

**“TODAY I PLAY HOLĪ IN MY CITY”  
DIGAMBAR JAIN HOLĪ SONGS FROM JAIPUR**

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The springtime festival of Holī has long posed a problem for Jains. Jain ideologues have criticized the celebration of Holī as contravening several key Jain ethical virtues. In response, Digambar Jain poets developed a genre of Holī songs that transformed the elements of Holī into a complex spiritual allegory, and thereby “tamed” the transgressive festival. These songs were part of a culture of songs (*pad*, *bhajan*) and other vernacular compositions by Digambar laymen in the cosmopolitan centers of north India in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. I argue in this essay that an investigation into this Digambar genre of Holī songs encourages us to see that many of the “Hindu” Holī songs from this same time period were also engaged in a process of reframing and taming Holī. Both Hindu and Jain songs translated its antinomian and transgressive elements into softer, less threatening sets of metaphors specific to their spiritual traditions.

On the first night of the festival everyone gathers for the burning of a bonfire, in memory of the burning of an evil woman or demoness. In many interpretations this is the demoness Holikā.<sup>1</sup> The bonfire clearly violates the central Jain ethical principle of *ahimsā* or

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<sup>1</sup> Amrita Shodhan 2001: 123, 144 n.13 noted that nineteenth-century explanations of the stories behind the observance of Holī do not link it to the story of Viṣṇu, Prahlād and Holikā, which is presented in most scholarship as the explanatory myth behind the events. She cited two Gujarati essays from 1859 printed in Bombay reformist periodicals.

non-harm. Igniting a fire at night, when inevitably many insects and other small living creatures will be incinerated, is seen as an act of fearsome violence. A well-known story of the twenty-third Jina, Pārśvanāth, for example, relates how he perceived that a Brāhmaṇ ascetic, performing a penance by sitting in the sun surrounded by fires, was unmindfully incinerating two snakes.

The next morning is Dhuleṇḍī; this is a riotous time, as neighbors throw colored liquids and dry colored powders on each other. Many people accentuate the festivities by consuming *bhāṅg* and becoming intoxicated. Holī is also a time when many people sing songs “publicly characterized as obscene”; they focus on “the joking [and potentially sexual] relationship between a woman and her younger brother-in-law” (Jassal 2012: 219). In many villages, women employ long phallic staffs and thick, wet-knotted ropes to beat the men (Miller 1973: 18f.). All of this clearly goes against the Jain emphasis on decorum, mindfulness and equanimity (*samatā*, *saṃyam*, *sañjam*). Scholarship has shown the many ways that the observance of Holī involves extensive sub-altern expressions of subjugated social and economic status, something in which many Jains from middle- and upper-class families, as paradigmatic “alterns,”<sup>2</sup> might understandably be reluctant to participate.

For these reasons Holī was included on a list of “harmful customs” (*hānīkārik rivāz*) that Śvetāmbar Mūrtipūjak reformers in the early twentieth century urged their fellow Jains to avoid (Cort 2000: 175f.). In the middle of the twentieth century, the Śvetāmbar Mūrtipūjak Tapā Gacch monk Ācārya Vijay Amṛtsūri (1953) contrasted the proper Jain spiritual (*bhāv*) observance of Holī, which was aimed to wear away accumulated karma, with the popular physical (*dravya*) observance of Holī, which had the opposite effect, and bound the soul to sinful karma. He concluded his short *Holikā Vyākhyān* (*Sermon on Holikā*) with a list of the great amount of karma one accumulated by the extensive karmic suffering brought about by observing the popular Holī customs, and contrasted this with a list of fasts one could undertake to remediate the karmic affects of the popular Holī.

In a 1940 essay published in the Hindī-language journal *Anekānt*, of which he was the founder and editor, the Digambar intellectual and social reformer Jugalkiśor Mukhtār (1877-

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Marriott 1966 remains the most accessible introduction to the observance of Holī in a north Indian village, although Miller 1973 and Cohen 1994 are important extensions and corrections of his analysis. The older accounts of Bose 1967 and Crooke 1968 II: 313f. are still useful. The films by Beeche 1990 and Katz 1996 provide excellent presentations of the cultural significance of Holī in north Indian rural and urban culture, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> I have coined this neologism as a back-formation from “subaltern.” Whereas the latter designates people and communities who are in subordinate social positions, the term “altern” indicates that most Jains have occupied a more powerful position in north Indian society.

1968) decried the way that Holī was commonly observed, and argued that its true essence was equanimity (*samatā*) and independence (*svatantratā*) (Mukhtār 1940b). He argued that it was of vital interest to the cause of the nation for the Congress to take the lead in restoring the observance of Holī to its original spirit. This would help instill a true spirit of independence (*svarājya*) in the people. If Congress was unwilling or unable to take the lead in this effort, he suggested that another national religious organization such as the Hindu Mahasabha should. He concluded his essay with a ten-point plan for the reform (*sudhār*) of Holī. This included using liquid ingredients in the play of colors that were not harmful, eliminating the consumption of alcohol and other intoxicating substances, not trading insults and not singing obscene songs. He accompanied his article by a poem he wrote in Hindī entitled “Holī Holī Hai,” in which he played upon the oral coincidence between the Hindī “Holī” and the English “holy” to ask in the refrain, “How is Holī holy?” (*kaise “holī holī hai”?*) (Mukhtār 1940a). The refrain was a rebuttal to the popular phrase “Holī hai!” This is the standard response to any criticism of the excesses of Holī, and implies, “it’s Holī, so anything goes!” He reprinted the poem in a 1948 issue of *Anekānt*, proudly noting that he had been told that the poem had been painted on the wall of the Bīspanth Koṭhī temple at the important pilgrimage shrine of Sammet Shikhar in eastern India.

This is not just a modernist response to Holī. The fifteenth-century Digambar poet Brahm Jindās criticized the popular performance of Holī in his *Holī Rās*.<sup>3</sup> As summarized by Premcand Rānvkā (1980: 70f.), Jindās described how Holī had been observed in the fourth spoke of time in Jain cosmology, a Jain version of the golden age of truth (*satya yug*):

“[S]pring (*basant*) was played on the full moon of Phālgun. *Rās*, *bhās*, *kavitt*, *phāg* and *gīt* [all genres of songs] were sung. Virtuous people worshipped in the Jina temples. There were performances of religious stories. This was the correct Holī. The way Holī is observed nowadays is not correct.”

A century-and-one-half later, the Digambar poet Chītar Ṭholiyā in his *Holī kī Kathā*, which he composed in Mozamabad in 1603, said that the play with colors and the Holī bonfire are both examples of *mithyātva* or wrong faith. According to him, not only does participating in the play of Holī result in a person being reborn in an infernal existence (*jo*

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<sup>3</sup> Brahm Jindās was a renouncer in the *saṅgh* of Bhaṭṭārak Sakalakīrti, who established the Idar seat of the Balātkār Gaṇ. He was also Sakalakīrti’s younger birth-brother. They were born in the Humbaḍ caste in Patan, north Gujarat. We do not have precise dates for Jindās, but know that he composed two of his many texts between VS 1508 and 1520 (1452 – 1464 CE), and presided over the consecration of Jina icons in VS 1510 and 1516 (1454 and 1460 CE) (Rānvkā 1980: 16).

*ṣelai holī mithyāta / so pāvai narakā kau pāta*), but just watching the bonfire will have the same result (*holī jalatī deṣai soya / naraka taṇaum jīva soya*).<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Holī is a neighborhood event in which everyone in a community is expected to participate. Most Jains have done so willingly and even eagerly. It is a joyous springtime festival, the celebration of which traditionally has not been tied to any one religious community. An article in the March 15, 2008, edition of the *Rājasthān Patrikā*, a Hindī-language daily newspaper in Jaipur, listed several locations where there was public singing for the eight days leading up to Holī. These included the Lārlijī temple of Krishna in Rāmgāñj Bazār, the Vaiṣṇo Devī temple in Rājā Park, the Ānand Kṛṣṇa Bihārījī temple in Tripoliyā, and the Śyām Sevā Parivār organization of Krishna devotees in Jamnāpurī. Another article in the same issue described a poetry recital in celebration of the season; of the five poets mentioned in the article, three were Muslim. At the conclusion of Holī, there is a big annual *kavi sammelan* (“poet’s gathering”) in Vidyādharnagar, a suburb of Jaipur, which is attended by thousands of connoisseurs who come to hear seasonal poetry.

Much of what goes on during Holī, such as visiting with friends and neighbors to express loving comradeship, and eating sweets, dried fruits and other special seasonal foods, is not opposed to Jain ethics or etiquette. Not to participate in these activities can even be seen as rude and anti-social. Despite the ideological stance that a strictly orthodox Jain should not participate in various aspects of Holī (and some indeed do not), in actual fact the vast majority of Jains of all traditions living in north India do so. In Jaipur, for example, on the afternoon of the final day of Holī, many Digambar Jains used to go to the Phāgī temple in Ghīvāloṃ kā Rāstā, where there was a program of devotional singing of Holī and other songs (Anūpcand Nyāyātīrth 1990: 15).<sup>5</sup>

### **Singing Spring: *Phaguā*, *Phāgu***

Holī in north India is more than a two-day religious and social event. It is a high point of a larger set of cultural events that mark the season of spring. As we have seen, there are many musical and poetic performances. People gather in Hindu temples and other public places to sing Holī songs in a seasonal style known as *phaguā*, after the spring month of Phāgun. In

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<sup>4</sup> Chītar Ṭholiyā, *Holī kī Kathā*. These passages are found in verses 95 and 96 in ms. 1356, and verses 94 and 95 in ms. 1357. See also Anūpcand Nyāyātīrth 2004.

<sup>5</sup> While the similarity between the name of the temple and the name of the season may be behind the annual song performance, the name of the temple derives from the fact that the founders of the temple migrated to Jaipur from the village of Phāgī.



traditional north India, wintertime often saw the men of a family go elsewhere, to work, trade or soldier. In Phāgun women expected their men to return. Many *phaguā* songs express *viraha* or love in absence, and are filled with emotional longing and sexual anticipation. Others express *saṃyog*, as the man has returned and the lovers are again united.

*Phāg* is also one of the names for the red powder that people throw on each other while playing Holī. While the various myths behind the festival indicate that most of the activities pre-date the Krishna-oriented Vaiṣṇavization of north India, in large parts of north India, Holī for several centuries has been inextricably linked with imitating the ways that Krishna and his companions played it. The play of colors in particular is closely associated with the spiritualized erotic play of Krishna and the *gopīs* in the countryside of Braj.

Modern *phaguā* songs derive from the older genre of *phāg* or *phāgu*. As described by Charlotte Vaudeville (1986: 21), “the main and almost sole theme of the *phāgu* is the erotic theme in its various aspects and phases: *viyoga* and *saṃyoga*, union and separation of lovers.” Kantilal B. Vyas (1942: xxxviii f.) has summarized the features of a *phāgu*. It begins with a sensuous description of spring, as all of nature exhibits new life. The poem then turns to the heroine. The fertile exuberance of spring accentuates her longing for her absent lover. The detailed descriptions of the love-sick heroine are essential to the mood of the poem, creating a sympathetic sense of longing in the audience. At length, the hero returns, the lovers are reunited, and rather than being in conflict with the surrounding natural setting, their fertile erotic play is consonant with it. The poem ends with a sense of profound fulfillment.

This genre was adopted by more theologically oriented poets in the Vaiṣṇava and Jain traditions to express the separation of the person from his or her spiritual essence. In a Vaiṣṇava *phāgu*, the poet allegorized the separation of the lovers to the separation of the soul from God as Krishna. In a Jain *phāgu*, the poet allegorized the separation of the person as defined externally by the transitory and deluded body and senses from the person’s true being, the internal, eternal and wise soul.

The Jain genre of *phāgu*, and another genre that Vaudeville demonstrated had extensive overlap with it, the genre of *bārahmāsā* (a cycle of songs depicting the twelve months of the year), had a significant influence on the later Digambar genre of Holī songs. Vaudeville (1986: 22) wrote, “in the oldest *phāgus* . . . the ‘play-acting’ element is always noticeable,” so the genre lent itself to transformation from narrative poetry into drama. These two genres of *phāgu* and *bārahmāsā* appear to have been particularly popular in the language now characterized as Old Gujarati, and the examples Vaudeville discussed were all composed by Śvetāmbar authors. In relation to the *bārahmāsā* genre, she observed (p. 17), “the oldest known *viraha-bārahmāsas* [sic] are not krishnaite poems . . . but Jain works in Apabhraṃśa or old Mārvāṇī-Gujarātī; the heroes are not Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, but one of the Jain saints,

usually the romantic Nemi (Neminātha) and his fiancée Rājimatī, cruelly abandoned by him on her wedding day.”<sup>6</sup> Agarcand Nāhṭā (1962b: 36f.), and following him Vaudeville (1986: 23), argued that the genre of *phāgu* also shows Jain, and particularly Śvetāmbar Jain, origins. The oldest known *phāgu* is the twenty-seven-verse *Sthūlibhadra Phāgu* by the Śvetāmbar author Jinapadmasūri. He was head of the Khartar Gacch from VS 1390 to 1400 (CE 1333-1343) (Vinayasāgar 2004: 202f.).<sup>7</sup>

A third genre that overlapped extensively with *phāgu* was *dhamāl* (also spelled *dhamār*; in older Digambar texts often spelled *ḍhamāl*). This was not as early a genre; the earliest Digambar examples are from the sixteenth century VS, and the earliest Śvetāmbar examples from the seventeenth century VS. The overlap between *phāgu* and *dhamāl* was so great that Nāhṭā (1962b: 39) said, “There must be differences between *phāgu* and *dhamāl* in terms of meter, *rāginī* and style, but in the seventeenth century, from when most of the compositions in the genre of *dhamāl* date, both names are applied to the same compositions.” We see this clearly in the seventeenth-century text I discuss below by the seventeenth-century Banārsīdās, which was entitled both *Adhyātam Phāg* and *Adhyātam Dhamār* in the same manuscripts.

Among Jains *phāgu* and *bārahmāsā* appear to have begun in Śvetāmbar literary circles, but they did not remain exclusively Śvetāmbar genres. There was also a Digambar expression of this genre, as seen in the *Ādīśvar Phāg* by Jñānbhūṣaṇ, composed sometime around 1500 CE. The author was a *bhaṭṭārak* who occupied the Sagwara seat (in what is now Dungarpur District in southern Rajasthan) of the Kāṣṭhā Saṅgh, Nandītaḍ Gacch. He was active between VS 1531 and 1560 (CE 1475-1504). His *Ādīśvar Phāg* in two cantos, the first in Sanskrit and the second in what Kāslīvāl (1967: 59) characterized as “Rajasthani influenced by Gujarati,”<sup>8</sup> narrated the biography of the first Jina, Ādināth or Ādīśvar. After dwelling at great length on the hero’s childhood and accession to the throne as king, Jñānbhūṣaṇ achieved a denouement

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<sup>6</sup> Vaudeville’s use of the term “old Mārvāṇī-Gujarātī” indicates the extent to which “Old Gujarati” and “Old Rajasthani” extensively overlap, such that distinguishing between them obscures more than it clarifies. Recent papers by Imre Bangha 2012 and Phyllis Granoff 2012 have gone far toward reorienting the history of the vernacular languages of north India, and demonstrated clearly both the important role of the Jains in the development of all the vernaculars, and the extent to which modern labels such as “Hindi” and “Gujarati” are of dubious use in analyzing pre-modern vernaculars. See also the comments by two of the leading scholars of pre-modern languages and literatures of western India. Kastūrcand Kāslīvāl 1981: 59 said, “In truth, in the seventeenth century Gujarati and Rajasthani could not have been different.” H. C. Bhāyāṇī 1965: 34 n.1 said, in a similar vein, that the same medieval language can be called Old Gujarati, Old Western Rajasthani, Maru-Gurjar and Old Gurjar.

<sup>7</sup> Vaudeville dated Jinapadmasūri’s text to ca. 1330.

<sup>8</sup> See note 6.

in which the divine dancer Nīlañjanā was sent by the gods to remind Ādīśvar of the need to renounce the world. She danced so energetically that she fell dead. This shocked Ādīśvar into realizing the fragility of life, and caused him to renounce his throne and become a homeless mendicant. We see here a skillful redeployment of the common *phāgu* emphasis on *viraha* or bereavement at separation from one's beloved to underscore the Jain valorization of renunciation of the emotions.

Other Gujarat-based *bhaṭṭāraks* also composed *phāgus*.<sup>9</sup> Bhaṭṭārak Sakalakīrti of the Idar branch of the Balātkār Gaṇ composed a *Śāntināth Phāgu* in the late fifteenth century (Kāslīvāl 1967: 1f). Bhaṭṭārak Vīrcand of the Surat branch of the Balātkār Gaṇ composed a *Vīr Vilās Phāg*, on the life of Nemināth, sometime shortly before 1600 (Kāslīvāl 1967: 106f.). Bhaṭṭārak Ratnakīrti of the Surat branch of the Balātkār Gaṇ composed a *Nemināth Phāg* and *Nemināth Bārahmāsā*, also sometime shortly before 1600 (Kāslīvāl 1981: 51f.). Finally, Brahm Rāymall, another renouncer in the Surat branch of the Balātkār Gaṇ, but who lived in the Dhūṇḍhahāḍ region (the modern-day Jaipur area), composed a *Nemīśvar Rās* or *Nemīśvar Phāg* in VS 1615 (CE 1558; Kāslīvāl 1978: 16f.). These works are all found in Digambar libraries in north India, and so almost certainly influenced the later north Indian genre of Digambar Holī songs.<sup>10</sup>

### **A Digambar Jain Counter-Tradition of Holī: Banārsīdās**

Digambar Jain poets in north India developed a tradition of short Holī songs (*pad*) that was both in continuity with the older *phāgu*, *dhamāl* and *bārahmāsā* literature, and a response to the popular transgressive observances.<sup>11</sup> We do not know when this counter-tradition of Holī

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<sup>9</sup> The influence of Gujarati-writing Digambar renouncers in the development of this genre is an indication of the important role Digambar Jains in Gujarat have played in the broader north Indian Digambar tradition, and as a bridge between the north Indian and south Indian Digambar communities. Discussion of the Gujarat Digambar communities is almost totally lacking in most scholarship on the Jains.

<sup>10</sup> Ramanlāl C. Śāh 1999 published 140 Jain *phāgus* in Gujarati script, by both Śvetāmbar and Digambar authors.

<sup>11</sup> Śvetāmbar authors, most of them mendicants, also developed a tradition of Holī songs. In 1886, the Śvetāmbar publisher Bhīmsīṃh Māṇek published a collection of 227 Holī songs (*Jain Horī Saṅgrah Pustak*). More recently, Kavin Śāh 2001 published an edition of 111 Holī (Holī) songs in Gujarati script, many of them the same as in the 1886 collection. This body of songs awaits analysis on another occasion. That the seventeenth-century Śvetāmbar poet Ānandghan composed at least one song that shares the Digambar allegory (Cort 2013b), and that songs by several Digambar authors are included in the two Śvetāmbar collections, indicate that there were avenues of influence and sharing among Śvetāmbar and Digambar authors. This subject also needs further investigation.

songs started, but it has been in existence since at least the time of Banārsīdās (1586-1643), who composed several Braj-bhāṣā poems on the subject. Included in his *Banārsī Vilās*, the collection of his poetic works compiled shortly after his death by his friend and fellow poet Jagjīvanrām, is an eighteen-verse poem entitled *Adhyātama Phāg* or *Adhyātama Dhamār*. Banārsīdās engaged in an extensive allegorization of the observance of Holī, in which he stressed the need to turn away from externalities and focus on one's inner spiritual essence. In the refrain of the poem, he asked,

Without spirituality  
how will you realize  
your divine form?<sup>12</sup>

This is the basic message of the style of Digambar spirituality known as Adhyātma; Banārsīdās was a leader in one of the most important Adhyātma circles, in Agra, in the mid-seventeenth century (Cort 2002). Adhyātma involved a radical form of soteriological dualism, and in the song Banārsīdās recommended that while deluded people play the external, physical Holī, the spiritual seeker should instead “play in the virtues of the power of the spontaneous soul”<sup>13</sup> and thereby destroy delusion. Among the many virtues in which the seeker should revel is *sumati*, right or good thought or belief. Hiralal Jain (1962: 14) felicitously translated *sumati* as “good intention.” In this poem, Banārsīdās said that *sumati* is like a festive black cuckoo, whose singing aids the soul (*ghaṭ*) that is wandering in a fog as thick as a cloud of cotton.<sup>14</sup>

Two other poems by Banārsīdās also described the Jain spiritual Holī. A short poem in the springtime *rāg* of Basant described the saints (*sant*) gathered in the Jina's court (*darbār*).<sup>15</sup> The other involved a more fully developed allegory, similar to what we find in the many Holī songs of subsequent centuries.<sup>16</sup> Banārsīdās said that the heroine Sumati and her

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<sup>12</sup> *adhyātama bina kyoṃ pāiye ho paramapuruṣako rūpa.*

<sup>13</sup> *sahaja śakti guṇa kheliye ho.*

<sup>14</sup> *bharama kuhara bādaraphaṭe ho.*

<sup>15</sup> *raṅga macyau jina dvāra cālau khelīyai horī* (Nāhtā 1978: 351).

<sup>16</sup> *raṅga bhayo jina dvāra calo sakhi khelana horī* (APP §517, p. 192); *raṅga bhayo jina dvāra calo sakhi khelana horī* (JBhG, pp. 286f.); *dhamāl: dhoma macī jina dvāra cālau khelīyai horī* (Nāhtā 1978: 351). Even though the opening lines diverge between the versions published in APP and JBhG on the one hand, and by Nāhtā on the other, there is sufficient overlap between them that they can be considered as a single *pad* with significant manuscript variation. The variants would seem to indicate that the unknown editor(s) of JBhG did

friends expelled the evil woman Kumati (Bad or Wrong Thought, Belief or Intention) from their midst. In place of the passionate colors of Holī, they sprinkled the colors of equanimity (*samatā*). Instead of a physical fire to burn the wood of the bonfire (and the small living beings who make it their home), they developed the interior fire of meditation (*dhyān*) in which they burnt up the eight forms of karma. Banārsīdās also allegorized the foods shared by people on Holī: the sweets became compassion (*dayā*), the expensive dried fruits became renunciatory asceticism (*tap*), and the betel leaf became truth (*sat*). Finally, the congregational musical performance of Holī was allegorized, as the drums and tambourines instead of music played the guru's speech (*vacan*), as well as knowledge (*jñān*, *gyāṇ*) and forgiveness (*kṣamā*, *khimā*).

### Jagjīvanrām

Banārsīdās was not the only Jain poet of his time to allegorize Holī. His fellow member of the Agra Adhyātma seminar, Jagjīvanrām (also Jagjīvandās), was an Agravāl Jain who was a *divān* for Jāfar Khan, a courtier of Shah Jahan (Premī 1957: 106f.). In VS 1701 (CE 1644) he collected Banārsīdās's smaller writings into the *Banārsī Vilās*. He was also a poet in his own right. He composed an *Adhyātmik Phāg*, which was built around the recitation of the *Namaskāra Mantra*.<sup>17</sup> In the song he urged his listeners as faithful Jains to play Holī in the appropriate manner, so they would never again suffer the burning pain of life in this world of suffering.<sup>18</sup> He concluded:

Your hair stands on end  
and happiness arises  
when you play Horī here

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not simply copy their version from *APP*, but had access to another manuscript version of the *pad*, so we are dealing with a single *pad* for which there are multiple manuscript readings.

None of these variant Holī *pads* is found in *Banārsī Vilās*, nor discussed in scholarship on Banārsīdās. The editor of *APP*, Kanchedi Lāl Jain, died before finishing the book, and so gave no indication of the sources for the poems in his collection. *JBhG* provides no information concerning how the book was compiled. Nāhṭā simply said that the *dhamāl*, and an eight-line *pad* in *rāg basant* (*raṅga macyau jina dvāra cālau khelīyai horī*) that he published at the same time, were from a manuscript in his collection. The attribution of these poems to the well-known poet, therefore, is uncertain at best. I have translated the *APP* version in Cort 2013b.

<sup>17</sup> *ṇamo ādi arahanta kauṃ ho sidha caraṇa cita lāyā*, in *Jain Pad Sañcayan*, §156, p. 82. The editor, Gaṅgārām Garg, collected this poem from a Digambar library in the Bharatpur area.

<sup>18</sup> *horī khelhiye bhavijana bahauri nahiṃ iha dāva*.

in the right way.<sup>19</sup>  
Jan Jagjīvan sings:  
remember the blessed Jina King.  
The dried fruits are crown and crest-jewel  
as you play Phagvā with your body.<sup>20</sup>

### The Battle between Delusion and Discrimination

Possibly because Banārsīdās is regarded as a foundational poet for the subsequent tradition of lay Digambar poets in north India, he was also credited with the composition of an allegorical drama, called *Moh Vivek Yuddh*, or *The Battle between Delusion and Discrimination*. Most scholars, however, have rejected his authorship of this text. Nāthūrām Premī (1957: 83f.) rejected it on the grounds that the text does not match Banārsīdās's known works either in use of Jain technical language or its skill in metrics. Saroj Agravāl (1962: 265f.) compared the text with two other known texts of the same name, by one Jan Gopāl (ca. VS 1650-1730) of the Dādūpanth,<sup>21</sup> and the second by Lāldās (composed ca. CE 1675 or 1710?), who was a Vaiṣṇava. She concluded that the Banārsīdās text is an abridgement of the one by Jan Gopāl, and so must have been authored by another, later Banārsīdās. Ravīndar Kumār Jain (1958; 1965; 1966: 207f.), who appears not to have known of Agravāl's detailed analysis, nonetheless came to the same conclusion by a similar close comparison of the texts by Banārsīdās and Jan Gopāl. Agarcand Nāhṭā (1964) also concluded that the text attributed to Banārsīdās was authored by Jan Gopāl. In verses two and three, the author of *Moh Vivek Yuddh* explicitly said that he related in a more concise version what was found in three longer texts by the earlier poets Malh, Lāldās and [Jan] Gopāl. According to Premī (1957: 84f.), on the basis of information provided to him by Agarcand Nāhṭā concerning a manuscript in a Jaipur library, Malh (or Mall), also known as Mathurādās, was an Advaitin author who lived

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<sup>19</sup> Holī is spelled and pronounced Horī in Braj-bhāṣā. I use the former spelling in my own prose, but the latter in direct translation, in order to be faithful to the poets.

<sup>20</sup> *roma roma sukha ūpajai tuma iha vidhi horī khelha*  
*janajagajīvana gāiye ho sumirau śrī jīnarāya*  
*mevā mukati siromaṇī tuma phagavā dehu manāya.*

<sup>21</sup> See Thiel-Horstmann 1983: 11f. on this Dādūpanthī poet, who was active in the late sixteenth century.

in Antard. <sup>22</sup> Malh's *Moh Vivek Yuddh*, composed in VS 1603 (CE 1546), was a vernacular version of Kṛṣṇamiśra's *Prabodhacandrodaya*.

The presence in the Digambar libraries of Jaipur of five manuscripts of *Moh Vivek Yuddh* attributed to Banārsīdās indicates that it was copied and read by later Digambar authors, for whom the attribution to Banārsīdās would have given the text an authoritative status. <sup>23</sup> Agarcand Nāhtā (1962a: 95f.) wrote that a manuscript in the *bhaṇḍār* (library) of the Śvetāmbar Jain Baṛā Upāsarā in Bikaner contained the *Moh Vivek Yuddh* along with four texts whose attribution to Banārsīdās is certain: the *Mokṣamāl Paiṛī*, the *Jñān Paccīsī*, and his Braj-bhāṣā translations of the *Sindūraprakara* and the *Kalyāṇamandira Stotra*. The manuscript was commissioned by a layman named Śāh Haṁsrāj, and copied in the town of Malkapur in 1703 by a Śvetāmbar mendicant named Raṅgvimalgaṇi. Haṁsrāj had the *Sindūraprakara* copied for his own studies (*paṭhanārth*), but had the other three copied so that he could use them in sermons (*vācanārth*). He obviously was an important leader of a local intellectual circle, and he was described as a leader of the local congregation (*saṅgh-mukhya*). While there is no colophon to the *Moh Vivek Yuddh*, it is possible that it was also copied for Haṁsrāj. Its presence in this manuscript shows that at least in the early eighteenth century in this one Śvetāmbar setting, Banārsīdās's authorship of *Moh Vivek Yuddh* was accepted.

In 118 verses, the text describes a lengthy battle between two opposing armies. On the one side was the army of Vivek (Discrimination), who was assisted by such allies as Niṣkāṁ (Dispassion), Dayā (Compassion), Saraltā (Straightforwardness) and Udārtā (Generosity). On the other was the army of Moh (Delusion), who was assisted by Kām (Passion), Krodh (Anger), Māyā (Illusion), Mamtā (Egotism), and others. In the end, Vivek was victorious.

## Kṛṣṇamiśra

*Moh Vivek Yuddh* indicates another line of historical influence upon the Holī songs of the later Digambar poets. This is the long tradition of allegory in South Asian religious writing. The Śvetāmbar scriptures, for example, contain many symbolic and metaphorical stories, as

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<sup>22</sup> It is not clear where this Antard was. According to the Indian Place Finder maintained by the University of Tokyo ([icia.csis.u-tokyo.ac.jp](http://icia.csis.u-tokyo.ac.jp); accessed June 3, 2013), there are two towns with this name in Madhya Pradesh, in Katni and Satna Districts.

<sup>23</sup> Kāslivāl (1945-72: 2: 184, 330, 364f.; catalogue §§ 664, 665, 2322, 2424, 2507) listed five copies of *Moh Vivek Yuddh* in the library of the Baṛā Terāpanth temple as of 1954. The first two were independent manuscripts, while the other three were in collections of multiple texts. As of 2011, only the two independent manuscripts I include in the bibliography could be located in the collection.

well as several instances of formal allegory.<sup>24</sup> The classical example of the use of allegory in Jain literature is the Sanskrit *Upamitibhavaprapaṇcākathā* (*Allegorical Story of the Diversity of Worldly Existence*), composed by the Śvetāmbar monk Siddharṣi in CE 906. All the characters in this long novel had highly allegorical names such as Niṣpuṇyaka (Virtueless), Supuṇyaka (Good Virtue), Sadbuddhi (True Insight), Sadāgama (True Scripture) and Sumati (Good Intention). Several centuries later, during the short reign of the Caulukya emperor Ajayapāla (CE 1229-32), the lay Śvetāmbar poet Yaśaḥpāla composed his Sanskrit *Moharājaparyāya* (*Defeat of King Delusion*), an allegorical drama first performed in the Kumāravihāra, a temple to Mahāvīra built in Tharad by Ajayapāla's predecessor Kumārapāla. This drama, about the "conversion" of Kumārapāla to Jainism, detailed a lengthy struggle between the armies of Vivekacandra (Moon of Discrimination) and Moha (Delusion). Their armies were populated by a large cast of virtues and vices. Allegory was also employed by Digambar authors, for example in the ca. fourteenth century VS Sanskrit *Madanaparājaya* (*Defeat of Lust*) by the south Indian layman Nāgadeva. This narrated a battle between the hero Jinendra and his foe Madana or Kāma (Passion), whose chief general was Moha (Delusion). Again, both sides were filled with allegorical characters from Jain soteriology. In the end, Madana and his army were defeated, Jinendra married Siddhi (Spiritual Perfection), and the two went to Mokṣa.

The most famous allegory in Indian literature, and one that had a significant influence on Jain literature, was the *Prabodhacandrodaya* (*Moonrise of Spiritual Awakening*) of Kṛṣṇamiśra. The author was an Advaitin ascetic who lived in the court of the Candella king Kīrtivarman, where the play was first performed sometime soon after 1060 CE (Kapstein 2009: xxviii). The play is said to have been written in order to teach philosophy to one of Kṛṣṇamiśra's disciples (Nambiar 1971: 2), and it serves well as an introduction to the various schools of Indian philosophy. In the play, Kṛṣṇamiśra lampooned representatives of the various non-Advaita schools, such as Buddhism, Jainism and Cārvāka, and described (with adequate accuracy) and rejected their doctrines. The hero of the play was Puruṣa (Soul), who had forgotten his identity with Parameśvara, the Supreme Being. He had been led astray by his wife Māyā (Illusion). His son Manas (Mind), along with a companion named Ahaṃkāra (Egoism), contributed to his ignorance. Manas in turn had two wives, the bad wife Pravṛtti (Activity, i.e., active engagement with the external sensory world) and the good wife Nivṛtti (Quiescence, i.e., ceasing such active engagement). Pravṛtti's son was the equally bad Moha (Delusion), while Nivṛtti's son was the good Viveka (Discrimination). Moha and Viveka waged a war over their grandfather, each of them accompanied by an appropriately negative

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<sup>24</sup> The best introductions to this literature are H. Jain 1962 and R. Jain 1964.



and positive army of external and internal values and practices. Manas saw that Pravṛtti had been the source of much suffering, and he became attached to Nivṛtti. He was aided by his good sons and associates, and became quiet, i.e., he turned away from external stimuli and focused upon his interior spiritual essence. Viveka was then able to awaken Puruṣa to his true nature.

This play was widely read in the subsequent centuries by intellectuals and artists in all traditions. It was also the source of extensive imitation, adaptation and translation. It had a significant place in the vernacular literatures of north India (Agravāl 1962; McGregor 1971, 1986; Sharma 2011: 136f.). As we saw above, as *Moh Vivek Yuddh* it was adapted into Braj-bhāṣā by poets of several different religious persuasions, including a Jain.

### Vādicandra

Arguably the most important Digambar Jain response to the *Prabodhacandrodaya* was the Sanskrit *Jñānasūryodaya Nāṭaka* (*Drama of the Sunrise of Knowledge*), written in VS 1649 (CE 1593) by the domesticated monk Vādicandra. The title was a direct nod to Kṛṣṇamiśra's earlier allegorical drama, for whereas the earlier play detailed the Moonrise of [Salvific] Awakening, Vādicandra's concerned the Sunrise of [Salvific] Knowledge.<sup>25</sup>

Vādicandra was a *bhaṭṭāraḥ* of the seat of the Sūrat Branch of the Balātkār Gaṇ of the Mūl Saṅgh in southern Gujarat (Premī 1956).<sup>26</sup> He composed the *Jñānasūryodaya Nāṭaka* in Mahuva, in present-day Surat district in southern Gujarat. He wrote a number of texts, mostly in Sanskrit, but also in the vernacular, between VS 1640 (CE 1584) and VS 1657 (CE 1601), including a *Pārśva Purāṇa* and a *Pavanadūta*. The latter was an imitation of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, so Vādicandra had an obvious propensity for imitations of classical Sanskrit literature.

The *Jñānasūryodaya Nāṭaka* was the story of the hero Ātman (Soul). He had a number of children by his two wives Sumati (Good Intention) and Kumati (Bad Intention). Sumati's four sons were all virtues: Prabodha (Awakening), Viveka (Discrimination), Santoṣa (Contentment) and Śīla (Virtue). Kumati's five sons were all vices: Moha (Delusion), Kāma (Passion), Krodha (Enmity), Māna (Pride) and Lobha (Greed). Several of these characters reappeared in the works attributed to Banārsīdās a generation later, and still others were included in the subsequent genre of Digambar Holī poems.

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<sup>25</sup> This highly popular Digambar text has never, to the best of my knowledge, been published in its Sanskrit original.

<sup>26</sup> See also Johrāpurkar 1958: 186f.

Sumati and Kumati are good and bad variants of one of the five forms of knowledge (*jñāna*) according to Jain epistemology. In brief, *mati-jñāna* consists of knowledge that is mediated by the senses (which, in Jainism, includes the mind).<sup>27</sup> In the Holī poems, *mati* simply refers to all the ways that the person interacts with external stimuli, and allows those stimuli to shape his or her understanding of and reaction to the world. Because it is sensory, *mati-jñāna* is inherently different from the immaterial soul. The soul (*jīva*, *ātman*), on the other hand, is marked by consciousness (*cetanā*).<sup>28</sup> Pure consciousness, however, is obscured in the unliberated soul by karma. Of particular importance here is the form of knowledge-obscuring (*jñānāvaraṇīya*) karma that blocks knowledge; one of the five sub-forms of this karma blocks *mati-jñāna*.

While the Digambar allegories of Sumati, Kumati and Cetan are based on the basic elements of Jain epistemology and karma theory, they do not relay the technical details. Rather, the allegories work on a simpler and more straightforward understanding that Cetan is the pure, eternal soul within the person, characterized in particular as being Consciousness. In Sanskrit the feminine noun *cetanā* was the preferred form, but in the vernacular literature the masculine noun *cetan* was used. This allowed the poets to allegorize Cetan as a male hero. Sumati and Kumati are the positive and negative mentalities - mind is considered one of the senses in Jain ontology - by means of which a person, as a transitory embodied being, interacts with the world. These two aid or hinder the person in realizing his or her pure, eternal essence. Sumati and Kumati comprise all of the thoughts, beliefs and intentions through which one interacts with the external world. Since *mati* is a feminine noun, the poets then allegorized Sumati and Kumati as feminine characters.

We do not have any definitive proof that Banārsīdās himself read or otherwise knew of Vādicandra's drama, composed a generation earlier in a different province of the Mughal Empire. It is clear that subsequent poets did read it, and it had a significant influence on later vernacular Digambar literature. There are at least eight manuscripts of the drama in the Digambar temple libraries in Jaipur, and at least another half-dozen manuscripts in other Digambar temple libraries elsewhere in Rajasthan (Kāslīvāl 1945-72). More important as evidence of its influence is that it was translated at least five times into the vernacular, making it among the most frequently translated of all Digambar Sanskrit texts. Just a single manuscript copy exists of some of these translations, indicating that they might be

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<sup>27</sup> See Jinendra Varṇī 1993-95 III: 249f. for an extensive presentation of *mati-jñāna* from the Digambar perspective.

<sup>28</sup> On *cetanā* see Jinendra Varṇī 1993-95 II: 296f.

translations done privately for a person's own edification.<sup>29</sup> An otherwise unknown author named Jinvardās (who, from his name, might have been a renouncer disciple of a *bhaṭṭārak*), composed his version in VS 1854 (CE 1797); the single extant copy was made by one Dayācand Cāndvār and deposited in the Barā Terāpanth temple library in Jaipur in VS 1892 (CE 1835). The unknown Bakhtāvarlāl composed his version, of which just a single copy was extant as of 1954, in VS 1854 (CE 1797). The one copy of a version by the unknown Bhagavatīdās was copied in VS 1877 (CE 1820). The well-known vernacular hymnist and author Bhāgcand composed his version in VS 1907 (CE 1850). There are at least twelve manuscripts of his version in Rajasthan libraries. The last version was by Pārasdās (also Pārśvadās) Nigotyā (d. VS 1936 = CE 1879), an important Digambar *paṇḍit* of Jaipur who was a voluminous author.<sup>30</sup> In VS 1883 (CE 1826), his father Ṛṣabhdās Nigotyā (who was also an active writer) built the Digambar Temple Nigotiyān, a Terāpanth temple in Jaipur, which is still managed today by his descendents (Anūpcand Nyāyātīrth 1990: 14f.). There are at least eight manuscripts of Pārasdās's version in Jaipur temple libraries.<sup>31</sup>

## Būcrāj

Another precursor to the later Digambar Holī tradition, who also pre-dates Banārsīdās, is the poet Būcrāj. Little is known of this poet. His only two dated texts are from 1532 and 1534. In total he composed eight longer texts and eleven short *gīts* and *padś*. He was a renouncer in the *bhaṭṭārak* tradition who lived in the area of what is now Rajasthan and Haryana.<sup>32</sup> In his undated *Bhuvanakīrti Gīt*, Būcrāj expressed his devotion to Bhaṭṭārak Bhuvanakīrti as his guru, and also indicated that he had spent some time in the group of renouncers led by Bhuvanakīrti's predecessor Bhaṭṭārak Ratnakīrti. Bhuvanakīrti and Ratnakīrti occupied the

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<sup>29</sup> I have used the manuscripts (listed in the bibliography) of all these translations, except for the one by Bakhtāvarlāl. Kāslīvāl 1945-72 IV: 317 listed one manuscript of Bakhtāvarlāl's *Jñānasūryodaya Nāṭaka Bhāṣā* (catalogue §3335; Choṭe Dīvān veṣṭan 564), which was missing as of 2011.

<sup>30</sup> See the introduction by Gaṅgārām Garg to his edition of *Pārśvadās Padāvalī*, as well as K. Rāṅvkā 1966.

<sup>31</sup> Just three decades after Pārasdās Nigotyā composed his vernacular version in a form of *Ḍhūṇḍhārī* that was strongly inflected by Braj-bhāṣā, the modern scholar Nāthūrām Premī, one of the most important of all traditional Digambar scholars, translated the play into Modern Standard Hindi in 1909. Whereas the earlier versions were all entitled *Jñānasūryodaya Nāṭaka Bhāṣā*, or sometimes labeled as a *vacanikā* ("vernacular prose gloss"), Premī's work was consciously in the new, modern genre of *anuvād* ("translation"). In his introduction (p. 4), Premī wrote, "The *vacanikās* do not fulfill what people nowadays like in a translation."

<sup>32</sup> Information on Būcrāj comes from Kāslīvāl 1979: 10f.; see also P. Jain 1964: 97f. and Kāslīvāl 1967: 70f..

seat of the Nagaur branch of the Balātkār Gaṇ. The branch was started by Ratnakīrti in 1515; he was later consecrated as *bhaṭṭārak* in Delhi in 1524.<sup>33</sup> He was succeeded by Bhuvanakīrti in 1529, who occupied the seat until 1533.<sup>34</sup> The colophon of a manuscript of the *Samyaktva Kaumudī* that was copied in 1525 indicates that it was donated to a Brahm (celibate renouncer) Būc in Champavati (also known as Chaksu and Chatsu), a town with an important Digambar presence that is located about twenty-five miles south of present-day Jaipur.<sup>35</sup> Kāslīvāl (1979: 11f.) has written that Champavati between 1518 and 1528 was a center of Bhaṭṭārak Prabhācandra and his group of celibate disciples, and they produced a number of manuscripts, so Būcrāj may have been one of the celibate renouncers in Prabhācandra's following. Prabhācandra was head of the Delhi branch of the Balātkār Gaṇ from which Ratnakīrti had earlier broken off. Prabhācandra and Ratnakīrti were both disciples of Bhaṭṭārak Jinacandra, and Johrāpurkar (1958: 110) indicates that the separation was simply one of geography, not ideology, so Būcrāj and other renouncers may have moved between the two groups. According to Kāslīvāl (1979: 12), Prabhācandra's group was one in which there was extensive study of Sanskrit and Prakrit texts, and so being in this group may have been attractive to a renouncer like Būcrāj with strong literary interests. Būcrāj completed his *Mayaṇ Jujjh* in Champavati in 1532. His only other dated text is the *Santoṣ Jayatilaku*, which he completed in Hisar in 1534. In a *gīt* (song) he venerated the icon of the Jina Śāntināth in Hastinapur, a Jain pilgrimage shrine about fifty-five miles northeast of Delhi.<sup>36</sup> Manuscripts of Būcrāj's texts have been found mostly in Rajasthan, confirming that while he spent time in other regions of northern India, this was probably his principle area of residence.<sup>37</sup>

Būcrāj is best known as a poet of allegories (*rūpak*), composed in a form of vernacular language that showed strong influences of Apabhramsa, but also the rising influence of Hindī. In the 159 verses of his *Mayaṇ Jujjh* (*The Battle against Lust*) he narrated a struggle between the first Jina, Ṛṣabha, and Kām (also known as Madan), the god of erotic love or lust. The battle was carried out between the same pair that we see in the *Moh Vivek Yuddh*

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<sup>33</sup> Information on Ratnakīrti comes from Johrāpurkar 1958: 104, 110, 114, 121.

<sup>34</sup> Information on Bhuvanakīrti comes from Johrāpurkar 1958: 114, 121.

<sup>35</sup> The full text of this colophon is given by Kāslīvāl 1950: 63.

<sup>36</sup> Būcrāj, *Gīt in Rāg Dhanākṣarī* (in Kāslīvāl 1979: 111). This same temple was visited by Banārsīdās a century later, in 1619; he also composed a very short hymn to Śāntināth, along with Kunthunātha and Aranātha, two other Jinas who are important at Hastinapur (*Ardhakathānak* 583). See Balbir 1990 for a study of Hastinapur.

<sup>37</sup> Nāhṭā 1963:361 reported that his manuscripts are found in both Digambar and Śvetāmbar libraries, indicating that his narratives were popular in the region across sectarian lines.

attributed to Banārsīdās, and who also played major parts in Kṛṣṇamiśra's *Prabodhacandrodaya*: the hero was Vivek (Discrimination), while his opponent was Moh (Delusion). Vivek was the son of Cetan (Consciousness) by his good wife Nivṛtti (Quiescence), while Moh was Cetan's son by his bad wife. Moh in turn married Māyā (Illusion), and their son was Kām. Among Moh's female companions was Kumati, along with Kusīkh (Bad Learning) and Kubuddhi (Bad Insight). Vivek married Sumati. Vivek was assisted by a retinue of virtues, while Moh was assisted by a large number of vices. In the end, Vivek defeated Moh, and so the renouncer Ṛṣabha overcame Kām.

Several of Būcrāj's other narrative texts also involved allegories that fit within the larger Digambar literary tradition that includes the later Holī songs. His 113-verse *Santoṣ Jay Tilaku* told the story of a contest between Santoṣ (Satisfaction) and Lobh (Greed). The *Cetan Pudgal Dhamāl* was a springtime narrative of 138 verses in which he told of the conflict between Cetan and Pudgal. This is the fundamental Jain ontological duality of conscious soul and unconscious matter; recognizing the profound difference between the two, and so orienting oneself toward the former while rejecting the latter, is at the heart of the spirituality emphasized by the later Jain vernacular poets.

### **The Ongoing Tradition of Cetan, Sumati and Kumati**

The allegory of King Consciousness and his two wives, Good Intention and Bad Intention, continued to be popular in Digambar vernacular literature outside of its use in the Holī songs I discuss below. The poet Bhaiyā Bhagavatīdās (also spelled Bhagotīdās), whose *pads* continue to be sung today, composed his *Cetan Caritra* (*Epic of Consciousness*), also known as *Cetan Karm Caritra* (*Epic of Consciousness and Karma*), in 1679.<sup>38</sup> Bhaiyā Bhagavatīdās was a Digambar Osvāl who lived in Agra, where his father Daśrath Sāhu had been a well-known merchant.<sup>39</sup> His dated compositions are from a period between 1674 and 1698. In part

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<sup>38</sup> The colophon of the incomplete manuscript (even though the library card prepared by Anūpcand Nyāyīrth in 1953 lists the manuscript as complete, as do both Kāslīvāl 1945-72 II: 17 in his published catalogue of the library and the recent library card prepared as part of the reorganization of the Digambar libraries in Jaipur under the auspices of the National Mission for Manuscripts, it is clear that the manuscript is complete only through verse 95 on page 24, and all subsequent pages are missing except for the unnumbered colophon page) I consulted in the library of the Baṛā Terāpanth temple in Jaipur gives the date of composition as 1695; all other sources give the date as 1699, including the version given in the printed edition of his *Brahm Vilās*. Śitikanṭh Miśra 1989-99 III: 32 has also noted the two different dates given for this text. On *Cetan Caritra*, see also Paramānand Śāstrī 1957 and U. Jain 2006: 39f.

<sup>39</sup> The Bhaiyā Bhagavatīdās who composed *Cetan Caritra* was different from the earlier Bhagavatīdās who also lived in Agra and was a companion of Banārsīdās in the Adhyātma seminar in that city. The earlier Bhagavatīdās was an Agravāl Digambar who was born in Ambala, and first moved to Delhi before coming to

because of his residence in the Mughal capital, his texts contain much Urdu and Persian vocabulary (Miśra 1989-99: 3: 316). He composed more than sixty texts, ten of which were to varying extents in the genre of allegory. In the 290 verses of the *Cetan Caritra*, he narrated the story of King Cetan and his two wives, Sumati and Kumati. Sumati sees that Cetan is entangled in Karma, and tells him that he must fight illusion (*moh*) with the weapons of discrimination (*vivek*), and the distinctly Digambar spiritual emphasis on knowing the difference (*bhed-vijñān*) between the sentient soul and the insentient material body. In response to this positive influence of Sumati, Cetan's other wife, Kumati, leaves him and returns to the home of her father, King Illusion (Mohrāj). He sends a messenger named Lust (Kām) to demand that Cetan accept back Kumati, or else prepare for battle. When Cetan refuses to take back Kumati, King Illusion advances with his army led by the generals Passion (Rāg) and Aversion (Dveṣ). They are assisted by warriors with the names of the various kinds of karma. Cetan in turn is assisted by his minister Knowledge (Jñān), and a number of warriors whose names indicate positive spiritual perceptions and practices. In the end, Cetan is victorious.

Another text that relays the conflict between Sumati and Kumati is the *Sumati Kumati kī Jakhaḍī* (*The Binding of Kumati*) by Vinodīlāl.<sup>40</sup> He was a resident of Sahijapur, a town on the Ganga, but also spent time in Delhi during the reign of Aurangzeb, where he composed a vernacular prose rendition of the *Bhaktāmara Stotra* and its related stories in 1690.<sup>41</sup> Other texts by him date from between 1685 (or 1687) and 1693.<sup>42</sup> He was a follower of Bhaṭṭārak Kumārsen, who occupied a seat of the Kāṣṭhā Saṅgh, Māthur Gacch, Puṣkar Gaṇ.<sup>43</sup>

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Agra. Texts by him date from between 1625 and 1658. See P. Jain 1964: 164f. and Miśra 1989-99 II: 316f. Information on Bhaiyā Bhagavatīdās comes from P. Jain 1964: 268f., Miśra 1989-99 III: 316f. and U. Jain 2006.

<sup>40</sup> I have not been able to see this text. The catalogue of the Baṛā Terāpanth Mandir library in Jaipur lists a single three-folio copy of it. It was copied in 1732 (Kāślīvāl 1945-72 II: 327). This manuscript, however, was missing from the library collection when I inquired after it in 2011. Neither Nāhṭā 1948 nor Miśra 1989-99 III: 311f. mentioned this text in their discussions of Vinodīlāl. P. Jain 1964: 322, however, did mention it, but referred only to the same now missing Jaipur manuscript. Kāślīvāl 1945-72 II: 340 listed an anonymous *Sumati Kumati kī Jaghrā* (*The Quarrel between Sumati and Kumati*); this manuscript was also missing in 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Information on Vinodīlāl comes from Nāhṭā 1948, P. Jain 1964: 311f., and Miśra 1989-9 III: 475f.

<sup>42</sup> Nāhṭā 1948: 64 and P. Jain 1964: 319 gave the date of his earliest dated composition, the 42-verse *Nemināth Maṅgal*, as 1687, whereas Miśra 1989-99 III: 477 dated it to 1685.

<sup>43</sup> Johrāpurkar 1958: 223f. gave three references to a Bhaṭṭārak Kumārsen in this lineage, but the available dates are 1558 and 1575. Clearly there was another, later *bhaṭṭārak* by the same name, of whom we know nothing other than the references to him by Vinodīlāl.

The later poets who composed Holī songs that employed the allegory of Cetan, Sumati and Kumati, also composed songs outside the Holī setting that described either all three of them, or just the struggle between Sumati and Kumati (and, accordingly, the need for a good Jain also to struggle between them). Budhjan, whose Holī songs I analyze below, for example, composed the following *pad* in the Rāg Kaliṅgarā:

The work of Kumatī  
is worthless,  
sir. (refrain)

The woman Sumatī  
is smart—  
the doctrine tells you, sir,  
she is excellent.

She is born of endless bondage.  
Her brothers are anger,  
greed & intoxication.  
Illusion is her sister,  
wrong faith her father—  
this is the lineage  
of Kumatī. (1)

She loots your house  
of knowledge, wealth  
& wisdom.  
She gives birth  
to passion & aversion.  
Then you become weak  
& karma foes  
grab hold of you.  
You dance the dance  
in life after life. (2)

Get rid of your affection  
for her family—

this is Budhjan's advice.  
Color your love with Sumatī  
                    the daughter of Dharma,  
                    live in the palace  
                    of liberation. (3)<sup>44</sup>

### The Story of the Holī Festival

In tracing the various literary streams that inform the later vernacular Holī songs of King Consciousness, Good Intention and Bad Intention, we should be aware of an earlier genre of Holī literature that appears not to have influenced the later Holī allegory. This is the genre of narratives, found in both Sanskrit and vernacular, and in both prose and verse, that relate the story behind a specifically Jain way of observing Holī in a nonviolent manner. Above I mentioned the *Holī kī Kathā* of Chītar Ṭholiyā, which he composed in Mojamabad in 1603. Almost nothing is known about Chītar Ṭholiyā. The *Holī kī Kathā* is his only extant composition. We do know, however, that Mojamabad in the early seventeenth century was an important center of Digambar Jainism within the Kacchvāhā state.<sup>45</sup> In the 101 or 102 verses of his poem,<sup>46</sup> Chītar Ṭholiyā told the story of a rich merchant named Manorath and his wife

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<sup>44</sup> APP §285, pp. 85f.; BBhS §126, p. 141; JPS §112, p. 45.

*kumatī ko kāraja kūṛau ho jī*  
*thānkī nārī sayānī sumatī mato kahai chāi rūṛau jī (ṭek)*  
*anantānubandhīkī jāī krodha lobha mada bhāī*  
*māyā bahina pītā mithyāmata yā kula kumatī pāī (1)*  
*ghara kau jñāna dhana vādi luṭāvai rāga doṣa upajāvai*  
*taba nīrbala lakhi pakarī karama ripu gati gati nāca nacāvai (2)*  
*yā parikarasaum mamata nivārau budhajana sīkha samhārau*  
*dharamasutā sumatī saṅga rācau mukti mahalamaiṃ padhārau (3)*

<sup>45</sup> This was in large part because of Nānū Godhā (Kāslīvāl 1989: 196f.). He was a *mahāmātya* - minister and general - in the court of Mānsiṃh, king of Amer. Mānsiṃh in turn was an important courtier and general of the Mughal emperor Akbar; he was general of the Mughal army in Akbar's invasion of Afghanistan, and later served as Mughal governor of Bengal. Nānū accompanied Mānsiṃh to Bengal. Upon his return to Rajasthan, Nānū constructed a large Digambar temple in Mojamabad, for which there was a large consecration ceremony in 1607, just four years after Chītar Ṭholiyā composed his *Holī kī Kathā* in that city. The consecration festival was presided over by Bhaṭṭārak Devendrakīrti, who occupied the Amer seat from 1605 to 1633 (Kāslīvāl 1989: 150f.). The *bhaṭṭāraks* of this seat to a significant extent also served as the caste gurus for the Khaṇḍelvāls of the region. While Chītar Ṭholiyā made no mention of Nānū Godhā, Devendrakīrti or the latter's predecessor Bhaṭṭārak Candrakīrti, it is quite possible that he had connections with both Nānū and the Amer *bhaṭṭārak* seat.

<sup>46</sup> Ms. 1356 has 102 verses, while ms. 1357 has only 101. Anūpcand Nyāyīrth 2004 wrote his article on the basis of a third manuscript, in the library of the Digambar Jain Mandir Caudhrī in Jaipur. This manuscript also



Lakṣmī. Their youngest daughter was named Holikā. She was widowed just a few days after her marriage, and returned to her natal home. There she fell in love with a young man named Kāmpāl (Lord Lust). She employed a go-between to arrange for a meeting with him. Holikā killed the go-between so that she could not tell of Holikā's inappropriate behavior. She then burnt the corpse, so people would think that it was Holikā who had died. Holikā and Kāmpāl ran off, and became absorbed in their passion for each other. The go-between was reborn as a fierce goddess (*vyantari*) who began to oppress the people of the city with an illness. She appeared to someone in a dream, and explained what to do to pacify her. She instructed the people to burn a log on the full-moon night of Phāguṇ, and then rub the ashes from the fire on the foreheads of anyone who was ill. If this was done in the spirit of correct Jain faith (*samyaktva*), the goddess would be pacified and the person cured. People came to call this fire "Holī." Holikā and Kāmpāl, meanwhile, became impoverished due to their single-minded focus on their erotic affair. Holikā returned to her natal city, and came to the shop of Manorath. He saw her eyeing a saree, and remembered that Holikā had been fond of it. He realized she was his daughter, and took her back into her home. Chītar Ṭholiyā concluded, as we saw above, with the exhortation that people should perform Holī in a state of equanimity and peace, whereas the popular, more riotous performances were a sign of wrong faith (*mithyātva*).

Other texts also told this tale. An anonymous Sanskrit prose text entitled *Holī Rañja Parva Kathānaka* (*The Story of the Festival of Holī Color*) found in a manuscript in the Digambar library formerly in the old capital of Amer, and now at the Jain Vidyā Saṁsthān in Jaipur, tells the same story. This manuscript was copied in 1820. As with many Jain narratives, this explanation for the observance of Holī is not restricted to the Digambara. The *Holī Rañja Parva Kathānaka* by a Śvetāmbar monk named Jinasundarasūri, in fifty-one Sanskrit verses tells essentially the same story as does Chītar Ṭholiyā and the anonymous *Holī Rañja Parva Kathānaka*.<sup>47</sup> None of the characters of this narrative, however, appear in the vernacular Digambar Holī songs.

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has 102 verses, followed by a thirteen-verse colophon in which the copier described Jaipur, the Chaudhī temple, and the lineage of Chājūlāl Sāh, who built the temple.

<sup>47</sup> At least three manuscripts of Jinasundarasūri's text are found in Digambar libraries in Jaipur, although most manuscripts are found in Śvetāmbar libraries. I have no further identification of this author. Śitikanṭh Miśra mentioned two vernacular authors by this name. The first was a monk in the Barātapa Gaccha, who lived sometime in the late-fifteenth or early-sixteenth century, but it is not known if he wrote any texts (Miśra 1989-99 I: 510). The second was a Kharatara Gaccha monk whom Miśra simply listed as a disciple of Puṇyasāgara and guru of Paramānanda. The latter composed a text in 1618 (Miśra 1989-99 II: 284). Mahopādhyāya Vinayasāgar 2006: 337 listed one author by this name, who composed four vernacular songs (*gīt stavan*). He lived from 1645 to 1715, and was active in southern Gujarat and Saurashtra (Vinayasāgar 2004: 278). The

## Budhjan

In the two centuries following Banārsīdās, seemingly every one of the dozens of prolific poets who made up the thriving lay Digambar vernacular literary scene in north India included several Holī songs in his repertoire.<sup>48</sup> For example, we find two Holī songs among Bhāgcand's eighty-seven songs, and there are seven Holī songs among the more than 700 we have from Pārasdās Nigotyā. On the occasion of this celebration of the scholarship of Alan Babb, and in honor of his close study of the city of Jaipur over the past two-and-a-half decades, I have chosen to present and analyze the six Holī songs (*pad*, *bhajan*) by the Jaipur Digambar Jain poet Birdhīcand (also Badhīcand, Bhadīcand and Budhcand), better known by his *nom de plume* Budhjan.<sup>49</sup> He was active between VS 1835 (CE 1778) and VS 1895 (CE 1838), and so lived a generation before Pārasdās Nigotyā. He may well have known Pārasdās's father Ṛṣabhīdās, since they were contemporaries, although we have no evidence that they met. Budhjan was a prolific author of more than two dozen independent texts, and more than 250 short *pads*. He also built a temple, in VS 1864 (CE 1807), the Budhcand Baj temple on Ṭikkīvāloṃ kā Rāstā in Kīśānpol Bazaar (Anūpcand Nyāyīrth 1990: 60f.). This temple is in the Gumān Panth.

Budhjan's poems do not show a single, simple allegorization of Holī. Rather, in each composition the poet gave different symbolic interpretations of various elements in the observance of Holī. Presumably part of the enjoyment of hearing the songs sung in performance would be the pleasure of seeing how the poet had structured equivalences in any one particular song, and then comparing them to the next song that followed in the series. To give some sense of how they might have been received in performance, I will first present and discuss the poems individually, before returning to an overview analysis of them.<sup>50</sup> The

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oldest manuscripts of the text found in the Śvetāmbar library in Patan were copied in the seventeenth century VS (Puṇyavijay 1971, §11467; and Jambūvijay 1991, §15256).

As with many Jain narratives, the story of Holikā is found in both Digambar and Śvetāmbar literature. Amṛtsūri 1953 presented a modern retelling of the Śvetāmbar version, which is largely similar to the Digambar one, but did not specify his source(s). Other versions of the story found in the Patan library include the 34-verse Sanskrit *Holikārajaḥparva Kathā* by Puṇyarājagaṇi, composed in CE 1429; the Sanskrit prose *Holikā Kathā* by Bhāvaprabhasūri, composed in CE 1726; the 139-verse Sanskrit *Holikārajaḥparva Kathā* by Phatendrasāgara, composed in CE 1766; the Sanskrit prose *Holikāparva Vyākhyāna* by Kṣamākalyāṇa Pāṭhaka, composed in CE 1779; and an anonymous 65-verse Sanskrit *Holikā Kathā*.

<sup>48</sup> I intentionally use the male pronoun here, as this tradition appears to have been an almost exclusively male one, at least in terms of what made it into manuscript form and has therefore been preserved for us today.

<sup>49</sup> On Budhjan, see Mūlcand Jain Śāstrī 1986 and Cort 2009.

<sup>50</sup> I discuss the performative context for Digambar hymns in Cort 2013c.

order here is the same as that in the recent edition of Budhjan's collected independent songs by Tārācand Jain.

*Now he's come home, my King Consciousness*<sup>51</sup>

In the first poem, Sumati—who is never directly named in the poem, but is understood to be the person singing it—celebrates that her lord and master Consciousness has returned home from unspecified travels in time to play Holī. As contemporary scholarship has shown, Holī is a time of social anti-structure, when the hierarchical concerns of society are temporarily set aside. Sumati does this as well, in addition to setting aside worldly concerns that distract one from the spiritual pursuit. The poet indicates one ritual way to overcome Kumati: donation (*bali*) to the gurus. Since at the time of Budhjan there were no full-fledged naked Digambar *munis* in north India, but only landed and clothed *bhaṭṭāraks*, whose authority and therefore suitability for donation the Gumān Panth rejected, Budhjan either speaks idealistically of giving to a true renouncer, or else by “gurus” (*guruḥ*) refers to the Jinas, the ultimate teachers for the Jains. Budhjan then turns to his allegorization of Holī. The reservoir that holds the water to be used in the water-fights equals experience of the self (*nij subhāv*). The red dye, the squirt-gun, and the act of sprinkling the dyed water are all referred back to this experience of the self. Through this experience, Sumati sings that she will be able to keep Cetan “at home,” and he will not wander again.

Now he's come home,  
my King Consciousness.  
Friend,  
now I can play Horī. (refrain)

I've put aside laziness  
I've put aside worries  
I've put aside family

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<sup>51</sup> These songs use extensive technical and semi-technical language, which causes problems in translation. The three key characters - Cetan, Sumati and Kumati - are all short words of two or three syllables. Short words fit well with the aesthetic of both Braj-bhāṣā and contemporary American English verse, as both tend eschew the use of long, multi-syllabic words. Technical philosophical terms in English tend to be longer words, however, which can quickly deaden a verse translation. For the most part, therefore, I have chosen to retain Cetan, Sumati and Kumati in the original Braj-bhāṣā. At times, however, the longer translated terms fit the verse as well if not better, and so I have chosen to use them, as in this case.

I am firm  
I am steadfast  
I am strong.

Don't think about Kumati—  
she's a bad one.  
She keeps looking at me.  
I give & give  
to the gurus  
to drive away  
my silly ideas. (1)

I fill the reservoir  
with the water of experience  
of my self,  
I stir in  
the red dye  
of my self.  
I pick up the pure *pickārī*<sup>52</sup>  
my self  
I sprinkle  
my mind itself. (2)

I have sung  
I have rejoiced  
he's now under my sway  
never again  
will he go away.  
Budhjan says,  
I am dyed [with the self]  
& will remain inside  
[I have found]  
my timeless strength. (3)<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> The *pickārī* (also *picukī*) is a syringe for squirting colored water at a distance, much like a modern-day squirt-gun. Both “syringe” and “squirt-gun” entail misleading associations in English, so I have chosen to retain the original in my translation.

### *Everyone has gathered to play Horī*

In this poem, Cetan is missing when everyone else gathers to play Holī, as Kumati has stolen him through greed (*lobh*) and delusion (*moh*). These two vices are common to all Indic religions, but in Jainism are both forms of karma (Jaini 1979: 131). The sweets that people give each other at Holī are given a negative gloss, as lies (*jūṭha*) that have allowed Kumati to lead Cetan into unvirtuous actions. Sumati reflects one of the foundations of Jain ontology: every individual soul in its pure state is indistinguishable from every other soul in its perfections, and the perfected soul is God, the Lord of the three worlds (*tīn lok sāhib*). But we forget this due to the karmic vices, and so are condemned to become slaves (*dās*) of our wrong perceptions and intentions, and to wander through the city of rebirth. In her bereavement at losing Cetan, Sumati turns to the gurus - here clearly the Jinas - and weeps her petition (*araj*) that they show mercy (*dayāl*) on her, and return Cetan to Sumati - in other words, that they return Consciousness to the influence of Good Intentions.

Everyone has gathered

to play Horī.

Whom will I meet

to play Horī? (refrain)

Kumati is an evil one.

She has charmed my wise one.

She's sown greed & delusion

& robbed him.

He is naïve

so she fed him sweets of lies.

She forced him

away from his virtues. (1)

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<sup>53</sup> APP §510, p. 189; BBhS §187, p. 219; JPS, Vol. 5, §91, p. 36.

*aba ghara āye cetanarāya sajanī khelaiṅgī maiṃ horī*  
*ārasa soca kāni kula harikai dhari dhīraja barajorī (ṭek)*  
*burī kumatikī bāta na būjhai citavata hai mo orī*  
*vā gurujana kī bali bali jāūṃ dūri karī mati bhorī (1)*  
*nija subhāva jala hauja bharāūṃ ghorūṃ nijaraṅga rorī*  
*nija lyaūṃ lyāya śuddha picakārī chirakana nija mati dorī (2)*  
*gāya rijhāya āpa vaśa karikai jāvana dyaūṃ nahi porī*  
*budhajana raci maci rahūṃ nirantara śakti apūraba morī (3)*

He is the Lord  
of the three worlds.  
Who is equal  
to his strength?  
He doesn't remember  
his self.  
He's become a slave  
& wanders about her city. (2)

Budhjan says,  
Sumati says to the gurus,  
Hear my plea  
& show mercy on me.  
I weep & moan  
I grasp your feet.  
Give me back  
my dear Cetan. (3)<sup>54</sup>

### *Cetan, play Horī with Sumati*

In this third song, the speaker is Budhjan, who directly addresses Cetan, in other words, his own Consciousness. He urges his Consciousness to break with all that is “other” (*ān*, i.e., *anya*), the term commonly used in Jainism to indicate karma, the material bondage that is “other” than the pure immaterial soul. As in this poem, the karmic “other” (*anya*, *par*) is contrasted with what is one's “own” (*nij*), the soul. Budhjan again uses an urban metaphor, one that would speak to the lived experience of his urban (and urbane) listeners in a Jaipur temple, when he urges Consciousness to return home to his own city. In this poem Budhjan engages in a fuller allegorization of Holī than the first two poems. The ashes (*chār*) from the Holikā fire are the passions; Budhjan here uses a technical term, *kaṣāy*, that is specific to Jain

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<sup>54</sup> APP §508, p. 188; BBhS §188, p. 221.

*aura sabai mili hori racāvaiṃ hūṃ kāke saṅga khelauṅgī horī (ṭek)*  
*kumati harāmini jñānī piyāpai lobha moha kī dārī ṭhagaurī*  
*bhorai jhūṭha miṭhāi khavāi khoṃsi laye guna kari barajorī (1)*  
*āpa hī tīna lokake sāhiba kauma karai inakai sama jorī*  
*apanī sudhi kabahūṃ nahiṃ lete dāsa bhaye ḍolaiṃ para paurī (2)*  
*guru budhajana taiṃ sumati kahata haiṃ suniye araja dayāla su morī*  
*hā hā karata hūṃ pāṃya parata hūṃ cetana piya kīje mo orī (3)*

philosophy. The saffron (*keśar*) that is mixed into the water to sprinkle on other people is *samakit* (right faith), while deluded people fill the shoulder-bags they carry during Holī with stones that are *mithyā* (wrong faith). This is another fundamental Jain dualism, as rejecting the wrong way of understanding the world (*mithyā*, *mithyātva*, *mithya-darśana*), and coming to right faith (*samakit*, *samyaktva*, *samyak-darśana*), or the correct way of seeing the world as has been shown by the Jinas, is the key moment in one's becoming a true Jain. Instead of carrying around the heavy stones of wrong faith in one's shoulder-bag, one should carry around the light red powder (*gulāl*) of the self. This is what leads to enlightenment, and allows one to forego the external play of the senses and karma in favor of the inner spiritual play (*vilas*) with the beautiful bride of liberation (*śiv-gori*). There is a gentle eroticism in this image of play, as *vilas* (more often *vilās*) refers to sensuous engagement with the world. R. S. McGregor (1997: 928) defines *vilās* as “sensuous pleasure; luxurious life . . . pleasure with the opposite sex, flirting.” The spiritual union of one's liberated self is compared and contrasted with the worldly union with a beautiful woman (*gorī*, *gaurī*).

Cetan,  
     play Horī  
         with Sumati. (refrain)  
 Break with your love  
     for that other one,  
         that shrewd one.  
 Join with the good one.

You wander  
     from path to path.  
         Come to your own city.  
 Why not share  
     the juice of Phaguvā  
         with your own?  
 If not  
     you'll be wretched. (1)

Give up the passions—  
     they're ashes—  
         grab hold of her.

Mix the saffron  
     of right faith.  
 You carry around  
     stones of wrong faith—  
         throw them away.  
 Fill your shoulder-bag  
     with the red powder  
         of the self. (2)

You've fallen  
     under the spell  
         of frauds.  
 All you've gained  
     is sorrow,  
         you've lost your senses.  
 Budhjan says,  
     restore your own appearance  
         & play with the bride of liberation. (3)<sup>55</sup>

***Cetan, today I'll play Horī with you***

This fourth song is the most sensuous of Budhjan's Holī songs. In it he explicitly refers to the erotic nature of Holī and transforms it into an allegory of the spiritual path. This song also starts with the image of Cetan returning home after wandering elsewhere for many days. Sumati is piqued, and vows to get back her own. In a sort of violent love-play, she binds him, but with equanimity (*sañjam-mat*), and visits upon him afflictions (*parīṣah*), which, she assures him, will be good for him. This again involves technical Jain doctrine. The stories of

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<sup>55</sup> In *rāg Āsāvārī Jogiyā*, in a fast *tetālā*. *APP* §508, p. 188; *BBhS* §189, p. 222; *HPS* §238, pp. 198f.; *JPS*, Vol. 5, §23, pp. 10f.

*cetana khela sumati saṅga horī*  
*torī ānakī prīti sayāne bhalī banī yā jaurī (ṭek)*  
*ḍagara ḍagara ḍole hai yaum̐ hī āva āpanī paurī*  
*nija rasa phaguvā kyaum̐ nahim̐ baṅto nātara khvārī torī (1)*  
*chāra kaṣāya tyāgī yā gahi lai samakita keśara ghorī*  
*mīthyā pāthara ḍārī dhārī lai nija gulāla kī jhorī (2)*  
*khoṭe bheṣa dharaim̐ ḍolata hai dukha pāvai budhi bhorī*  
*budhajana apanā bheṣa sudhāro jyaum̐ vilaso śivagorī (3)*



the Jinas and subsequent ascetic monks are filled with the stories of the afflictions (*parīṣah*) they endured with equanimity (*samyam, sañjam*). In this song, enduring afflictions is equated with the games of lovers. Earlier Cetan had been bound by Kumati (here called Durmati); but Sumati binds him for his own good. She lovingly bathes him to make him pure, and then rubs his body with the red powder (*gulāl*) of right faith (*samakit daras*). She gently sprinkles the juice or nectar (*sudhāras*) of right knowledge (*jñān*) on him, and rubs the paste (*cobā*) of right conduct (*cārit*) all over his body.<sup>56</sup> These three are the three jewels of right faith, knowledge and conduct that together make up the Jain path to liberation, here allegorized as unguents with which Sumati covers his body. Finally, just as lovers feed sweets to each other with their own hands, she feeds Cetan the sweets of compassion (*dayā*). Through all these intimate acts, Sumati makes Cetan's body fruitful (*saphal*), and says that the two lovers, formerly separated but now joined, will remain together forever. By this Sumati is able to fulfill her mind's desires (*man kī āśā*); whereas the desires of a worldly lover would be love-play with her man, in the spiritual allegory Mind desires immersion in the pure soul.

Cetan

today I'll play Horī with you. (refrain)

Why have you wandered elsewhere

for so many days?

Now I'll take my revenge.

I count as wrong

everything you've done.

Now I will bind you

with equanimity.

You will endure

many afflictions

but they'll be good for you. (1)

She made you suffer

& made you wander—

I'll drive away Durmati.

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<sup>56</sup> The film by Katz 1996 included a scene in which a couple lovingly rubs oil over the body of their young son in order to gather up all the sinful dirt on his body that has accumulated in the past year. They then rub cleansing oil on his body, and throw the old, polluted paste into the Holikā fire.

You've been fettered  
by the spells of frauds.  
Now I'll bathe you  
& make your appearance pure. (2)

I'll rub you  
with the red powder of right faith.  
I'll sprinkle you  
with the nectar of knowledge.  
I'll rub the paste  
of right conduct  
all over your body.  
I'll feed you  
the sweets of compassion. (3)

Budhjan says,  
I'll make your body fruitful.  
I'll grind up  
all your misfortunes.  
I'll remain with you.  
never again  
will we be apart.  
I'll fulfill  
my mind's desires. (4)<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> In *rāg Kāfī*, and *tāl Dīpacandī*. *BBhS* §190, p. 223.

*cetana tosaum āja horī khelaungī re*  
*ananta divasa kyom anatahi dolyau tākau badalā aba lyauṅgī re (tek)*  
*jo taiṃ karī so bhaṇḍuvā gavāūṃ sañjamataiṃ kara bāndhaugī re*  
*trāsa pariṣaha lagaigī terai taba sudhatāi āvaigī re (1)*  
*jina tokaum dukha dai bharamāyau tā duramatikaum bhagāvaungī re*  
*khoṭe bheṣa dhare laṅgara taiṃ aba śubha bheṣa banā dyaungī re (2)*  
*samakita darasa gulāla lagāūṃ jñāna sudhārasa chirakaungī re*  
*cārīta cobā caracaum saba tana dayā miṭhāi khabāvaungī re (3)*  
*budhajana yau tana saphala karaungī vidhi vipadā saba cūraungī re*  
*hima mila rahuṃ bichuraum nahim kabahūṃ manakī āśā pūraungī re (4)*

### *Today I play Horī in my own city*

Many of the scholarly accounts of Holī focus on it as a rural festival, celebrated in villages, especially the villages of the cowherds of Braj. It has long been an urban festival as well, and Budhjan as a lifelong city dweller focuses on its urban aspects. This allows him to employ a widespread spiritual metaphor of the body as a city (oftentimes described as a city of nine gates), and traveling and celebrating within the city as a metaphor for the inward spiritual path. Budhjan says he will celebrate Holī in “my own city” (*nij-pur*); this could equally be translated “the city of my self,” and the double entendre is intentional. The subject of this song is Budhjan, who says how elated (*umagi*) he is that both Cetan - in this case called Cidānand (Bliss of Consciousness), a widespread Indic term for the spiritual self - and Sumati have come to his town to play Holī with him, in his very body. He again allegorizes elements of Holī to the three jewels: the red powder (*gulāl*) is right knowledge, the saffron (*kesar*) is right faith, and the water thrown from the squirt-gun (*picukī*) is right conduct. In the fourth verse Budhjan creates an allegory using elements of *hatha yoga*; these are stock in trade for *nirguṇ* songs across the religious traditions of north India, and found in many other Jain songs. Whereas the external Holī is known for its distinctive seasonal songs, Budhjan silently sings his soul with every yogic breath.<sup>58</sup> Whereas in the external Holī people douse each other with a cascade of colored water, Budhjan in his yogic Holī spreads the “unstruck sound” (*anahad*).

Today I play Horī  
in my own city. (refrain)

I am elated  
Cidānand-jī has come  
& beautiful Sumatī has come as well. (1)

All worldly shame  
& worries of family  
have gone.

I fill my bag  
with the red powder of knowledge. (2)

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<sup>58</sup> Tārācand Jain (p. 226) in a footnote explained that *ajapā gāna* refers to repeating (*jap*) a verse or mantra, doing one recitation with every thought or every breath, while moving one’s lips but making no sound.

I mix the color  
of the saffron of right faith.  
I squirt right conduct  
from the *picukī*. (3)

With every breath  
I silently sing the beautiful songs.  
I spread a cascade  
of the unstruck sound. (4)

Budhjan says,  
when they see this  
& are soaked  
they'll observe  
an amazing story. (5)<sup>59</sup>

***I will play Holī in the court of the blessed excellent Jina***

We saw above that many Jain songs in the *bārahmāsā* and *phāgu* genres involve the twenty-second Jina, Nemināth. It is not surprising, therefore, that a number of Holī songs also describe the play of Holī in Nemināth's court (*darbār*). This is part of a much older use of the life of Nemi to contrast the Jain path of world-renunciation, equanimity and non-harm to the world-affirming, sensuous and therefore potentially harmful sports of his cousin Krishna. While Budhjan does not explicitly mention Nemi in this final song, most Jain listeners would assume that in this song Budhjan is describing himself playing Holī in Nemi's court. He again contrasts the interior spiritual Holī of the self (*sarūp*) with the exterior material Holī of the other (*par*), karma. He contrasts Kumati as a demoness (*nārikā*) with Sumati as a similar sounding but ethically opposite good woman (*nāri*). He allegorizes the ashes (*bhasmī*) of the Holikā fire and the colors (*raṅg*) of the Holī play with the dualistic pair of wrong faith (*mithyā*) and right faith (*samakit*). Whereas people in the material Holī drink *bhāṅg* and

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<sup>59</sup> In *rāg Sāraṅg*. *APP* §509, pp. 188f.; *BBhS* §191, p. 225; *HPS* §237, p. 198.

*nijapura meṃ āja macī horī (ṭek)*

*umagi cidānandajī ita āye ita āī sumatīgorī (1)*

*lokalāja kulakāni gamāī jñāna gulāla bharī jhorī (2)*

*samakita kesara ranga banāyo cāritra kī picukī chorī (3)*

*gāvata ajapā gāna manohara anahada jharasauṃ varasyo rī (4)*

*dekhana āye budhajana bhīge nirakhyau khyāla anokhī rī (5)*

become intoxicated, Budhjan drinks the juice of the self (*nij ras*), and thereby attains a spiritual intoxication that fills him with bliss (*ānand*) and joy (*haraṣ*).

I will play Horī  
in the court  
of the blessed excellent Jina. (refrain)

I will remove the spell  
of the power  
of the other.

I will purify  
my innate self.  
I will play Horī. (1)

I will no longer keep company  
with Kumati  
that demoness.

I will summon  
the good woman Sumati.  
I will play Horī. (2)

I will sweep away  
the ashes  
of wrong faith.

I will filter the color  
of right faith.  
I will play Horī. (3)

Budhjan says,  
I drink the juice of the self  
& now I'm drunk.  
I'm filled with joy  
& bliss.  
I will play Horī. (4)<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> In *rāg Kanaṭī*. *BBhS* §192. p. 227.  
*śrījīnavara darabāra khelūṅgī horī (tek)*

## The Allegorical Songs of Holī and Jain Spirituality

We do not see in these songs a single, rigidly imposed allegorization. There are a few elements that are common: the male hero is Cetan (in one place Cidānand), Consciousness; the female heroine is Sumati, Good Intention; and the wicked anti-heroine is Kumati (in one place Durmati), Bad Intention. The basic allegorical message is that of Digambar spirituality: the need to turn away from the external world of sensory influx and karmic bondage, and focus instead on the inner spiritual path to the purity of the soul. The many ways that a person can be distracted by external sensory experience are symbolized by aspects of Holī, as are the religious virtues and practices that allow one to turn away from the externals and return to one's self, one's soul.

The ashes (*chār*, *bhasmī*) of the Holikā fire in one case are the passions (*kaṣāya*), and in another are wrong faith (*mithyā*). In another song, wrong faith is symbolized by stones (*pāthar*) that a person carries around in a shoulder-bag. Wrong faith, what we can also translate as incorrect worldview, the wrong way of seeing things, in other words, is the very essence of the personality of Kumati.

Right faith (*samakit*), on the other hand, is the very essence of Sumati. It shows up in four of the six songs, symbolized in two cases by the saffron (*keśar*, *kesar*) mixed into the water that is squirted in the Holī play, and in the other two by the dry red powder (*gulāl*, *raṅg*) that is thrown in the Holī play. The red powder also symbolizes the self (*nij*) in two songs, and knowledge (*jñān*) in another song. The water into which the saffron or other coloring agents is mixed symbolizes experience of the self (*nij subhāv*) and right conduct (*cāritra*). Knowledge and right conduct also appear in different guises in Budhjan's more erotic song, "Cetan, today I'll play Horī with you," the former as nectar or juice (*sudhāras*) shared by the lovers, and the latter as cooling paste (*cobā*) that Sumati rubs all over Cetan's body.

Finally, one element of Holī appears as both a virtue and a vice. Celebrants share sweets (*miṭhāī*) with each other on the afternoon after playing with color, a sign of the loving communion with family, neighbors, and even strangers that is at the heart of one social message of Holī. In one song the sweets symbolize the lies (*jūṭh*) with which Kumati has

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*para vibhāvakā bheṣa utārūṃ śuddha sarūpa banāya khelūṅgī horī (1)*  
*kumati nārikaṃ saṅga na rākhūṃ sumati nāri bulavāya khelūṅgī horī (2)*  
*mithyā bhasamī dūra bhagāūṃ samakita raṅga cuvāya khelūṅgī horī (3)*  
*nija rasa chāka chakyau budhajana aba ānanda haraṣa baṛhāya khelūṅgī horī (4)*

entranced Cetan and led him away from his virtues (*guṇ*), and in another they symbolize compassion (*dayā*) that Sumati feeds to Cetan to keep him united with her.

In the hands of an unskilled poet or a pedantic moralist, allegory can be a deadening genre, which can quickly fail to hold the reader's (or listener's) attention. The analogies between the external, physical surface of the drama, and the interior, spiritual and conceptual message, can become mechanical, predictable and therefore boring. This is not the case, I argue, in Budhjan's songs. He employs his skills to provide a different "take" on the underlying allegory in each song. I intentionally import this term from western music to indicate the way that allegory functions in these Holī songs. Any take of a song, whether in live performance or in the recording studio, will differ from all others, perhaps in slight and subtle ways, perhaps in significant and even drastic ways. The music aficionado knows the "original" of a song, and can appreciate the ways that the performance of any particular take plays with it and creates something new (or, of course, the opposite—not all takes work for all listeners). In a similar manner, the knowledgeable members of an audience gathered in a Digambar temple in Jaipur during the season of Phaguā to hear a performance of Budhjan's songs, would know the many cultural elements in the observance and play of Holī, and would also know the basics of Digambar Jain spirituality and the path to the perfection of the soul. To the extent that each song successfully presented a new way of allegorizing that spiritual path through the elements of Holī - a new take on the inner spiritual Holī - members of the audience would experience musical joy. They would also experience a heightened understanding of the spiritual truths of Digambar spirituality, and perhaps some of them thereby advance along that spiritual path themselves (or, "them-selves").

## **Taming Holī**

The Digambar Jains have not been the only ones in north India to compose and sing allegorical Holī songs. Many "Hindu" poets have also composed such songs, in both the *nirguṇ* and *saguṇ* styles,<sup>61</sup> although it does not appear to have been as extensive a genre as among Digambar poets. In an article on the Holī songs in north Indian religious literature, Bhaṇvarlāl Polyākā wrote that religious poets, "have seen Holī in a different way, and experienced it in a transcendent [*alaukik*] form. They hear the message of Holī in a different

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<sup>61</sup> The *nirguṇ-saguṇ* distinction has been thoroughly historicized and problematized in recent years (Hawley 2005). I use it here as a simple shorthand to distinguish between two broad and overlapping styles of religiosity in north India, on the one hand with an emphasis on turning inward to discover one's spiritual essence, and on the other with an emphasis on the need to establish a firm relationship with God (in various forms) as one's refuge and savior.

way, and their play of colors with the *pickārī* and other toys is different” (Polyākā 1957: 141). He discussed Holī *pads* by eleven authors. Three of these were Jain - Budhjan, Daulatrām and Dyānatrāy. Of the other eight, six were “Hindu”: Mīrābāī, Sahajobāī, Caraṇḍās, Cunnīlāl, Sāhabrām and Nārāyaṇ. Two were Muslim: Yārī Sāhab and Afsos Sāhab. He concluded, “Sant and bhakti poets of every tradition have composed spiritual (*ādhyātmik*) *pads* in connection with Holī, and have described the Holī play of their chosen deity (*iṣṭ*)” (Polyākā 1957: 151).

Paying attention to the Jain allegorization of Holī allows us to see how non-Jain authors also strove to recast Holī as a spiritually transformative occasion rather than a socially transgressive one. Let me give a few examples.

The large anthologies of songs in the Dādū Panth known as *Pañc Vāṇī*, include a single Holī song each by three of the five poets. These are Kabīr, Nāmdev and Hardās. Dādū and Raidās do not appear to have composed such songs, at least not among those in the anthologies.<sup>62</sup> In their critical edition of the *Pañc Vāṇī*, Callewaert and de Beeck included songs by Gorakhnāth and Sundardās; the latter’s songs also include one Holī song. These four *nirguṇ* songs show an allegorization of Holī, although not the same as the Jain allegory with Cetan, Sumati and Kumati. Kabīr sings:

Play Horī with the true teacher.  
Drive away disease & death,  
bring wandering to an end.<sup>63</sup>

He continues, to sing of spraying forgiveness (*ṣimā, kṣamā*) with the *pickārī*, of playing Horī in the alley of meditation (*gyānn galī*), and of the dramatic display of the true teacher playing Phāg (*tamāsā satagura ṣelai phāga*).

Nāmdev’s song begins in a manner similar to several of those by Budhjan:

My beloved has wandered  
to a foreign land,  
how can I play Horī?<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Nor are there any Holī songs in the collection of Raidās’s works by Callewaert and Friedlander 1992.

<sup>63</sup> *sataguru saṅga horī ṣelie jātaṃ jarā marana bhrama jāī. Nirguṇ Bhakti Sāgar* §144, p. 327.

<sup>64</sup> *mora piyā bilamyō paradesa horī maiṇ kā saum khelaum. Nirguṇ Bhakti Sāgar* §229, p. 419.



He does not, however, engage in an extensive allegorization of the elements of Holī. Both Hardās and Sundardās refer to the “red powder of knowledge” (*gyān gulāl*), and in their songs they play on the image of the inner self being soaked in the color of true spiritual experience.<sup>65</sup>

*Saguṇ* poets have produced Holī songs that are in many ways quite similar to those of the *nirguṇ* poets, reminding us that the *saguṇ-nirguṇ* distinction, while heuristically useful at times, can also obscure as much as it reveals. The *saguṇ* Holī songs focus on the loving play with colors and liquids, in which the participants dye each other and erase visual social differences, and simultaneously dye their souls and erase the ignorant perceptions of difference between God and soul. The sixteenth-century Vaiṣṇava poet Paramānand sings (Sanford 2008: 170f.):

Listen, darling beloved reveler, let's go play  
some games.  
Sandalwood and vermilion, perfumed yellow die and red powder,  
everyone throws *rasa*.  
And they take red powder and yellow color, their play resplendent  
in every bower.  
You throw on us, we throw on you: we'll wear  
each other's color.  
The heart of hearts knows this inner joy; he smiles,  
darling and handsome.  
Paramānand knows the connoisseur of *rasa*; he divides and  
throws the *rasa*.

Here the play of colors in Holī symbolizes the Vaiṣṇava emphasis on communion: of congregants with each other, and of congregants with God, the “darling and handsome” one, who is, of course, Krishna. Further, the poet emphasizes that the seeming separation of one from another, of soul from God, is in fact all part of God's creative play, his *līlā*. God experiences life as a unity, but also creates our human experience of difference. In that experience of difference, the soul feels the absence of God, and so many Holī songs begin with a lamentation at separation, as we see in the beginning of the song by Nāmdev. Many centuries later, at the tail end of the Braj-bhāṣā poetic tradition, the Banarsi Vaiṣṇava poet

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<sup>65</sup> *Nirguṇ Bhakti Sāgar* §70, p. 465 (Hardās); and §200, p. 582 (Sundardās).

Bhāratendu Hariścandra wrote a Holī song remarkably similar to that of Nāmdev, in which the female soul mourns the absence of her lover at the beginning of the Holī season:

Friend, my beloved  
is in a foreign land—  
how will I play Horī?<sup>66</sup>

For a Vaiṣṇava, the absence of the beloved reveler at Holī symbolizes the separation of the feminized Soul from the masculine Krishna; for a Jain, it symbolizes the separation of Good Intention (feminine) from the Conscious Soul (masculine).

It is striking that all of these poets - Jain, *nirguṇ*, *saguṇ* - present a softened, cleaned up version of Holī. It is a celebration of loving companionship, in which people gently throw colored powder and sprinkle colored liquid over each other, and share with each other sweets and drinks. These depictions of Holī in the songs of all traditions, to symbolize the theological positions on suffering and liberation, are quite different from the descriptions we get from other sources.

In the songs, the revelers gently throw powder and colored water on each other. They do not douse each other with buffalo urine (Marriott 1966: 203). They might gently hit each other in the songs; we do not find people with lacerated scalps from being struck with hurled water pots (Marriott 1966: 203), or with bruised shins from being fiercely beaten with sticks by village women (Crooke 1968 II: 316, Marriott 1966: 203, Miller 1973: 19). In the songs, the poets drink the juice of religious essence, and become intoxicated in the love of Krishna or the experience of the self. They are not intoxicated on *bhāṅg* or country liquor (Marriott 1966: 203f., Miller 1973: 18, Jassal 2012: 227). While many of the songs involve a symbolized eroticism, this is always within the bounds of poetic propriety. The poets sing devotional *bhajans* and *pads*, not sexually explicit and insulting *gālīs* (Crooke 1968 II: 316, 320f., Cohen 2007, Jassal 2012). Their songs are never obscene (*aślīl*). There are no references to Mahālaṇḍ or Superdick raping the mothers and sisters of the listeners (Cohen 2007). We do not hear of young men and old men dressed as bridegrooms, riding backwards on donkeys, waving gigantic penises made of rags and paper (Marriott 1966: 202, Cohen 2007: 206; cf. Bose 1967: 37f., 53f.). The veiled eroticism of the Holī songs of the Jain, Vaiṣṇava and *nirguṇ* poets is always heterosexual; the male homoeroticism of Holī in Banaras is missing (Cohen 2007). Equally missing is the violence in reaction to caste, class and gender hierarchies that lies clearly visible just beneath the surface of much Holī activity.

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<sup>66</sup> *sakhī hamare piyā paradeśa horī maiṇ kāsom khelaum. Bhāratendu Samagra*, p. 111.

Holī in the songs is fun and playful; Holī today, at least in many cities, is a potentially dangerous time when many people wisely stay off the streets.

In other words, Holī as performed today in Braj and Banaras, and from the historical evidence as it has been performed for at least several centuries, is a deeply transgressive affair. Seemingly every hierarchy - of caste, class, religion, gender, age, sexuality - is turned upside down. It is a time of freedom. But this freedom is not the calm, controlled freedom of orthodox religious ideology; rather, it is an antinomian social freedom from forms of oppressive domination.

Some religious reformers may decry the excesses and subversions of Holī, and urge their co-religionists to avoid it as a “harmful custom” that runs counter to religious orthodoxy. But Holī is unavoidable in north Indian life, and has been for centuries. We see, then, how religious poets from many traditions have tried to soften the subversions of Holī. Budhjan and the other Jain poets employed their educated literary tools of metaphor, symbolism and allegory to transform Holī’s social transgressiveness. Instead of critiquing and reversing the hierarchies of society, we find in Budhjan’s poems a gentler, more irenic religious transgressiveness, in which the listener is urged to put aside all the external constraints and ignorance of worldly existence and turn instead to an inner spiritual pursuit of that which is ultimately real.

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