

# Jaina Studies

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRE OF JAINA STUDIES



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### On the Cover

Detail: *Maharaja Ranjit Singh in a bazaar*  
Gouache on paper, 1840 – 1845  
On loan from Sir Howard Hodgkin  
LI118.110

Image © Ashmolean Museum, University of  
Oxford.

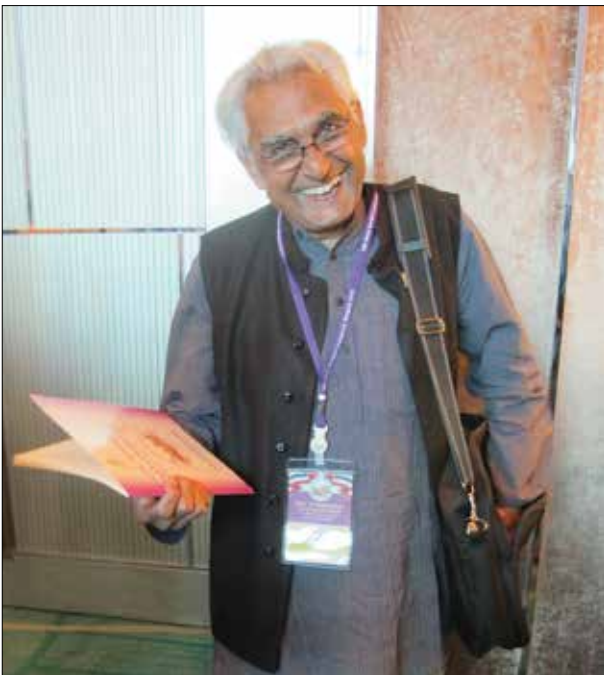


analysis of *Mahābhārata* epitomes from the 11th-12th Centuries,” Christine Chojnacki (University of Lyon 3) examined three summaries of the *Mahābhārata*, namely Kṣemendra’s *Bālabhārata* (ca. 8,000 verses), Devaprabhasūri’s *Pāṇḍavacarita* (ca. 6,000 verses) and Amaracandrasūri’s *Bālabhārata* (ca. 5,500 verses), focusing on the question of “which motivations urged poets from different religious backgrounds to compose such works in various places of India.”

Raval Rishikesh (G.D. Modi College of Arts, India) presented his paper, “A comparative study of Valmiki *Rāmāyaṇa* and Jain *Rāmāyaṇa*,” looking at several Jaina retellings of the *Rāmāyaṇa* composed in different historical periods.

In sum, the five-day conference provided a sensational opportunity for Sanskrit scholars from various countries and with different specialties to meet and communicate research ideas. Nalini Balbir and Peter Flügel deserve special thanks for organizing the Jaina Studies section which proved to be a productive, stimulating and enjoyable experience for all attendees. We look forward to a continued vibrancy of Jaina scholarship in the 17th World Sanskrit conference to be held in Vancouver in 2018.

**Juan Wu** graduated from Peking University (MA, 2008) and obtained her PhD from Cardiff University in 2012 with a dissertation on Indian Buddhist narratives of *Ajātaśatru*. After completing a two-year research fellowship at University of Tokyo, she is now a postdoctoral fellow at Leiden University, working on a project titled “Royals across religious boundaries: A comparative study of stories of shared royal personages in Indian Buddhism and Jainism” funded by the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation administrated by American Council of Learned Societies.



Jayandra Soni, General Secretary of the International Association of Sanskrit Studies (IASS)

## Papers on Jainism at the ICEMLNI

Tillo Detige

From 15 to 19 July 2015, the University of Lausanne, Switzerland hosted the 12th *International Conference on Early Modern Literatures in North India* (ICEMLNI). The conference was organised by Maya Burger and Nadia Cattoni on their spacious and green campus close to the shores of the idyllic Lac Léman. The triennial ICEMLNI intends to bring together specialists of North Indian languages and literatures. Formerly colloquially known as ‘the Bhakti conference’, earlier editions focused mostly on *bhakti* literature written in early Hindi. With the explicit aim of pursuing comparative insights, the conference in its more recent editions has widened its scope. Yet, so far only very few papers on Jainism had been read at these conferences. For the first time the 2015 conference included a panel devoted entirely to Jainism. While introducing the panel, chairperson Daniel Gold (Cornell University) remarked that no understanding of the early modern period, be it from a literary, religious or historical perspective, could be complete without attention to the contributions of the Jains, as constituting important communities in for example Western India. John Cort (Denison University), the first to come to the dais to present his paper, added that the Jains, contrary to what is often presumed, not merely borrowed from other traditions, but themselves often exercised crucial and initiatory influence upon others. It was precisely in this line of thought that, during discussion rounds throughout the conference, the participants much appreciated comparative perspectives and elucidations on various issues from the Jain side of things.

In his paper titled “‘No One Gives Like the Guru’: Devotion to the True Guru in Digambar Hindi Literature’, John Cort discussed Jain Brajhbhāṣā authors such as Dyānatray (1676-1726 CE), Bhūhardās (dated works from 1724-44 CE) and Banārsīdās (1587-1643 CE), and their expressions of the nature of the supreme guru. In compositions that were widespread and are still well-known today, such as Bhūhardās’ *Bandaṃ digambar* and Banārsīdās’ *Sādhu Vandan*, Cort noted the focus on the naked *muni* as an ideal guru. Elements of eager petitioning (*vinatī*) and the agony of separation (*viraha*) of the guru in this poetry reflect the historical fact that naked renunciators remained a largely unseen ideal throughout most of the early modern period. By contrast, in compositions of the early 20th century we see the criticism of the clothed *bhaṭṭārakas* as false gurus (*kuguru*) taking far more stringent forms, while at the same time, as naked *munis* reappeared, poems began to be written in a spirit of rejoicing about the (re)union with the true guru.

The next contribution, by the present writer (Tillo Detige, Ghent University), offered a complementary perspective through its focus on ‘Ascetic Ideals & Guru-bhakti in the Bhaṭṭāraka lineages of Digambara Jainism’. Here, today little-known 15th to 18th-century devotional and ritual texts (*gīta*, *pūjā*, etc.) were analyzed in which

individual *bhaṭṭārakas*, or sometimes even *bhaṭṭāraka* lineages in their entirety, stand as the object of veneration. Attention was raised to their rich, ethical, soteriological and ontological contents, and their mnemonic structures. It was argued that these texts and the practices in which they were performed constituted an epistemological tool for the transmission and embodiment of values of renunciation, as a fundamental Jain ‘technology of the self’. Other vernacular, literary texts from the early modern period testify to the conferment of the ascetic ranks of *muni*, *upādhyāya* and *ācārya* to renouncers in the *bhaṭṭāraka saṅghas*, and the parallels of the *bhaṭṭāraka dīkṣā* with contemporary *muni* consecration rituals. Like the enduring practices of veneration of historical renouncers, these latter findings too speak of continuities right across the early modern period, and thus challenge the idea of a distinct ‘*bhaṭṭāraka* era’.

The third contribution to the panel was Steven Vose (Florida International University)’s paper ‘Jain Language Use in Early Modern Western India: Examining the Trajectory of Tellings of the Narmadāsundarī Satī Kathā’. Vose provided a summary of the contents of this *śīla kathā*-type narrative on the unfathomable mechanisms of karma and the ideal, virtuous conduct of a Jain woman. He subsequently compared three versions of the story, a 12th-century Prakrit text by Mahendrasūri in mixed verse and prose with *kāvyaesque* embellishments and elaborations; the *Namaya sandhi*, a 13th-century versified Apabhraṃśa version by Jinaprabhāsūri of the *Āgama Gaccha*, and a 15th-century prose telling in Old Gujarati by Merusundaragaṇi. Vose argued that the choice of language, instead of merely and solely corresponding to natural language development, was determined by the registers and genres the authors sought to work in, while the choice of the latter in turn depended on their purposes. The development of the vernacular did not efface the use of classical languages altogether; the former, in other words, did not supplant the latter all at once, but long remained a genre-specific option.

Vose concluded the panel with a general remark on the nature of Jain identities in the early modern period which carries great bearing. While notions of ‘Hindu’ and ‘Muslim’ identity as fixed, trans-historical categories have long been challenged, Jains all too often continue to be conceived of as a distinct, homogenous social group. Here, a pan-Jain consciousness, which developed only in the modern and contemporary period, is read into earlier contexts. While in certain situations Jains of various affiliations might indeed have considered each other as ‘co-religionists’, far more often maybe not only Śvetāmbara and Digāmbara but also further caste and *gaccha* variations and idiosyncratic practices defined the actual social and ‘religious’ boundaries. An improved understanding of and sensitivity to such differentiations seems necessary not solely for its higher historical accuracy, but also to connect developments within these various Jain traditions and contexts more closely and more specifically to non-Jain partners and counterparts.

Considering the prodigious literary production by Jains in the early modern period, the amount of unstudied, unedited and untranslated materials lying dormant in Jain manuscript collections, and the reality of complex, rhizomatic influences and parallel developments between various Indian traditions, it can be hoped that more work in this field, era and paradigm will be forthcoming. Future ICEMLNI conferences will continue to offer an inspiring and invigorating environment to connect materials and insights from the Jain traditions to broader developments in North Indian literary and religious traditions of the early modern period, and vice-versa. The 13th ICEMLNI conference is scheduled to take place at the University of Warsaw in the summer of 2018.

*Tillo Detige* (Ghent University) is currently working on a PhD as part of the research project: Early Modern Digāmbara Jainism in Western India: The Age of the Bhaṭṭārakas?



Elācārya Prajñāsāgara directs a layman performing *abhiṣeka* at the conclusion of the consecration of the Digāmbara Jaina Ratnatraya Jina Mandira, Dvārakā (Delhi), 12th of February 2014. (Photo: Tillo Detige)

Centre of Jaina Studies  
School of Oriental and African Studies  
Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square  
London WC1H 0XG

email: [jainastudies@soas.ac.uk](mailto:jainastudies@soas.ac.uk)

Centre Chair  
Dr Peter Flügel

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Dr Peter Flügel & Janet Leigh Foster

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SOAS • Russell Square • London WC1H 0XG •  
Email: [jainastudies@soas.ac.uk](mailto:jainastudies@soas.ac.uk)



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