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Individualisation and democratisation of knowledge in Banārasīdās' *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*

The ways in which religious pluralism produces and regulates processes of individualisation (Malinar 2016, 150) is one of the most productive questions to ask about religion in South Asia, and one that comes to the heart of how Jains, a numerically small community, explained and reconciled religious difference, thus creating an imaginary that affords and accommodates diversity of belief, but also necessarily diversity of personality and identity. The Jain *adhyātma* group championed neutrality and equanimity with regard to otherness and difference, rejecting hostility and partisanship. For these poets, partisanship meant the betrayal of the Self and a lost chance to know the Self, because taking any side is necessarily taking sides against yourself (joining someone else). Early modern Jain spiritual/mystical poets re-calibrated Jain philosophical concepts to the requirements of the laity, and particularly, the individual seeker.

One of the most interesting individuals in 17th-century North India, of whom we have a good record, is the Jain poet Banārasīdās (1586–1643). Perhaps the most telling and fascinating aspect of his writing that speaks to a process of individualisation is Banārasīdās' fascination with himself, as evidenced in his celebrated autobiography, *Ardhakathanaka*. Banārasīdās is so interesting precisely because he intentionally left this ego-document containing a detailed account of his own life, which was the first of its kind in South Asian literature. In the case of Banārasīdās, writing may have helped develop notions of individuality (Rüpke 2013, 8). His desires, anxieties, intense sorrow and exuberance feature prominently in most of his work, wrought with a subtle poetic genius. The micro-social aspects and anecdotal moments in Banārasīdās' writing allows modern readers to view the tender friendships that shape his life and embolden him to take pioneering risks in 17th-century India. He was a pioneer in at least two ways: first, his ego-document was unprecedented and introduced a new genre in Indian literature, and second, he had the audacity, as a layperson, to produce a modern, vernacular version of a religio-philosophical text from the Jain tradition, the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*. Banārasīdās' legacy resulted in a type of conventionalisation of individualisation via other poets and members of the laity. These concepts can be traced through the work of several Jain poets, starting with Banārasīdās. Poets of the *adhyātma* (spiritual) school placed a high premium on *anubhava* (experience of the self through yogic insight), *samatā* (equanimity), and anti-dogmatism

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(Bangha 2013).[1] In order to trace the implications of Banārasīdās' work, I will also briefly discuss Cidānanda (early 19th cent.), and Rājacandra (1867–1901), to demonstrate that two centuries later we still find vibrant strands of this line of Jain thinking and poetics.

Banārasīdās' major works are the following: *Banārasī Nāmamāla* (lexography, 1613), *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* (religio-philosophical treatise, 1636), *Ardhakathanaka* (autobiography, 1641), *Banārasīvilāsa* (a posthumously-compiled poetry collection, 1644). The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*, while not as famous, studied, or celebrated as the *Ardhakathanaka*, is the text in which we see Banārasīdās developing a strong literary personality. Running through the work is a determination and agenda geared toward a bold religious individualisation based on the pluralistic, multifaceted ontology and epistemology of the Jains.

This study will concentrate mostly on Banārasīdās' *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*, since the *Ardhakathanaka* has been thoroughly discussed elsewhere (Banarasidasa and Premi 1943, Lath 2005, Vanina 1995). While the Urtext of the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* was by Kundakunda and commentaries by Amritcandra, on which Banārasīdās based his work, were indeed focused on the Self and Jain soteriology, they had less to contribute to a concept of individualisation. Rather it is what Banārasīdās draws out of the Urtext and commentaries that suggests a new way of being in the world that shifts emphasis to the unconditioned-individual's access to salvation. What is so amazing about Banārasīdās is that he and his small group of laymen appropriated a tradition of learning that was hitherto overwhelmingly dominated by the monastic tradition. Banārasīdās and his group of friends reject ideas long held dear by ascetics, specifically that salvation is only available from the status of monkhood and that the laity would need to be reborn and aspire to that higher station.[2]

1 Banārasīdās the merchant-poet

Banārasīdās[3] was born in Jaunpur (65 km northwest of Banaras) in 1586 into a Śwetambar Jain[4] merchant family. His life spanned the reigns of three great

1 For an excellent discussion of these aspects of Jain poetry and thought, see John Cort's 'Forword' in Imre Bangha, *It's a City-showman's Show!: Transcendental Songs of Anandghan*, New York: Penguin, 2013.

2 I am grateful to Monika Horstmann for discussing this text with me, sharing her insights, and confirming the novelty of what Banārasīdās and his group of friends were doing.

3 This biographical information comes from an article by (Tomar 1985).

4 Jainism is one of the oldest religions in the world and yet it has often been mistakenly ascribed to offshoots of Vedic religion or Buddhism; it is neither. It is based on the teachings

Mughal emperors: Akbar, Jahangir, and Shahjahan. Banārasīdās is known as a central figure in the reform movement of Jain spirituality called *Adhyātma*.[5] This is indeed one of the most significant reasons for interest in Banārasīdās since he influenced serious changes in the fabric of Jain socio-religious life, and yet he was not a monk or renunciant, rather he was a merchant. We can see from his work that he struggled against the expectations and strictures of his community. He lived in an epoch in which the pressure of social approval demanded a high degree of conformity and militated against divergence from age-old traditions. Yet despite himself, Banārasīdās remained divergent throughout his life within this social hegemony. The stakes were incredibly high for merchants since their clans enforced stern internal regulation of their members in order to maintain communal integrity, commercial solidarity, and credibility (*sākh*). Going it alone, without alliances and partners, was not an option for merchants, and therefore religious deviance or heterodoxy necessitated subtlety and accomplices.

Banārasīdās critically engages with the religious institutions of his community. The scope of his intervention, as a member of the laity, must have been nearly unprecedented. Banārasīdās' ego-document traces his lifelong reflection on his experiences and the trial-and-error approach to spiritual seeking. He shows his reader the details of a journey that has brought him to a new religious direction, almost like a mathematical proof. His insights and interventions were not particularly welcomed by many religious authorities. Yet, Banārasīdās, as he says in his work, could overcome discouragement with the support of his friends and trust in his intuitions.

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of 24 great teachers who attained omniscience and nirvana. They are known as the *tīrthankara*s, or ford-makers, since they can help humanity ford the ocean of transmigration and rebirth. The 24th *tīrthankara*, Mahavīra, was a slightly older contemporary of the Buddha. The two main branches of Jainism are Śwetāmbar and Digambar, in the former the monks are clad in white (*śweta*) cloth and in the latter, they are naked, literally wearing only the sky (*dig*). While the two traditions share the central Jain principles of *ahimsa* (non-violence), *anekāntavāda* (non-absolutism) and *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness, greedlessness), they differ on many doctrinal aspects of the religion and maintain separate literary and scriptural canons. Banarasi's spiritual movement, *Adhyātma*, was unique in that it had members of both major sects.

5 *Adhyātma* means belonging to self or person; concerning an individual, concerning self. It is supreme spirit (manifested as the individual self) or the relation between the supreme and the individual soul. *Adhyātma* is usually associated with the spiritual.

2 The historical context of Jain Hindi literature and bhakti

The two centuries immediately prior to the 17th century saw the emergence of several divisions within the Jain *sangha* (community) and therefore many reform movements emerged. This was also in response to a perceived laxity in the behaviour of Jain monks. As a result, this period was followed by a great emergence of writers, scholars, monks, and reformers all trying to assert some influence on Jainism. Much of this new energy in the community is credited (in the Hindi language literature) to Emperor Akbar's syncretism, during the 'pax Mughalica'.[6] The growing disillusionment with religious authority in the 15th and 16th century provoked, in part, a self-reliance imperative. In his texts, Banārasīdās champions the empowering concept of *anubhava* (≈ experience of the Self), as the guiding knowledge that leads to liberation, thereby rendering prevailing religious authorities somewhat redundant. Yet, as mentioned above, he was emboldened by the support of his small group of well-wishers, who were already beginning to organise a type of spiritual and literary community with stabilising conventions.

In his introduction to *Hindī jaina sāhitya kā bṛhada itihāsa* volume II (of 7!), Śitikaṇṭh Miśra insists that it is not possible to adequately categorise or indeed encapsulate even with seven volumes the variety of trends, flavours, and ideologies of early modern Jain literature! (Miśra 1994, 6–7). With varying degrees of subtlety, this literature deals with numerous entanglements, such as the blending of Jain themes (nonviolence, nonpossession, correct life-style, charity, austerity, liberation, all in the Jain mode) with the themes emerging from trends in bhakti literature, which had a substantial influence on Jain literature of the period.[7] Many Jain poets and thinkers display an inward turn in this period, one that privileges the personal and insists on a self-reliance based on a special type of (inner) experience (*anubhava*). In this article, I attempt to locate this *experience* in the poetry and find some of the

6 I borrow this expression from Jack Hawley, via Martin Fuchs. See Hawley 2015. The idea is that Mughal era allowed for a high degree of plurality and co-existence.

7 The famous, and pioneering, Hindi literary critic, Ramchandra Shukla, characterised Hindi-language Jain literature, as well as Nath Panth and Siddha literature, as exclusively sectarian instructional (*sāmpradāyika śikṣā mātra*). It was not given a place in 'pure' or real literature. Usha Jain says that this has to do with his puritan perspective, but she generously also suggests that many texts were not yet available, and therefore Shukla did not have a fair chance to amend his assessment. Both Rahul Sankrityayana and Hazari Prasad Dwivedi have written about Jain literature, but few others have shown interest until recently. Hazari Prasad Dvivedi wrote that if we expunge literature with religious sentiments from the category of real literature, than we can wash our hands of more than half of the Indian tradition (Jain 2006).

implications of this shift, particularly socio-historically. *Anubhava* has a special, and occasionally, competitive relationship with bhakti.[8] Bhakti was a prominent feature in early-modern, North Indian popular culture with which Jain poets had to engage. Banārasīdās shares or possibly borrows numerous tropes and conceits from his Bhakti colleagues, ranging from Kabir to Tulsidas, to name just two. Yet Banārasīdās, naturally, employs Jain concepts and values at these moments.

Jain poets, like their Bhakti, Sufi, and Sant contemporaries, found accommodation for strands of religious individualisation within the cultural confluence that was Mughal North India. It was a dynamic time in Indian history in which many cultures and art forms were able to mix relatively freely. This developed into something Hindi scholars have called *sājhī sanskṛti*, or shareholder/partner culture. Jain poets began to apprehend an introspective, personal religious turn and calibrate it with their canonical, philosophical tenets, e.g. *anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda* (non-absolutism and may-be-ism). Befitting the historical moment, this new literature appeared in a vernacular poetic idiom, thereby democratising access to spiritual knowledge and emboldening further spiritual and literary innovation. This may account for why we see in Jain discourse an increasing use of the concept of manifold perspectives, known as *anekāntavāda*. Furthermore, in the privileging of *anubhava* and *adhyātma*, Jainism is managing and mitigating the cultural purchase of bhakti. In this way, hegemonic Jainism adapts and produces its own counter-culture, but one that puritanically returns to itself, the hegemonic. What seems at first like a radical departure, a rebelliousness, and even meets with reactionary opposition, is perhaps the unconscious efforts of mainstream Jainism to modify itself in the bhakti milieu. Here Raymond Williams may help elucidate this phenomenon: 'It can be persuasively argued that all or nearly all initiatives and contributions, even when they take on manifestly alternative or oppositional forms, are in practice tied to the hegemonic: that the dominant culture, so to say, at once produces and limits its own forms of counter-culture' (Williams 1977, 114).

Following Williams, the *Samayasāra* is addressing itself to more than one cultural force. Banārasīdās' appropriation and subordination of bhakti is the neutralisation of its potential challenge to the Jain path, and the re-assertion that knowledge is the path to liberation is also a Jain gesture. The modification is in advancing personal experience as the wellspring of liberating knowledge, thereby profoundly individualising the resource. While the poetry and characters

8 Jain devotion or bhakti appeared in many forms, as did objects of devotion. Some popular examples would be guru-bhakti, *thīrtankara*-bhakti, *śalākā*-purush (great man) bhakti, frequently executed with elegance and refinement. Bhakti did not exist in the oldest texts, as Paul Dundas has indicated, but from the earliest period bhakti was 'a necessary part of the Jain path and was credited with the ability to destroy karma' (Dundas 2002, 171).

who emerge from the *adhyātma* movement are highly individualised, as a larger historical process it also appears to be a way in which Jainism avoids becoming irrelevant. Below I will discuss the passages in which Banārasīdās discusses and subordinates Bhakti in favour of knowledge through experience. For a thorough engagement with Bhakti and its implications regarding religious individualisation, see Martin Fuchs' contribution in this publication, *The Social Embedment of Individualisation in Bhakti* (in Section 1.2).

3 Implications for individualisation

In some ways, Jain soteriology as a whole contains within its very logic an extreme form of individual isolation: that is the radical separation of each and every *ātmā* or *jīva* from everything else and every other *ātmā* or *jīva*. Indeed, the *summum bonum* of Jain life is to attain omniscience and then liberation, culminating in blissful, absolute isolation, known as *kevala-jñāna*. Although this sounds stark it should be thought of as independent perfection. The liberated soul is called a *kevalin*, it obtains *mokṣa* (liberation) and rises to the *siddha-loka* and 'remains there in a disembodied state (*siddha*), *experiencing* its own inherent nature of infinite consciousness and bliss' (Wiley 2009, 123). I have emphasised the word choice 'experience' from Wiley's handbook on Jainism because experience is central to the Adhyātmīs. Experience of the self through yogic insight, *anubhava*, is also how we can trace the power of this idea outward from Banārasīdās' text, across space and time, into the voices of other Jain poets and philosophers.

Banārasīdās belonged to and led a school of Jain spiritualism based in Agra called *adhyātma*, mystical exploration of the inner self. It was similar to other reformist sects in terms of social ideas. It has been suggested that before Banārasīdās, *adhyātma* was an intellectual movement, but with him it became a confident religious reform program. The *adhyātmīs* harkened back to older teachings in order to bypass what they saw as accretions onto to their religion over time. The *adhyātma* reformists eschewed ritual and image worship, which had become orthopraxy in many Jain sects, preferring spiritual (*adhyātma*) self-exploration as the path to liberation (*mokṣa-nīrvaṇa*). Banārasīdās was able to bring some of the loftier concepts down to earth and simultaneously provide something that a movement of a lay community sorely lacked – scriptural authority. This allowed the group to proceed without the blessing of the professionals, monks, and priests, which is a crucial aspect of religious individualisation. Moreover, he wrote in the popular poetic idiom, *Braj*, and this gave Jains some relevance in the marketplace of religio-literary production.

By democratising forms of knowledge and making available vocabularies of liberation to a wider Jain public, Banārasīdās believed that he side-lined a declining religious authority and made audible the 'voice of the Jina'.[9] Additionally, he confronts and gains from bhakti as well as Sufi romances, entanglements that provide him with a new sensibility and approach to both his own religion and his concept of self (Bangha 2015). In this sense, he was instrumental, as were the other *adhyātmik* poets, in adapting popular Jainism to new cultural forms.[10] These adaptations, in turn, made room for highly individualised poetic composition, which can be traced to numerous poets. At the conclusion of this article I will trace these poetic conventions to 19th-century Jain poets Cidananda and Rajacandra to demonstrate the spatial and temporal reach of these ideas. The very act of writing also seemed to contribute, over time, to Banārasīdās' sense of himself and his place in historical time, culminating ultimately in a proper ego-document, the *Ardhakathanaka*. Banārasīdās seems to share Ricoeur's view that 'life cannot be understood other than through stories we tell about it, [and so] we are led to say that a life *examined*, in the sense borrowed from Socrates, is a life *narrated*' (Ricoeur 1991, 435).

Jain *adhyātmik* literature promotes what one might call Indic idioms of religious individualisation: oneself as the premier spiritual resource, broader acceptance of difference, explanations for variation, increased opportunity for guru-ship (less strict criteria), anti-sectarianism, anti-intolerance, anti-bigotry, non-absolutism, equanimity, and finally, increased interest in personhood (evidenced by ego-documents and personal anecdotes). Additionally, Jain philosophical concepts suggest avenues for individualisation, such as *anekāntavāda*, manypointedness, which allows for a diversity of perspectives since it maintains that each view makes a proper but partial contribution to a higher truth. In Jain philosophy, *anekāntavāda* acknowledges the internal logic and intelligence of competing philosophical systems (Cort 2000). Scholars have referred to this as a type of relativism of knowledge (*syādvāda*) and a dialogical search for truth. *Anekāntavāda* is a willingness to benefit from truthful insights of other philosophical traditions, for to deny another (person or tradition) at least a partial claim to truth is to harbour pretensions towards omniscience. This is the logic by which bigotry and partisanship become chief heresies (Qvarnström 1999, Chapple, Haribhadrasūri, and Casey 2003). While Jain thinkers drew from a

9 A *Jina*, meaning conquerer, is a liberated and perfected teacher or *tīrthankara*, whence the word Jaina is also derived as a follower of the *Jinas*.

10 As the Bhagavadgita endeavored to define Hinduism in interaction with Buddhism, Jainism, and Ajivikas, Banārasīdās attempts a similar task with the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* for a destabilized Jain Dharma in the face of bhakti and other attractive alternatives.

shared and common religio-philosophical Indic pool of concepts, they implemented many familiar ideas in accordance with their own ontology, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics (Soni 2000, 367). This is one reason that simply surveying what *anubhava* has meant elsewhere will not suffice regarding what these poets were mobilising.

In his introduction to *Open Boundaries*, John Cort wrote of a concept of self that is key to our understanding of individualisation: 'a sense of self-identity, whether in terms of the individual person or a social group, is never constructed in isolation, but rather is always a contextualised process in which the sense of "self" is in dialogue, opposition, or dialectical relationship to a sense of what is "not-self" or "other"' (Cort 1998, 1–2).[11] This approach is inspired by Saussure's structural linguistics, which posits that the meaning of any word depends on its difference from other words or signs, and thence this enters into critical and cultural studies (Saussure et al. 2011). Thus the 'self' conceived in this manner, can only be understood when juxtaposed to an 'other' (Cort 1998, 14). However, this is not the only way to understand what Jain thinkers themselves are saying about the Self. Jain *adhyātmik* poets were fiercely committed to the idea of the individual identity in a state of neutrality, unconditioned by external forces. I suggest supplementing the structuralist approach mentioned above with the concept of the Neutral, a close analogue of the problem on which these Jain poets meditate – the radically Neutral as a polemic against all dogmatism, against all ideological appropriations, and against meaning created by oppositional binaries or appositional relations among signs. The *adhyātmik* poets consistently reject binaries, oppositions, and conflict to determine meaning, opting instead for *samatā* (Neutral, amongst other synonyms). In a way, they explicitly reject the Self that is formulated in a contextualised process, against an other, and rather prefer a pre-contextualised Self, the one not determined by opposition but by equanimity. Roland Barthes writes of the Neutral as 'everything that baffles the paradigm [...] The paradigm [is] the opposition of two virtual terms from which, in speaking, I actualise one to produce meaning [...] meaning rests on conflict (the choice of one term against another), and all conflict is generative of meaning: to choose one and refuse the other is always a sacrifice made to meaning [...]' (Barthes 2005, 6–7). The poems discussed below corroborate that the poets undertake the very difficult task of understanding the Self without the assistance of meaning creating oppositions, binaries, and others against whom to define oneself. Another critical insight from Barthes is that the Neutral doesn't refer to 'impressions' of greyness, of 'neutrality,' of indifference. Rather, the concept is both active and

11 See Part 2 of this publication, particularly Linkenbach.

personal: 'The Neutral [...] can refer to intense, strong, unprecedented states. To outplay the paradigm is an ardent, burning activity' (Barthes 2005, 7). It should be noted that Jain thought and post-structuralism have significantly different projects. For one thing, much of Jain thought is soteriological, but that does not mean that it is not also epistemological. There is an affinity between the Neutral and the Jain *samatā*, which refers to an ardent resistance to meaning-determining enclosures or binaries, as the poetry below will corroborate. The idea of the Neutral, in Barthes' terms, offers at the very least a useful reference point or analogue to the 'non-conditionment' implied by *adhyātmik samatā*. It is also important to recall that this is in conversation with the structuralist approach mentioned above.

The concepts of 'self' and 'other,' or 'non-self' is profoundly important in Jain ontology. Jain worship and ritual also have a significant effect on the worshipper's sense of self. Whereas the many two-way interactions of religions of which Jains would have been aware, such as those involving Kṛṣṇa or Śiva, the object of worship and bhakti in Jainism is completely isolated and non-transactional (Babb 1998, 150). Whereas Kṛṣṇa is a profoundly transactional being, as in the Puṣṭimārg, Jain worship is transactionally null (Babb 1998, 152). Cort sums up this idea as 'pure reflectivity, a mirror that absorbs and transforms nothing but rather shows the worshiper the truth of who he or she is' (Cort 1998, 10). This is another way to think about the dissolving of the binary of bhakti for Jain purposes. Josephine Reynell writes that, 'doctrinally it is the āyā (ātman) which is the carrier of passions, cognitions and intentions initiating actions. These passions and actions in turn shape specific personalities, thereby constituting the self within each human being and making each human being a unique individual in the Jain view [...] providing a clear counter-example to the views of Dumont and Marriot [...]' (Reynell 2006, 212–213) see Linkenbach in this publication, Section 2.1). Reynell makes two important conclusions regarding Jain individualisation: first, the embodied soul is perceived to lie at the heart of the self and second, karma attached to the soul is believed to be responsible for the particular constitution and individuality of each person (Reynell 2006, 213).

While most Jain teachers have followed the tri-ratnam, the three jewels of right faith (*samyak darśana*), right knowledge (*samyak jñāna*) and right conduct (*samyak cāritra*), Kundakunda (c. 750 CE) expressed a minority position that deemphasised behaviour/conduct (*cāritra*) and privileged knowledge (*jñāna*). The emphasis is on knowledge of the difference between what is self and what is other (Sanskrit *anya*). Kundakunda explains in the *Niyamasāra* (141–50), that the autonomous self is the true self, while the dependent self is the external one, the social persona. Therefore, as John Cort eloquently puts it, the duality between self and other is not only a matter of external relations, it is even internalised in terms of correct and incorrect self-understandings, what we might call 'true and false

consciousness' of the self (Cort 1998, 10–11). This otherness can extend to the apparatus of the body and mind (*manas*), which shapes (or distorts) the nature of the experience that the soul has. The attachment to this experience that is shaped by exterior otherness, *anya*, is a singular perspective *ekānta*, and therefore leads to a condition of *matārthi*, often translated as bigotry. While this duality looks like a meaning-producing binary, I suggest that meaning of the self is not in every case generated relationally to the other, but often in spite of the other, in neutrality.

4 Experience (present)/neutrality/ the anti-dogmatic

These three categories and tropes, which recur across centuries of Jain poetry (17th – 19th cent.) and philosophical writings, are connected intimately with individualisation through an uncompromising and sustained effort to resist de-individualising trends such as partisanship, dogmatism, and ideological conflict.[12] These terms become a convention and poetic conceit for forms of individualisation. While this is not a standard institutionalisation such as laws or a church, it is rather a poetic conventionalisation of a set of individualising resources. These concepts are dynamically and causally connected, they enable one another. That is, they are not completely autonomous and tend to invoke ancillary associations. For example, one way to think about them is that *anubhava* (experience) is the resource, which enables *samatā* (neutrality/equanimity) as a view, and *matārthi-virodha* (anti-dogmatism) is the outcome or the (in)action. One could also say by way of *samatā* as a view, stemming from *matārthi-virodha* openness, one may access *anubhava*. The poets play endlessly with this constellation, but it is critical that *matārthi-virodha* remain an element, since it is the portion that resists ideological appropriation.

Anubhava (experience, yogic insight) came to be of supreme importance as an individualised resource without need of temple, religious professional, or sect. The focus on *anubhava* is the central conventionalisation, approaching institutionalisation, in the Adhyātma line of poetry and thinking. Adhyātma (Jain spiritualism) proliferated and emboldened numerous poets and their audiences; they gained confidence in their own *ātma*s as the sole requirement to attain *mokśa* (liberation). This confidence coincided with non-religious spheres such as increased

12 Jains are by no means a homogenous community with a unity of purpose and perspective, this would immediately contradict the doctrine of manifold perspectives. That notwithstanding, several scholars, such as Babb and Cort, have indicated that there is something like a Jain 'style' when it comes to matters of epistemology, of ontology, and I would suggest, of poetics.

mobility, sociality, and entrepreneurship, sharing family resemblances to non-Indian strands of individualisation. *Adhyātmīs* found authorisation for their ideas from critical Jain philosophical concepts and attempted to emplot *anubhava* in Jain intellectual lineages. Yet *adhyātmik* ideas were challenged then and now.[13]

There are many critiques of the concepts of religious experience, and though it is well beyond my ability to consider all of them, I will take the one that seems to come straight to the problem in my material. Robert Sharf's analysis nicely encapsulates one critique of religious experience, which is: appeals to experience remain authoritative because they reference empty signifiers that refer to the ineffable. He writes: 'The category of experience is, in essence, a mere place-holder that entails a substantive if indeterminate terminus for the relentless deferral of meaning. And this is precisely what makes the term experience so amenable to ideological appropriation' (Sharf 1998, 113). Jain thinkers were keenly aware of this problem and therefore almost always couple any discussion of *anubhava* with polemics against ideological appropriation (*matārthi*) and meaning delimiting binaries or dogmatism. Sharf insists that any insight achieved from experience is 'gained at the expense of any possible discursive meaning or signification' (Sharf 2012, 150). Jain poets might agree, adding that the meaning created by experience is indeed aloof of discourse and relational signification, rather this meaning of experience is created in the autonomous neutrality of the Self.

Raymond Williams' discussion of experience is useful here: 'a particular kind of consciousness, which can in some contexts be distinguished from "reason" or "knowledge"'. He continues, 'Experience [...] is then the fullest, most open, most active kind of consciousness, and it includes feeling as well as thought. This sense has been very active in aesthetic discussion, following an earlier religious sense [...]' (1988). Williams makes an important distinction between experience *past* and experience *present*, the former acting as knowledge gained from past events, and the latter a type of full and active awareness. 'The strength of this appeal to wholeness, against forms of thought which would exclude certain kinds of consciousness, as merely "personal", "subjective", or "emotional", is evident' (Williams 1988, 127). *Experience present* is a type of subjective witness, 'offered to be shared [...] as the most authentic truth [...] an unquestionable authenticity and immediacy

13 My research traces the career of these individualising strands up to contemporary Jainism by way of interviews with Jain monks, field observations, and the *Samaṇasuttam*. The latter is an unprecedented compendium based on a 1974 Delhi-based conference of Jain monks (all 4 sects) convened to concord the central Jain principles and texts. However, it omits many early modern developments; neither *anubhava*, nor any cognate or equivalent term, appear at any point in the *Samaṇasuttam*. Therefore, we see a decline – or intentional exclusion – of *anubhava* at the hands of religious authorities. This decline was not the case in popular poetic traditions.

[...]' (Williams 1977, 128). The 'evident appeal', to which Williams refers, offers some insight into the practicality and versatility of such a term as *anubhava*.

As each innate *ātmā* already possesses omniscience, and the *anubhava* of each separate *ātmā* is the guiding wisdom for liberation, then one's own *anubhava* is at once radically individualised and yet qualitatively equal, since each *anubhava* derives from an omniscient *ātmā*. One absolute knowledge should not differ from another absolute knowledge. Therefore, *anubhava* is individually determined and accessed, and yet not *merely* 'personal', 'subjective', or 'emotional', it is an anti-authoritarian, decentralised resource, which resists marginalisation since even as it is atomised, it maintains a radical solidarity (and equality) with the *anubhava* of every other *jīva*. The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* marks a transition of worldviews, institutional relationships, ideology, and history. The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* is simultaneously a rupture and continuity in a complex set of discursive and institutional relationships within and without the Jain Sangha.

Towards the end of the *Ardhakathanaka*, after studying Kundakunda et al, Banārasīdās explains that from the *guṇasthāna* (gradualist system) he has learned that there are numerous appropriate ways of being and behaving in the world, according to the spiritual stage one has reached. This is a reconciliation for variation and divergence amongst individuals. He even applies this gradualist system to his own literary endeavours at different stages of his life, which allows him to see his early erotic poetry and his later philosophical and spiritual writings as equivalent.

> Once again, Banārasī took up his poetic activities, now in a deeply spiritual vein. His early work and his current work were alike, there was no contradiction/opposition there (636). He had had a stain in his heart, and there was a coldness within, which was removed and replaced with equanimity (*samatā*), there remained neither high nor low (*Ardhakathanaka* 637). (Banārasīdāsa 1981)[14]

The significant difference of Banārasīdās' approach is how personally he applies Jain concepts to himself, rather than just discussing these concepts abstractly. Through such values as *samatā* (equanimity), and the logic of the *guṇasthāna*, he finds a way of reconciling his many worldly selves over the span of a lifetime. His relationship to Jain philosophy takes a highly personal character, quite different from the theoretical abstractions of philosophers Haribhadra and Yaśovijaya. It is important to note that his language challenges judgmental binaries, equalising

14 *Taba phiri aura kabīsurī, karī adhyātamamāhiṃ* | *yaha vaha kathanī ekasī, kahuṃ virodha kichu nāhiṃ* ||636|| *Hṛdaimāhiṃ kachu kālimā, hutī saradahana bīca* | *soū miṭi samatā bhaī, rahī na ūṃca na nīca* ||637||

the 'then' and 'now' of his poetry: 'There was no opposition [...] *samatā* [...] neither high nor low.' These terms also carry social signification, which subsequent poets will make much more explicit. The importance of *samatā* shows a resonance with *sant* poet ideas as they exist in Jain discourse. Charlotte Vaudeville, writing about Kabir, explains *samatā* in the following terms:

> [...] the state in which all differences or opposites such as good and bad, praise and blame, pleasure and pain etc., are abolished, as all appears "equal" (sama) to the true Yogī; samatā pertains to the Hindu, especially the Yogic ideal of saintliness [...] this transcendent state of absolute "non-conditionment" or bliss is also experienced as samatā or samarasa, oneness of "enjoyment" or of "emotion", which implies the constant realisation of the oneness of the whole visible world in spite of its apparent diversity and of the falseness of all duality; on the psychological plane, it implies that the perfect Yogī looks on all things as "equal" (sama) and that he has transcended all possible forms of opposition or contrasts, such as male and female, hot and cold, good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant etc.
>
> (Kabir and Vaudeville 1974, 253 n.5, 125)

So while these ideas are not uniquely Jain, the force of the concepts take their own form and have relevance in this strand of the Jain world, as they would have in any non-dogmatic enterprise.

5 The *Samayasāra* and the genealogy of discriminative knowledge (*bhed-jñān*)

In the *Ardhakathanaka*, Banārasīdās reports that his spiritual progress was deeply impacted by two texts. He became acquainted first with the *Samayasāra-pāhuda* and, twelve years later, *Gommaṭasāra*. With the first text, Banārasīdās finds himself disillusioned regarding the usefulness of ritual and idol-worship, and becomes effectively unhinged and left in a spiritual desert. However, the *Gommaṭasāra* makes Banārasīdās a staunch Jain again, and moreover, an *adhyātmī*. He tells us that it was the *Gommaṭasāra* that facilitated his understanding of the *Samayasāra-pāhuda*. He was then, he tells us, in a position to joyfully undertake the trans-composition of the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* from Sanskrit to vernacular (Banarasidasa and Premi 1943).[15]

15 He fails to mention that he simply appended his version of the *Gommaṭasāra* to the end his *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*, thereby significantly changing the text according to his own requirements. He felt that *Samayasāra* was not intelligible without a section on the *gunasthānas*, or stages of a soul's ascendance.

Scholars believe Kundakunda is a name that stands for the collective authorship of a Prakrit textual tradition between the third and the fifth centuries of the common era, and yet more recently some scholars locate Kundakunda after 750 CE (Dundas, 107). His *Samayasāra-pāhuda* (The Essence of the Self) elaborates on the nature of the innate pure soul (*ātman*) and one's mystical experience of it. In the *Samayasāra-pāhuda*, Banārasīdās found answers to many of his tormenting spiritual questions. The *Samayasāra* text has a special career and destiny[16]. It fell into the hands of Banārasīdās, his free adaptation of the text enjoyed great popularity in the 17th century and was probably read during meetings of the *adhyātmik* groups. The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* was widely distributed across Rajasthan and can be found in nearly every collection of manuscripts (Jain 2006, iii). As the text's most recent translator/re-writer, Banārasīdās is in many ways an embodiment of religious individualisation as he recreates a classic text somewhat to accommodate his own worldview. Although the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* is not an ego-document in the strictest sense, its author shares many personal anecdotes and insights regarding the text and its uses. He textually performs individualising gestures as he appropriates resources and emplots himself in lineages.

Kundakunda characterises reality as having two levels of truth: the absolute perspective (*niścaya naya*) and the conventional, practical perspective (*vyavahāra naya*). The text focuses on discernment (*bhed-jñān*) between the pure soul/Self and everything else, between *niścaya* and *vyavahāra,* absolute and practical knowledge. As Paul Dundas writes,

> Kundakunda taught the centrality of inward experience and the reorientation of all religious practice to focus on the Self [...] The soul is the only true and ultimate category which provides a "certain" (*nishcaya*) standpoint [...] with reference to which all other entities, beliefs and practices can be judged [...] Everything else in the universe has a purely transactional and provisional value and is to be viewed from the perspective of a worldly (*vyavahara*) standpoint. (Dundas 2002, 91)

Banārasīdās makes use of these two-levels truth to help him reconcile the many paradoxes of the individual, namely the possibility of simultaneous difference and equivalence.

16 Kundakunda (2nd – 3rd cent., 750 CE) *Samayasāra-pāhuda* (Saurseni Prakrit)
↓
Amritcandra (8th – 9th cent.) adds *Ātmakhāti* (commentaries in Sanskrit)
↓
Rājamalajī Pande (16th cent.) *Bālabodhinī* (commentaries in old Hindi)
↓
Banārasīdās (1586–1643) *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* & *Ardhakathanaka* inter alia
↓
The Adhyātmik Poets of the 17th – 19th centuries (e.g. Cidananda and Rajacandra)

The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* of Banārasīdās was completed, he tells us, Vikram 1672 (1616 CE), Ashwini 13th, on a Saturday. It is noteworthy that in the precise dating of the text, he only refers to his historical time, as if calendric dating has a new urgency in his moment. He does not date or place the other contributors, such as Kundakunda et al. Rather they exist in the mists of time, somewhere in India, presumably. We see this trend to give precise dates of composition amongst many of Banārasīdās' contemporaries and recent predecessors (Jain 1964). In another telling historical signpost, he also refers to the text as his *bādshāh* (Persian, Mughal emperor) of knowledge-manifest, to whom he offers his *taslīm* (Arabic salutation) (Banārasīdās 1997, 407). Banārasīdās historicises the text and salutes it in a Mughal idiom, which is one of many moments where the text moves between religious and socio-historical discourses.

The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* is largely based on the Sanskrit commentaries of Amritchandra from the 9th century and Rajmal Pande's 16th century *Bālabodhinī*. It is a great deal more than a translation. For one, it greatly exceeds the other versions in size. In a charming moment of immodesty, Banārasīdās tells his reader, in the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* itself, how long the text is: 'If calculated using 32-syllable *śloka* as the metric, my *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* is 1707 verses in number!' (*Samayasāra Nāṭaka* 422). Yet Banārasīdās is not just boasting, but laying claim to have expanded the work, insisting that he is not a mere translator, but one of the authors of the great text. Or perhaps he is influenced by a merchant's training to always take stock and account. In any case, he is asserting his personality and pride of achievement. The available cultural forms, while perhaps not fully adequate, were increasingly capable of representing individual accomplishment, consciousness, and experience, thereby promoting the socio-literary imaginaries that facilitate representations of, and interests in, interiorities and subjectivities. Here Banārasīdās explains his discovery of the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*:

> Now I shall discuss how the vernacular *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* came to be. The original text was Muni (monk) Kundakunda's, and Amritchandra was the author of the commentary (Verse 21). The *Samayasāra Nāṭaka* is a giver of joy, and the Sanskrit commentaries are understood and bestow special knowledge on the learned (*pandit*s). But the simple-minded (common) folks don't get the meaning (Verse 22). Pandit Rajmall is a good Jain and well-versed in the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*. He produced a simple commentary on the text (Verse 23). In this way, in time, in the spiritual mode (*adhyātmik śailī*) in the vernacular (*bhāṣā*) spread, and the voice of the Jina manifested in the world, and from home to home the drama (*nāṭaka*) was discussed (Verse 24). Now in the famous town of Agra there were special meetings of the great thinkers, five men stand out as especially capable, who night and day would discuss the essence of knowledge (Verse 25).'[17]

17 *aba yaha bāta kahūṁ hai jaise* I *nāṭaka bhāṣā bhayau su aise* II *kundakunda muni mūla udharatā* I *amṛtacandra ṭīkā ke karatā* II21II *samayasāra nāṭaka sukhadānī* I *ṭīkā sahita saṃskṛta*

The narrative strategy here is telling. He brings the voice down to earth (*jagamāhī*) and facilitates discussion from home to home, democratising access to knowledge (*bodha-vacanikā*). Banārasīdās is keenly aware he is a threatening, nonconformist. He establishes an august lineage of Kundakunda, Amritchandra, and Rajmall. He then explains that the joy-giving and liberating truth of the text has been available only to the learned *pandits*. Banārasīdās considers the domestication of the voice of the Jina an important function of the poet and one that he continues in other works, particularly the *Nāmamāla* (1726–1727), in which he provides a sort of lexicon of key words from Sanskrit, Prakrit, and vernacular languages (Jain 1964, 182–183). Banārasīdās continues to give the names of his five friends with whom he 'constantly discussed the highest truth'. These five friends are historical figures and poets in their own rights: Rūpcand, Caturbhuj, Bhagavatīdās, Kuṃarpāl, Dharmadās. He brings the text, narratologically, out of oblivion, from the mists of time, to datable, public time, and with cartographic precision, in Agra. This is already somewhat a literary novelty, the introduction of an everyday merchant milieu and new chronotopes (Bakhtin 1998).

The inclusion of stories about his friends and his town has another striking literary feature: the anecdote. For Stephen Greenblatt, the anecdote is 'in compressed form the ways in which elements of lived experience enter into literature, the ways in which everyday institutions and bodies get recorded' (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000, 30). As Greenblatt has pointed out, the anecdote,

> satisfied the desire for something outside the literary, something that would challenge the boundaries of the literary [...] the sphere of practice that even in its more awkward and inept articulations makes a claim on the truth that is denied to the most eloquent of literary texts. Or rather, the anecdote was a way into the "contact zone", the charmed space where the *genius literarius* could be conjured into existence. (Gallagher, Greenblatt 2000, 49)

Banārasīdās is elevating not only his own personality, but also his friend circle, to the level of literary emplotment. This is an important example of social discourse flowing into literary discourse and thereby presenting an increased interest in personality. The following stanzas are similarly thematically diverse. He discusses the presence of divinity in each sentient being while lashing out at those who would be doctrinal. He then returns to an anecdote of his five friends who whimsically persuade him to write the *Samayasāra*.

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vānī ‖ *paṃḍita paḍai su diḍmati* ǀ *alapamati aratha na sūjhai* ‖22‖ *pāṃḍe rājamalla jinadharmī* ǀ *samaisāra nāṭakake marmī* ‖ *tīna garaṃthakī ṭīkā kīnī* ǀ *bālabodha sugama kara dīnī* ‖23‖ *ihi vidhi bodha-vacanikā phailī* ǀ *samai pāya adhyātama sailī* ‖ *pragaṭī jagamāhī jinavānī* ǀ *ghara ghara nāṭaka kathā bakhānī* ‖24‖ *nagara āgare māṃhi vikhyātā* ǀ *kārana pāi bhae bahu jñātā* ‖ *paṃca puruṣa ati nipuna pravīne* ǀ *nisidina jñāna-kathā rasa-bhīne* ‖25‖

> Now to what extent shall I praise the glory of my friends, it is better to come to the point. In the famous town of Agra lives the meagre-minded Banārasī (Verse 32), in whom the ingenious skill of poetry resides. Those five brothers show him great kindness, and laughing gently, forthrightly say to (Banārasī) the simple-minded (Verse 33): The *Nāṭaka Samayasāra* is the benediction of all jīvas (souls), and (while) Rājmall has provided a simple commentary, If a poetic composition in the popular language and metre should be written (bhāṣā grantha), then everyone may read it (Verse 34). Banārasī in his heart reflected, if I do write this popular poetry then the voice of the Jina will manifest (pragaṭai jinavānī). Having taken the blessing/permission of his five friends, he produced his poetic creation (Verse 35).[18]

Many things are happening in this short passage. For one, we see the poet deliberating about the task and ultimately deciding that it is in the service of the dharma, since the voice of the Jina will manifest. This deliberation constructs the narrator Banārasīdās as a pensive and apprehensive figure, who eventually takes action. Paul Ricœur makes a distinction between identity as spatiotemporal selfsameness (idem – sameness) and the capacity of an agent to initiate an imputable action (ipse – selfhood). This dynamic thinking/acting character develops this way in the story, for 'narrative identity is not based on the permanently subsisting substance (*idem*) but on a living tissue of narrated stories that permits the recognition of the self (*ipse*)' (Ricœur 1990, 246). As Banārasīdās shows us, he is an evolving identity, a narrative self, and it is perhaps this realisation that prompts the subsequent writing of his autobiography.

The anecdotes that Banārasīdās provides function precisely as the 'contact zone' Greenblatt describes above. Furthermore, we see 'the ways in which everyday institutions and bodies get recorded' (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000, 30). Banārasīdās describes the birth of an informal institution, and one that is explicitly contrived to support and encourage individualised gestures that will disseminate individualising religious values, thus creating something of an individualising feedback-loop. It is a matter of some irony and pragmatism that such efforts are necessarily group efforts.

Banārasīdās positions himself as someone who will be ridiculed and labelled mad. This suggests that he sees his endeavour as (appearing) quixotic or transgressive. He anticipates his detractors and even flatters them by calling them wise or worthy. This is a strategy that he repeats in his autobiography several years

18 *ghaṭa ghaṭa aṃtara jina basai, ghaṭa ghaṭa aṃtara jaina* । *mati-madirāke pānasauṃ, matavālā samujhai na* ॥31॥ *bahuta baḍāī kahāṃlauṃ kījai* । *kārija rūpa bāta kahi lījai* ॥ *nagara āgare māṃhi vikhyātā* । *bānārasī nāma laghu jñātā* ॥32॥ *tāmaiṃ kavitakalā caturāī* । *kṛpā karaiṃ ye pāṁcauṃ bhāī* ॥ *paṃca prapaṃca rahita hiya kholai* । *te banārasīsauṃ haṁsi bolai* ॥33॥ *nāṭaka samaisāra hita jīkā* । *sugama rūpa rājamalī ṭīkā* ॥ *kavitabaddha racanā jo hoī* । *bhāṣā grantha paḍai saba koī* ॥34॥ *taba banārasī manamahiṃ ānī* । *kījai to pragaṭai jinavānī* ॥ *paṃca puruṣakī ājñā līnī* । *kavitabaddhakī racanā kīnī* ॥35॥

later, but it was developed here because his very right to comment on such lofty religio-philosophical matters would have been suspect. This reference to figures who will laugh at him indicates the presence of forces outside the texts whom he presumes to be hostile to his audacity. Whether because of his status as a humble and hapless merchant, a layperson, and/or his transgression into clearly demarcated Digambara terrain (he was a Śwetāmbar), Banārasīdās is asserting and risking himself. The proof of this will appear in a volley of attacks from the towering figures of Jain thought at the time (Lath 2005). Yet he is emboldened by his little community of well-wishers, his Agra-five, whom he credits even with the idea of producing a popular verse rendition of a classical religio-philosophical text. What is striking is his insistence on his simplicity and small-mindedness. He gives these five friends credit for the democratisation of this spiritual knowledge, while he ascribes to himself little more than poetic virtuosity. He develops a literary image of himself as having something of a 'poetic savant syndrome', that is demonstrating prodigious literary capabilities far in excess of his limited mental faculties. This staged humility may indicate, counter-intuitively, a profound confidence and practicality, or even a conventionality aligned with great contemporaries such as Tulsidas (e.g. *Kavitavali*). Nevertheless, he draws attention to individual roles and strengths that compel him to compose the work. By including his friends, he has added the benefit of implicating them in his endeavour, making them de facto signatories, and thereby forging a solidarity of co-conspirators. In early modern India, one's clan and community were the most tangible social realities for the common person. An individual's security and livelihood depended directly on good standing within a community, and this is especially true for merchants (Vanina 1995). Perhaps certain strands of individualisation require group efforts and support to proceed. The *Hindī Sāhitya Kośa* (*Hindi Literature Compendium*) states that volumes were written against and in support of Banārasīdās and the *adhyātmī*s, but whatever came their way, they were fearless and completely independent thinkers (Tomar 1985). How fearless and independent they may have been is hard to determine, yet Banārasīdās gives us the impression that his work was nearly heroic, but also tilting at windmills.

Below Banārasīdās admirably anticipates ridicule for wading so far out of his depths, by making his endeavour into a metaphor of courage and wonder.

> Just as a fool tries to swim across the mighty ocean [...] or just as a child might grasp at a reflection of the moon in the water, so have I with my limited intellect begun to write the Nāṭaka Samayasāra. The wise will surely laugh at me and say, what a crackpot! (Verse 1.12)[19]

19 *jaisaiṃ koū mūrakha mahā samudra tirivekauṃ* | [...] *jaisaiṃ jalakuṇḍamaiṃ nirakhi sasipratibimba, tāke gahibekauṃ kara nīcau karai ṭābarau* | *taisai maiṃ alapabuddhi nāṭaka ārambha kīnau, gunī mohi hasaiṃge kahaiṃge koū bābarau* ||1.12||

Banārasīdās elaborates the herculean, perhaps quixotic, task he has set before himself. He concludes by ironically acknowledging that 'the learned and virtuous' (*gunī*) will laugh at him and call him a crackpot (*bābarau*); he compares himself to a fool (*mūrakh*), a child (*ṭābarau*), and a simpleton (*alapabuddhi*), suggesting that it may only be precisely those who are free or innocent of opinion that strive for liberation. This should not be mistaken for modesty, since he also just credited himself with bringing the voice of the Jina to the people, but he treads lightly by pre-empting censure through self-effacement. Yet he is really (disguised with irony) targeting the theologically narrow-minded, or in the Jain context, one-sided or partial. Banārasīdās' couplet below, from his trans-creation of Kundakunda's work, comes to the heart of the issue of partiality and endorses the individualised resource of adhyātmik (spiritually Self-centred) truth.

> In every heart lives a Jina,[20] and so does the Jain dharma. Those who drink of intoxicating doctrinal partiality, will be too drunk on bias to understand. (Verse 31)[21]

Echoing Kabir, Banārasīdās emboldens lay people to take charge of their own spiritual lives and not look externally to religious authorities, since the Jina resides within each of us (*ghaṭa ghaṭa antara jina basai*). Then also in the vein of Kabir, he condemns the dogmatic ones for being too intoxicated from bias to see clearly. The operating poetic conceit appears as several wonderful puns on the word mat/mad/matavālā. *Mata* can be: 1) belief, opinion, doctrine (from *mana*), as well as 2) an intoxicant (Sanskrit *mādhu*, Proto-Indo-European *médhu*, German *Met*) (Callewaert and Sharma 2009, 1631–1633). Thus, the line, *mati-madira kē pānasauṁ*, having drunk the doctrine/drink, the dogmatic/drunkards (*matavālā*) are too deluded to understand (*samujhai na*). This conceit of 'doctrine as intoxication' becomes the convention in all of this poetry. It is the doctrine/drink (*mata*) that prevents both *samatā* (equanimity) and consequently access to *anubhava* (experience).

Banārasīdās acknowledges bhakti, but then privileges *anubhava* as a form of knowledge that is the true requirement for liberation. In the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*, the 14th stanza of the introduction, for example, has an explicit reference to bhakti: *hradayai hamārai bhagavantakī bhagati* (*bhakti*) *hai* ('We have bhakti for

20 The couplet bears a striking resemblance to a very famous doha from the Sant-poet, Kabir: *kastūrī kuṃḍala base, mṛga ḍhūṁḍhata bana māhi | jyo ghaṭa ghaṭa rāma hai, duniyā dekhe nāhī |* ('The musk resides in the deer itself, who searches in vain for the scent in the forest. Similarly, Ram dwells in each heart and yet he is not seen in the world').

21 *ghaṭa ghaṭa aṃtara jina basai, ghaṭa ghaṭa aṃtara jaina | mati-madirāke pānasauṃ, matavālā samujhai na* ||31||

the blessed One in our hearts'; (Banārasīdās 1997, 0.14). Banārasīdās uses the term bhakti with the intention of immediately subordinating it by then promoting the idea of the *experience* of the soul as the means to liberation. Banārasīdās writes in his 'description of experience':

> We have bhakti for the blessed One in our hearts (Verse 0.14) [...] [here] I speak of certain/absolute knowledge, transactional knowledge, the path of liberation, and the authority of *experience* (*anubhava*) (Verse 0.16). That thing upon which one meditates, from which the spirit finds peace, and from which a sense of the essence of the soul manifests, that is what is called *experience* (Verse 0.17). *Experience* destroys karma, and at the highest level joins Love, No religion (*dharma*) can equal *experience* (Verse 0.19).[22]

In rapid succession (first 20 stanzas of the text) the supremacy of experience is established, which is intentionally conflated/aligned/entangled with bhakti. Thus, Experience joins Love (bhakti), at the highest level, and no religion (dharma) can equal experience (*anubhava*). This is the closest thing we have to a definition of what is meant by *anubhava*, and how one gains access to it. It is the object of meditation and also the medium by which one gains a glimpse of the Self, and the fount of knowledge. The Jain philosophical concepts play a role here, as it is critical to remain non-absolutist in meditation. Below Banārasīdās explains how *syādvāda* (may-be-ism) is mobilised in meditation to facilitate the necessary neutrality for knowledge:

> In the heart in which *syādvāda*-meditation is done, the pure *anubhava* of the *ātma* is revealed, In whom the glory of knowledge radiates day by day, s/he will indeed cross the ocean of existence (Verse 42).[23]

Banārasīdās gives one of many clues as to how the experience of the soul is achieved, namely through a meditation or deep focus on core Jain philosophical principles, in this case, the perspectivist and multi-layered nature of reality (*syādvāda* and *anekāntavāda*). The verb *syāt* in Sanskrit is the optative form of the verb 'to be', thus expressing a critical uncertainty which according to Jain epistemology should accompany every truth statement. In other words, every statement should have the mood of 'could be' or 'may be', rather than 'is'. Cidānanda,

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22 *hiradai hamārai bhagavaṃtakī bhagati hai* ll14ll *[...] kahauṃ sudha nihacaikathā, kahauṃ sudha vivahāra* l *mukatipaṃtha kārana kahauṃ, anubhava adhikāra* ll16ll *vāstu vicārata dhyāvataiṃ, mana pāvai viśrāma* l *rasa svādata sukha ūpajai, anubhau yākau nāma* ll17ll *anubhava ciṃtāmani ratana, anubhava hai rasakūpa* l *anubhava māraga mokhakau, anubhava mokha svarūpa* ll18ll *anubhau karama torai paramasauṃ prīti jorai* l *anubhau samāna na dharama koū aura hai* ll19ll

23 *jāke hiradaimaiṃ syādvāda sādhanā karata, suddha ātamakau anubhau pragaṭa bhayau hai* l *[...] tākau gyāna mahimā udota dina dina prati, sohī bhavasāgara ulaṃghi pāra gayau hai* ll42ll

to whom I soon turn, continues these impulses. The reliance on bhakti is rejected because it is oriented outward from the Self:

> Without restraint, you cannot reach the absolute level of knowledge, without love you cannot know the essence of love's refinement, without meditation you cannot still your mind, without knowledge you cannot reach the auspicious path (Shiv Path!) (Verse 7.24).[24]

This seems to want to take the wind out of the sails of bhakti, since Love teaches you about refinement, but Knowledge is the only and final recourse regarding the auspicious path (Shiva Path)[25] to liberation. Banārasīdās tells us repeatedly that this knowledge is the discernment of the experience of the pure soul from everything else.

To conclude this Banārasīdās section, it is worthwhile to recall several elements of his writing that may endorse individualisation. He begins by emplotting his narrative self into the august lineage of the Samayasāra Nāṭaka legacy. He follows this by painting a picture of his life and friends in Agra, in his historical moment, lending importance to an otherwise obscure and humble merchant. The fact that he finds his story worth telling, indeed edifying, elevates his personality to unprecedented heights for his station. Lastly, he repeatedly implores his reader to rely on his/her experience of the Self as the premier source for liberating knowledge, rather than any external (even transactional bhakti) resource. Taken together, these elements have emboldened generations of poets and members of the laity. I now turn to a brief discussion of two more poets.

6 Banārasīdās' legacy

Aside from the conventions of humility possibly learned from Tulsidas and other Bhakti poets, Banarasidas' ironic and self-effacing stance anticipates trajectories of discursivity emanating from his disruption. Some of the Jain orthodoxy tended to view and write about Banarasidas' innovations and transcreations as an intolerable heresy and as neo-*Digambar*. On the other hand, the Terapanth sect thoroughly institutionalised his ideas and venerate him as their *Adiguru* (prime Guru) (Lath 2005, 9). And still beyond the confines of the Terapanth sect,

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24 *nema vinā na lahai nihacai pada, prema vinā rasa rīti na bujhai* | *dhyāna vinā na thaṃbhai manakī gati, jñāna vinā siva paṃtha na sujhāī* ||7.24||

25 Banārsīdās, perhaps intending multiple meanings, likes to use the word *śiva*, which also means auspicious. He confesses elsewhere to having experimented with Shaivism, but abandons it rather quickly.

the reverberations of Banarasidas' insistence on self-reliance occurs in the subsequent works of *adhyātmik* Jain poetry, thereby conventionalising and institutionalising Banarasidas' audacity. Below I will briefly demonstrate the reach of these poetic conceits and philosophical conventions with examples from two poets who are exemplars of *adhyātmik* thought. While numerous poets would serve as good examples here, I have chosen Cidānanda and Rājacandra because they demonstrate the temporal and spatial reach of these ideas; they are both 19th-century figures and they were based approximately a thousand kilometres to the East and West, respectively, of Banārasīdās' base in Agra.

Cidānanda,[26] who lived approximately two centuries after Banārasīdās, is a somewhat obscure figure in whom we see many of the themes cherished and propagated by Banārasīdās. The one source that discusses Cidānanda, the *Cidānanda Granthāvalī*, admits that it is difficult to determine his precise dates, but cites an elegy for his passing from around 1861 (Dhūpiyā 1976, 13–16). Therefore, he presumably lived in the first half of the 19th century. He was said to have spent decades wandering around sacred Jain places, mostly *Sametaśikharjī* (Pārasnāth Hill, Jharkhand), where he was known to practice yoga in caves and where he eventually died. The following poem expresses a description of *samatā* closely aligned with Banārasīdās'. Along with this quality of equanimity he inserts a strong critique of bias or partisanship:

> "Rare is the Neutral, the feeling of Equanimity"
>
> Hey Seeker (or yogi)! In the world I've seen there are scarce few sadhus who are free of *partiality/bias*. [However,] the one who merges cognition with a spirit of *equanimity*, becomes *neither established nor non-established (i.e. takes no certain position)*, and he will come to know the essence of indestructible peace (1). He knows no *distinction* between wealth and poverty, he records gold and stone as *equal*. He doesn't view woman as she-serpent (i.e. temptress), but sees an auspicious temple (2). Upon hearing rebuke or praise, neither joy nor sorrow come to him, as a master yogi in this world, he constantly ascends the gunasthānas (3). Who shines like the moon, and is as serious (deep) as the ocean, always rambling with a bird-like spirit, fully aware (not-intoxicated), pure patience equal to a mountain (4). A lotus (*pankaj*) is so called because it emerges from mud, but the lotus remains detached/distinct. Cidānanda says thus are the great ones, so is the dear lord (5).
>
> (Dhūpiyā 1976, 85–7)[27]

26 I learned about Cidānanda, the second of these three poets, from the Jain monk Kīrti Mahārāj, who claims the poet to be his favorite. To my knowledge, there has not been any scholarship in Hindi or English on this poet (but my search to find some continues).

27 '*nirapekṣa viralā-samarasabhāva*'

avadhu nirapakṣa viralā koī, dikhyā jaga sahu joī ‖ *ṭera* ‖ *samarasa bhāva bhalācita jāke, thāpa athāpa na hoī* ǀ *avināśī ke ghara kī bātāṃ, jāneṃge nara soī* ‖**1**‖ *rāya raṃka meṃ bheda na jāne, kanaka upala sama lekhe* ǀ *nārī nāginī ko nahīṃ paricaya, to śiva maṃdira dekheṃ* ‖**2**‖

In his exposition on *samatā*, Cidānanda gives some fairly common oppositions to be rejected: rich and poor, stone and gold, but what is far more striking is that he refuses to see women as dangerous or as temptresses. Rather, he recognises the figure of woman as an auspicious temple within which there is also a *jīva* that seeks liberation. While *anubhava* is not mentioned, he means precisely this experience when he refers to 'knowing the essence of indestructible peace'. He uses a series of beautiful metaphors to describe the qualities of the equanimous: lunar brilliance, oceanic depth, roaming free as a bird, the patience of a mountain. Based on the force of these metaphors, even if they are rather standard, he is not taking *samatā* as indifference or greyness. It is rather a profound accomplishment to break free of all doctrine and opinion; it requires, simultaneously, immense patience, seriousness, and yet bird-like lightness of spirit.

The following three excerpts deal with opinion, *mata*, as something that always contains bias and conflict. Cidānanda insists that it is better not to even entertain a position, since all opinions are self-serving of another self. Rather, he implores his audience to always seek the unique experience of themselves, which is always an unprecedented utterance. No one else can provide this voice, since it remains unspoken until it is listened to, or experienced via *anubhava*. It is precisely here that we see the celebration of the individual:

> "The ineffable (unsaid) story [...]" (*pada* 55)
> Who knows the ineffable story of your genius, only one lovingly acquainted with your wit (yourself),
> The rest, partisan and sectarian types, they only establish deceit and conflict.[28]

> "The all-inclusive way of the Jina" (*pada* 48)
> No one can tell you of the true path.
> Whomever you ask, they will sing the glories of their own path,
> The doctrinal drunkards, discourse-bearers, shamelessly adorn their own dogmas,
> Without the benefit of *syādvāda* and *anubhava*, their stories look to me rather pallid.[29]

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niṃdā stuti śravaṇa sunī ne, harṣa śoka nahīṃ āṇe । *te jaga meṃ yogīśvara pūrā, nitya calte guṇaṭhāṇe* ॥3॥ *candra sāmāna sobhyatā jākī, sāyara jema gambhīrā* । *apramatta bhāraṃḍa pare nitya, suragirī sama śuci dhīrā* ॥4॥ *paṃkaja nāma dharāya paṃkaja se, rahata kamala jima nyārā* । *'cidānanda' isyā jana utama, so sāheba kā pyārā* ॥5॥

28 *'akatha kathā'* (pada 55)

akatha kathā kuṇa jāne ho terī catura sanehī ॥ *nayavādī nayapakṣa grahī ne, jhūṭhā jhagalā ṭhāṇe* ।

29 *'jinamārga kī sarvāṃgitā'* (pada 48)

māraga sācā kou na batāve । *jāku jāya pūchie te to, apanī apanī gave* ॥ *matavārā matavāda vādadhara, apata nija mata nīkā* । *syādvāda anubhava bina tākā, kathana lagata mohe phīkā* ॥1॥

"The Pure Nature of the Path" (*pada* 46)
The clever ones thus have this idea, that opinions are by nature numerous,
Like things they come and go, don't bother indulging in discourse and counter-discourse.[30]

The doctrinal-drunkard, discourse-bearers, is the conceit to which I referred in the Banārasīdās section. The paradox is that by having (and holding) an idea you won't have a clue. Through the lens of *syādvāda* (may-be-ism) and *anubhava*, the poet tells us all positions look rather pallid to him, without the flavour of truth. The motif of the 'unsaid story', which we will see again, is that only the individual can articulate his or her mind, to take any other or external position as one's own would distract or cloud the sense of the Self. Thus, in the second poem, 'No one can tell you the true path'. One may only find it via *syādvāda* and *anubhava*, critical non-absolutism and personal yogic insight. In the torrent of discourses and currents of thought, it is better not to get involved.

The last poet I will discuss, Śrīmad Rājacandra (1867–1901), was an anti-sectarian, Jain poet-saint from Gujarat. He models, very succinctly in his poetry and teachings, the way in which *anubhava* was mobilised to confound religious authority. He was aware of Cidānanda and wrote about him as a great yogi with profound self-awareness (Dhūpiyā 1976). Rājacandra represents something of a culmination of the ideas which were given a significant push by Banārasīdās in the 17th century. He was not a mendicant, he never took *dīkṣa* (monastic initiation), and like Banārasīdās he was a merchant, poet, and religious leader all at once. And similarly, his following was nearly entirely laypeople. He emphasises self-realisation and *guru bhakti* (veneration of the guru). His most celebrated text, the *Ātma Siddhi*, was composed in 1896. Śrīmad Rājacandra, as Emma Salter has indicated, echoes the teachings of Kundakunda. She writes, '[He] defines self-realisation as an internal or spiritual state; specifically as the experience of one's own soul as a phenomenon independent from one's physical body or empirical senses' (Salter 2006, 247). She does not mention that perhaps the most important vernacular language interpreter of Kundakunda was Banārasīdās, and it was perhaps the latter who framed Kundakunda's ideas in a way that would assist in reshaping religious authority under Rājacandra. Salter notes that Rājacandra's recognition of self-realisation as the premier source of spiritual authority has had a two-fold effect on Rājacandra's community: It allows lay gurus religious authority and it has evoked a staunch anti-sectarian ethic (Salter 2006, 249). These elements are reminiscent of Banārasīdās and Cidānanda, since they also promote experience and eschew any

30 *'śuddha-svarūpa prāptimārga'* (pada 46)
matimaṃta ema vicāro re, mata matiyana kā bhava ‖ *ṭera* ‖ *vastu gate vastu laho re, bāda vibāda na koya* ‖

sort of dogma, yet Rājacandra institutionalises these principles. Salter also rightly extrapolates the anti-sectarian ethic of Rājacandra and his followers as a scepticism about mendicants since they were seen as representatives of sectarian Jainism. The high premium on self-realisation and experience of the self has allowed the layperson to sincerely participate in the central soteriological objective of Jainism, which had hitherto been the reserve of mendicants.[31] Rājacandra's 'burning passion for self-realisation', can be seen in the following *pad*.

> Knowledge of *Self, equanimity*, gained/emerging in wandering experiment, *unprecedented speech*, (i.e. speech full of theories *never heard before*), great knowledge of scriptures, these are the qualities worthy of a true guru (*AS* 10). (Maheta and Chandrika 2006)[32]

Taking this *pad* as an example of Rājacandra's message immediately privileges elements of individualisation: the focus on the self, to begin with, is ubiquitous in his work. *Equanimity*, as I have discussed, has real social implications, namely an openness to a variety of ways of being, this type of non-judgement propels social imaginaries of increased choice and possibility. The *gained in wandering experiment* can be read a few ways, but it reminds one immediately of Cidānanda and Banārasīdās, since they also speak of an untethered itinerancy as a metaphor for a similar process of mind, but also as literally moving about in the world. *Unprecedented speech*, stands out, again, as an openness to the unique and personally creative, a privileging of what has *never been heard before*, rather than received wisdom and doctrines. We saw this above in the poem *akatha kathā* (unsaid story). The poet honours the uniqueness, sincerity, and personality of the individual cum guru. Lastly, knowledge of the true scriptures makes the list, but these are not specified here and maintain manoeuvrability. Below are two couplets addressing the problem of partisanship/bigotry and the phenomenon of plurality.

> To wit, there are many doctrinal views (*mata-darśana*) and ways stating many paths to liberation. Which among them is true? Such discrimination cannot be made. (Couplet 93)[33]

> In which caste is there liberation? In which external guise is there liberation? This cannot be decided because of the many profound differences and proclivities. (Couplet 94)[34]

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31 The most famous recipient of spiritual counsel from Rājacandra was, of course, Gandhi. A series of letters written between the two shows that Gandhi sought spiritual guidance and 'refuge' several times from Rājacandra and received elaborate responses in Gujarati. Gandhi wrote in his autobiography that 'no one else has ever made on me the impression that Raychandbhai [Rājacandra] did' (Weber 2004, 34–37).

32 *ātmā jñāna samadarśitā vicare udaya prayoga* | *apūrva vāṇī paramaśruta sadaguru lakṣaṇa yogya* ||10||

33 *athavā mata darśana ghaṇāṃ kahe upāya aneka* | *temāṃ mata sāco kyo bane na eha viveka* ||93||

34 *kayī jātimāṃ mokṣa che kayā veṣamāṃ mokṣa* | *eno niścaya nā bane ghanā bheda e doṣa* ||94||

The couplets focus attention again on the impossibility of taking any standpoint. The proliferation of views makes it pointless to insist on a correct one, as Cidānanda also advises. He then extends this idea to social variation in the form of caste and outward guise (clothes, appearance, and physical identity), rejecting the idea that people who look a certain way or are in a certain caste have an exclusive claim to liberation. This is also, no doubt, meant to recall the Digambar/Śvetāmbar schism. Therefore, by refusing to hierarchise or attach value and meaning to these social differences, Rājacandra at once brings the ethic of *samatā* into the social realm and also mobilises social plurality as a tangible metaphor for *anekāntavāda* or multiple truths.

In this last *pad*, the poet uses the second person to address his audience, striking a familiar and empowering tone. After beseeching his audience to reject all opinion, he asks them to turn to themselves as they are already everything.

> As there is liberation in dharma; you are liberation itself; you are infinite views and knowledge (darśana, jñāna); you are un-disturb-able bliss itself (Couplet 116).
>
> (Rajchandra and Jaini 1964)[35]

The last *pad* speaks of an immense personal resource that becomes available only after the critical non-absolutism of non-alliance and non-aversion of *samatā* is realised. Here *samatā* resonates with the Neutral: 'first: suspension of orders, laws, summons, arrogances [...] Then, by way of deepening, refusal of pure discourse of opposition' (Barthes 2005, 12). *Samatā* follows a pattern that first rejects bigotry/certainty/partisanship and then rejects oppositions, binaries, i.e. recognising no distinctions. Once these paradigms are stripped away, the individual is afforded the calm to experience his or her own Self. This is the moment nuance can be felt and the sensitivity this affords offers a guide on to how to live: 'nuance is one of the linguistic tools of nonarrogance, of nonintolerance [...]' (Barthes 2005, 130). As it happens, these poems have non-intolerance in the content as well. This Jain *adhyātmik* literature itself is a nuanced reading of the central Jain tenets as it extrapolates even more from the Jain principles than conditional inclusivism of Haribhadra or Yaśovijaya. The poems of Cidānanda and Rājacandra promote an interpretive practice challenging 'conditionment' and privileging a liberating self-reliance and a non-comital attitude towards doctrine. In this sense, they continue what Banārasīdās had initiated, and they carry his work further as they focus more precisely on *anubhava* (experience present), *samatā* (Neutral) and the anti-dogmatic.

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35 *eja dharmathī mokṣa che tuṃ cho mokṣasvarūpa* | *ananta darśana jñāna tuṃ avyābādha svarūpa* ||116||

7 Conclusion

In the *Jīvadvāra* section of the *Samayasāra Nāṭaka*, Banārasīdās elaborates the counter-intuitive complexity and contradiction of individual beings. He uses a metaphor of fire and fuel to explain how *jīva*s are *essentially* the same, but manifest uniquely:

> Grass, wood, bamboo and various fuels of the forest, when put to fire, can be said to appear multiform. But if one considers only their incendiary nature, then all fire is one. Likewise, comprised of the nine elements, all *jīva*s (beings) appear multiform, some pure, mixed, and impure. However, giving mind to their power of sentience, they are grasped as formless and undifferentiated. (Banārasīdās 1997, 31)[36]

Thus Banārasīdās attempts to reconcile the enigma of difference and equality, suggesting a perspectivist approach to the problem that allows individuals and fires to have simultaneously identical and differing properties. This both explains individuality (and plurality) and allows for it, and then asserts that from another perspective, all beings are undifferentiated. James Laidlaw has written eloquently about the complexity and would-be paradoxes of the image of Jainism that we frequently encounter, '[…] values and ideals can exist in counterpoint: a relation that is not logical or semantic, but aesthetic. Incompatible ideals can remain compelling […]' (Laidlaw 1995, 389). If we think about Jainism as austere and mirthless, just orientated towards stark, absolute isolation, we miss the whimsical poetic part that remains defiantly nimble, that offers encouragement to the individual seeker to rely on him/herself. Banārasīdās places the activities and experiences of individuals at the centre of his work and his successors push this ethic even further by rejecting anything external to the self. And yet, along with this individualistic impetus, they form a supportive community for those who wish to be themselves. Banārasīdās is even able to make dancing a metaphor for the bliss of stark, absolute isolation in nirvana (*kevala*): *ṭhānai nṛtya pāi ekanta* ('finding himself in solitude, he breaks into dance'; Lath 2005, verse 655).

36 *jaise tṛṇa kāṭha bāṃsa ārane ityādi aura, īṃdhana aneka vidhi pāvakameṃ dahiye* । *ākṛti vilokita kahāvai āga nānārūpa, dīsai eka dāhaka subhāva jaba gahiye* ॥ *taisaiṃ nava tattvameṃ bhayau hai bahu bheṣī jīva, suddharūpa miśrita asuddha rūpa kahiye* । *jāhī china cetanā sakatikau vicāra kījai, tāhī china alakha abhedarūpa lahiye* ॥ (Samayasāra Nāṭaka, Jīvadvāra, 8)

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