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'Let Me Tell You about the Origin of Śrāddha'
An Early-modern Jain Narrative Argumentation Concerning Death Rituals

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Abstract   Funerary rituals have held an ambiguous position in the history of the Jains with doctrinal literature refuting their efficacy, while other evidence testifies to their widespread performance. On the critical side, Jain theorists argue that the transition from death into the next stage, either a new life or liberation, is instant, and that no fruits of an action by one person can benefit another person. At least as important are the socially oriented critiques against specifically Hindu forms of funerals, directed against the dominance of Brahmanical groups. This chapter focuses on early modern Jain views regarding rituals at death, in particular on how the Hindu *śrāddha* ritual has been narrated in the Old Hindi *Dharmaparīkṣā* ('Examination of Religion') by the Digambara Jain Manohardās (seventeenth century). This ritual at the conclusion of the funerary rites involves the offering of gifts and food to the ancestors and priests so that it may benefit the deceased into his next life, as well as the donor. The narrative argument by Manohardās is innovative in the way it embeds its critique into an episode of a merchant's life as well as an origination story of *śrāddha* about a gander and a crow that is not found elsewhere. In order to evaluate Manohardās' depiction of the Hindu ritual, the chapter engages with other discussions of *śrāddha*, most importantly Somasena's contemporary *Traivarṇikācāra* (Dundas 2011). It is suggested that Manohardās' early modern narrative about ancestral ritual is not just a continuation of a time-honoured topic, but instead a reframed engagement with the multireligious past, as well as the early modern lay-focused present.

Stories entertain, inform, inspire; they work as a looking glass reflecting the tangles of society, often with a moralizing effect, and thus provide the historian with hints about the beliefs and practices of the society presented in the story. This chapter treats a small substory from the Old Hindi *Dharmaparīkṣā*, an adaptation – one may even use the term translation (see De Jonckheere 2023) – of the Sanskrit *Dharmaparīkṣā* by the eleventh-century Digambara author Amitagati. While I use the term 'Old Hindi' to denote the vernacular language of this adaptation, I must note that there is no incontestable term to denominate the early vernacular languages of North India. The language variant of the *Dharmaparīkṣā* discussed in this chapter can be described more precisely as open-ended Braj Bhasha with Rajasthani influences. I prefer the term 'Old Hindi' because it facilitates literary comparison across the language variants of early modern North India.[1]

The *Dharmaparīkṣā* tells the story of two semi-magical beings, two *vidyādharas*, who travel to earth to discuss with Brahmans in the town of Pāṭaliputra. Their goal is to refute the beliefs of the Brahmans, including those about the puranic gods, and to relate the proper behaviour of a righteous (i.e., Jain) person. For that reason, the text presents some critiques against specific Brahmanical practices and uses stories to argue for them. The *Dharmaparīkṣā* by Amitagati is not the oldest version of this narrative: the 'Examination' has existed at least since the tenth century and was rewritten before the twentieth century in several languages.[2] The version I draw from in this chapter was composed by a Jain layman called Manohardās in 1649 CE. He came from the Khandelvāl merchant caste in Sanganer near Jaipur and wrote several texts that fit into the trends of Jain literature at that time, namely writing on spirituality and 'vernacularizing' from Sanskrit into Old Hindi.[3] His *Dharmaparīkṣā* is his most often copied work according

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1   Old Hindi is the preferred term among contemporary scholars of North Indian early modern literature. The language of the *Dharmaparīkṣā* here under discussion resembles Braj Bhasha as described by Snell (1991), as well the language of the Sants as analysed in Strnad's grammar based on Kabīr *vāṇī* poems (2013). While there is a definite closeness between what I call Old Hindi and Old Gujarati, I distinguish the latter because, especially in its earliest (Jain) form, Old Gujarati is much closer to Apabhramsha or Maru-Gurjar.

2   Details of the earlier and later versions of the *Dharmaparīkṣā* and a detailed paraphrase of the story will be published in my forthcoming book. Readers may at present resort to De Jonckheere 2019 and 2023.

3   The writings of Manohardās show influences of the spiritual movements which in Agra led to the establishment of *adhyātma*. The Adhyātmika group, of which Manohardās seems not to have been part directly, translated and

to Jain manuscript libraries today. Since there are no critical editions of this text, I have collated specific paragraphs of several manuscripts (specified in the Bibliography) for my analysis.

The substory I present here is unique to the adaptation by Manohardās. It claims to tell the origin of *śrāddha*, the ancestor rite connected to Hindu death rituals in which rice-balls are offered at specific times, ending with the ceremonial feeding of invited Brahmans.[4] The mention of *śrāddha* in the Old Hindi *Dharmaparīkṣā* is not entirely exceptional, since the text by Amitagati also refers to and censures offering food to ancestors (16.91). The ancestor rite can be seen as particularly problematic because it involves a form of merit transfer from one person to another which Jain karmic theory rejects, as well as a certain time lapse for the soul between the moment of death and rebirth.[5] Jain philosophers argue that rebirth is instantaneous, in contrast to Hindus and Buddhists. As a consequence, there are no actions or non-actions after death that could have an impact on the deceased Jain's next life. From that perspective, the complex funerary rite in which Hindus offer food, usually in the form of rice-balls, to reach and benefit the ancestors so that the deceased person may access the ancestral world, is unacceptable. Nevertheless, Jains have engaged in funerary practices which involved an underlying idea of merit transfer since at least the beginning of the common era. This has been pointed out by Cort (2003) who concludes that such seemingly contradictory stances should be acknowledged to exist side by side in different Jain genres.

The story told by Manohardās uses traditional arguments and tropes to make its point against *śrāddha* and interlaces these within a folk story that also elucidates some of the practices seemingly involved in the funerary ritual. In what follows, I will render a translation and analysis of the Old Hindi 'origin of *śrāddha*'-narrative in the context of

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read the texts of the philosopher Kundakunda (see Cort 2015). There is no scholarly agreement on the dates or identity of Kundakunda (between second and eighth century CE; see Soni 2020 and Balcerowicz 2023). The works ascribed to him, most importantly the *Pravacanasāra* and the *Samayasāra*, represent a focus on the self, applied in a religious practice that concentrates on an inward experience of self-knowledge.

4 A short introduction is found in Schömbucher-Kusterer 2018. Knipe 1977 offers a more detailed description of the rite including a discussion of the series of bodily constructions for the deceased to enter into the world of the ancestors.

5 See Jaini 1980 for more detailed discussions on these issues in doctrinal texts. Jaini mentions the *Dvātriṁśika* by another Amitagati, who would have been the predecessor of the eleventh-century *Dharmaparīkṣā* author, in this context (1980: 235). See also Cort 2003, who nuances Jaini (1980) by referring to inscriptions, mortuary rituals, and narrative literature.

earlier Jain literature, and in particular in relation to the relatively rare description of funeral ritual by Manohardās' contemporary Somasena in his *Traivarṇikācāra* (Dundas 2011). The discussion will give insight into how early modern Jain popular culture in its dialogue with religious principles results in a heterogeneous presentation of Jain lay ideals by drawing on multiple paradigms of doctrinal, ethical, and social values.

Jain Perspectives on the *Śrāddha* Rite

The ritual of *śrāddha* is mentioned in the *Dharmaparīkṣā* in the context of an absurd frame story related to food, told by the two protagonists as an invented life event. The two *vidyādharas* present themselves to the Brahmans of Pāṭaliputra as brothers who were once asked by their father to herd the sheep in a field. While letting the sheep graze, they become hungry and the eldest decides to cut off his head so that he can throw it into a tree full of wood apples and fill his belly. Satisfied, he lets his head descend from the tree and reattaches it to his trunk. The Brahmans, hearing this impossible account, challenge Manovega to explain how this could be true. In response, the *vidyādhara* compares his account to the ritual in which Brahmans are fed so that the ancestors would be happy. Implied in the comparison is a criticism of the idea of merit transfer, in the form of food, behind the *śrāddha* ritual: just as a belly cannot enjoy the food eaten by a severed head, so also the ancestors cannot enjoy the food eaten by the Brahmans. The critique is relatively common in Jain literature. First, the same disapproval is expressed in the tenth-century Apabhramsha *Dhammaparikkha* by Hariṣeṇa.[6] Further, the critique of *śrāddha* has several precedents and reiterations in the centuries around the composition of the earliest *Dharmaparīkṣā* texts. These texts include:

1) the *Varāṅgacarita*, supposedly written by Jaṭāsiṁhanandi in the seventh century (Upadhye 1938: 8–19 and Warder 1983: 148). This narrative about prince Varāṅga introduces Jain ethics and brings up several points of polemics. One questions how the ancestors could be honoured by giving dairy products to

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6   v. 9.11 in Bhāskar 1990, my translation:
    iha loï vippaṁ bhoyaṇu karaṁti | para-loe piyara kahi dihi dharaṁti ||
    In this world, food is offered to Brahmans. In the other world the ancestors are satisfied.

Brahmans so that the gods would be pleased, while the poor people who farm these cows keep suffering and do not receive any benefits from the gods (24.60–63). The focus of the criticism seems to be on some sort of social inequality, and there is no explicit reference to merit transfer.

2) the *Yaśastilakacampū* by Somadeva from the tenth century. This Sanskrit story of king Yaśodhara is full of narrated information of the literary, social, and political aspects of Somadeva's time. It resembles the *Dharmaparīkṣā* in that it contains many points of advice for Jain laity and thus relates *śrāvakācāra* ('principles of Jain lay conduct'). The text disagrees that ancestors who have acquired their dwelling (rebirth) based on virtue would need a yearly offering of rice-balls that are offered to Brahmans and crows. Its main argument against *śrāddha* is that merit collected during one's life cannot be transferred through rituals. Instead, transmigration of an ancestor is only affected by the ripening of his own *karman* acquired from previous actions (4.88–90).

3) the *Syādvāda Mañjarī* by Malliṣeṇa, written in 1292 CE (according to Jaini 1963). This is a commentary on Hemacandra's *Anyayoga Vyavacchedikā*, which is 'a cluster of 32 verses repudiating the absolutist *(ekānta-vāda)* tenets of the orthodox schools of Indian philosophy' (Jaini 1963: 47). In his elaboration of Hemacandra's critique, Malliṣeṇa ardently argues against the violent sacrifices of the Brahmans (specifically of Mīmāṁsakas) and in this context refutes *srāddha*. Again, one of the main arguments against *śrāddha* is the impossibility of merit transfer between Brahmans and dead ancestors ('only in the Brahman do we see the fattened bellies'). Interestingly, Malliṣeṇa also refutes the idea that feeding a Brahman who is 'as good as dead' is in vain (Thomas 1960: 70). With this, he implies that even if a Brahman is very close to the realm of death, where the ancestors reside, he cannot transfer merit to them. Malliṣeṇa seems to refer in this statement to the Jain perspective that rebirth is instantaneous and results from the *karman* one has built up during one's life.

4) For the sake of completeness, other shorter yet critical references are included in the *Bhāvasaṁgraha* by Devasena (tenth century, Handiqui 1968: 360); the *Jasaharacariu* by Puṣpadanta (tenth century); and the story of Ambikā in the *Vividhatīrthakalpa* by Jinaprabhāsūri (fourteenth century, see Granoff 1990: 182–4). Early references to the ritual in Jain sources are found in the *Nisīhacunni* (Sen 1975: 121) and the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* (2.6.43–44).

The texts enumerated above are all, in some way, involved in criticizing Brahmanical perspectives. These critiques are directed against certain philosophical principles – in this case the possibility of merit transfer – but perhaps even more so argue against the actions that result from those principles. Indeed, many of the texts mentioned are meant to inform and to create a lay audience, that during the medieval period was increasingly understood as essential to the continuation of the Jain community. Making sure that the laity exhibited proper Jain conduct, called *śrāvakācāra*, was therefore a prominent element in the production of texts from that period onwards. The mere fact that all these texts refer to the *śrāddha* ritual suggests that Jain *śrāvakācāra* also involved the correct dealing with death or those who have died. This, as also Paul Dundas has noted, is something that Robert Williams (1963) – to this day the main author on Jain *śrāvakācāra* – seems to have overlooked (2011: 100).[7] Dundas (2011) has used this lacuna to relate in detail the description of a death ritual by the seventeenth-century author Somasena in his *Traivarṇikācāra*, a text included by Williams as a final example of *śrāvakācāra* texts. This text, in fact, gives its own description of *śrāddha* without implicating the complex support and merit transfer to the ancestors as found in the Hindu ritual (Dundas 2011: 133). I want to use the opportunity pointed out by Dundas to look at a contemporary narrative text that refutes the ideas behind the Brahmanical *śrāddha*, but in doing so, suggests certain conventions around death at the time.

The 'Origin of *Śrāddha*' Story

Manohardās introduces the ritual of *śrāddha* in a way similar to earlier Jain authors, namely by problematizing it. He continues the dialogue between the two *vidyādhara*s acting like brothers and the Brahmans with the following critical response by the *vidyādhara* Manovega:

'When one gives food to a Brahman, his ancestor receives its juice.' Those who have heard this, hold it in their hearts, the dull-headed ones! (1752)

When food is given to you, will a dead person be satisfied? Will a lamp that is extinguished burn again simply by oil? Tell me the truth! (1753)

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7   Williams focuses on *sallekhanā* as one of the supplementary vows (1963: 166–72).

Your [ancestral] father sitting [in heaven] looks fixedly upon you, while you are seated [here] enjoying flavoursome food. [But] his belly does not fill at all! Even if the Creator sends it up. (1754)

During your life, the costs beat you on the head like a shoe. You do not meet the expenses; and the price isn't small! Your dhoti is torn, your bed is broken, the entrance-door full of holes. (1755)

Whether you are eating good-smelling or bad-smelling food, you are enjoying what has been given [for you] to eat. Listen! While you are alive you enjoy such sufferings. How is the body of a dead one nurtured? (1756)

… Living, he does not consider his mother and father, for him *dharma* remains unknowable. After he has died, his head is shaven bald, just like the back of a donkey. (1758)

A *vimāna* is made for the dead person. His head is exposed to all people. The body is not the essence of life. Running and running kills everyone. (1759)

[Once,] a *śrāvaka* (layman) did the *śrāddha* ritual. In an invited meal he fed a Brahman-Sādhu. He gave two copper coins as a fee and took the merit from his human birth. (1760)[8]

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8   All translations are my own. They translate my edited collation of the four manuscripts of Manohardās' *Dharmaparīkṣā* described in the Bibliography. The verse numbers reflect the verse numbers used in Ms. G-24:
bāṁbhaṇa ko bhojana diye | pitra lahai rasa tāhi | aisi suni hiradai dharai | te mūrakha sira āhiṁ || 1752
mūva tirapati hota hai. bhojana diyā tohi | bujyau dīpa phuni tela sauṁ | balai sati kaho mohi || 1753
ṣatarasa bhojana bhuṁjai āpa | baiṭhyau ṭakaṭaka dekai bāpa | bāko udara naika nahi bharai | yadapi vidhātā ūpari karai || 1754
jīvata sira ṭhokai paijāra | ṣaraca na milai na dāma lagāra | phāṭī dhovatī ṭūṭī khāṭa | paḍyau pauli vici bāraha bāṭa | pauli bici bāraha bāta || 1755
vāsyo kūsyo bhojana khāi | suna khāsi rame de de jāi | jīvata aisī dukha bhogavai | mūvai kahā te tana poṣavai || 1756
(…)
jīvata māta pitā nahī mānai | tiha ko dharma aleṣai | mūvā pāchai muṇḍa muḍāvai | gadahaḍī ke leṣai || 1758
mūvo vimāna baṇāī | mūḍa nughāḍe sakala jana | jīvata sāra na kāī | dhai dhāi mārai sakala || 1759
eka sarāvaga karyau sarādha | nyoti jimāe bāṁbhaṇa-sādha | ṭaka doi dakṣaṇa kā diyā | manuṣa janama kā lāhā liyā || 1760

So far, Manohardās' account remains within the framework of how we commonly understand the ritual and the Jain attitude towards it. His argument against *śrāddha* is based upon the impossibility of merit transfer, and we encounter the same simile of the lamp and its oil as found in the text by Malliṣeṇa (Thomas 1960: 69). The concern with money in verses 1755 and 1760 is a recurring trope in Manohardās' text, as well as in other, particularly vernacular, Jain literature.[9] Its occurrence here may suggest an additional motivation in criticising *śrāddha* stimulated by tensions concerning the social and socio-economic power of Brahmans. In verse 1756 Manohardās further points out the irony between the belief that life is suffering and that one can delight in death, and he criticizes in verse 1758 the idea that one would not care for his parents during their lives but that he would when they have passed away. We also learn that the head of a dead person was usually shaved and seems to have been exposed while being carried on the palanquin *(vimāna)* to the place of cremation. Somasena describes in his text how the face of the deceased should be uncovered for a moment to sprinkle water on it (Dundas 2011: 118). We might, for this reason, presume that Manohardās' description also envisions exposing the head only momentary or that it refers to the fact that the head is shaved bald. On the other hand, the following comment that the body is not the essence of life seems to suggest that ritual concerns about the body do not, in fact, matter and that perhaps the deceased person's exposed head helps to remind people of the mortality of the body in contrast to the soul. The use of a palanquin denominated as *vimāna* is also attested in the text by Somasena (Dundas 2011: 118).[10] Further, it is interesting to learn that custom prescribed a fee of two copper coins to give to a Brahman for his services.

Manohardās' narration continues by evoking certain superstitions that might have existed around the feeding of the Brahmans more specifically.

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9 Several Jain narratives tell of the adventures of merchants, such as the famous *Vāsudevahiṇḍī* or the *Kuvalayamālā* in Prakrit, and in that context involve reflections on wealth. In Old Hindi, Banārsīdās, who, like many Jains, is from a merchant background, describes several financial affairs in his personal environment in his *Ardhakathānaka* (2009). His text seems to illustrate an openness to talk about personal or personally framed money issues in early modern vernacular literature, which we also find in the text by Manohardās.

10 Flügel (2017) presents an overview of death practices in Jainism.

Then this excellent merchant had the following thought: '[My father's] ghost is sitting at my door.' So he invited a Brahman, and talked to him to clarify something. (1761)

'Today my father appeared in my dream, [saying]: "You have satisfied the Brahmans completely. I am very blessed, my reliable Śāh.[11] You should [now] feed the Brahmans, my son."' (1762)

'... Give a Brahman – in your heart – tens of sweet rice-balls, my boy. There is no wrong in that. Then my suffering will disappear.' (1766)

[The *śrāvaka* continued:] 'Therefore, o Brahman, please fill yourself with the ten rice-balls, I beg you in mind, speech and body.' After hearing these words from the merchant, the Brahman was struck as if by fear of lightning. (1767)[12]

It seems that the appearance of a ghost frightens the Brahman, and after the merchant's request, the Brahman simply remains silent. The merchant is surprised by this reaction and challenges the Brahman to either admit the falsity of the ritual or to leave the city. After challenging the priest, the merchant gives his own explanation of the origin of *śrāddha* by telling a fable. This fable about a crow and a gander, typically symbolizing vice and virtue, narrates how the reciprocity between host and guest that is central to Indic culture turns into a trick by the crow and corruption by the rulers of the crow's city:

'Listen, I will tell you the origin of *śrāddha*. Since then [as follows], merchants perform *śrāddha*: Between a crow and a gander there was friendship that was created by the creator as befits *karma*. (1771)

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11 *Śāh* means 'merchant', but the word is also commonly used to denominate a Jain, since Jains are often of merchant castes.

12 *phuṇi vaṇivara ika mato vicāra | malina vadana baiṭhau daravāra | phuni tina bāṁbhaṇa liyau bulāya | tina sauṁ bāta kahī samajhāya || 1761*
āja pitā mohi supano diyau | bāṁbhaṇa jāya tripati tai kiyau | dhani dhani mere sāha sadhīra | tuṁ bāṁbhaṇa bhugatāvai vīra || 1762
(...)
bāṁbhaṇa hiradai māhi | daśadaśa gula de bālakai | yā mai mithyā nāṁhi | to merī pīḍā bhajai || 1766
tātai daśadasagula duja-rāi | khaïye bali jāūṁ mana-vaca-kāya | aisai vacana vani ke sunai | jānu ki bhaye vajra ke haneṁ || 1767

Regularly, the crow went to the house of the gander and ate dishes of different types. The town where the crow had set up his house was filled with bad people. (1772)

The gander said to the crow very affectionately: "Show me your house [too]." But the crow replied to the gander: "What do you actually want in my house?" (1773)

The crow noticed the goose in the house and with politeness and affection, he took them [both] to his house. He brought different types of fruits and put honey in front of them. (1774)

Then, in order to test the city [and its inhabitants], the crow-king arranged a play of pretence. No one does such a work! If you hear of it, you will be greatly surprised! (1775)

Walking around, the crow-king said to the gander, curtseying: "This goose is mine, brother. Give what is mine to me." (1776)

Having heard these words of the crow, the gander beat his head in desperation. If someone is in the companion of a low person, their entire wealth disappears. (1777)

"Oh crow, all this you are asking for is impossible. A female goose in the house of a crow, that is never heard of!" The gander [then] went to the Panchayat and said: "Give him [only] what is rightly his." (1778)

[But] the crow had gone to the Panchayat before. Without showing respect he spoke [to them]: "Accept my lie, dear brothers, and tell it [as I say], if you want to prosper. (1779)

Everything of yours will be great today. Come and I will show it in mind and speech, dear lords." [said the crow.] After taking their promise, he went to the gander. Quarrelling and quarrelling they stood in the town. (1780)

Having gone to the Panchayat, they [the crow and the gander] said: "Give us a solution for our dispute." In the minds of the Panchayat arose greed. [So] they gave the goose to the crow. (1781)

The poor gander was sobbing: "Now I saw the justice of the Panchayat applied." The crow [also] said to the gander: "You have now seen the justice of this town, brother." (1782)

[Then] the crow gave the goose back to the gander. The crow said then to him: "Look, my friend, at this logic. In a lie-ridden city, a thief is king.'" (1783)[13]

Up to this point, the story presents its main moral: this world is full of liars – not least among the powerful – and greed is a vice of many people. Such messages are common in Jain and Indian literature. They may be related to the vows of truthfulness *(satya)* and non-possessiveness *(aparigraha)* which are central to all Indic traditions, but would as well reflect a general ethics present in most fables and other folk stories. Manohardās continues the fable by connecting the corruption of the Panchayat to the origin of *śrāddha*:

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13 *sunai śrāddha kī utapati kahūṁ | tava tai śrāddha karata hai sahū | vāyasa haṁsa mitratā bhaī | karma yogya vidhinā niramaī | 1771*
haṁsa ke ghara vāyasa nita jāi | bhojana nānā bhāṁti karāi | vāyasa jiha pura mai ghara karyau | so pura duṣṭa-manuṣa syauṁ bharyau | 1772
haṁsa vāyasa sauṁ kahi vahu bhāya | hama kauṁ apaṇau geha diṣāi | vāyasa phiri haṁsā sauṁ kahai | mere ghara pai kā yauṁ cahai || 1773
vāyasa haṁsani graha deṣiyo | bhāva bhagati kari ghari le gayo | nānā bhāṁti ke phala vahu lyāi | mahuḍā āgai milho āi || 1774
phuni tiha nagara parikṣa kāja | eka tamāso kīnau rāja | aise kāma karai navi koï | suni tai vaḍau acambho hoi || 1775
calatā haṁsa sau kāga-pati | bolyau vinai karei | yaha haṁsani merī bhayā | merī mo kūṁ dei || 1776
aisī bāta kāga kī suni | hāi hāi kari mūṁḍī dhunī | nīca puruṣa soṁ karisī saṁga | tiha ko jāsī aratha abhaṁga || 1777
are kāga saba pūchata hunī | haṁsanī kāga ghari kabahūṁ na sunī | calyau paṁca pe haṁsa sau kahīṁ | tāhī dei tāhī kī sahī || 1778
kāga paṁca pai pahilai gayau | binā bhagati kari soṁ boliyau | jhūṭha hamārai liyau bhrāta | bolau jo cāho kuśalāta || 1779
baḍe tumhāre sagale āja | jāi diṣāūṁ mana vaca rāja | kaula lei haṁsa pai gayau | jhagaḍata jhagaḍata pura majhi ṭhayau || 1780
bāta kahī paṁcani soṁ jāi | hamarau jhagaḍo dehu cukāya | paṁcana mana mai lobha upāya | haṁsī kāga kau dīnī jāi || 1781
haṁsa vicārau vilaṣau bhayau | paṁca nyāya phuni juta deṣiyau | kāga kahai haṁsā soṁ bāta | nyāya nagara ko deṣau bhrāta || 1782
kāga haṁsanī haṁsa ko daī | phuni bātī vāyasa-naiṁ caī | aho mitra tuma deṣau nyāu | jūṭhī nagarī carapaṭa rāu || 1783

Then the crow came there where the Panchayat of the city was seated. "You have kept your word [about] what I have told you. That your [dead] fathers also saw. (1785)

I will show you your fathers." Know this in mind and speech, o people: a person who carries out what he has promised, that person is excellent. (1786)

… The Panchayat stood up and went with him most enthusiastic in the mind and enchanted to see their fathers. There is nothing untrue in that. (1788)

He [the crow] went where there are lines of hellworms, and pointed them out with his hand laughing: "Your forefathers are here. Will you now [still] perform some worship? (1789)

O Panchayat, these are your forefathers. There is nothing wrong in that. Because they spoke lies, they received this [minute] life-form. Understand and see it in your mind." (1790)

'Then the Panchayat said: "Listen, o crow. Please be compassionate to us in some sort of way. Save them! Even though you are a crow, you are the essence in every way." (1793)

[The crow replied:] "Fill the beaks of all these [crows here], and I will take [the food] among the gods. If you feed my family, there is no fault in that. (1794)

Know that when the month of Aśvin comes, on the auspicious fifteenth day, it is said to give that food to my family and invite the Brahmans along."[14] (1795)

They prepared all these things. The crow left and returned home.'

[Then] the merchant [said]: Śūdras, Kṣatriyas, Brahmans, and Vaiśyas, they all began to make offerings. From then onwards,

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14 Puranic literature associates different dates of the calendar with the funerary rites of *śrāddha* (see Underhill 1921: 112–13). However, custom seems to prefer either the dark fortnight of the Bhādrapada month according to the Amānta calendar of South and West India, or the dark fortnight of the Aśvin month according to the Pūrṇimānta calendar of North India.

this peculiarity became *śrāddha*. Know this in mind and speech, oh Brahman.' [Thus the merchant] explained this great sin that is said to be the beginning of *śrāddha*.' (1796–1797)[15]

While we have learned already about the maliciousness of untruthful people, in this 'consequential' part of the fable we learn more precisely that the karmic consequence of lying is such that it leads to a rebirth as a minute creature in hell (v. 1789). The members of the Panchayat discover to their horror that this is what happened to their ancestors, because they, indeed, as leaders of the city had been liars up until then. This narrative element may be read as a contemporary social critique too.

In fact, all beings can be seduced into corruption, although they should not be. As the *Dharmaparīkṣā* reveals many times, even the gods are not exempt from indulging in trickery and unrightful behaviour. This reflection on the deities is found in another version of the story of the gander and the crow that was collected in the beginning of the twentieth century by William Crooke and Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube. The colonial folklorist and Pandit Chaube recorded the story as it was told by a certain Bansidhar, a schoolmaster of Bah in the Agra district.[16]

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15 *phiri kari vāyasa āyo tahāṁ | paṁca nagara ke baiṭha jahāṁ | pālyau vacana kahyau mai tohi | pitra tumhāre deṣai johi || 1785*
pitra diṣāūṁ tāharai | mana vaca jānau loi | bolau niravāhai puruṣa | uttama hoi ju koi || 1786
...
paṁca cale te sātha uṭha | ati uchāha mana māṁhi | pitra deṣi kau mohaṇā. yā mai mithyā nāṁhi || 1788
jahāṁ naraka-kīḍā kī rāśi | jai diṣāye kari vahu hāsi | baḍe tumhāre tiṣṭai ehu | ava tuma seva karoge kehu || 1789
e paṁca tuhāre baḍe ha |. yā mai mithyā nāhi. jūṭha katheṁ yahu gati bhaī | samajhi deṣi mana māhi || 1790
...
boleṁ paṁca taba suni re kāga | aba hama upari kari anurāga | kisī bhāṁti ina kau udhāra | hoi kāga tuma saba vidhi sāra || 1793
inahi sabana kau cauṁca bhari | le melhau sura māṁhi | bhojana jau dehi mohi kula | ya meṁ mithyā nāhi | 1794
asuna māsa lāgata hī jāni | panarai ithi śubha kahī vaṣāni | bhojana hama kula kau dehu vahū | aura brāhamaṇai nyautau sahū || 1795
sakala bāta tina āreṁ karī | vāyasa nija uṭhi āyau gharī | vanika śūdra kṣatrī brahmana vaisya | dekari kau laga esa visesa || 1796
taba tai bhayau sarādha | mana vaca jānau māhanā | kahyau baḍau aparādha | kahai kanāgata ādi hai || 1797
16 The story was first published in *Indian Antiquary* 1925, vol. 54; all the stories were collected in Crooke and Chaube 2002.

Bansidhar's story equally tells of a gander and his wife who were hosted by a crow for several days, and how the crow claimed the goose upon their departing, arguing that she was his wife in a previous life. They call together the Panchayat of crows who had been bribed to give the goose to the crow. When this Panchayat decides to grant her indeed to the crow, the gander calls upon Indra. However, Indra too succumbs to the bribe of the crow who promises to grant him immortality. In the end, the crow gives the goose back to the gander and points out the corruption of both men and gods. The attestation of the same story in oral lore more than 200 years later is suggestive of the register that Manohardās applied in making his Old Hindi translation.[17] I believe that our author took the narrative from oral tradition, because of the lack of textual attestations elsewhere and the fact that Manohardās is not an author referred to in other early modern vernacular sources. The story at least suggests a stronger turn towards the popular in vernacularizations of Sanskrit texts. Against this, one might argue that the *Dharmaparīkṣā*-story itself exists as a compilation of several folk stories, which is indeed true.[18] However, the unique addition of a fable reorients Manohardās' vernacular adaptation to the people of his time and region. First, it is probable that the crow–gander story was told in Manohardās' surroundings and not necessarily in that of the earlier authors. Second, it is the only story that humanizes animals, the other substories of the *Dharmaparīkṣā* all portray human lives. They are parables, this is a fable. This uniqueness signals how the Old Hindi author understood the genre-characteristics of the *Dharmaparīkṣā*.

In Jain discussions of the narrative genre, parables and fables are both included under the category of *kappiya* ('fiction'), but they seem to have a different function. While stories of animals in dialogue (fables) are not commonly used to teach religious principles, metaphorical narratives that are about humans (parables) are (Balbir 1995: 238). Manohardās' inclusion of a fable and subsequent conscious or unconscious conflation of the two types of *kappiya* suggests that he envisioned the *Dharmaparīkṣā* as a collection of fictional stories, albeit with an overarching religious message, rather than as a religious frame story illustrated by focused narrative teachings.[19] The story of the crow and

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17 I have elaborated on the stylistic elements that express orality in Manohardās' text elsewhere (2023).

18 Most substories of the *Dharmaparīkṣā* bear characteristics similar to stories described in the Thompson Motif Index (1885–1976).

19 Balbir (1995) describes in detail the subcategories of *kathā* ('narrative') in Jain literature. One distinction made by Jain literary theorists is between *cariya*

the gander is also not followed by an explicit moral in the frame story. Furthermore, the fable puts the moral teachings in the mouth of an animal, while the pedagogical role in the other substories is reserved for either the virtuous *vidyādhara*, or a Jain monk. Manohardās thus plays with the ethical imagery of animals. The gander (or goose), usually associated with virtue, is easily tricked, while the crow, who is seen as malicious, is also smart and cunning.[20] It is the crow who eventually points out the corruption of the Panchayat (v. 1782). Nevertheless, his dubious character makes the gift of rice-balls to his crow family far from virtuous.

On Crows and Rice-balls

The comparison of Manohardās' story with an orally attested folk story is insightful, but it has not led us further in our discussion of the *śrāddha* ritual. To understand why Manohardās links the *śrāddha* rites with crows, I here re-examine earlier Jain literature and also look at an account of Jain praxis.

In the *Yaśastilaka campū* by Somadeva (v. 4.88) it is said that the rice-balls offered to a deceased person are actually eaten by Brahmans and crows. A similar sentence is found in the older *Varāṅgacarita* by Jāṭasiṃhanandi: 'If the food that should satisfy the dead ancestors in another world is eaten by Brahmans and crows, [then] that which was acquired earlier by those ancestors, pleasant or unpleasant, is spoiled because of this ritual.' (v. 25.64). Also the *Vajjālagam*, a Prakrit anthology by Jagadvallabha, describes how a housewife commonly offers food daily to her favourite crow, but chases the crow, a sign of death, away not wanting to believe that her lover has passed away (vv. 459–460).[21] These texts make clear that crows were associated with hospitality and with death in medieval India. In fact, they still are today.

('non-fiction') and *kappiya* ('fiction'), which can be further subcategorized, although these categories are not clearly distinguishable.

20 The Sanskrit *Dharmaparīkṣā* by Amitagati makes the negative perception of crows explicit: 'Just like dancing to a blind man, singing to a deaf man, purity to a crow, eating to a dead man, or a wife to a eunuch is useless, in the same way a blissful gift to a fool [is useless].' (4.90)

21 Hemacandra in his Prakrit grammar cites a similar poetic Apabhramsha verse expressing *viraha* of a wife: 'As the lover was suddenly sighted by a lady who was driving away the crows, half of her bracelets dropped down on the earth and the (rest) half cracked with a noise' (4.352; translated in Schwarzschild 1961: 43).

Rice-balls are traditionally offered not only to Brahmans within the Hindu *śrāddha*, but also to crows. Often, it is believed that the crows represent the ancestors or that they are the messengers bringing the rice-balls to the ancestors. A range of explanations exist and the custom of offering to the crows is found in many communities all over South-Asia. Jains too were accustomed to this tradition. Besides the critical literature just mentioned, or the *Traivarṇikācāra*, which supports the offering of rice-balls (Dundas 2011: 130 f.), Sharma attests that Jains in Karnataka 'burn the dead, throw the ashes on the third day into the river, and even offer rice-balls to the crows on the tenth day, and feed relatives and caste-fellows on the twelfth and thirteenth days' (1940: 161) He sees this as an accretion from Hinduism. Perhaps we may read the same critique in the *Dharmaparīkṣā* by Manohardās. The author indeed states that *śrāddha* is wrong and merely based on [a faulty] tradition supported by misconceptions about merit transfer, be it through Brahmans or crows. Nevertheless, his main argument is against the special treatment of the Brahmans. At the end of the story, Manohardās does not extend his criticism of the ritual, but instead focuses on the Brahman to whom the merchant talks in the beginning of the story. This one becomes a *śrāvaka*, which involves being calm in the mind, giving daily donations and eating after doing *pūjā*. I, therefore, argue that the purpose of the story of the merchant preparing a *śrāddha* and telling the crow–gander story is primarily, in line with the *Dharmaparīkṣā* tradition, to subvert the power of dominant Hindu groups, and secondarily to add local flavour to the text.

Conclusion

To conclude my exploration of this vernacular Jain narrative, I want to ask what we may learn from this folk story about ancestral or death rituals and the perception thereof among early modern Digambara Jains. In his analysis of Somasena's *Traivarṇikācāra*, Dundas argues that the description by Somasena of the performance of a *śrāddha* should be separated from doctrinal interpretations and religious necessity of such practice. In contrast to Hindus, Jains never formulated any principles to validate *śrāddha*, but that did not mean that they did not accept ceremonial aspects accompanying the commemoration of a deceased person (Dundas 2011: 132).[22] Similarly, I believe that Manohardās did

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22 In fact, Dundas (2011: 140) suggests that also within Hinduism *śrāddha* may have become undetermined in meaning and function.

not intend to attack the funerary ceremonies or the honouring of the ancestors with rice-balls in itself, but rather he criticized the meaning-seeking interpretations of these practices. His repetition of the time-honoured argument against merit transfer in the beginning, and the reaffirmation of the superiority of Jain values at the end, frame his narrative detour by which Jain laity can consider their practices in dealing with the dead as well as the morality of society, understanding the underlying current that resurfaces throughout the *Dharmaparīkṣā*, that true value lies in internal and spiritual righteousness. This final analysis can lead us to acknowledge the strength of the narrative form in conveying religious knowledge, since it allows Manohardās to comprehensively reflect on the multiple values and paradigms connected to funerary rites, including the Jains' literary history of rejecting *śrāddha* based on the impossibility of merit transfer, a critique of the social power of Brahmans and the misuse of power in general, and an engagement with the oral tradition that accompanies such rites.

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