

Concealing and Protecting. Stories on *Upagūhana*

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Upagūhana is one of the eight *aṅgas* or auxiliaries of *samyaktva* or *samyag-darśana* (right belief).¹ The first four of these are freedom from the obstacles of doubt (*niḥsaṅkitā*), from craving for the joys of the world (*niḥkāṅkṣita*), from repugnance (*nirvicikitsā*) and from wrong belief (*amuḍha-dṛṣṭi*). The second half of the group is described in positive terms as contributing to the growth of *samyaktva*: they are qualities that are directed outward, toward the religious community, its status in the society and the duties among the fellow believers in the faith: these are *upagūhana* or *upagūha*, sometimes called *avagūhana* (Pkt.: *uvagūhaṇa*; protecting Jainism by concealing the faults of one's fellow members), *sthiti-kāraṇa* (strengthening the faith of the fickle-minded ones), *prabhāvanā* (propagation of the faith by spectacular good deeds like alms giving, temple building, austerities, promoting learning etc.), and *vātsalya* (kind assistance to the members of the community).²

Among all these virtues *upagūhana* seems to be the most 'political' guideline insofar as it highlights the strategy of concealing the faults committed by fellow members of the faith, in order to protect the prestige of one's religion in public.³ It is

¹ Cf. RKŚĀ 1.11–20, Kundakunda's SSā 7.228–263, YT 6.5–20 (see HANDIQUI (1968: 258)). The importance of the eight *aṅgas* is stressed in RKŚĀ 1.21: Without the *aṅgas* right belief is not able to destroy the continuity of births, just as without the letters a *mantra* does not efface the pain caused by poison:

*nāṅga-hinālaṃ chettuṃ darśanaṃ janma-santatiṃ /
na hi mantro 'kṣarāyūno nihani viṣa-vedanām //*

² BhĀr 44:

*uvagūhaṇa-ṭhidi-karaṇaṃ vacchalla-pabhāvaṇā guṇā bhaṇidā /
sammatta-visodhīe uvagūhaṇa-kārayā cauro //*

³ In his comment to SSā 233:

*jo siddha-bhatti-jutto uvagūhaṇago du savva-dhammānaṃ /
so uvagūhaṇa-kārī sammādiṭṭhi muṇeyavvo //*

Amṛtacandra does not use the word *upagūhana* but *upabṛmhaṇa*, which means 'increasing' and interprets it as increasing the powers of the self (*ātma-śakti*) by

the explicitness of this pragmatic demand which is intriguing and especially the way in which it is dealt with didactically in the respective stories.

Samantabhadra defines *upagūhana* as the removal of the blame originating from ignorant and incompetent ones pertaining to the right path, which in itself is pure.⁴

Somadeva, in addition, also stresses the necessity of guarding the reputation of one's religion by suppressing any blemishes which may lower it in the estimation of others. If any fellow member commits an offence by accident or error 'one should conceal it with the wealth of one's own virtues as does a mother that of her children.'⁵ This protectionism of one's faith is obvious in the following story, where the innocence of the culprit is established by the pious Jaina going against his better knowledge of the facts of the situation and even facing personal offence. It is the *Upagūhanākhyānaka*, the story of Jinendrabhakta and the thief, in ĀKP (No. 10):

'In the country of Saurāṣṭra, in the city Pāṭaliputra reigned king Yaśodhvaja, his queen was Susīmā. Their son Suvīra was a victim of the seven evil passions, and surrounded by many similar men. Once, he got to know that a very unique, priceless cat's-eye gem crowned the threefold umbrella of an idol of Pārśvanātha, who stood, heavily protected, on the top of a seven-storeyed building. It belonged to the merchant Jinendrabhakti. He lived in the East, in the region of Gauḍa, in the city of Tāmralipta. The prince Suvīra in his greed asked his men: "Who is able to fetch this jewel?" "I'll bring even Indra's crest-gem", the thief Sūrya roared out. He disguised himself as a *ḥṣullaka* [novice] and made his way to Tāmralipta, causing excitement in villages and towns on account of the mortification of his body. The merchant Jinendrabhakta heard people praise him and he went to see him. They had a conversation and Jinendrabhakti praised him, deeply impressed. He led him to see the Lord Pārśvanātha and although he seemingly refused, he [the thief Sūrya] was persuaded and assigned as the guard of the jewel. One day after having consulted the *ḥṣullaka* the merchant

cultivating forbearance and the other nine qualities of *dharma*. The intension of the term *upagūhana* evident in the stories chosen for this article might allow the extension of the term to *upabṛmhaṇa*, the increasing of the powers of the *ātman* of the right believer, but the didactic impact of the stories clearly aims at *upagūhana* as 'concealing/protecting.'

⁴ RKŚĀ 1.15:

*svayam-śuddhasya mārgasya bālāśakta-janāśrayām /
vācyatām yad pramāṛjanti tad vadanty upagūhanam //*

⁵ HANDIQUI (1968: 260).

set out for a sea-voyage, left the town and camped outside it. The *ḥṣullaka*-thief who knew that the servants were busy with the transport, grasped that jewel at midnight and ran off. But due to the lustre of the jewel he was detected on the road and pursued by the watchmen. Since he was not able to escape from them he sought refuge at the merchant's and cried: "Protect me, protect me!" The merchant appeased the shouting of the watchmen, pondered and having realised that the *ḥṣullaka* was a thief he told the guards for the sake of concealing [the scandal] and uplifting the religion: "I myself have told him to bring me the jewel here and it would be improper to proclaim that this great ascetic were a thief." The watchmen then bowed to him and went away. That very night the thief was removed by the merchant. In this way others too, who have the true faith should conceal a fault concerning the religion brought about by a person devoid of knowledge and not endowed with devotion.'

In the *Yasas-tilaka* version the story ends with the solemn declaration of the merchant that he himself had given the jewel to the ascetic, a noble soul who deserved their highest veneration and respect.

The most striking feature in this story is indeed that the recommended protection of the true religion is based on an explicit lie, readily uttered by the pious Jaina merchant, and obviously raising questions about double standards. If one were to analyse such didactic stories strictly in terms of models of behaviour, one could easily and, in the numerous cases, often point out obvious contradictions regarding righteous ideals. One could, however, regard the *exemplary* stories as representing rather a realistic picture of social and communal endeavours and interactions, and that they serve as an education in various facets of successful living. A closer look at the interpretation of *asatya*, as is hinted at by JAINI (1979: 173 f.), which defines *asatya* for the layman as a lie for one's own sake, would solve some double-bind situations for the lay *satya-vratin*. An untruth spoken for the sake of avoiding *himsā* would then not be harmful to the soul of the liar. By extension, lying for the sake of upholding the true faith would be acceptable, since it prevents damage to the reputation of one's religion. A monk or a nun however, whose *satya-vrata* is absolute, does not have this choice; he or she would simply have to be silent, even at the risk of somebody's destruction. There are several stories illustrating such instances of keeping silent, even at the expense of the destruction of life. However, I do not know of any scenario involving *sādhus* or *sādhvis* set up especially in this case of *upagūhana*. It seems to be a purely *vyavahāra* theme.

The following two stories are from the *Bṛhat-kathā-kośa* of Hariṣeṇa (BKK). The BKK is a representative collection of 157 stories of varying length, stretching over 12,500 *śloka*s in Sanskrit. It is dated 931 CE. All the stories are based on *gāthā*s of the *Bhagavatī-śrādhana* (or *Mūlārādhana*; BhĀr) of Śivārya, an early (fourth or fifth century CE) pro-canonical text of the Digambaras. There are two stories listed under the theme of *upagūhana*.

The first story is about the model behaviour of king Śreṇika which appears as story number 9 in the BKK, the *Śreṇika-nṛpa-kathānaka*. The following is a summary of the story with a few selected quotations:

King Śreṇika was highly praised in the assembly of gods as having *samyaktva* with *kṣāyika*, i.e. the true insight due to the destruction of *darśana-mohanīya-karma*. One of the gods, being envious, wanted to test the truth of this praise. He goes to Śreṇika's town, disguised as a *muni* and fishes in the tank with nets. King Śreṇika, full of devotion, comes to him to pay him the respects due to a Jaina *muni*. He sees him gathering fish and throwing them in a basket. He immediately descends from his elephant, circumambulates the monk and greets him with reverence. As he stands in front of him bent down in humility, Śreṇika tells him: 'Someone who follows the mendicant path to liberation ought not kill fish, since that increases the course of existences (*saṃsṛti*). Therefore give me your net, I'll collect the fish for you in the basket and you, O *sādhū*, keep away!' Without a word the ascetic gives the net to the king who throws the net in the lake. At this the *muni* prevents him telling him that he did not need more fish and lauding him as a good Jaina he gives him leave. The king returns home with the *muni*, the net and the fish.

After this incident criticism is voiced among Śreṇika's vassals. They say: 'How can the *muni* catch fish and how can the king be so foolish as to worship him? And how can our king, who actually rules over us follow the orders of the monk?' King Śreṇika hears this criticism directed against Jaina principles (*jina-śāsana-dūṣaṇa*) and thinks of teaching them a lesson. He smears stinking dirt and excrement on the letters with the royal edicts which the vassals have to receive. They hold the stinking leaves reverentially to their foreheads as if they were smelling of flowers. The king then asks them, how they could act in this way and they can only answer that with anything given by the king's grace there is no question of either dirt or *kumkum*. Śreṇika then draws the analogy by saying: just as you accept with devotion all that is given by me, even though it might be foul smelling, so did I, with

devotion to the Jina, make my reverence to the fish catcher who looked like a *muni*.

At these words of the king the fisherman reveals himself as a heavenly being, explains the test-situation and praises and rewards Śreṇika highly.⁶

In this story *upagūhana* has no connotation of concealing anything, on the contrary, everything is highly public. It is quite spectacular that the king venerates a fishing *muni* and then himself undertakes to perform the unroyal and, as a Jaina, even the sinful act of fishing. The king does it in a demonstrative manner, acting out the model relation between a layman and a king towards a monk. As a layman he makes good for the misbehaviour of the monk by taking the sin upon himself, albeit not without pointing out the monk's breach of behaviour and reminding him of his ascetic duties. This is in keeping with the duty of lay-people, namely, to support the ideals of the ascetics and to make it possible for them to live up to and according to these ideals. As a king he fulfils his duty of protecting the religious principles by using his authority to eradicate the criticism against himself as a pious Jaina and against the sweeping criticism against the apparently bad monk, who actually cannot pollute the true religion taught by the Jina.

Finally, the blame on the religion and the ascetic is lifted by revealing that the whole affair was merely orchestrated to test Śreṇika's righteousness and so there

⁶ Haribhadrasūri gives the theme of this story in two lines in his *Vṛtti* no. 5 to the *niryukti* of DVS 3 (p. 91) as an example for *upagūhana*: 'A God, doubting Śreṇika's firmness of faith, takes the form of a novice catching fish; Śreṇika hinders him.' Cf. also related passages in the *Maṇipati-carita* (MPC) by an anonymous author (eighth or ninth century) and the one by Haribhadra (twelfth century) (MPCH), translated by R. WILLIAMS (1959). The term *upagūhana*, however, is not explicitly mentioned in these texts, but the underlying message is 'to prevent a scandal of the Jina's teaching' as will be seen below (footnote 9). Stanzas 415–416 of MPC read: 'Suddenly in a pond at the edge of the road to the city he saw an acolyte catching fish and had him called to his presence, saying: "I will give you something to make up for this, cease from this evil task."' Stanzas 124–128 of the MPCH: 'At a fitting time the king set out for his own city, and by a divine illusion beheld a *muni* catching fish. The king said: "What are you doing?" The *muni* replied: "Let it be evident to you." So saying he cast his net into the water for fish. The king said: "What is this on your lap?" The other replied: "The monk's broom." When the king asked: "What is achieved by this?", the *muni* replied: "Jīvas are preserved." "Then why do you kill fish?" asked the king. The *muni* replied: "In the bazaar I shall buy a blanket with them." The king indicated the reason for not taking life and bestowed a blanket on him.'

never was, in fact, a really bad monk—a device which is in itself an *upagūhana*, the protection of the religion by proving the purity of its members.⁷

The other story from the BKK illustrating *upagūhana* is a peculiar contribution to the fact of the nudity of Digambara monks and their male, biophysical conditioning. In the context of the debate on *stri-mokṣa* male nudity is a prerequisite for perfect mendicancy and liberation. Women are denied the possibility of final liberation, because they cannot abandon their clothing. But unlike the categorical prohibition of female nudity under the pretext of her biophysical and social unfitness, male nudity demands protection, if needed.

In the following story the lay woman Celanā fulfils this religious virtue. The term *upagūhana* in this story is indeed to be understood as both, concealing and protecting. It is story number 8 in BKK, called the *Celanā-mahā-devī-kathānaka*.⁸ This is a summary of it:

Prince Vaiśākha was newly married when his childhood friend, now a monk, came to his house for alms. As soon as the prince saw him, he was intensely filled with joy and devotion and when it was time for the monk to leave, the prince decided to go away with him and also became a monk. His abandoned wife realised that he had become a Jaina monk practising austerities. She practised false beliefs and when she died she became a *vyantari*. She still bore the grudge against her former husband for abandoning her and hence decided to trouble him during his austerities. When it was time for the solitary monk, weak from a month-long fast, to take some food, she caused him to have an erection. This happened when he came into Celanā's courtyard to break his fast. 'Celanā, filled with devotion, realised that the monk was in trouble and she concealed him from public view with a piece of cloth, concerned that people would speak ill of him.' The monk then finished his meal and continued his wanderings and his austerities. He eventually attained omniscience and was worshipped by gods and men. Celanā also went to bow down to the now omniscient one. There in the assembly of gods and men she asked him why he was subjected

⁷ In another context Somadeva says that a religion cannot be sullied by the misdemeanour of a weakling among its adherents, just as the ocean does not become foul on account of a frog dying in its waters (HANDIQUI (1968: 261)).

⁸ The story has been published and translated by GRANOFF (1989: 57–60). I acknowledge here my sincere gratitude to Phyllis Granoff for having introduced me to Jaina narratives and for her continuous generosity and encouragement.

to such a torment. The omniscient one explained how it was that his abandoned wife had tormented him and how grateful he was that she, Celanā, firm in her right belief, had protected him.

The story ends in the stereotyped way with the gods and people being astonished and worshipping the monk who finally attained liberation. And then the teaching is added: 'Just as Celanā protected this monk, so should others protect all those who practice the true religion.'

One has to note in this story that the *upagūhana* here does not refer to any breach of conduct on the part of the monk, as in the previous case of the fishing monk. The monkhood in that case was cleansed by revealing the bad monk as just a divine delusion. Here in the Celanā story the monk practises the true religion and is actually faultless, since abandoning his wife in order to become a mendicant would only prove that he has taken up the right path. Contrary to the other story, the monk here he is a victim of the wrath of his intolerant wife. In this way again, there is no blemish on monkhood: it is not his lack of control or weakness which causes him the embarrassment, but the curse of a *vyantari*. The resolute action of the laywoman and her concern pertains rather to preventing public contempt and discredit of the religion than to any embarrassment of the persons involved in the scene.

From all the three stories above it becomes clear that *upagūhana* is not the protection of an individual but of the reputation of the Jaina religion.

A corresponding predicament, namely the pregnancy of nuns, also comes within the context of *upagūhana*.⁹

⁹ Cf. footnote 6 above. Haribhadrāsūri relates to this theme (*Vṛtti* no. 5 to *Niryukti* 188 of DVS 3) as the second example for *upagūhana*: 'A God, doubting Śreṇika's firmness of faith ... meets him in form of a pregnant nun. He takes her to the inner apartment and himself takes care of the delivery so that no one learns of it. The God then reveals himself in his true form and lauds him: "O Śreṇika! You have reached the purpose of existence, since you have such devotion to the teaching." Cf. also MPC 417–418: 'Then as he entered the city he saw a Jaina nun big with child roaming about the market and, calling her, he took her to his house. From fear of opprobrium falling on the Jaina religion he himself took care of her giving her employment in his household ...'; MPC 128–129: '...Then as he was going along he saw in the bazaar a female *sādhu* pregnant. Preventing scandal to the Jina's teaching, his mind undeviatingly fixed on the sacred law, the king kept her in secret and harboured her until the day of birth.' It is noteworthy that *upagūhana* is not mentioned, but the act of protecting the religion from scandal or critique as an essential feature of the right believer corresponds to the doctrinal concept.

The following instance is from Hariṣeṇa's BKK, story number 97, *Nīla-lohita-kathānaka*, as part of a longer story of rebirths and is summarised here. The term *avagūhana* is explicitly mentioned in the respective context. The nun, a novice, is Jyeṣṭhā who becomes pregnant because of her association with a *muni* (Sātyaki). Her son Rudra is abandoned in a cave and then retrieved.

Jyeṣṭhā was one of the seven daughters of king Ceṭaka and she was the sister of Celanā who was abducted by Abhayakumāra, son and counsellor of king Śreṇika of Rājagṛha, to become the wife of king Śreṇika. Jyeṣṭhā was supposed to accompany her sister, but she was left behind by her jealous sister by means of a trick: when leaving the town at night Celanā sent her back to the palace to fetch a necklace. Jyeṣṭhā then arrived with the necklace at the appointed place but searched in vain for her sister. She was afraid to return to her father's house and in her feeling of being destitute she entered a retreat of nuns and resorted to Jaina *tapas*. Once the nuns heard that the *muni* Sātyaki (Jyeṣṭhā's husband in a former life) was practising *tapas* on a mountain near Rājagṛha and went up to him to bow down to him. On the way down, the floods of an unseasonal rainstorm made the nun Jyeṣṭhā seek shelter in a cave (*gūha*). Sātyaki had to interrupt his *yoga*, disturbed by the water, and he too entered the cave. When they beheld each other there in the cave their minds were filled with amorous emotions and they united in love. Sātyaki then went to his guru, confessed and undertook the prescribed penance. Jyeṣṭhā on her part went to her superior and confessed. The nun accepted her with composure and entrusted her into the care of her sister Celanā in Śreṇika's palace. There she gave birth to a heavenly shining boy. Abhayadeva (Abhayakumāra) took the newly born boy away and abandoned him in a cave. On account of a dream which Celanā had the king Śreṇikā went to this cave, found the boy and entrusted him to the care of his wife who then educated him with her own son.

In this place the narration is interrupted by the reflection: (stanza 69): 'Together with Abhayakumāra the conscientious Celanā, who was firm in the right belief, performed the concealment (*avagūhana*) of Jyeṣṭhā.'

This seems to be the didactic impact of this section of this *dharma-kathā*. There is no condemnation of the breach of the monastic vows. The conduct of the monk and the nun is a matter of confession and atonement and is dealt with internally. The duty of householders, however, is to ward off any blemish in public. They give shelter to the pregnant woman, something that would be quite natural since the

delivery could take place in the house of a relative. And, further, they orchestrated the hiding and 'finding' of the child, who thus was not known to be the son of Jyeṣṭhā but a foundling being taken care of by friendly people.

From the examples of the stories referred to above the following points can be drawn as the main features of *upagūhana*:

1. *Upagūhana* is the protection of the reputation of the Jaina religion;
2. For this purpose it is proper for laypersons to hide the faults committed by members of the religious community by concealing facts or even lying or to counteract misbehaviour publicly;
3. *Upagūhana* is not implemented for the sake of an individual but for the status of the Jaina community in society.

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