THE IMAGE OF THE JAINS IN RAJJAB'S COMPOSITIONS

Joanna Flynn[1]

Abstract

At the turn of the 17th century, various religious traditions and religious sects coexisted in relative peace in North India. However, on numerous occasions, they had to compete with each other for influence, rich sponsors, and followers. They did so in many ways, one of which was by composing poetry. Rajjab was a Dadu Dayal's devoted disciple and he was greatly revered and respected by other Dādūpanthīs. The region in which he lived (in the surroundings of modern Jaipur, Rajasthan), was also a place where Jain culture had been strongly rooted since many centuries earlier. Rajjab, a prolific poet and a skilled compiler, also composed some verses criticizing not only the Jains but also other religious groups. This paper analyzes selected stanzas from Rajjab's works (specifically *Jain Jañjāla* and *sākhīs* from *Rajjab Vāṇī*) and intends to reconstruct the image of the Jains, especially Jain monks, emerging from these compositions and juxtapose that image with reality. The paper will also explore the doctrinal and social reasons for creating such poetic content and will also examine how this critical and sometimes stereotypical discourse fits into the broader socio-cultural context of 16th and 17th century North India, and mutual relations between various religious groups.

Introduction

The Indian subcontinent, from very early times, was a cradle of religious and philosophical concepts and a place of assimilating and intermingling of manifold cultures, religions, and views. It was a place of huge diversity, and Rajasthan was no different at the turn of the seventeenth century. This paper investigates a small portion of the interactions between two influential religious groups at that time, namely Dādūpanthīs and Jains. After a brief introduction to Rajjab, a read and analysis of his selected stanzas is undertaken, in order to depict the image of Jains as represented in his poetry. Further, the status of the diverse community of Jains during Rajjab's time and different types of Jain monks, namely *yatis/jatis* and *bhaṭṭārakas* are described. Next, the reasons for Rajjab's critique – social and doctrinal, are enumerated and discussed. The paper argues why the negative image of Jains emerging from Rajjab's poetry cannot be extrapolated into real-life relations. Finally, a couple of examples that demonstrate the amicability and peaceful coexistence between Jains and the followers of other traditions are given.

A Brief Biography of Rajjab

Although Rajjab's dates of birth and death can only be approximated, it is believed that he was born in 1567 in Sanganer (Horstmann 28). Rajjab was a renouncer, and a direct and most influential disciple of Dadu. His name would assume that he was a Muslim, but he never identified himself as one, as being a *santa* and a Dādūpanthī – he rejected caste (Horstmann 4, 24), however, Dādūpanthī tradition perceived him as a *paṭhāna* Muslim from Sanganer (Horstmann and Rajpurohit 78). We know some of his biographical details from hagiographies. In *Dādū Janmalīlā* (probably composed between 1610 and 1620 (Callewaert 22)) by Janagopal, Rajjab comes up in the life of Dādū between the years 1594 and 1596, and in some further verses, he is described when organizing a party for Dādū sometime after 1596. Janagopal also mentions that Rajjab was present at his guru's death in 1603 (Horstmann 25, 28). In *Bhaktamāla* (1660, but more probably 1720 (Callewaert 25)), Raghavdas describes Rajjab coming

[1] Joanna Flynn from Poland is a student of Jainism at Ghent University, Belgium.

as a bridegroom to Ambaneri (Amber/Amer) in Rajasthan and upon the encounter with Dādū, he renounces his marriage and past life and fully dedicates himself to the order.[2] The overall tone of Rāghavadāsa' stanzas shows how much Rajab was revered and respected in Dadu's sect. He was called there "of wondrous deeds", "a great Sant hero", and was compared to Dhruva, Prahlāda, Hanumanta, and the sons of Kaśyapa (Horstmann and Rajpurohit 80–81). The places he spent most of his time – Amer, Tuntoli, Naraina – they are all around modern day Jaipur, the area also inhabited by a thriving Jain community (Horstmann 25, 28). Rajab authored an immense work titled *Rajjab Vāṇī* and also compiled an anthology titled *Sarbaṅgī*. The latter consists of 144 chapters presenting the compositions of 88 poets (Callewaert 67–73) (Horstmann and Rajpurohit 80–81). Horstmann (1) describes his literary language as "*Braja* with eastern Rajasthani and proto-*Kharī Bolī Hindi*".

Jains in Rajjab's Compositions

Among Rajjab's numerous compositions, we can find those that directly relate to Jains and their tradition. In the composition titled *Śrī Svāmī Dādū Dayālajī ke Bheṁṭa ke Savaiye*[3], he puts his revered guru in a superior position against other traditions, including the Jains. Rajjab describes Dadu as the one who "does not go by worldly standards", who "has no use for the *yogī's* horn and ear-rings, does not follow the rules of the Buddhists" and "does not know of the Jain pretense" (Horstmann 27).[4]

Rajjab also composed an entire 21-verse poem fully dedicated to the critique of Jains titled *Jain Jañjāla* (*The Jain Illusory World*) (Narayandas 1318–23). He enumerates several Jain beliefs (e.g. reverence to twenty-four *ṭīrthaṁkaras*) and behaviors (e.g. pilgrimages) which he condemns. In the chosen passages of the poem, we read[5]:

> Listen, O Sant, duplicity is the snare of the Jains, their behaviour builds on deceit.
>
> Their mind is not set on the immaculate name; they have lost themselves in the twenty-four. (1) (…)
>
> But gold is not produced by gold; accordingly, salvation will not come from the twenty-four. (3)
>
> They call themselves jati, they have set their snare by building temples and assembly
>
> halls in the region,

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[2] It is believed that Rajjab met Dadu during his wedding procession and then he renounced his marriage. Therefore, among Dādūpanthīs, he is imagined as wearing his wedding crown (Horstmann and Rajpurohit 80).

[3] 'Savaiyā' verses are dedicated to the meeting with Dadu Dayal

[4] For the full *savaiyā,* see Svami Narayaṇadas (1170).

[5] *sunahu santa yahu jaina jañjāla, kapaṭa karma kī bāṁdhī cāla* |
nāma nirañjana soṁ nāṁhiṁ, bhūla rahe caubīsauṁ māhiṁ || 1 ||
(...) *para sone sonā kade na hoya, to cava chake na sadagati koya* || 3 ||
jatī kahāveṁ jaṛe jañjāla, deśa dehure kīnhī sāla |
tina ārambhoṁ vāra na pāra, parahi prāṇi śira pāpa pahāra || 4 ||
śatruñjaya sudhi hīne jāṁhiṁ, āge pāthara bolai nāhiṁ |
mārahīṁ jīvahu āvata jāta, tahāṁ caṛhāvai phūla ru pāta || 5 ||
dayā dṛṛhāvaiṁ duṣṭa śarīra, maratoṁ deya na bhojana nīra | (...)
nāka nakapatī jīva vicāra, ramahiṁ diśāntara kosa hajāra |
kācā pānī bhīṭaiṁ nāṁhiṁ, calate paiṁṭhaiṁ nadiyoṁ māṁhiṁ || 10 ||
(…) *eka hi agha utarai so dūri, caubīsoṁ sumire bhaga bhūri* || 14 ||
(Horstmann 29-31)

> Their undertakings have no limits, so that mountains of sin come to oppress other people. (4)
>
> People search their way to Mount Śatruñjaya, but the stone in front of them does not speak,
>
> By their traffic they kill living beings; when they reach their destination, they offer flowers and leaves. (5) (…)
>
> They enjoin compassion, but are wicked inside, for they do not give the dying food or water. (8) (…)
>
> They wear a nosepiece before their nose because they care for living beings, but they roam all over the regions a thousand miles.
>
> They do not touch unstrained water, but on their tours they wade through rivers. (10) (…)
>
> There is one sin that they must get rid off, but from this aim they are far away: ill-fatedly,
>
> they contemplate the twenty-four. (14)

In the *pada* 29 from *Rajjab Vāṇī*, Rajab criticizes different religious views, including Jainism (Narayandas 1044–45)[6]:

> (…) In this world the Jains made falsehood a craft: wearing a mouth-shield, like splitting your earlobes, is worthless.
>
> Prayer beads and brow marks and special attire—they've all come from this world and were thrust on your body. (2)
>
> Views of religion created in this awful age are false (…)

In the following *sākhīs*, yet again the poet emphasizes Jains' wrong belief in twenty-four *tīrthaṁkaras*:

> There are numberless names of the Endless; but only One is experienced in the heart; there may be ten or twenty-four incarnations, but only One can enter your heart.[7]
>
> Some speak of ten incarnations, others of twenty-four; I meditate on the Lord, who is the greatest.[8]

In the next *sākhī* Rajjab seems to reprove Jain's realistic and pluralistic view (which in his opinion is totally false), in opposition to Dādūpanthīs' monist approach:

> If the Jains would make a moon and place it up in the sky,
>
> Then the lotus wouldn't want to bloom and partridge's thirst wouldn't quench.[9]

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6 *kapaṭa kalā jainahu juga ṭhāṭī, phāṛi kāna phokaṭa mukha pāṭī* |
prapaṁca mālā tilaka ju bānai, ihāṁ hī āya deha para ṭhānai || 2 ||
ṣaṭ darśana khoṭe kali kīnheṁ (...)
(Horstmann and Rajpurohit 134)

7 *nāva ananta ananta ke, basata eka uṛi jāṁṇi* |
rajaba dasa dūṇe catura su, uri baiṭhai nahīṁ āṁṇi || Sākhī 43.21|| (Callewaert 144, 234)

8 *eka kahai autāra dasa, eka kahai caubīsa* |
rajaba sumirai so dhaṇī, jo sabahī ke sīsa || Sākhī 43.22|| (ibid 144, 234)

9 *jai sasi kīyā sevaḍahu, rākhyā ūṁcī vora* |

From all the above stanzas a pretty harsh critique of Jains emerges. Rajjab describes them as false, deceitful and pretentious – all those adjectives have a very negative connotation. They are also characterized by duplicity. Jains are regarded as wicked, because they don't give food to the dying.[10] The poet repeats on numerous occasions that the Jains are lost in twenty-four *tīrthaṁkaras*, which is completely wrong, sinful and it is not the way to salvation. They also kill all living beings by roaming around, going on pilgrimages, crossing the rivers, offering leaves and flowers in the temples.[11] All this behavior goes against the main principle of Jainism which is *ahiṁsā* – non-violence, and additionally against the Jain common practices to protect all life by wearing the mouth shield and straining the water before drinking. Additionally, in the last quoted *sākhī,* Rajjab points out that their pluralistic worldview is false, as under the Jain fake moon no lotus would ever bloom and the partridge (*cakora*) would never quench its thirst.

The question might arise here – why such a harsh critique of Jains in Rajjab's compositions? In order to try to answer it, first let us examine the status of Jains in Rajasthan during Rajjab's times.

Jains in Seventeenth-Century Rajasthan: Contextualizing Rajjab's Satire

At the turn of the seventeenth century, Rajasthan was a very diverse place, with many religious traditions – Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and Jain, and also thriving with the *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* forms of devotions. Jains, alongside the Nāthas and the Dādūpanthīs, formed powerful and influential groups there. Jains, divided into Digambara and Śvetāmbara sectarian traditions, with many further different branches and sects, weren't in the least a homogenous community. They were established in that area of India since old times. In Sanganer, there is an old Digambara Jain temple – Singhījī, with inscriptions dating back to the 10th century. In Naraina, Jainism can be traced back to the 10th century and from the 12th century, it was an important pilgrimage place. Also, Amer and Chatsu were the places of Jain *bhaṭṭārakas*' seats in the 16th century. Last but not least, the Digambara Terāpantha reformist movement emerged in Sanganer in the mid-17th century (probably in 1660's) as a response to an individual layman's reaction against a regional *bhaṭṭāraka* (Horstmann 2, 29) (Cort, A Tale of Two Cities: On the Origins of Digambar Sectarianism in North India 50–51).[12] Who were the *bhaṭṭārakas* against which such an opposition formed? They were sedentary Digambara monks who possessed and managed monastic properties. They formed several lineages, and they were present around Jaipur. They enjoyed quite a high level of respect among lay supporters and devotees, they were wealthy, powerful and influential and they were also connected with Mughal emperors and the Sultanate rulers. It is important to emphasize that even among and within the plethora of Jain branches and sects the conflicts and misunderstandings occurred on a regular basis (Horstmann and Rajpurohit 79; Detige).

In the third verse of the *Jain Jañjāla*, Rajjab mentioned "*yatis/jatis*" – who were they? In answer, they were domesticated Śvetāmbara semi-monks, in many ways similar to the above-mentioned Digambara *bhaṭṭārakas*. They only took lesser vows (*aṇuvratas*[13]) and followed less strict daily ascetic rules. They resided in one place, possessed properties, dressed in white garments and often had hair and moustaches

taū bārija bigasai nahīṁ, cāhi na miṭai cakora || Sākhī 43.24|| (Callewaert 144)

[10] It seems that Rajjab was drawing on a stereotype based on the lack of knowledge about *sallekhanā* – which is a religious, peaceful death through fasting (Wiley 218-19).

[11] Jains perceive plants as living beings possessing one sense (Donaldson 31).

[12] A Jain layman Banarsidas witnessed these conflicts when he visited Sanganer and described the events in his biography (Horstmann and Rajpurohit 78).

[13] *Aṇuvratas,* or lesser vows are usually taken by a Jain layperson (Wiley 69).

(as opposite to mendicants who were to pluck their hair on regular basis twice a year). Their lineages were connected with royal families, and they had political power (Cort, Jains and Jainism in Patan 43–44) (Wiley 46) (Horstmann 34). Overall, as it can be observed from the above paragraphs, the Jains, with the centuries of presence and tradition, were well established in early modern-day Rajasthan, forming an influential group who enjoyed wealth and power.

Going back to the reasons of Rajjab's critique regarding the Jains, that critique could have been driven by two-fold kinds of motives: on the one hand there were social reasons at play, and on the other hand - religious and doctrinal differences between Dādūpanthīs and Jains. When it comes to the first group of reasons, as mentioned in previous paragraphs, Rajasthan, at the turn of the 17th century, was very diverse and different traditions coexisted alongside each other, including Jains and Dādūpanthīs. Inevitably, both groups shared the same area for seeking the alms and competed for the support of rich patrons including the ones from the merchant castes. Additionally, Jains, being a wealthy lay community with a trading background, were perceived as greedy and uncompassionate towards the poor. Moreover, a degree of envy could play an important role as well. Śvetāmbara leaders had very good relations with Mughal emperors. Among them, a Jain saint Hiravijaysuri had connections with Akbar's court and in 1584 he was granted a prohibition of animal slaughter during the Paryuṣaṇa festival.[14] Coincidentally, that could have had an effect on Dadu's hagiography. In the longer recension of *Dādū Janmalīlā* by Janagopal from 1654 we read that it was actually Dadu, who was granted prohibition of animal killing by Akbar, upon their mutual encounter in 1585 (Horstmann 32–33). Moreover, as the Jains were the representatives of upper merchant castes, would a dichotomy between them and lower castes play a role in the critique? It seems that it wasn't the case, as Dādūpanthīs represented different and diverse strata of Indian society – among them there were Brahmins as well as low castes and Muslims. (Horstmann 3–4)

To complete the picture of Jains and Dādūpanthīs in the times of Rajjab, it is important to mention the second group of reasons – religious and doctrinal differences between those two traditions. Dādūpanthīs were non-dualists, they emphasized importance of interior pilgrimage, they strongly discouraged fasting and the institution of nuns within the sect practically didn't exist. As they belonged to *nirguṇa* tradition, there was no image worship within the sect. On the other hand, Jains were pluralists, they highly valued pilgrimages to the sacred places and fasting was a particularly desirable social behaviour among them. Moreover, Jain nuns – *sādhvīs*, were common, and some sects worshipped images (Wiley 189). In the *Jain Jañjāla,* Rajjab particularly points out at *jatis/yatis* – domesticated, wealthy Śvetāmbara monks mentioned in earlier paragraphs. In the poem, they serve as a negative example of how a monk should not present himself or behave. Rajjab opposes *jatis* to *sādhus* in Sant tradition, emphasizing the deviant behaviour of the former (Horstmann 4, 31–33). It seems that Jains were depicted as a contrast to the religious piety practiced by Dādūpanthīs.

Analysis of Rajjab's Satire

The image of Jains that Rajjab depicts in his compositions, of which the examples are quoted in this essay, is unfavorable and clearly negative. If drawn only on Rajjab's texts, it is easy to imagine how the real-life relations would have looked like – full of harsh criticism, envy, competition, and hatred. However, we must be very careful not to generalize the picture emerging from Rajjab's poetry into the actual relations between the two groups. There are several reasons to be cautious. First of all, it is important to emphasize that because of the fact that different religious groups lived next to each other, it was natural that they responded to each other's worldviews and practices, so it was absolutely normal

[14] *Paryuṣaṇa* is one of the most important festivals in the Śvetāmbara tradition, which lasts eight days (ibid 203).

that different texts were composed relating to the approaches of others (Cort, Jain Perceptions of Nāth and Haṭha Yogīs in Pre-Colonial North India 1). Secondly, Horstmann (31) points out that these compositions were directed to the fellow Sants or Dādūpanthīs and they were not intended to argue or dispute with Jains themselves.[15] The critique of Jains rather served as a negative contrast in order to strengthen the bonds within the sect and present its members in a more favorable light against the background of other traditions. Finally, as we could observe from the quoted passages, Dādūpanthīs criticized and disregarded not only the Jains, but also other religious traditions, and viewed their members as hypocrites. At that time in Rajasthan, the division into six views (*ṣaḍ darśana*) or six different religious traditions was very common, and Jains were always enumerated within it.[16] Even Dadu himself was very critical, and he characterized "*yogīs*, *jaṅgamas*, *sevaṛās* (Jains), Buddhists, *saṁnyāsīs* and *sheikh*s (Muslims)" as fraudulent and deceitful.[17] However, it would be highly unlikely that Dādūpanthīs would have fought with the members of other traditions in real-life situations. It would have been simply impractical, and it would have jeopardized the chance of acquiring support and new members for their sect.

In order to complete the whole picture, it is worth mentioning a couple of examples of Jains' positive interactions with other traditions at the times of Rajjab. One good illustration is the figure of Banarsidas (born in 1586) who was a Jain layman, poet and one of the leaders of the reform movement focused on inner transformation and rejection of rituals, which arose in a strong opposition to the *bhaṭṭārakas* and their deviant lifestyle. His songs and a philosophical work *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*[18] were incorporated in Dādūpanthī manuscripts starting from the turn of the eighteenth century. While it is not surprising that those manuscripts introduced a great range of authors from different traditions (Nāthas, Sants, followers of Kṛṣṇa), the inclusion of the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka,* a purely philosophical work on Jain *guṇasthāna* doctrine[19] with very specific Jain vocabulary, seems to be baffling (Cort, A Tale of Two Cities: On the Origins of Digambar Sectarianism in North India 42–46) (Horstmann 38–39) (Cort, Jain Perceptions of Nāth and Haṭha Yogīs in Pre-Colonial North India 2). After all, it could be a proof that Dādūpanthīs were much more inclusive, tolerant, and not as critical as the tone of Rajjab's compositions on Jains might suggest. Another evidence of amicability between Jains and other groups is shown by White. In his book *The Alchemical Body,* he describes close cooperation between Jain and Nātha alchemists and also close connections of shared sacred sites and reverence to *tīrthaṁkaras* within those two traditions (White 130).

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[15] In the very first verse of *Jain Jañjāl*, Rajab directly addresses his fellow Sants: "Listen, O Sant,(…)" (Horstmann 29)

[16] The members of the six views may vary. Raghavdas enumerates six views as *saṁnyāsīs*, Nātha yogis, Buddhists, Jaṅgamas, Jains and Sheikhs (Muslims). Haribhadrasūri mentions Bauddha, Naiyāyika, Sāṁkhya, Jain, Vaiśeṣika and Jaiminīya systems. Traditional list of the six systems includes Mīmāṁsā, Vedānta, Sāṁkhya, Yoga, Nyāya and Vaiṣeśika (ibid 5)

[17] *jogī jaṅgama sevaṛe, bauddha saṁnyāsī śekha |*
ṣaṭ darśana dādū rāma binā, sabai kapaṭa ke bhekha || Dādū Vāṇī 14.33|| (ibid 6)

[18] *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* is a Braj version of Amṛtacandra's Sanskrit *Samayasāra Kalaśa*, which is a commentary to Kundakunda's *Samayasāra*.
(Cort, Jain Perceptions of Nāth and Haṭha Yogīs in Pre-Colonial North India 2)

[19] Jain *guṇasthāna* doctrine describes the 14-stage progression of the soul from a state of delusion to a state of omniscience and final liberation. (Wiley 278–80)

Conclusion

At the turn of the seventeenth century Rajasthan was a melting pot of different religious traditions, of which the followers and devotees intermingled and coexisted alongside each other. Some of those traditions, like Jains, were already established for centuries in that area, while the others, like Dādūpanthīs, were in the early period of their formation. Drawing on the selected passages from Rajjab, the prolific poet and most influential disciple of Dadu, this essay presented the portrayal of Jains as seen through his compositions. The image of Jains that emerges from Rajjab's verses, is undoubtedly unfavourable to say the least. The words such as "pretense", "duplicity", "deceit", "lost", "wicked", "falsehood" strongly denote Rajjab's views on the Jains and their tradition. However, Jains weren't the exemption, as the critique of followers of other religions was also common and it was included in the poetic texts. Besides, living in such a diverse environment, it was natural that people expressed their opinions on the views of others in many ways including the poetic form. This paper also investigated the reasons that might stand behind this sort of depiction of the rival religious group which can be divided into two different kinds. The first group encompasses the social reasons including rivalry for patronage and shared areas for seeking alms, common stereotypes about Jains and their greedy nature, and jealousy of Jain connections and their influence at the Mughal court. The second group contains religious and doctrinal differences and includes issues such as pilgrimages, worship, fasting and the place of women among mendicants. As these poetic compositions circulated among Dādūpanthīs themselves and they were not intended to be used in debates with opponents, their main function was to consolidate the bonds within the sect and highlight the religious righteousness against the background of deviant practices and views of others, in this case – Jains. Finally, it is important to emphasize that the image of Jains emerging from Rajjab's verses doesn't reflect the true dynamic of the relations between Jains and Dādūpanthīs, as in reality they were much more amicable. This view can be supported by looking into Dādūpanthīs manuscripts, where among a great range of authors from different traditions, verses composed by a Jain layman Banarsidas can be also found, thus proving Dādūpanthīs inclusiveness and tolerance.

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