly say more about these. According to the fullest biography of Yaśovijaya we have to date, one of the decisive events in the process leading to this transformation was Yaśovijaya's meeting with the poet Ānandaghanjī (Desai, 1910: 22). Before this turn towards the philosophy of the self, however, Yaśovijaya had produced several of the finest works in Jaina epistemology, including the *Jaina Tarkabhāṣā* and the *Jaina Nyāyakhaṇḍakhādyā*, utilising the methods of Navyanyāya in a reformulation of Jaina epistemology. It is of particular interest to see how Yaśovijaya takes the Nyāya idea that a single object can have a variegated colour (*citrarūpa*) – for example, that of a single pot whose parts are both blue and red – and in particular Raghunātha's defence of this idea with the help of the

new concept of non-pervasive location (*avyāpya-vṛttitva*), and how he carefully distinguishes this explanation of the way a single reality can have apparently mutually excluding properties from the Jaina explanation in terms of non-onesidedness (*anekāntavāda*). The importance of these ideas was not to be lost in the later works which will be my concern shortly, works in which a variety of ethical themes are explored within an *anekāntavāda* framework, including the moral and intellectual virtues worthy of cultivation, the nature of spiritual exercises, the idea of a spiritual path and its analogy with a medicine for the soul, and the concept of that self for the benefit of which all these ideas are developed.

Secular Intellectual Values

In one of the ethical works, the *Jñānasāra*, Yaśovijaya systematically describes thirty-two moral and intellectual virtues jointly constitutive of a virtuous character. Many would be equally familiar to a Buddhist or Hindu, but two are distinctive: neutrality (*madhyasthātā*) and groundedness in all view-points (*sarvanayāśraya*). Neutrality is explained in terms of the dispassionate use of reason: a person who embodies this virtue follows wherever reason leads, rather than using reason only to defend prior opinions to which they have already been attracted (16.2). Yaśovijaya stresses that neutrality is not an end in itself, but rather that it is a means to another end. We adopt a neutral attitude, he says, in the hope that this will lead to well-being (*hita*), just as someone who knows that one among a group of herbs is restorative but does not know which one it is, acts reasonably if they swallow the entire lot (16.8). As we can see from this example, philosophy is thought of as a medicine for the soul, the value of a doctrine to be judged by its effectiveness in curing the soul of its ailments. That is why it can be reasonable to endorse several philosophical views simultaneously, just as one can take a variety of complementary medicines.

Being grounded in all view-points means giving to each view-point its proper weight within the total picture; it is akin to the “overarching organisation” in Goodman’s *Ways of Worldmaking*. The benefit that accrues from this is again linked to the use of reason, this time the ability to engage in reasoned discourse. Someone who is so grounded can enter into a beneficial discussion about religion and ethics (*dharma*); otherwise the talk is just empty quarrelling (*śuṣkavāda-vivāda*) (32.5). For Yaśovijaya in the *Jñānasāra*, the final goal to which the cultivation of these and the other virtues leads is the soul’s fulfilment (*pūrṇatā*), a fulfilment consisting in ‘consciousness, bliss and truth’ (*saccidānanda*) (1.1). The idea that assuming a neutral attitude towards all views is the way to fulfilment is partially reminiscent of Greek Pyhrronism, where it is argued that developing an attitude of indiscriminate

refusal to assent to any view (*epoche*) is the means to achieve that tranquillity of mind (*ataraxia*) necessary for happiness (*eudaimonia*).

Tolerance and the Critical Evaluation of Others

Paul Dundas (2004) has shown how, in the *Dharmaparīkṣā*, Yaśovijaya uses the concept of neutrality as the basis for an irenic strategy towards other religions. Followers of other religious traditions can be considered as conforming to the true (i.e. Jaina) path if their attitude towards the doctrines of their own tradition is sufficiently non-dogmatic. Dundas worries, reasonably enough, that in spite of being inclusivist, such a position nevertheless does still assert the superiority of the Jaina path. Perhaps that is why, in the *Adhyātmopaniṣatprakaraṇa*, Yaśovijaya advances another strategy. He now argues that the virtues to which Jainism gives particular prominence, namely impartiality, neutrality, and non-onesidedness, are in fact already present in the various non-Jaina systems, albeit in an only implicit form. For all the systems seek an “overarching organisation” when it comes to sorting out and arranging their internal doctrinal claims. All therefore do embody the quintessential Jaina principles and virtues in their own theoretical practice, whether or not those principles and virtues receive any explicit mention in the official meta-theory.

Let me examine this idea in more detail. Yaśovijaya argues that no body of ‘theory’ (*śāstra*), whether Jaina or non-Jaina, is to be accepted merely on the basis of sectarian interest. Instead, the theory should be subject to testing, just as the purity of a sample of gold is determined by tests involving rubbing, cutting and heating (1.17). In a body of theory, the relevant test is to see whether the various prescriptive and prohibitive statements pertaining to some one issue ‘rub together’, that is to say, whether they cohere with one another and pull in the same direction (1.18). For example, in Jainism the prescriptions concerning religious meditation and the prohibitions on the use of violence are coordinate and together pull in the direction of *mokṣa* (1.19). In practice, of course, no reasonably large and complex body of theory will meet this test; nor can coherence be manufactured simply by ‘cutting out’ some statements and keeping others. The only method for dealing with such apparent incoherences as inevitably do arise is the method of conditionalised assertion (*syādvāda*) and non-onesidedness (*ānekāntya*). To say that the soul is eternal is to depict human subjectivity in one way; to say that the soul is non-eternal is to depict it in another: both depictions, in their own way, gesture at something right about what it is to be a human subject. Yaśovijaya then shows how each of the non-Jaina systems does incorporate the spirit, if not the letter, of the principle of non-onesidedness (1.45–52). Referring by name to Sāṃkhya, Vijñānavāda Buddhism, Vaiśeṣika, the

three Mīmāṃsaka schools of Kumāriḷa, Prabhākara and Murāri, and Advaita Vedānta, he concludes that *syādvāda* is a doctrine of all the systems (*syādvādaṃ sārvatāntrikam*) (1.51). The Vedāntins, for example, say that the soul is both bound and unbound, relativising those statements to the conventional and the absolute in order to avoid contradiction. Likewise, Kumāriḷa says that entities are both particular and universal, conditioning these claims upon aspects of experience. Yaśovijaya concludes by bringing the discussion back to the cultivation of an attitude of neutrality. All the different systems of belief are equal in requiring of their practitioners that they adopt an attitude of balance and coordination; indeed this balance and neutrality is the very point of *śāstra*. True religious and moral discourse (*dharmavāda*) is based on this; the rest is just a sort of foolish hopping about (*bāliśa-valgana*) (1.71). It is worth emphasising that Yaśovijaya by no means considers the doctrines of conditionalised assertion and non-onesidedness to lead to a laissez-faire relativism, for he explicitly here dismisses the Cārvāka as being too confused in their understanding of the topic of liberation even to be said to have a ‘view’ (1.52). Neutrality does not mean acceptance of every position whatever, but acceptance only of those which satisfy at least the minimal criteria of clarity and coherence needed in order legitimately to constitute a point of view.

The Self

We have seen that Yaśovijaya first identifies certain moral and intellectual virtues as being quintessentially Jaina, and how he then argues that if non-Jaina systems understood the nature of their own practice more clearly, they would see that they too embed those virtues in their conception of the philosophical path. I have also noted that the embodiment of those virtues is thought of as a means to some further end. In a final step, Yaśovijaya argues that the equanimity which is the end of the Jaina path is consistent with the realization of that universal self, consisting of truth, bliss and consciousness, also spoken of in the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*.

In the first chapter of the *Adhyātmopaniṣatprakaraṇa*, Yaśovijaya tells us that there are two different perspectives on the self. From a strictly etymological perspective, it is the one who performs a variety of actions and activities. From the perspective of ordinary linguistic practice, however, it is the mind as endowed with virtuous qualities like friendliness (1.2–4). In the second chapter, however, Yaśovijaya describes the state of true self-awareness in decidedly Upaniṣadic terms, a state which is beyond deep sleep, beyond conceptualisation, and beyond linguistic representation, and he says that it is the duty of any good *śāstra* to point out the existence and possibility of such states of true self-awareness, for they cannot be

discovered by reason or experience alone. How, then, should these two visions of the self be organised, the one consisting in pure bliss and undivided consciousness, the other of a multitude of spatially bounded and active selves? One might have expected Yaśovijaya to say that both have their proper place in a non-onesided attitude towards selfhood, but in fact he gives clear preferential weighting to the unitary conception of self (a conception which he also identifies, in the final chapter, with *samatā*, a state of pure equanimity). That comes out most clearly in the *Adhyātmāsāra*, where he states unequivocally that the apparent multiplicity of selves is an illusion, likening it to the illusion of a multitude of moons caused by the eye disease *timira*, double-vision (18.13, 20). Having repeated once again that the self consists in truth, consciousness and bliss, he quotes with approval *Bhagavadgītā* 3.42: “The senses are high, so they say. Higher than the senses is the mind; higher than the mind is thought; while higher than thought is He (the soul)” (18.39–40). This is the spiritual fullness which Yaśovijaya has told us is the outcome of the exercise of neutrality and groundedness in all view-points. Both the *Adhyātmāsāra* and the *Adhyātmopaniṣatprakaraṇa*, we can note, are sprinkled with references to the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Upaniṣads* (Kansara 1976, Shastri 1991).

Yaśovijaya and Dārā Shukoh: A Cosmopolitan Ideal in 17th Century India

With this synopsis of the development of Yaśovijaya’s thought, let me return to the political context in which he lived, and in particular to the religious cosmopolitanism of Dārā Shukoh (1615–1659). It was in 1655 or 1656, at just the time when Yaśovijaya would have been finishing up his studies in Varanasi, that Dārā Shukoh himself assembled in Varanasi a team of the most renowned Sanskrit paṇḍits to help him execute his plan of translating the Hindu scriptures, or at least those of them that were “hermeneutically continuous” with the Qur’ān. He was to supervise the translation into Persian of fifty-two *Upaniṣads*, of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* and of the *Bhagavadgītā*, all of which, he believed could be read as speaking of the divine unity, if one mapped their terminology into that of Sufism in accordance with the notational isomorphisms he had already established, in a book entitled *The Meeting-Place of the Two Oceans (Majma-ul-Barhain)*, the title indicative of a conception of Hinduism and Islam as coming together at a point of confluence. A translation into Sanskrit, possibly made by Dārā Shukoh himself, is entitled *Samudra-sangama*. In the ‘Preface’ to his translation of the *Upaniṣads*, Dārā Shukoh tells us that

“As at this period the city of Benares, which is the centre of the sciences of this community, was in certain relations with this seeker of the Truth [sc. Dārā

Sukoh], he assembled together the pandits and sannyāsis who were the most learned of their time and proficient in the *Upanekhat*, he himself being free from all materialistic motives, translated the essential parts of monotheism, which are the *Upanekhat*, i.e. the secrets to be concealed, and the end of purport of all the saints of God, in the year 11067 A.H. [1657 C.E.]” (Hasrat 1982: 266).

That Yaśovijaya would have had a keen interest in Dārā Shukoh’s inclusivist project, had he known about it, is certain. And it seems hard to imagine that he could not have known about it given the high status of the project, which gave employment to a great number of the most celebrated Sanskrit intellectuals of the day, and given also its pivotal role in one of the most momentous events of the epoch, providing Aurangzeb with an excuse to brand Dārā Shukoh a heretic and arrange for his execution (having already imprisoned their ailing father, Shāh Jahān), thereby usurping the Mughal throne. Yaśovijaya was eventually to return to Gujarat, but according to a curious detail in his biography, he went first to Agra and continued his work there for a few years (Jain 2006: 134). Whether true or not, and one cannot be entirely sure, the detail is indicative of the circulation of both people and ideas at this time between centres of Islamic and Hindu intellectual influence.

Yaśovijaya, I have suggested, sought a top-down account of the unity to which the various viewpoints are susceptible, a unity grounded in a shared appreciation of the intellectual virtues associated with the “translational process of cultures’ inbetweenness”. I have also suggested that he felt a considerable pull towards another account of unity, the bottom-up account represented by his interest in spiritual unity. This second move would have served to bring his thinking into line with the “Unity of Being” ideology currently in vogue in the centres of political power. The tension in Yaśovijaya’s conception of a supra-religious spiritual community is apparent in the way he invokes that celebrated metaphor of identity-and-difference, the metaphor of the ocean and its waves. Yaśovijaya says:

“The divisions born from the [various] standpoints are merged in a great universal form, just as the huge waves generated by strong winds in the ocean” (*Adhyātmopaniṣatprakaraṇa* 2.41).

That seems both to recapitulate the Vedāntic use of the image of waves not different from the body of water that is the ocean and yet retaining their separate identity (e.g. *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 2.1.13), but also to hint that it is the emergent pattern produced by the interaction in which the unity is to be found. The ability to see that picture

comes, however, with the cultivation of the distinctively Jaina virtues of neutrality (*madhyasthata*) and impartiality (*samatā*), which for Yaśovijaya are the grounding cosmopolitan virtues in a multi-faith community.

Interestingly, Dārā Shukoh appeals to the very same metaphor, again giving it a distinctive twist:

“The inter-relation between water and its waves is the same as that between body and soul or as that between *śarīra* and *ātmā*. The combination of waves, in their complete aspect, may be likened to *abul-arwāḥ* or *paramātmā*; while water only is like the August Existence, or *sudh* or *chitan*” (Dārā Shukoh 1929: 44f.).

Here we have on display the two models of unity with which I began, the top-down model represented by the single pattern created by the waves in interaction with each other, and the bottom-up model signified by the body of water itself, to which all the waves belong. Where one might have expected the Jaina Yaśovijaya to espouse the top-down model, and the Sufi Dārā Shukoh the bottom-up model, what one finds instead is a desire by both to offer some accommodation of each model. And perhaps, indeed, a robust religious cosmopolitanism does require there to be space for both a unifying vision and a vision of unity.

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