Reconciling Illness through Devotion: The Medicalization of Modern Jain Faith Healing Practice through Bhaktāmara Stotra

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RECONCILING ILLNESS THROUGH DEVOTION: THE MEDICALIZATION OF MODERN JAIN FAITH HEALING PRACTICE THROUGH BHAKTĀMARA STOTRA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

by

Aashi Jain

2021
To: Dean John F. Stack  
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This thesis, written by Aashi Jain and entitled Reconciling Illness Through Devotion: The Medicalization of Modern Jain Faith Healing Practice Through Bhaktāmara Stotra having been approved with respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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Date of Defense: June 25, 2021

This thesis of Aashi Jain is approved.

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________________________________________
Andrés G. Gil  
Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2021
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother in heaven, Lt. Varsha Jain. Her demise motivated me to choose this career and I am grateful to her for this treasure.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is my pleasure to acknowledge everyone who supported and helped me throughout this research. I feel fortunate to be guided by excellent advisors and members of my committee. I thank Dr. Vose for his valuable feedback that helped me to get brainstorm which produced great ideas. His contribution in shaping my research, and his belief in me kept me going cannot be ignored. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Akhtar, who took charge of my thesis in the end and provided a sense of security and comfort. His constant support enabled me to complete my thesis on time. I also want to offer special thanks to Dr. Albert Kafui Wuaku, whose ethnography class helped me to navigate my research. His inputs kept me pushing to work harder and develop my research strategies. I convey my thanks to Dr. Eric Larson, who mentored me during the Teaching Assistantship for his class and the rest of the semesters with his positive attitude.

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In the end, I would like to express my deep devotion and gratitude to Bhaktāmara Stotra and Lord Ādinātha, without this hymn and his support, I wouldn’t be here.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

RECONCILING ILLNESS THROUGH DEVOTION: THE MEDICALIZATION OF MODERN JAIN FAITH HEALING PRACTICE THROUGH BHAKTÂMARA STOTRA

by

Aashi Jain

Florida International University, 2021

Miami, Florida

Professor Iqbal Akhtar, Major Professor

There are numerous accounts of healing abounded with the Jain narratives which on one side determines bodily wellness by healing the physical body, and on the other side directs the path of attaining liberation. The Bhaktâmara Stotra (BhS), “Hymn of the Devoted Gods,” composed in Sanskrit by Ācārya Mânatuṅga, (6th century-11th century) holds great relevance as a hymn of devotion in the Jain tradition. Many modern Jains theorize the faith healing potential of the BhS through the language of medical science. In this research, I argue that diaspora Jains in the US have understood the BhS’s effectiveness as working at the nexus of bhakti and mantra, while contemporary Jains add a new interpretation of its efficacy that I call “medicalization.” The term, “medicalization” is one sort of specialized version of “scientization”, that explains the scientific understanding of BhS, includes faith healing practices through Bhaktâmara stotra and its Rituals. Jainism holds a belief that our life is governed by our karmas; illness is, doctrinally speaking, a result of bad actions. This research examines how Jains in the diaspora see the BhS as an instrument of healing and by using BhS to negotiate the doctrine of Karma.

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Introduction

In September 2017, I moved in with my guardians in New Delhi, about whom I had heard so many stories. One claimed that he could cure "incurable diseases" through the chanting of mantras and by having the right faith in the Jinas. Being an atheist who had recently completed her undergraduate degree in business management at the time, I rolled my eyes saying, “Do not try to prank on me, you know I don’t believe in this stuff.”

Throughout my stay with them, I noticed that many people came in for guidance and counseling. My guardians recommended mantras that, when used, would solve their problems. The people would always return with positive feedback and a request for more mantras. I would observe these activities and attempt to rationalize (by providing my reasons) why the mantras worked for these people. Gradually, I started assisting them in a bid to understand how the mantras worked. My guardians, Dr. Prriya Jain and Dr. Pradeep Jain, who were mantra healers, Reiki masters, Vāstu experts, and astrologers, would always answer my questions, explain how the chants were done, and teach me the terms I was not familiar with. They would go to the hospitals, to provide some sort of “healing” to the patients in critical condition, and the techniques were working well for them as well as their patients.

One morning, I heard them saying that “Mrs. Kamla, that old lady in Balaji hospital, has been discharged.” I had heard them discuss the woman's plight a few nights prior. She had been struggling with a critical stage of adenocarcinoma, a kind of lung cancer, along with a stomach infection that had rendered her unable to eat anything in the
past 12 days. The doctors had offered little hope as they had done all they could, and yet saw no improvement in her condition.

They had gone to the hospital on one of the nights and chanted the 45th śloka (verse) of the Bhaktāmara Stotra (Hymn of the Devoted Gods) 27 times along with its rddhi (superhuman powers) and mantra. The following day, they received a call that informed them the patient was progressing and had just had her first meal after 12 days. The doctors reported that she was stable, and her family had taken her home. I was left wondering whether it was truly possible if one's life could be "revived" by the chanting of mantras. Intrigued by this practice, I started reading about their therapy, ‘Faith-based healing through Bhaktāmara Stotra’ (as they call it), in an attempt to examine the science behind it. My curiosity set the foundations for my academic research which began at Florida International University in 2019.

The Bhaktāmara Stotra (BhS), composed in Sanskrit by Ācārya Mānatuṅga, is considered an epitome of devotion (bhakti) in the Jain traditions. Dedicated to Ādinātha or Ṛṣabhanātha, the first tīrthaṅkara (ford-maker) or Jina (spiritual victor) of this cycle of time, the hymn is widely accepted by both the Śvetāmbara and Digambara sects, though in two recensions of 44 and 48 verses, respectively. As a popular hymn written sometime in the early medieval period, it became the subject of several narratives and commentaries in Sanskrit and vernacular languages. Since at least the late 13th century, each verse of the BhS has had a mantra connected to it, which is thought by some to have the ability to heal diverse kinds of medical ailments and conditions. This hymn continues to hold great relevance as a hymn of devotion which has come to be used as means of faith healing.
Thesis Statement

This thesis is an ethnographic investigation of how Jains living in the US view the BhS as an instrument of healing. Jainism holds a belief that our life is governed by our karmas; hence illness is, doctrinally speaking, a result of bad actions. This thesis will explore how Jains in the US understand both modern medicine’s and the BhS’s respective abilities to cure. The central questions of this thesis are: How do diaspora Jains theorize the faith healing potential of the Bhaktāmara Stotra? What use do they make, if any, of the language of medical science to do so? How do Jains understand the ways bhakti, mantra, and medicine each work, if at all, to provide both physical healing and spiritual progress? The research will help readers to understand how “faith healing” exists among believers in modern medicine and science, taking into consideration the overlap and complexity of the relationship between traditional practices and modern science. Also, this work will broaden our perspective on the relationship between science and faith by examining faith-healing practices.

Stotras and stotra literature in Jainism

There are plenty of genres in the devotional literature in Jainism and stotra is one of them. Stotras are complex and not easy to define as belonging to a specific genre of religious poetry, although considerable scholarship presents them as such. This is because stotras do not possess idiosyncratic features that easily identify them as such.
The word *stotra* along with its synonyms “*stuti*” and “*stava*” is derived from the Sanskrit root, “*stu*,” which means “to praise” or “to eulogize.” Praise is considered the central definition of this word. As Bühnemann (1983) advocates “the majority of stotras which are included in popular collections and are recited today are hymns that praise a personal deity and promise material benefits to the reciter” (9). A general definition given by Hamsa Stainton claims that stotras are always composed in verse and are short poems that praise a deity (or any religious figure) directly or indirectly. They are regarded as effective (recited or sung) in attaining spiritual or material gains. Due to their association with the praise of a deity or other religious entity, these are translated as “hymn of praise” (Stainton 2019: 29). The characteristics of stotra literature alter distinctly. I will discuss the characteristics of BhS in detail in chapter 2, instilled with poetic images and alliteration (alankaras).

**Methods and Theoretical framework**

In this research, I employ textual and ethnographic methods. Specifically, I examine the commentaries and stories about the hymn and its author from the 13th century CE to the present. To trace the textual background, I investigated various commentaries and *Prabhandha* (narratives) to identify the development of ideas about the *stotra* linked with the practice of faith healing. Through interviews conducted over Zoom, my research focuses on what I call the “medicalization” of the BhS, that is, how the language of medical science influences the ways diaspora Jains understand mantra-based healing practices. Medicalization is one sort of specialized version of “scientization.” By scientization, Knut Aukland (2015) means “processes by which proponents of a religion
appeal to modern science” or in other words, a tendency among Jains since the 19th century to view Jainism as consistent with modern scientific knowledge. For my theoretical framework, I built upon S J Tambiah’s and Frtz Staal’s theory of language and Humphrey and Laidlaw’s theory of ritual action that I will discuss in chapter 3.

**Jains in the US Diaspora Community**

During the late 19th century, Gujarati and Punjabi Śvetāmbara Jains migrated to East Africa, working as traders and shopkeepers, eventually scattering to Britain, North America, and different parts of the world (Flügel 2019: 9). These migrants established Jain centers and temples in the communities where they settled. Due to the small Jain populations in these places, constructions surpassed sectarian, caste, and other differences. Most of the Jains, considering their busy work routine, embrace the traditional American Christian custom of conducting worship services on Sunday (Desai 2005, 430). For instance, the Jain Temple of South Florida conducts temple worship on Sundays followed by a lunch.

I chose to interview Jains in the US diaspora community as they while keeping traditional beliefs in mind, possess a universal outlook by inventing a new Jainism irrespective of sect, caste, or region. While some diaspora Jains envisage Jainism as scientific religion and indulging in the trends of Jain veganism (that includes vegetarianism too), contribute to resolving global environmental problems. Others tend to emphasize the traditional doctrines and practices of the religion. These Jains, adhering to ethical and doctrinal views have been able to preserve the values of Jainism by transferring them to their generations.
Literature Review

Jainism has voluminous numbers of hymns, mantras, and other devotional media, but the BhS is considered a favorite in both sects. Nalini Balbir (2007) and Whitney Kelting (2001) show the vital role of hymns in the Jain tradition in general and the BhS specifically. Balbir places the BhS in the broader historical development of Jain devotional culture. She asserts two underlining features of the hymn, one being the comparison of the Jina with the bright and radiant things in the universe such as the moon and the sun. The latter feature points to the supremacy of Jainism demonstrated (Verse 25) by Ācārya Mānatuṅga in comparing the Jina with the main Hindu gods, Shiva, Brahma, and Vishnu. She also sheds light on the BhS stories that emphasize the magical supernatural powers of this stotra. The stories emphasize that the chanting of BhS eliminates all kinds of fears and solves everyday issues in life, which I will discuss in Chapter 2.

Balbir’s entry in JAINpedia clearly illustrates the trend of bhakti in Jainism through the growing popularity of BhS among the diaspora Jains. Bhakti is considered fruitless if it takes place due to the extrinsic motive of fulfilling worldly desire. John E. Cort stresses, “when done properly, bhakti is indeed as efficacious in the destruction of karma as are those practices considered by scholars to be the hallmarks of Jain practice—asceticism and equanimity” (Cort 2002: 77). The trend of composing hymns of devotion and praise to the Jinas became common in the Jain tradition, giving rise to an image worshipping culture. Cort (2002) claims the popularity of the BhS can be seen in Jain devotional culture—daily rituals (pūjās) and everyday lay practices—but indicates that it has another
side, seen in the *yantras* and *maṇḍalas* (diagrams used for tantric rituals) to attract specific deities.

Embedded in Jain tantra or mantravāda, BhS is the center of an extensive ritual tradition. To understand the *mantra* in Jainism, Paul Dundas argues that Jain *mantraśāstra* (the power of sound) considers language as able to affect reality for the fulfillment of desires (Dundas 1998: 31-52). Rajan Mohadikar’s translation and critical analysis of 37 Prakrit *stotras* provide a fair idea about how Jain *mantras* and hymns were influenced by *mantraśāstra* and *tantraśāstra* of Hinduism. Her conclusion states the purpose of the composition of *stotras* (hymns) is not limited to spiritual benefits of attaining salvation but also includes material welfare such as dissipating calamities, providing protection from evils, curing diseases, and protection from troubles caused by others. Her work shows the popularity of the BhS in comparison with other hymns. What is so unique about the BhS that it's widely accepted by both the sects unlike other stotras in Jainism?

Ellen Gough (2020) details how karma influences the soul and how it could be modified by mantras. She posits an implicit Jain theoretical framework of the interrelation of karma theory with sound that explains how mantras work. She lays emphasis on *maṅgalas*, a form of prayer that occurs in the beginning of any hymn or mantra to facilitate reading the text without any obstacle. She describes various mantras consisting of Prakrit praises that were originally considered *maṅgalas*. According to her, “By the medieval period, Jain texts begin to call these praises a ‘mantra’ and encourage its recitation, often affixed with combinations of seed syllables (*bījamantra*), in an impressive variety of rites that could cure diseases, defeat enemies, initiands, and so on.”
To understand faith healing tradition in Jainism through the BhS’s mantras, Granoff (1998) examines various medieval narratives of healing through the hymn. She analyzes which diseases were applicable for curing via the hymn, focusing on both the initiator (monks or any practitioner) and the patient (who is suffering from the ailment). Her accounts show ample evidence of healing through mantras with monks as the primary healers. In one account, she emphasizes on the end of the suffering of a king who was oppressed by an evil goddess. The king was cured by applying the water of monk Mallā’s feet. In another narrative, Mānatuṅga sent his hymn BhS to the city of Takṣaśilā, unlike going himself like Mallā, to free the people from plague. There have been several other stories of plagues and leprosy that she discusses and establishes the cure could be possible in numerous ways.

The title of my research is inspired by Aukland’s (2015) theory of “scientization” that applies in Jainism; “medicalization” is my own adaptation. He argues that scientization has led to various challenges in how Jains in the diaspora community see and practice their religion suggesting it as “scientific.”

**Key Terms**

Mantra: Every verse of BhS has a mantra attached to it. These can be translated as syllables, sacred chants, incantation, or magic spells.

ṛddhi: These refer to various superhuman powers such as power of intellect, healing, changing bodily form, etc. achieved by Jain practitioners by performing
rigorous austerities. In the Jain canonical text Trilokaprajnapti, Śvetāmbara lists 64 different powers that were later added to BhS.

**Chapter Outline**

Chapter 1 outlines my virtual fieldwork. I have described my field, methodologies I implemented, positionality as a researcher and my experience of research in the virtual field. The chapter highlights the differences between contemporary ethnography via Zoom and traditional ethnography in the field.

Chapter 2 traces the hymn’s growth in stature through medieval *prabandhas* and commentaries. This chapter endeavors to answer why the BhS has gained so much prominence and popularity among so many other stotras. Along with this, I will provide an account of the characteristics of *stotra* as a genre, survey the biographies of *Mānatuṅga* and the narratives of the circumstances under which the stotra emerged, tracing their trajectory to understand the growing importance of this hymn to the tradition up to contemporary times.

Chapter 3 will discuss the components and ritualization of BhS that includes *ślokas* (verses), *mantras* (sacred chants), *ṛddhis* (superhuman powers) and *yantras* (mystical diagrams). The chapter will shed light on visual and aural rituals connected with BhS. The central question of this chapter is, how do people use material objects as part of process of reciting the hymn in ritualized contexts? Some Jains see Jainism through the lens of science rather than as a matter of faith. This chapter will help to develop an understanding of theorizing mantras based on my respondents’ attitudes,
whether that includes scientific discourse or not. Also, the chapter will explain the BhS process of chanting and rituals performed by diaspora Jains to facilitate healing. Using Humphrey and Laidlaw’s theory of ritualization, I will explain the integration of ritual culture into healing through BhS components and Bhaktāmara Rituals performed by diaspora Jains. Tambiah’s theory of language will prove useful in supporting my argument that mantras are just instruments that link the reciter with the supreme power that makes things happen for them.

Often, modern medicine overlooks the spiritual factors that are associated with the health of a patient. Chapter 4 will examine the attitude and behavior of diaspora Jains and Jain medical professionals residing in USA towards this hymn. This chapter will reflect on the sociological perspective of Jains about the faith healing practice of BhS. I try to answer the following questions: how do diaspora Jains and Jain medical professionals theorize the application of BhS as a healing instrument? Is it merely devotional or does it also have a healing aspect? What is the main purpose of using the stotra? How do they understand the relationship between tantras, mantras, and devotion in Jainism? Do Jains (medical doctors and non-medical professionals) in the diaspora see any relationship between Jain mantras and modern medicine?

I will conclude by highlighting different approaches used by modern Jains in the understanding of BhS and the working of its mantas. I will discuss how my respondents understand BhS’ power to heal the physical body.
Identity Disclosure

I have substituted names of my respondents to maintain their identity. In case of original names, permission has been granted by the participants.
Chapter 1

Shifting Gears from Field to Technology: The Story of My Virtual Fieldwork

Introduction

At 5:55pm on March 11, 2020, when the email from FIU President Mark Rosenberg came through, I froze. The notification read, “Florida’s State University System is transitioning to remote learning in response to the coronavirus pandemic.” I pondered over what that might mean for my research. After much deliberation, and morose over not being able to enjoy the experiences of fieldwork, I was faced with two options: Do archival research or conduct online interviews. I, like everyone else, was anxious about the unknown future. I had already made my travel plans for the summer to conduct an ethnographic study on the diaspora Jains of the USA. I caught myself on several occasions wondering how long the pandemic would last and hoping that it would go away in time for my research. Over time, however, I accepted the facts and shunned my longstanding dream of conducting an ethnography. As classes shifted to remote learning and we all had to adjust to the new mode of learning, I noticed that many professors, although unhappy about the new learning dynamics, put in a lot of effort into making the classes interactive. As I considered the pros and cons of the options presented, I reckoned that the beauty of all the technological advancement of the 21st century could still furnish me with some opportunity for fieldwork, albeit not as fulfilling as the actual one. For this reason, I resolved to create my own virtual field through Zoom.
1. Setting a Virtual Field

Anthropologists have conducted several online community research studies through social media platforms in the past and there is variety of data available in the catalogue. However, performing ethnography through Zoom in the 21st century during a pandemic is a modern technological advancement. I find Boellstorff’s (2015) assertion that a “fully fleshed out ethnography can take place without ever meeting a research subject offline” convincing to support my research.

I undertook this ethnographic study using the virtual platform, Zoom, and conducted online interviews. I explore three different areas in this research: 1) the popularity of the hymn, by tracing the progression of narratives and commentaries from primary sources; 2) Association of Jains with BhS’s rituals and devotional culture; and 3) Jains’ attitude towards medical healing through the stotra. Along with these, and to develop an understanding of Jains in the USA, I explored other major areas of the tradition such as sectarian negotiation, Jainism and science, visual culture, karma theory, etc. Majority of my participants belong to the Jain Center of New Jersey, the Jain Center of America (New York), the Jain Center of South Florida, the Jain Center of Southern California (JCSC), and the Jain Society of Tampa.

Marcus and Fischer (1986: 704) indicate that the transnational political, economic, and cultural factors that shape local contexts are frequently ignored in anthropological investigations of the local and international worlds. Ethnography can be conceptualized multi-locally or as multi-sited in order to take account of these global influences. Because it is possible that both persons and objects may become highly mobile, ethnography must be concerned with these movements. At present, with the
modernization of societies as well as cultures, a dire need for implementing new
strategies is felt. One of the strategies could be redefining the concept of field, “shifting
the material space to cyberspace” (Wittel 2000: 21). Agreeing with Wittel’s suggestion,
I believe a shift from traditional ethnography to a multi-sited network fieldwork will
modify the relationship between the researcher and the participant that can blur the
limitations between home and the remote field.

1. 2 Participant Observation

Gupta and Ferguson (1997), quoting Appadurai’s (1991) work, propose to reconstruct
the idea of the field. The field should be theorized as a “political location” as a
central part of ethnography methodology, which will displace the role of participant
observation. Keeping this critique in mind, for my methodology, I employ
Malinowski’s (1922) practices of participant observation and Geertz’ thick description
in this thesis. Malinowski specifies 3 main objectives for the researcher in the field.
1) Recording the daily life as a member of the community, 2) creating a framework
based on scientific perspective, and 3) collecting detailed information about the
community or people.

For the participant observation, I observed and took part in virtual rituals and
practices conducted over Zoom on Sundays by different Jain communities. With an aim
to follow Malinowski’s objectives, I joined some WhatsApp groups for the event updates.
Before the pandemic, I was able to observe the ritual and material culture by participating
in daily pūjās (worship) and other rituals, as well as meditation sessions, at the Jain
center of South Florida. I attended lectures various lectures delivered by Jain scholars
such as Chandrakant Mehta, Samani Chaitanya Pragyaji, Mahendrabhai Shah, Arihant
Jain Patni, Dr. Sudhir Shah, conducted online by Jain center of New Jersey, Jain center of South Florida and Jain center of Southern California. Some of the lectures were in the form of small study sessions consisting of 5-10 people, and I was able to understand their perspectives by taking part in the discussions. All the Jain centers celebrated major Jain festivals like Navpad Oli, Dasalakshan, Paryushan, Mahavir Jayanti, Diwali through the medium of Zoom. Social distancing was maintained wherever participants of the events were required to meet in person such as in case of Diwali performances, or a puja was streamed live from the Jain center involving minimum number of participants.

Along with this, places like JCSC hosted events of BhS and Navkar mantra recitation on Thanksgiving 2020 to abide by the values of non-violence and compassion towards all the living beings. Jains in the diaspora hold a firm belief that chanting of mantras and hymns can destroy bad karmas; I will discuss this further in Chapter 3. I also observed that due to the pandemic, diaspora Jains engaged themselves as well as their kids in enhancing their knowledge by attending various sessions on basics of Jainism, chanting of BhS and other mantras. Zoom emerged as a learning platform for Jains. Following this, participant observation allowed me to analyze the rituals, devotional and visual culture and understanding of Jainism by the Jains in diaspora community.

1. 3 Positionality: Insider or Outsider?

The Insider/Outsider debate revolves around the researcher's relation to the participants. There is a difference in the information available to a person who enters the field as an insider having adequate knowledge about the research group, as compared to the information available to the outsider with lack of knowledge. Griffith (1998: 374) argues
that researchers do not fit into the category of an insider or outsider. Rather, research is seen as a relationship with others. Styles (1979) supports the above argument by asserting that research depends on the ability of a researcher to immerse in the lives of participants specifically in qualitative research. He writes, "Insider and outsider myths are not empirical generalizations about the relationship between the researcher's social position and the character of the research findings. They are elements in a moral rhetoric that claims exclusive research legitimacy for a particular group" (Cousins, Hamsa & Styles 1979: 148). From my understanding, myths held by both insiders (researcher) and outsiders (other people) do not necessarily depict or reflect the relationship between the researcher’s position and the findings. They are just things that specific people hold dear and provide legitimacy.

Renato Rosaldo describes "positioned observer" as a recognition that "you are somebody: you come out of a certain class; you come out of a certain place; you go into a certain country; you then go home; you do all of these things"(Olson 1991: 246). My positionality as an insider, member of the Jain community and an outsider as an ethnographer has helped me in expanding my research capabilities and area. My positionality consists of dual identities of being a researcher and a practitioner of Jainism. I will provide an overview of both the identities in this section, and their effect on my relationship with the participants and the field, according to Griffith’s claim. My ethnicity is South Asian, specifically, Indian. My roots originated in a Marwari family from Rajasthan, following the Digambar (sky-clad) Jain tradition.

On 23 August 2019, my arrival in a foreign land away from my family with a lot of uncertainties about practicing my own religion soon disappeared. I was fortunate
enough to visit the Jain center on my first day in Miami. Unaware of the sectarian arrangements, I asked my hosts (a Jain family) if the temple we are going to belongs to Śvetāmbara or Digambara Jains. They smiled and informed me that “This is not India. We practice together irrespective of any sectarian affiliations.” At first, it sounded like an alien concept to me but when I visited the Jain temple in Weston, seeing different idols placed under a common roof, I sensed a wave of pride. I was not exposed to any other rituals out of Digambara tradition and never been to any other temple. I realized my knowledge of Jainism and its sectarian culture was limited.

Unlike India, we see no sectarian differences among different sects and there is harmony among people. Amused at this invention of Jainism by Jains in the USA, my mind was flooded with numerous questions such as, how do Jains in the US practice their tradition? Despite the difference in practices of both sects, how do they perform their rituals together under one roof? What is the main binding factor in the diaspora community? My curiosity made its way into research through the advanced fieldwork course during my second semester in the Religious Studies department at Florida International University.

I was excited to work on my first research project on sectarian identity negotiation by the Jain community in the USA. My frequent visits (Figure 1) to temple and active engagement in rituals and other activities helped me to establish rapport in the community. Also, my hosts introduced me to different people as a new FIU student pursuing a master’s degree in Religious Studies. I conducted interviews and was able to present my findings in the class. Analyzing my own results, I observed that Jains in the
diaspora community, irrespective of sects (Figure 2), unite and perform devotional practices. The BhS (having 48 verses) was carved into metal plates on the wall of the Jain Center of South Florida, which shows the acceptance of the hymn by both sects. I decided to conduct ethnographic research for my thesis to analyze the Jain understanding of healing through devotion using BhS from a scientific perspective.

Figure 1: Attending a YJP meeting at Jain Center of South Florida

Figure 2: Shrines presenting 3 different Sects of Jainism.

Having been a practitioner of the same faith for the past 22 years, I was able to develop a good command over fundamental knowledge about Jainism. My experience helped me to establish trust among my respondents towards me. Sharing similar religious and sociocultural background with the participants was a good advantage for me but
sometimes there was a linguistic barrier as I am not highly proficient in Gujarati, and it was widely used by Jains in the community. In effect, sometimes during conversations they narrated their experiences in Gujarati, assuming my proficiency in it. Interviewees, however, were flexible and multi-linguistic and were willing to adjust to English for my understanding. I asked certain questions over telephone interviews about their understanding of Jainism as a religion in USA and what differences they see between here and in India. These were the two most common questions I asked my respondents.

Respondents were, in turn, curious to know my interest in this field. One of the things I found interesting, I was rarely asked about my sectarian identity or caste during my interactions with the community members. This shows that the members, unlike what transpires in India, were less attentive towards the sectarian and other identities in their present context. My understanding and perception of my own religion was highly altered through this research. The central idea of this discussion on positionality was to identify my dual identities and I affirm that my positionality had a significant impact on my respondents.

1. 4 Interviews

I conducted all interviews over Zoom, ranging from 20 minutes to 1 hour. The main goal of conducting the interviews was to investigate Jain understandings of the BhS as an instrument of healing and whether modern Jains understood that through scientific explanations. During the summer of 2020, I was offered an opportunity to teach the *Bhaktāmara Stotra* to Jain kids and youths in North America over Zoom. I was able to
establish my place as a researcher in the community and discussed my research interest with people. Some of the parents of participants in the class voluntarily showed their interest, while some played the role of gatekeepers. As Cassell and Hoffman discuss, the role of gatekeepers is to grant access “towards those ‘formal’, ‘private’ settings where boundaries are clearly marked, [and] are not easily penetrated.” (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007:51). Gatekeepers generally act as initial points of contact for the researcher within settings of the research. I set up open ended and formal interviews with the parents depending on their convenience.

Using Zoom for interviews makes the work of a researcher efficient and effective. Unlike traditional ethnography, interviews were recorded on the Zoom app and were stored in a protected folder. Interviewees were very receptive to technological advancements and adapted to the Zoom environment. After gathering and analyzing the background information, I decided to divide my interviewees into 3 categories: practitioners (who chant the BhS regularly for healing purposes), non-practitioners (who know the BhS but do not use it for healing) and Jain medical doctors (who are aware of the hymn and may or may not apply it in their field). I endeavor to compare understandings of hymn among the three groups. Initiating conversation with an informal discussion about my research objectives, I began by asking general questions related to sectarian identity, Jain fundamental theories, common rituals, then shifted to the specific questions about the Bhaktāmara Stotra. There were some technological glitches in the beginning such as connectivity issues, participants with their videos off because of which it was hard to establish connection with them, but these did not affect
the quality of responses. I followed up with my interviewees using emails, texts, and phone calls.

1.5 Experiencing the Virtual Field

Conducting virtual ethnography through Zoom introduced a new amplitude to my ethnographic research experience. I do not mean to criticize traditional ethnography, but this research offered ample opportunities to conduct a research gaining wider access to communities in a short time. The virtual field provided great exposure to explore the research subject and I was able to undertake the study from a diverse group of Jains. Instead of restricting my research to a few Jain centers and communities, the entire community of North America was my field, because the members were easily accessible. From the large population size, I used the snowball technique to sample 30 participants. Having a larger platform encouraged the members of the Jain community in the United States to freely participate, which was advantageous to my research.

Aligning with Geertz’s theory of "thick description" wherein he believes that it could only be acquired when the ethnographer deeply engulfs himself/herself into the culture, I would acknowledge the fact that participant observation was not the same as in classical ethnography of experiencing the ritual and in-person interactions when observing rituals and conducting interviews via Zoom. Reflecting on that environment Geertz (1973) elucidates, “field provides an actual understanding of the process—instead of compiling or analyzing data at office desk.” He refers to this process as the hidden aspect of the examined culture; he is after "construing social expressions [which are] on their surface enigmatical.” Where thick description is a practice of writing ethnography
through an intensified experience of networks, people, communities and their culture, thin description can contaminate that experience without active involvement into the field. With my interest initially in learning about rituals and traditions in other sects, I developed an appreciation for the unified diasporic Jainism through this research work. I have learnt that many Jains in the diaspora community hold a rational and scientific approach towards the concept of healing through mantras that I will elaborate upon in this thesis.

Conclusion

Regarding the changing nature of communities and our ability to research groups now defined by different parameters, Gupta and Ferguson write, "What would once have appeared as a logical impossibility—ethnography without the ethnos—has come to appear, to many, perfectly sensible, even necessary" (Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 2). With the development of culture, societies and individuals, there is a great need to upgrade our research techniques to move together with the change.

The first-generation Jains, find it difficult to practice the Jainism of diaspora community as compared to India (Vallely 2002: 194). The demographics of Jain diaspora community affects the way it is practiced as second-generation Jains find it more authentic to worship together keeping balance with their work life. Despite the several challenges of accessibility of temples, lack of religious leaders, less population,
Jains in the diaspora community have continued to put their efforts to maintain their age-old tradition in the USA.
CHAPTER 2

From Praises to Power: Tales of Healing through Devotion

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two major sections: the first encompasses a historical overview of the developments in Jains’ understanding of the hymn, not just in contemporary times but back to medieval times. This chapter will provide an account of characteristics of *stotra* (hymn) as a genre, assess the biographies of Mānatuṅga and the developing stories of the circumstances under which the *stotra* emerged, and outline current scholarship on its origin, evolution, and expansion. The second section examines the commentaries made by Jain Indologists as well as western scholars. This chapter endeavors to answer why the BhS has gained so much prominence and popularity over so many other stotras.

Despite knowing the presence of Jain devotional literature, vast manuscript collections, and hymns in different languages, many Jainologists failed to assimilate the actuality of this material culture into their understanding of Jain tradition. The term “devotional culture” as described by Cort (2006) refers to “a milieu of intellectual and artistic expressions located within a larger devotional framework—in this case, a framework around the *Bhaktāmara stotra*” (93). Not only is the hymn known for its devotional charisma, but it is considered as “*mantragarbhita*” (filled with mantras) similar to the *Ajīta* and *Santi stotras*. The association of *mantraśāstra* with Jain hymns in the medieval times led to the shift of purpose from devotional to material benefits (Rajan
Jhavery’s (1944) critical analysis of mantraśāstra traces the effects of different Jain mantras and he seems to refute the idea of mantras borrowed from Hindu tradition as in practical, mantras are considered as a popular method of self-realization (33).

This chapter will examine the means adopted by Jains to express their devotion to the Jinas as well as the major developments of bhakti religiosity that took place in medieval times.

2. 1 A Hymn of Praise and Devotion: Bhaktāmara Stotra

The word Bhaktāmara is made from two words, bhakta refers to the devoted and amara refers to the immortal. These are the first two words of the hymn that has the ability to make the devotee immortal. As Balbir mentions, the first verse captures the essence of the title; it reads, “his feet enhance the luster of the jewels set in the crowns lowered by the devoted gods” (Balbir 2007). Though the author, Ācārya Mānatuṅga, composed the hymn honoring the first Jina, Lord Ādinātha, we do not see the direct occurrence of his name in the entire stotra except an indirect reference to “prathamam jinendram” (first Jina) in verse 2. The hymn, written sometime in the medieval period, principally describes the virtues and attributes of any Jina who is considered a liberated soul and free from all tainted passions. The author has made comparisons of Jina’s radiance with the biggest creations of the universe such as the sun and moon (verses 7, 11). He has portrayed himself as a dimwit (verse 6) and showed his eagerness to compose a hymn. The ending verses from 34 to 43 (Śwetāmbara version) express freedom from fear by the recitation of mantras. The hymn concludes (verse 44/48) with the one who wears garland of Jina’s name on his/her neck attains liberation.
Despite being originally written in Sanskrit, it is widely popular among all Jains and fondly recite as they understood hymn itself carries some sort of magical powers. It is also a part of what Śvetāmbaras today classify nine poems as the “nine remembrances,” or navasmarana (Kapashi 2007: 44). The translations of this hymn have very specific ways of understanding what the hymn is that allow certain kinds of interpretations to come forth.

The meter of a Sanskrit hymn is derived from the number of syllables per line. These specified meters provide a balance and rhythm forming new patterns in the recitation of a hymn. In general, hymns consisting of reciting god’s name and their qualities are considered effective in facilitating meditation and devotion (Lopez & Beck 1995:133). In the context of the literary devices used in the hymn, it is affluent with alliteration, similes, imagery, numerous comparisons with the gifts of nature, and verses are composed in the meter known as Vasantatilakā. ¹ A set of 14 syllables encloses the same rhythm in each quarter as follows:

| long long short long short short short long short long long long |

(Balbir 2007)

¹ Vasantatilakā, Sanskrit meter (chandas) and comprises of fourteen syllables in each quarter and the gaṇas therein are ta, bha, ja, ja, ga and ga respectively.
Despite the clarity in the verses, the hymn is a representation of traditional Sanskrit poetry (kāvya). The Digamabara monk, Prabhācandra termed the hymn as “destroyer of all disease” in the 11th century, whereas the Śvetāmbara monk Prabhācadasūri in the 13th century referred to it as “destroyer of all disturbances” (Dhaky & Shah 1998: 3). One of the most common recurring themes here is the influence of tantric developments in the Jain tradition. Each verse of the hymn is infused with ṛddhi, mantra, yantra that combines to eliminate the effects of karmas and provide well-being. However, Kataria disagrees that the Bhaṭṭārakas have made this simple and venerable hymn complex and discordant with a web of interlocking mantras and their stories (Dhaky & Shah1998: 342). The association of Bhaktāmara Stotra with mantras since the 14th century means the hymn carries special powers to provide, along with the spiritual welfare, worldly benefits such as dispelling calamities, curing diseases, Pregnancy protection, etc. (Ibid 3). The recitation of the hymn can take place anywhere, in a temple or at home; some Jains recite it before commencing any auspicious work, similar to the Namaskār Mantra. Some Jain centers organize Bhaktāmar pah (recitation) once a month for periods that range from 3 to 24 hours.

One of the possible reasons for its prominence is that this hymn has been translated into different Indic vernacular languages (Hindi, Gujarati, Kannada, etc.); it was first translated into a European language, English, by Hermann Jacobi in 1932. His primary reason for selecting the Bhaktāmara to translate is because of his confrontation with numerous manuscripts and his identification of its popularity among Jain people, who recited the “prayer for help in the dangers and trials under which men suffer” (Kapadia 1932: V). Dangers here refers to all kinds of fear of diseases, snakes, lions,
elephants, water, war, travel, imprisonment, fire, etc, and the last verses 40-47 declare that faith in the Jina can protect a devotee from these calamities.

2. About the author: Ācārya Mānatumga

While both the sects firmly accept Ācārya Mānatumga as the author of the Bhaktāmara Stotra, there has not been given any indication of his dates, nor of his monastic lineage (gaccha, gaṇa). At present, both sects believe that he was first in the other community and later entered their own. I will discuss the hagiographies of Mānatumga here. In the Śvetāmbara tradition, narratives linked with his life are first found in Rājagaccha Prabhācandrasūri’s Prabhāvakacarita (Deeds of the Glorifiers, 1277 CE). Later, the mention could be found in Nāgendragaccha Merutuṅga’s Prabhandacintāmani (Wishing-Stone of Narratives, 1304 CE), Rudrapallīyagaccha Guṇākarasūri’s very popular Vivṛtti (commentary) (1426 CE), and then Mānatumgācāryaprabhandha (mid-15th century).

Along with these, Tapāgaccha Munisundarasūri’s Gurvāvalī (Line of Gurus, 1466 CE) and Tapāgaccha Śubhacandragaṇi’s Bhaktāmara Māhātmya (15th century, third quarter) also discusses his hagiographical accounts. In fact, generic stories have been buried by both traditions. Śvetāmbara sources provide an account of his life through commentaries, prabhandas (hagiographies), and paṭṭāvalīs (list of succession of disciples). Different scholars have set various hypotheses, considering him 150 years before Hemacandra (12th century), or master of famous poet Dhanaṇjaya (10th century CE); Ācārya Prabhācandrasūri (ca. 1024 CE), in his commentary to the Kriyakalāpa, has clearly

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2 Paṭṭāvalīs provide a lineage of teachers from Mahavira until their time of composition. Based on a historical evidence, they mention about the particular gaccha to which those teachers belong.
stated that Mānatuṅga was also a Śvetāmbara (Dhaky & Shah 1998;107). Another source for ascertaining Mānatuṅga’s sect is the Śrīmānatuṅgācāryaprabhandha in the stanza 24, which I have translated and discussed below.

In the reign of king Harsha\(^3\) (7\(^{th}\) century CE), in Varanasi, there was a man of Brahmin and Kṣatriya class named Dhanadeva. Mānatuṅga was his son. One day, he went to the Digambara temple. Having bowed down to the feet of the Jina, he took initiation by the name Cārukīrti. He does not think about whether an enlightened being eats or is free from desire for women. While doing this bad conduct as a Digambara, he was proudly invited by his sister’s husband to the house. Seeing the impurities in the water present in his kāmaṇḍalu (water vessel of monks), his sister, who adhered to vows of Śvetāmbara tradition, ridiculed his vows and praised the fivefold order of Śvetāmbara. She told him to meet a Jain ācārya assembled near the edge of Ganga River named Jinasiṃhāsūri. Later, he took Śvetāmbara initiation from the same monk and was known by his birth name, Mānatuṅga. The same narrative is mentioned in the “Deeds of Mānatuṅgasūri” in the Prabhāvakacarita, having a difference of the invitation being sent by his sister rather than her husband.\(^4\)

The hagiographical account presented above does not provide clear personalia about Mānatuṅga’s life. Due to the controversies about his alliance with King Bhoja in Ujjain (10\(^{th}\) century CE) and king Harsha (7\(^{th}\) century CE) in Varanasi, it becomes difficult for scholars to determine his period. However, Dhaky and Shah argue that

\(^3\) Ruled after the collapse of the Gupta Empire and mentioned in the context of Hinduism as well as Buddhism.

\(^4\) See Prabhācandrasūri’s Prabhāvakacarita, p. 112.
Mānatuṅga was a Śvetāmbara poet who lived at the end of 6th century CE or early 7th century CE and disapprove the title of “court poet” as mentioned in many hagiographies (Dhaky & Shah 1998: 95). Due to the lack of strong textual evidence, not much information can be derived about the history of the composition of the *stotra* before the 13th century. As Jacobi points out, the *Prabhāvakarita* and Tapāgaccha Munisundarasūri’s *Gurvāvalī* both mention that Mānatuṅga is regarded as the 23rd teacher in the Kharataragaccha and 21st in the list of the Tapāgaccha (Kapadia 1932: VI). Although both the lists above declare his predecessor as Mānadeva and Virā as his successor, in the narrative discussed above, Jinasimhā is considered antecedent to him and Guṇākarasūri belonging to the same lineage. The Tapāgaccha list mentions that Mānadeva lived approximately 300 years after Vikrama.\(^5\) Since Mānatuṅga was his successor, he should belong to roughly the fourth century CE. Although there is no clarity on the dates of Vāra, an estimate according to the *Kharataragaccha Paṭṭāvalī* points to Mānatuṅga’s Mānatuṅga period being somewhere around the beginning of the 5th century (Kapadia 1932: VI).

The variation in the periods of teachers points to the apocryphal nature of *paṭṭāvalīs* and fails to provide clear and reliable information about Mānatuṅga’s origin. In summary, based on the first hagiography in the *Prabhāvakacarita*, written in 1277 CE, itself following proximate dates from different sources assumed to be based on the tradition, place him in “A. D. 300, 420, 630, 850, 925 or 1050” (Ibid). Regardless, it is clear that his existence as a great sage was well established in the 13th century. Despite

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\(^5\) See Tapāgaccha Munisundarasūri’s *Gurvāvalī*, verse 37.
the popularity of the Bhaktāmara Stotra, the details of Mānatuṅga’s life, where he came from, his time, etc. are still an enigma.

2. 3 Sectarian Difference of 44 and 48 Verses

While both sects accept the BhS, there are differences in the number of verses in each sect’s version of the hymn. Before delving into the discussion about the differences, I will recount the story of the composition that I heard from my interviewee, Heena Patel, a 40-year-old Śvetāmbara Mūrtipūjak woman working in the financial sector. Not only Mrs. Patel, but many of my interviewees were familiar with this version of the story. She narrates:

King Bhoja, a learned scholar of Sanskrit poetry, used to rule in the city of Ujjain. He called a Jain poet, Paṇḍit Dhanañjay into his court and praised him for his poetry and knowledge. Dhanañjay gave the entire credit of his wisdom to his teacher, named Ācārya Māntungā. King Bhoja expressed his desire to meet Māntungā Ācārya, he sent him a respectful invitation to the royal court by his guards. When the servants reached, Ācārya was engrossed in his meditation. They requested him to come to the court with them regarding the invitation of the king. He denied the request, as Jain monks [do not] partake themselves with the materialistic affairs. The servants, unable to fulfill the king’s order, returned to the king and narrated the entire story to him. The king, furious and agitated, ordered the servants to bring Ācārya forcefully to the court. Following the orders, Ācārya was brought up and the king asked him to deliver a sermon to the attendees of the royal court. But Māntungā-ji, sensing the unfavorable circumstances, decided to remain quiet.

The king requested again and again, but after realizing the disobedience of orders, he instructed the guards to put him behind bars.
The Śvetāmbara version of the story claims that Mānatuṅga was put behind 44 bars and all his locks were broken while composing the 42nd verse, while Digambaras believe that the sūri was locked in a 48-barred prison cell and freed during his composition of the 46th śloka. According to Prabhācandrasūri’s story, Mānatuṅga was bound in 44 chains, which was the reason behind the number of verses being 44.

The length of the verses directly corresponds to the number of locks. The four extra verses in the Digambara version are found in between the verses 32 to 35, which appertains to the “prātiḥāryas” (miraculous phenomena) that emerge during Jina’s state of attaining enlightenment (kevala jñāna) and when delivering sermons to all beings in the assembly hall (samavasaraṇa). There are a total of eight prātiḥāryas, which are mentioned in verses 28-35 that includes: Kalpavṛkṣa (wish-fulfilling tree), siṃhāsana (lion-throne), cāmara (flywhisks), chattrā-traya (triple umbrella), dundubhi (drums), pupa-viśi (rain of flowers), prabhā (halo), divyadhvani (divine speech). Both the sects acknowledge the initial four verses but the Śvetāmbaras denounce the latter 4 verses, which are as follows:

Verse 32: gambhīratāraravapūrita digvibhagas –
trailokyalokasubhasaṅgamabhūtiddakṣaḥ |
saddharmarājaṇayaghoṣaṇaghoṣakah san |
khe dundubhir dhvajati te yaśasaḥ pravādi (32)

The kettledrum resounds in the sky, a proclamation of your fame,
Being a proclamation announcing your victory as the king of the true dharma
Which is befitting of your power, which is connected to the welfare of the beings of the three worlds.
By which (all) the directions are filled with a deep and loud sound
Verse 33: mandārasundaranamerusuparijāta –
santānakādikusumotkaravir uddhā |
gandhodabindusubhamandamarutprapātā
divyā divaḥ patati te vacasāṃ tatir vā (33)

Is it a divine shower of a multitude of blossoms from the Mandāra, Sundara, Nameru, Supārijāta, Samtānaka, and other trees that falls from the heavens, carried away on a pleasant, gentle breeze with drops of fragrant water or is it the multitudes of your teachings?

Verse 34: śumbhatprabhāvalayabhurivibhā vibhos te,
loktrayadyutimatām dyutimākṣipantī |
prodyaddivākaranirantarabhūrisanikhyā
dīptyā jayaty api niśām api somasaumyām (34)

The splendor of your power, a radiant halo of shining light, casting the light of (all) the lights of the triple world, equal to many clusters of rising suns, defeats even the darkest night, though its light is as cooling as the moon’s.

Verse 35: svargāpavargagamamārgavimārganeṣṭaḥ
saddharmatattvakathanaikapatus trilokyāḥ |
divyadhvanir bhavati te viṣadārthasarva –
bhāṣāsvabhāvaparināmagnath prayojyaḥ (35)
Your divine voice, which leads (those gone) astray to the path going to heaven and liberation, which alone is capable of telling (us) the essence of true religion to those in the triple world, is effective because of its qualities of translating its essence into all languages with clear meanings.

These four verses describe four of the auspicious signs of Jina’s power wherein huge drums referred to as dundubhi are played by the devas (gods), followed by showers of flowers by gods in heaven known as puṣpa-vṛti, divine halo (prabhā) behind the Jīna, and the divine sound of tīrthaṅkara understood by all being present there termed as divyadhvani (divine speech). The disparities are convoluted here because of the acceptance of eight praṭīhāryas in both sect’s texts. One of the questions I raise here is despite the stotra being composed by the same author, where do these differences in verses arise from? Many assumptions have been made regarding the length of this hymn.

The first argument, provided by Jacobi, is that the Bhaktāmara Stotra served as a base for the Kalyāṇamandira Stotra, (KmS) which also has 44 verses by Kumudacandra (ca. 1100-1125), later known as a composition of the famous Śvetāmbara monk, Siddhasena Divākara (Dhaky & Shah 1998: 23). There is a belief that the Bhaktāmara Stotra was an imitation of this stotra due to the similarity in terms of length, style, meter, and mention of the author’s name in the last strophe similar to Kumudcandra’s stotra. However, Dhaky rejects this theory, as he argues that the Bhaktāmara Stotra came way before the Kalyāṇamandira Stotra as Mānatuṅga had to have lived before
Kumudacandra (Ibid). The author of the latter hymn seems to reproduce the same idea in different words to make it look original. Jacobi states that verse 39 according to the Śvetāmbara version is a repetition of verse 38 and verse 43 is a summation of all the verses from 34-42, considered unnecessary and added later after Kumudacandra’s stotra (Kapadia 1932: II). From the above points, it seems clear that there were lots of similarities between the two stotras and Kumudacandra composed KmS later based on the already existing idea of BhS.

As Dhaky and Shah conclude (29) that some of the Śvetāmbara texts only list four prātihāryas and they do not always agree with all eight prātihāryas that the Digambaras list. It might be a possibility that to maintain their consistency, a Digambara poet might have added the 4 verses later. Building on this conclusion, Gough contemplates that associating ṛddhi-maṅgala of 48 lines with BhS may have resulted in the lengthening of Digambara version of BhS. She further asserts that the development of yantras (which I will explain in the next chapter) with the hymn can or cannot be considered as one of the reasons for the varying lengths of the stotra, as both the sects accept the forty-eight yantras associated with BhS (Gough 2021).

2. 4 Analysis of Hagiographies, Commentaries, and Translations

Contemporary Jains may know the BhS in either Sanskrit or modern languages. Scholars wrote commentaries after this stotra gained its popularity after the first commentary was published in the 14th century. I will proceed with analyzing the following hagiographies and commentaries to show how these BhS stories evolved over time.
The story in the *Prabhāvakacarita* (first hagiography) (author? Date?) starts with the reign of King Harsha in Varanasi; there lived Mānatuṅga who was the son of a man of Brahmin and Kṣatriya class named Dhanadeva. One day, having heard the instructions of a Digambara monk, he decided to renounce the world and took initiation under Charukīrti, who named him Mahākīrti but later he converted to Śvetāmbara faith due to his sister. ⁶ The king had two exceptionally talented poets, Mayūrā and Bāṇa; Bāṇa was the son in law of Mayūra⁷. One night, in an argument between Bāṇa and his wife, Mayūrā overheard them and made a remark to resolve the situation; but out of rage and anger, his daughter cursed him by saying “become a leper.” Mayūrā cured his disease by reciting *Sūryaṣṭaka* (100 Verses to the Sun) in the king’s assembly hall and at the same time, jealous of him, Bāṇa cut off his hands and feet and recovered his limbs by composing *Caṇḍīṣṭaka*.

Later, this literary reminiscence took the form of a miraculous story in the context of Jain literature. The king acclaimed the two poets, as there was nothing like it in other creeds. One of his court poets commented about a Jain monk who had special powers and he was invited by the king to the court. The Ācārya was asked to show a miracle and he fettered himself with 44 locks and chains and confined himself in a prison cell. Later, after the composition of the *Bhaktāmara Stotra*, all his locks got broken, the fetters fell off and he came out of the cell automatically. The king was astonished to see this miracle and accepted the powers in the Jain faith.

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⁶ See *Prabhāvakacarita* by Prabhācandrasūri, 112

⁷ In the *Prabhandacintāmaṇi*, they are described as brothers-in-law of each other.
As per Hermann Jacobi, there is no complete evidence provided of the contemporary presence of Mayūrā and Bāṇa and we do not see the three poets together at the same time or place. What is particularly striking about this version of the story in the Prabhāvakacarita is that Mānatuṅga’s affiliation is originally with the Digambara tradition.

The comparison between the story narrated in the Prabhāvakacarita and in Merutuṅga’s Prabhandacintāmaṇi (1305 CE) reveals several contradictions and discrepancies regarding the place where this event occurred. Here, it is considered in the back part of Ādinātha’s temple in Ujjain instead of in a prison in Varanasi. Also, the name of the king referred to is Bhoja, whose reign is dated to the 11th century. Along with it, an important thing to consider here is the victim of leprosy mentioned here as Mayūrā, whereas Merutunga’s narrative claims Bāṇa as the victim, as he overheard the conversations of his sister and her husband and so their compositions were reversed (Tawney 19001: 94).

It is interesting to note Guṇākarasūri’s commentary (1369 CE) has also mentioned the event took place in Ujjain and the king is named as “Vṛddhabhoja” (the great Bhoja, king of Avanti) here. In his version of the miraculous story of Mānatuṅga, the chains broke with the composition of every verse, and by the time he chanted the 42nd śloka, the lock of the room broke, and he came out. I will discuss Guṇākarasūri’s tales of the BhS below to provide an understanding of the efficacy of the hymn.

The description of these magical events started to happen in the 15th century in the Śvetāmbara tradition. In the pages of manuscripts of commentaries found in Jaipur,
the mention is reversed. Mānatuṅga, who was a great Śvetāmbara poet, was suffering from leprosy and it was afflicted by the leader of the Jain Ācāryās and Mānatuṅga asked to him, “O Lord! What can be done now?” The Ācārya suggested that he compose a prayer with multitudes of qualities and then he spoke the beginning of the prayer with the words, “Bhaktāmara” (Kapadia 1932: 19). There are some unclarified assumptions about the narrative which has been transitioned entirely from being freedom from chains and prison to freedom from leprosy through Bhaktāmara Stotra.

Leprosy was prevalent during medieval times. In Mayūra’s story, he cured his leprosy through venerating the sun god. 8 This story raises another important issue of trope here. In Hindu tradition, the sun god, Sūrya, is venerated to heal leprosy as mentioned in the case of Mayūrā, whereas in Jainism meditation upon mantras has been used to treat the same problem. In the story of King Sajjana of Ayodhyā, who was suffering from dreadful pain and suffering in his entire body, his ministers approached the Jain monk Guṇāsensūri to ask him to cure the king. The monk meditated on the fifteenth verse of the Bhaktāmara Stotra and a goddess (Cakreśvarī) appeared to convey the cure: the water used by the Jain ascetic Mallā to wash his feet. The next morning, that water was applied to the king’s body, and he was cured (Granoff 1998: 226). This narrative introduces another important theme, namely, a cure can be done both by reflecting upon the verses and through physical contact with objects that have come into intimate contact with monks.

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8 See Mānatuṅgācāryaprabhandha from Purātanaprabandhasangraha, 1
In addition to the story narrated above, this hymn has different versions of its application and here I will discuss another side, as mentioned in the biography of Mānatuṅga in the Prabhāvakacarita. There was a plague in the city of Takṣaśilā and the citizens urged the monk to come to them and provide the water used by him for washing his feet (same as Mallā). But since Mānatuṅga was reluctant, he sent the Bhaktāmara Stotra to them. These narratives establish the Stotra’s power to cure ailments, leprosy, or any other dreadful disease. In Chapter 3, I will elaborate on how the 45th verse of the BhS is considered helpful in curing leprosy. The stories mentioned above revealed the power in the recitation of mantras or applying the sacred water over the body.

Belief in the healing properties of religious acts is widely attested in many different genres of medieval Indian religious literature (Granoff 1998: 218). To acquaint the readers with glory (mahimā) of the Bhaktāmara Stotra, Bhagārakas (leaders of the Digambara community) also added the tales with each verse to demonstrate the impact on the devotee and its greatness. In some tales, the verse is considered as the mantra itself, as in the case of verse 42 (Śvetāmbara version) or 46 (Digambara version). The combination of verses with the tales reflects on the experiences people have chanting the hymn, showing how the hymn or just a verse helped them to overcome difficulties (Balbir 2007). These tales are one of the reasons for the prominence of the hymn that makes use of several concepts that are widely spread in medieval India in Hinduism as well as in Jainism such as worship of lower deities (Rajan 2011: 266). In this case, the

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9 See Biography of Mānatuṅga in the Prabhāvakacarita.
One of the significant contributions is made by Guṇākarasūri, a Śvetāmbara monk from the Rudrapallīyagaccha who composed in Sanskrit the most famous commentary (vṛtti) on the BhS known today, at least amongst Śvetāmbaras (Kapadia 1932). He correlates each verse of the hymn with different mantras and rituals and includes twenty-eight tales of how devotees recited these verses and mantras to overcome obstacles such as being stuck in a well, being paralyzed, and being lost in the jungle (Balbir 2007). I will discuss some of the narratives here from his commentary to describe the situations where the rescue was required and provided.

Verse 4: Oh, ocean of virtues! Is there anyone comparable to Bṛhaspati, teacher of the gods, capable of addressing your virtues, radiant like the moon?

Who is capable enough to swim with his two arms across the ocean, swarming with crocodiles agitated by the storm winds blowing at the time of destruction?

Commentary: A poor merchant with a good character, Sumati, lived in the city of Ujjaiyini. He paid his homage to a Śvetāmbara monk who delivered his instructions on dharma that he found relevant. Having a desire to increase his wealth and reflecting on the monk’s teachings, Sumati started reciting the Bhaktāmara Stotra and left the city, boarding a ship. As soon as the boat reached the middle of the untamed sea, ferocious winds began to blow like the winds of the apocalypse. Clouds forming the veil of
darkness demolished the hover of the sky. The thunder, resembling a demon’s eye burst into the boatmen’s ears. A stormy sea full of horrendous creatures were stirred up and drifted shakily here and far off in the sea waves. The terrified merchants crying out for help began to recall god’s names.

The boat’s frame couldn’t stand above the water and an imbalance occurred. The dreams of seafaring merchants were shattered as the white sail and the ropes broke. Sensing their inability to rescue themselves, they cut the mast at the base and grasped onto the planks as if they were holding the most valuable possession. The entire load of wealth sunk in the ocean when the boat collapsed into pieces. During that time, Sumati meditated on the fourth verse of the Bhaktāmara Stotra and mighty goddess Cakreśvarī backed him in crossing the stormy ocean alone with just his arms. She gifted him five jewels equivalent to the weight of five grains and directed him to the city. Sumati, through the virtue of his devotion, was able to gain wealth, respect and fame in the court and later became the chief Jain disciple (Lefeber 1995: 429). The mantra attached with this verse is as follows:

\[ Oṁ hrīṁ klīṁ sāgara siddha devatābhya namo namaḥ swāhā. \]

This mantra helps devotees to cross the ocean of troubles alone, leaning on the power of devotion. Another tale, this one about verse 26, narrates an event where a merchant learned the verse, “Praise to you,” from a monk. In the times of trouble and poverty, he used to chant the verse 108 times daily to the goddess Mahālakṣmī (herself a devotee of Lord Ādinātha), who made him wealthy (Cort 2007:101). The mantra
mentioned by Guṇākarsūri in the commentary is different from the actual mantra. It is as follows:

\[
\text{Om shrīm hrīm klīm mahālakṣmyai namaḥ. Surabhisadhvyaskapīt pushpairlakshapat siddhi.}
\]

The mantra is dedicated to venerating Mahālakṣmī. Chanting of this mantra with the fragrant flowers 100,000 times leads to the attainment of desires. An interesting thing worth noting here, although the hymn is dedicated to Lord Adinatha, the mention of Mahalakshmi brings us back to the concept of worshipping lower deities. There are many other tales found in Guṇākarasūri’s commentary supported with the images to depict the results of chanting of the hymn. These tales summarize the idea of attaining wealth, power, and the elimination of 7 types of fear – fire, snakes, elephants, war, disease, imprisonment, lions – through the chanting of particular verses.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, the framework of the narratives shows developments in the application of BhS. Some stories often hold some implicit promise of worldly reality to accompany the hope of spiritual perfection (Cort 2007). The story in the Prabhāvakacarita suggests a coalition of Mānatuṅga with both the sects, which can be one of the reasons for the popularity as well as acceptance of this hymn. Tied with chains all around the body and imprisoned with 48 locks, devotion towards the Jina motivated Ācārya Mānatuṅga to compose a hymn in his praise. Who can think of performing such an act of bhakti during times of misery? This work of Ācārya Mānatuṅga is the heart of devotional culture for the Jains.
The textual evidence shows the increasing popularity of the *stotra* from the 13th century to contemporary times. Despite several differences in the place of events, characters, and a number of verses, this hymn presents a strong historical background of the faith healing either by the water touched by the monk or the hymn itself. Especially the tales narrated by Guṇākarasūri in his commentary point to the efficacy of the hymn to benefit an individual with spiritual and physical healing if chanted with devotion and surrendering oneself towards the Jina.

In the narratives, we see evidence of healing of leprosy through hymns but the whole historical question of when people started using it as healing is something that cannot be answered. This is the beginning, but we do not have a clear idea when these rituals connected with the BhS that involve healing emerged. I believe this trend is fairly recent, but we will explore the ritualistic healing aspects of the BhS in the next chapter.
Chapter 3

Contextualizing well-being in diaspora community through Bhaktāmara Rituals

Introduction

Jains in the diaspora community express devotion connected with various BhS rituals involving mantras, yantras, and ṛddhis (superhuman powers) to experience healing. This chapter will shed light on the different ways through which diaspora Jains perform rituals in general and BhS rituals in specific. How do modern Jains relate themselves with these rituals and what is their purpose behind them? Incorporating Tambiah and Staal’s theory of sound vibration and words, I will try to explain how healing takes place through the BhS and what is the perspective of modern practitioners who use the hymn for various aspects including bodily healing. The chapter will present a brief understanding of the components of BhS along with their application.

3.1 From Rituals to Devotion: How and Why do Jains Perform Rituals?

The ritual tradition in Jainism is integral as a part of the everyday lives of Jain laity as well as the ascetic community. During the (virtual) Paryushan celebration at the Jain Center of South Florida, I met Hemaben Mehta, who is a fifty-five-year-old retired teacher belonging to the Digambara Terapanthi community. She used to visit the Jain Center every Sunday (since the Center is open only on Sundays) before COVID and worships at home for the rest of the days. After entering the worship area by ringing the bell three times, folding her hands close to the chest, she bows to the garbhagriha (a chamber where an image of the primary Jina (s) of the temple are placed); first one Digambara idol of Adinatha, center one Švetāmbara idol of Mahavira embedded with jewels and last one to the extreme right of Simandar Swami.
Jains consider Simandar Swami to be a living Jina who has already completed one hundred fifty thousand years and will live for another hundred twenty-five thousand years. Mrs. Mehta performs bhāva pūjā (psychic worship) by chanting certain mantras such as the Navkāra mantra and shanti mantra while standing in front of the images, then circumambulates them three times, venerating the images of the 24 tirthankaras along with the images of Saraswati, Padmāvati, Ghantākarna, and other protectors, behind and around the garbhagriha. She then sits on her knees and bows to the center deities by touching her head on the floor. She, after exiting the center pavilion, goes to the back and performs argha pūjā (worship with materials) wherein she makes the offerings such as rice, nuts, cloves, and water to the Jina. She draws a Swastika on her pūjā plate with the sandalwood and initiates her rituals of offering by following a pūjā manual, reciting certain mantras and stuti (hymns of praise to Jinas). This process takes about half an hour. She concludes her pūjā by reciting the Navkāra mantra to the shrines in the center with folded hands and then exits the temple, picking up her pūjā plate.

The Navkāra mantra also known as Namaskar Mahāmantra is considered the most common ritual performed by most of the Jains. Many of them consider this universal prayer useful for the protection of the devotee from all sorts of troubles (Lawrence 1994:15). Circumambulation is a ritual performed not only in Jainism but in other religions as well such as Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, etc.
In a discussion on nine tattvas (principles) of Jainism, I was introduced to Jitendra Patil, who lives in New York. Living in the USA for the past 30 years, he belongs to the Śvetāmbar community and is a physician. Due to his busy schedule, he does not get time to perform any puja daily but goes to the Jain Centre of America (JCA) every Sunday. Unlike the JCSF, this Jain center opens every day because of the large population of Jains in New York. Located in Queens, the JCA is the largest Jain center in the United States, a model of multi-sectarian Jainism under one roof. It consists of 4 storeys, including a cellar, allotting each sect its floor. The cellar has an art gallery displaying works of pārśvśālās kids, a craft room for children, a youth center, and a multipurpose hall. The second floor (Figure 3) is dedicated to a Svetambara temple and an upāsrāya (abode for ascetics) is adjacent to it, where monks and nuns reside and deliver their sermons. The third floor has a Digambara temple, a library with an extensive collection of Jain canonical literature, and a Shrimad Rājcandra meditation hall. The fourth floor has Ashtāpad (mountain from where Lord Ādinātha attained liberation), a small Dādābādi temple devoted to Jindatta Suri (a Jain monk from Khartar Gaccha lineage), a kitchen (where food is prepared for visitors, ascetics, and on special occasions) along with a huge dining hall.
Figure 3: Śvetāmbara temple on the second floor at Jain Center of America

Mr. Patil spends a considerable amount of time on the second floor on Sundays for puja. He wears unstitched clothes, picks up puja ingredients from the temple supplies, prepares a plate, dons a muhpatti (a covering for the mouth to avoid violence to micro-organisms), and enters the temple by ringing the bell. He then places the plate on the table inside and bows down to Jina in the center. He recites mantras and circumambulates thrice around the central shrine. He then picks up the mirror to see the reflection of the main idol. He prepares a sandalwood paste using water and applies it to the nine places of the idol and then repeats the same process by doing flower puja using flowers. He then picks up the incense stand and waves it in front of the idol. He sits on the floor, folding one knee recites the Navkāra mantra nine times and bows his head to the Jina by touching the floor, repeating the process three times. He concludes the puja by performing ārti (lamp ritual) to the center image as well as to other images placed in the temple. He then bows his head and exits.
Another respondent, Maltiben Shah, belonging to Śvetāmbara Mūrtipūjak community who has been staying in the USA in Miami for 40 years, finds herself fascinated by the simplicity of Digambara temples. Being a Śvetāmbar, she performs rituals including chanting Stavans (songs of worship) and performs ashtprakāri pūjā (worship performed with eight offerings: water, sandalwood, incense, flower, lamp, rice, sweet food, fruits) in the temple. However, she feels bhakti is not only about singing Stavans or performing pūjā; rather, it comes when you are playing multiple roles considering yourself as friend, mother, or servant to the Jinas, depending on the situation. But the key aspect of performing any devotional act starts with the feeling of surrender. To her, the main aspect of bhakti is not just doing rituals but following what our Tirthankaras have told us –his Jina (teachings found in the āgāmēs or scripture)—or in other words the speech of the Jinas (Jinavāṇi).

Chandrakant Mehta, a Jain scholar who has been living in the USA for over 50 years, travels to different countries for imparting his wisdom on Jainism. One of the key questions I asked during the interview was, “How do you express devotion?” He divided the rituals of worship into two categories: external and internal. He believes that the internal works better than external. He explained his viewpoint by citing an example; if given a choice between reading literature versus going to a temple, he would prefer the former choice, do Sāmāyika (equanimity), read the material, and reflect on it. I further asked, so you don’t visit the Jain center for taking part in rituals. He answered, “I do that. Not that I avoid it. I go to the temple on major events, pray, practice, and participate in but I think my most interest is going down within, try to go internal rather than external.”
As we can see from the above instances, different ways are adopted by Jains in the community depending on their time, preference, occasion, and physical constraints. Puja is characterized into three types: *argha puja* wherein offerings are directly made by placing in front of the idol, *anga puja* where offerings are made onto the idol itself, and *bhāva puja* where offerings are replaced with recitations and gestures (Cort 2001: 63).

In the first two descriptions above, individuals emphasized *argha puja* and *anga puja* respectively, wherein the case of Mrs. Shah and Mr. Mehta, it seems that *bhāva puja* too holds a significant place in the diaspora community. As Mrs. Shah mentioned, “*Bhakti* is not just performing a ritual, but following… the speech of the Jinas (*Jinavāni*),” which shifts the focus from traditional worship to the surrender of attachments to follow the path of liberation, taught by the Jinas. The above two responses drew my attention to the dichotomy between internal and external devotion and one of the questions I asked is, how do Jains living in the diaspora community in the USA make rational choices when it comes to expressing their devotion? While some individuals consider rituals as integral to maintaining their values and traditions, others prioritize self-introspection over rituals by gaining the right knowledge through the study of the canon. In the next section I will discuss the place of the BhS in these rituals and the purpose behind the performance, understood by Jains of the diaspora community.

3. 2 BhS Rituals: Fulfilling devotional goals or material goals?

Rooted in *mantravāda* (use of mantras), as we discussed in the previous chapter, the BhS is considered as an entire mantra in itself, because of which the recitation produces efficacious results. I will implement Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw’s theory of
ritual action, formed during their fieldwork on Khatara Gaccha Jains in Jaipur. They proposed a heuristic approach to understanding the Jain model of worship through Ritualization. They argue that when a Jain enters intending to perform a ritual, there is a change that takes place in his mental state (Bhāva). He becomes ritualized due to the compatibility with rituals and is the sole agent of his actions that does not require the attention of other social beings. They further assert that this ritualization of action is archetypal as “there is something invariant in the difference between ritualized and everyday action.” (Humphrey & Laidlaw 1994:13).

Diaspora Jains use BhS components (such as mantras, shlokas, yantras, and Rddhis) that form the ritual tradition and comprises the element of Bhakti, and I call these actions as “Bhaktāmara Rituals.” Building on Humphrey and Laidlaw’s theory of ritualization, I primarily discuss the ways Jains perform devotion through BhS rituals. By addressing the key area, I argue that BhS Rituals incorporated in the everyday ritual praxis of an individual, due to their performance, transforms the experiences of an individual bringing in a qualitative change in their entire body.

The process and purpose of chanting the BhS vary for mendicants and householders. I will discuss some of the responses stating the purpose and process of BhS recitation among diaspora laypeople. Agamya Jain, living in Tampa, a Śvetāmbara murtipujak, follows a regular procedure in her chanting session for 6th śloka. She stresses that the best time for the chanting of BhS to be morning 4 am- 6 am (brahmmuhrat) time. When I asked her about the idea behind early recitation, she affirms that this time is proven to be effective for rapid healing as the mind “comes up to the ease naturally.” Kapashi argues that a spiritual practice can be performed during three auspicious time
frames, either early morning 4:00 am-6:00 am, midday or evening 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm. He then alludes, the early morning holds maximum value as all the BhS rituals in the temple also take place during that time (Kapashi 2007:162). Agamya further adds that after selecting the desired śloka, the yantra (copper plate consisting of mantras) should be kept in the northeast direction. She chants śloka 27 times, ṛddhi 108 times, and mantra 108 times but suggested an alternative of reducing the number to 3, 9, or 27 times each as 3 is an auspicious number and so do the recitation in the multiples of 3. During the chanting, she performs ritual ablution (abhisheka) on the yantra initially and then meditates on it. After the completion of chanting, the water collected from the yantra can be consumed or applied to affected parts of the body or sprinkled in the vicinity.

A medical professional, Vineeth Jain, practicing as a neuroradiologist, from South India, holds a broad perspective as his upbringing in a multifaith society introduced him to the beliefs of different religions. Being into a profession that demands time, he narrates his journey of transformation from the world of patients to the spiritual world. His son was diagnosed with autism, which inclined his interest in spirituality. He says, “when my son was diagnosed, someone told us to recite 14th and 24th Gatha (verse) of Bhaktāmara stotra and I have been following it for the past 10 years without questioning.” He does not perform all the rituals with yantra but recites the verse, Ṛddhi.

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10 A devotee must choose one śloka or more depending on their purpose of chanting. It seems difficult to repeat all 44/48 ślokas multiple times due to the time constraint. That is why people prefer to meditate on a few ślokas to have an effective visualization and chanting experience.

11 This direction is considered ideal for undertaking any spiritual activity as according to Vaastu sastra, this is the residing place of gods or pure souls.
and mantra 8 times each. He believes that along with doing medical treatment for his son, chanting helps him and his family to be at peace internally. In my observation and after interviewing other participants, one of the questions that drew my attention is what is the factor that works here if there is no fixed process? I asked my respondents, “what is the first thing that comes to mind discovering the possibility of an incurable disease through mantra?” the answer was quite surprising as 95% of the participants agreed on faith and belief in the chanting practice of BhS. I will discuss the efficacy of chanting in the next chapter.

Nareshbhai Shah from Long Island shares his ritual schedule wherein he performs a personal Puja every day, and once a month, they have a certain activity in the temple like a panch kalyānaka Pooja, snātra along with the Bhaktāmara path (Chanting for an extended period). He also recites seven smaran (recitations) out of nine weekly. From what I observe in person before the pandemic along with the online puja sessions I attended, the BhS path and puja are performed monthly or annually or on special occasions instead of routine activity. One of the reasons could be the duration as it is a lengthy process, and some Jain centers are open once a week so it might be difficult to accommodate.

Kalpana Patni lives in New York and works in a jewelry business. She performs the rituals differently from others. She believes setting the environment to concentrate on chanting is the foremost step. “When you are chanting at home, there could be a lot of distractions. To focus your mind, it is important to create a favorable environment.” She lights up an earthen lamp (diya), incense sticks, keeps a rosary, a vessel of water with
cloves alongside and dips her finger in it. After the recitation of 48th śloka nine times, she drinks the water and holds a belief that she can establish a connection between her body and the process by keeping her finger in the water. The energy of sacred words goes directly into the water (research conducted by a Japanese scientist, Masaru Emoto), and drinking that charged water makes her feel energized throughout the day.

Another respondent, Mrs. Dalal, a 55-year-old Digambara Terapanthi woman from Sacramento, emphasizes the purity of the body while performing these rituals. She says it is advisable to take a bath and wear clean clothes before chanting and females should avoid chanting during their menstrual cycle. One of the important restrictions to be followed is to quit salt for a minimum of 21 days. I further asked her, how is salt related to mantra chanting? In her opinion, scientific study shows that our body has enough sodium and the intake of salt in food is unnecessary, although a person can substitute salt by giving up on any other favorite item. From what I understand, restraining ourselves from the intake of food is one of the ways of controlling tainted passion and is a form of austerity to improve karmas. While for Mrs. Dalal, leaving salt was not a big deal, other people find it difficult to quit, especially the younger generation and Jain professionals.

Kamla Surana, a physiotherapist in a health care organization who recently moved to Miami alone, shares her experience of leaving the salt. She says, “At first, I felt fatigued and aches in my body but after 7th day, I found myself more energetic. Due to a no-salt diet, my meal portion was reduced, I switched to plant-based food. An inner wave of
positivity and all the negative thoughts of isolation disappeared with the chanting of mantras. I never had this kind of experience before.”

A cancer survivor, Rishi Jain, living in Sacramento underwent multiple chemotherapies and spent more than a year in the hospital. His perspective of seeing religion was changed as he witnessed death closely. He says the chemo has changed everything in our life because before this, we were religious, but not to this level.” Earlier, he used to go to the temple once a month but after his chemo, for so many years, months, every day, he, and his wife wakes up at 5:00, after taking shower and cleansing physical body do full BhS recitation or do 5-6 Shlokas 9 times each. They aim to spend at least 30 minutes to 40 minutes every day chanting BhS, which is “very different than what we were doing before. Previously, we didn't devote time to it.”

Implementing Humphrey and Laidlaw’s theorization of rituals, I conclude that these respondents were able to experience changes in their inner peace after the performance of BhS rituals. It seems that Jains in the diaspora who have their faith in BhS perform these rituals following their convenience rather than emphasizing too much on the process or number of times of chanting. It occurs to me that, unlike India, there is a difference in the devotional practices of people living in the USA such as easy accessibility of temples. Emphasis on the purity of the external body through taking shower before any puja ritual or internal body through fasting is worth noting.
3. Purpose of the rituals

All the Jains who perform various rituals mentioned above do not necessarily seek liberation. According to mokṣa-mārga ideology, worshipping through praises of the virtues of Jina results in the decline in worshipper’s karma, ultimately leading him closer towards the path of liberation (Cort 2001:88). As Ratnasenvijay (1990: 7) describes, “The Caityavandan includes hymns describing the true virtues of God. By singing the virtues of the Lord there is elimination (nirjara) of the karma binding the soul.

Harsha Shah, a Śvetāmbara Jain staying in the USA for 55 years and who is a retired special education teacher, holds a view different from others. She explains she does not look for benefits before initiating any activity. Her whole purpose of spirituality is not to gain any simple materialistic things, nor it is to worry about future demanding things to happen. She believes, “every individual is independent, to make their own choices, and why does she have to impose her wishes, desires on somebody else?” She further adds, “I don't think if somebody put that on me, I would be able to fulfill it either.” Her goal is to interrogate her inner self, become a better and peaceful person from inside rather than attaining short-term gains from these spiritual practices such as chanting of any mantra.

Arti Shah believes that chanting of mantras serves as an effective medium to express Bhakti to the Jina. As she propounds, one should chant all those Stotras or Stutis, with one goal, no material benefit or no happiness should be attached as a part of the outcome. If we will chant anything for human benefit, it will directly and positively affect. As she provides an example of Shivamastu Sarva Jan gātha (a prayer for the wellbeing of all beings), if one chant for the entire universe, not for own selfish thing

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then, it will give you results, peace of mind. And hopefully, God will answer prayers.

Similarly, when people perform Aśhtprakāri Puja, some Dohās describes the virtues of Jina. With the chanting of every verse, one expresses his/her desire to become like him. In nutshell, she promotes the idea that “if chanting is done considering the soul and not the physical body, then one will be able to express devotion well.”

Mrunal Kasliwal from Tampa, a murtipujak is herself a BhS healer. She chants BhS for herself as well as for others, whenever required. Her morning routine consists of chanting BhS regularly and she admits that she initiated chanting of BhS with a few desires in her mind. She says, “but very soon I realized that we should not have any desire associated with reciting.” She discussed with her Guruji about the BhS recitation that she was doing because her husband needs a new project and if he does not get a new project they would have to go back to India. Her guruji assured her that BhS is very powerful, and you need it at this time, but the main goal should be the progress of your soul, not your desires. Accepting her guru’s advice, she shifted her purpose, and she explains in her own words, “When I started doing BhS with this thought in mind, it brought so much happiness in my life and my husband got a huge project.”

Along with worshipping gods and their virtues, Jains in the community regards ascetics and other spiritual figures (non- ascetic) as their main advisor before commencing any new work or making a major decision. This is one of the age-old trends that is prevalent among Jains in the diaspora community. The mantra or any discourse passed by a guru is believed to strengthen the mantra’s power and make it more efficacious. Buhnemann (1991) remarks that "A mantra heard accidentally or taken from a book is not only believed to be useless but also harmful to the practitioner"
Some of the Jains regard the instructions of the guru as final and live their entire life on those teachings.

Respondents like Naresh shah and Nayana shah believe that their purpose of chanting is not restricted to one aspect. Both the purposes are equally important as chanting leads to the reduction of bad karmas that will protect him from diseases. He doesn’t know if that’s true or not, but he has faith because of his gurus that it is beneficial. From the response of Beejal, few things drew my attention. One can experience a shift in purpose from being materialistic to spiritual while leaning into devotion. Though the goal of human life in Jainism is to attain liberation, some Jains at times prioritize their material desires keeping spiritual goals as secondary. In my opinion, some Jains in the USA seem to choose the middle path of fulfilling their goals and then explore their purpose of human life whereas Jains like Harsha Shah and Aarti Shah possessing awareness about that purpose strive towards fulfilling their religious duties and partake from engrossing in worldly benefits.

3. 4 Components of BhS Shloka

The shlokas are considered as the key component of the BhS. A BhS shloka consists of 4 lines in the Vasantatilakā meter and is widely recited by the practitioner every day. Many Jains in the diaspora community rely on shlokas instead of chanting the mantras and
Rddhis as it is considered equally efficacious. I have summarized the purpose of each shloka through the tabular representation below:

Table 1: 48 verses of BhS with their meaning and purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse no.</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>The poet pays homage to first Jina and expresses his intention of writing a hymn</td>
<td>For removing obstacles and relief in headache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>An audacious attempt to declare his intentions</td>
<td>For better eyesight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Contemplating on Jina’s virtues, one can cross a ferocious ocean full of sea Creatures</td>
<td>For safety from drowning in the water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Compares love of deer mother protecting her offspring to his devotion for praising Jina</td>
<td>Curing eye disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Calls himself a dimwit gathering courage to complete the task through devotion</td>
<td>For increasing concentration, I. Q., relief in stress and Insomnia,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Narrates the benefits of praising Jina</td>
<td>To nullify the snake poison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sanguine about his hymn that will be liked by others</td>
<td>All troubles are eliminated from the way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The mere mention of Jina’s name can destroy karmas</td>
<td>To be blessed with a male child/ or desired child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>One who praises becomes like him</td>
<td>To destroy the dog poison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Having sight of him gives satisfaction like drinking nectar</td>
<td>Converts salty water into drinkable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Describes Jina’s allure made of atoms of tranquility</td>
<td>To establish harmonious Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Your face excels over the moon that goes pale in a day</td>
<td>Avoids fear of theft on Journeys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>All the good qualities have taken refuge in him</td>
<td>Destroys the fear from enemy &amp; Vata (air) related disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Compared with Mount Meru, who couldn’t be deviated from the path</td>
<td>Attaining honor and respect in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>You are the light of the world</td>
<td>Extinguishes fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Superior to the Sun, cannot be eclipsed</td>
<td>Curing gastrointestinal Diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Your moon face illuminates the entire World</td>
<td>Removes illusive vision and thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>You are alone enough, no need for the Sun and the moon</td>
<td>For getting a job promotion, source of Earning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Your knowledge surpasses that of other gods like Śiva</td>
<td>Promotes fertility growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>The poet finds satisfaction in you that he didn’t find in other gods</td>
<td>Unites the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Compares Jina’s mother with the east direction as the Sun only rises from there</td>
<td>Destroys obstacles created by ghosts and devils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Grasping you completely, one can conquer death and there is no other path of liberation</td>
<td>For protection from evil spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-25</td>
<td>You are the embodiment of knowledge, superior to all other gods</td>
<td>Cures half headache, vertigo problems and safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>One of the most popular verses: Praise to you, O Lord, destroyer of the pain of the three worlds! Praise to you, the flawless ornament of the earth! Praise to you, supreme lord of the triple</td>
<td>Eliminates labor pains during the time of giving birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>No wonder all good qualities take refuge in you</td>
<td>Subduing the enemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>The first felicitation (Prātihāryas) - The aśoka tree</td>
<td>Desire fulfillment and cures leprosy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Second- The lion-throne</td>
<td>Gets rid of addiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Third- The flywhisks</td>
<td>Brings prosperity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Fourth- The triple parasol</td>
<td>Curing Skin diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Fifth- The kettledrum</td>
<td>Abdominal pain cure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Sixth- divine shower of a multitude of Blossoms</td>
<td>Removes all kinds of fever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Seventh- a radiant halo of shining light</td>
<td>Avoids miscarriages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Eighth- Your divine speech</td>
<td>Safety from epidemics, famine, hysteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Your footsteps cause lotuses to Bloom</td>
<td>Gains of wealth (metal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Your excellence in teaching the Dharma</td>
<td>Subdues cruel person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>People, having taken refuge in you have no fear of elephant</td>
<td>Subdues intoxicated elephant and wealth gain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>A lion does not attack, who have taken refuge in your mountain like pair of feet</td>
<td>Clarifies vision and provides a way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Your water like name quells the blazing forest fire</td>
<td>Eliminates fear of fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Your name acts as a snake charm for enraged snake</td>
<td>Cures snake poison effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>By praising you, a troop of powerful army can be defeated instantly similar to darkness dispelled by the Sun</td>
<td>Subjugates angry king and promotes peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Those who take refuge in your lotus like feet gain victory</td>
<td>Establishes peace and harmony among nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>By remembering, fears of those tossed on peaks of waves goes away</td>
<td>Freedom from fear of Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Those who have lost hopes of survival, afflicted by dropsy, become as beautiful as God of love by drinking nectar of immortality of Jina’s feet</td>
<td>Cures incurable diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Recalling your name that is a mantra, fear of bondage goes away instantly</td>
<td>Free from fear of prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Recitation of this verse to you destroys all kinds of fear</td>
<td>Free from all types of fear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The one who wears a garland of hymn in his neck find himself prosperous in Honor

| 48 | The one who wears a garland of hymn in his neck find himself prosperous in Honor | Attainment of wealth |

It can be noted from the table above that the poet has used comparison in several verses. Those comparisons are addressed to the virtues of Jina majorly with natural forces such as the Sun, the moon, mountains (Meru), unique flowers, wind, ocean, etc. The poet has used numerous synonyms for these words which points out the richness of Sanskrit language such for the Sun he uses Surya (verse 7), shahastra-kiran (verse 9), vivasvata (verse 19), shahastra-rashmi (verse 22 and 29), acidity a (verse 23), ravi (verse 28), bhānukara (verse 31), Diwakar (verse 38), dinkruta (verse 33) (Kapashi 2011: 96).

“BhS has the solution to every problem” as stated by one of the respondents. The 48 verses cover issues faced by individuals in different spheres of their life. It helps in personal growth, family union, protection from evil eyes, gives freedom from all types of fears, and promotes physical well-being.

Yantra

Yantra, derived from the Sanskrit root ‘yam’ means to control or restrain Although there have been several definitions provided by the scholars of Indic religions on the term yantra, the literal translation refers to it as a machine, an instrument, or a diagram for performing rituals often regarded as an instrument of harnessing power (Zeiler 2015: 68). Both the sects of Jainism accept forty-eight yantras associated with the hymn. There are
numerous ritual manuals that describe the application of yantras, and their benefits of reciting found in Jain households as well as the temples.

Ascribed with mantras and seed syllables on it, a yantra is seen as a pattern or design that facilitates visualizing or invoking the powers of a deity. As Pandit Dhiralal states, a diagram concentrating the energy of a worshipped deity is called a yantra (Kapashi 2007: 191). Considered as a form of energy by both Jains and Hindus, yantras can be engraved or drawn on different surfaces. Kapashi mentions, the classical eight tantric surfaces are gold, silver, copper, crystal, birch, bone, hide (which can include any type of paper), and Vishnu stone (Shaligrāma) (Ibid 192). Rastelli (2007) points out that a yantra’s material medium is sometimes believed to influence the results of worship, while Smith claims that it is “sometimes said to determine the relative effectiveness of the yantra” (Smith 2008:1029).

Does that mean a combination of specific metals in the yantra such as copper or gold leads to some elevation in the effect on its energy? Ajit Shah, a Śvetāmbar Mūrtipūjak Jain and medical professional (physician) residing in Michigan for the past 30 years, passionately believes that using a BhS copper yantra emits more energy and positivity compared to one drawn on paper or cloth. He cites an example of doorknobs and other handles in hospitals made of brass (a combination of copper and zinc) to minimize the transfer of bacteria to the body. He also acknowledged that while chanting, he pours water on the copper yantra with sacred mantras inscribed over it. He collects that water and drinks it as he believes that drinking water with copper element along with the mantra power provides him positivity throughout the day and heals acute issues in the body on its own.
Another respondent, Mahesh Patni, a resident of Los Angeles who visits his Jain center regularly also highlighted the importance of drinking yantra water. He practices the chanting of BhS regularly and admits that he has seen a notable change in his jewelry business after he initiated the chanting. He has placed BhS yantra in his home as well as his workplace. On being asked about the effectiveness of yantra, he asserts that he performs ritual ablution every day at home by reciting 36th shloka 3 times and collects the water. He drinks some water and sprinkles the rest at his workplace. He believes that the water is no more a normal drink. Instead, it converts into sacred water since it was poured over the mantras and yantras and consists of positive energy which energizes the body as well as the surrounding.

A similar kind of process has been found in Islam as well. Faki\textsuperscript{12}, the religious leaders of the Berti community live in the northern Darfur Province of the Republic of Sudan. They write koranic verses on the wooden slate, on both sides, with a pen that is made of sharpened millet stalk and ink (dawāī) of a fermented paste made from soot and gum Arabic (El-Tom 1985:144). They wash off the verses with water and give it to their clients to drink. The water is considered as mihāī (derived from the verb yamhā means to erase). The usage of water (El-Tom referred to it as erasure) and amulets results from the belief in the power of koranic verses, names of the God inscribed on the

\textsuperscript{12} The term faki has different connotations as graduates of the Koranic traditional schools, healers, divine amulets, etc.
slate. It is believed that following the process cures disease, provides protection against evil forces, helps the practitioner (client) to achieve desired goals (Ibid). In both cases, although the element is different the idea of healing through drinking water poured on the object (yantra or wooden slate) is similar. My interviews with the Jains in the diaspora community about the ritual worship of BhS yantras that contain praises established that they are often correlated with healing disease and protecting from malevolent forces.

**Shape of Yantra**

I argue that for a yantra to work, its effectiveness depends on certain factors that include the material, *bhāva* (sentiment), and shape of yantra. How does the structure of a yantra lead to healing? Yantras are manifold, they are featured in different shapes, such as a square, triangle, or hexagon. These diagrams are carved in different forms, two and three-dimensional, consisting of several shapes and patterns. For example, a common representation of yantra can be seen as inscribed in lotus(es) ranging from 4, 8, 10, 12, 16, 100, 1000, or more petals. These petals are encompassed by a square, circle, or a trio of both. The center point (*Bindu*), not always visible, is the principal place where the deity resides in the yantra (Bühnemann 2010: 569). The spot (*Bindu*) at the focal point of the yantra, for example, can be seen in a few diverse ways: as a device for tackling focus, as an image for the wellspring of the universe, and as a symbol for the quintessential clairvoyant solidarity of male-female standards, when it suggests powerful thoughts of enormous dualism (Ibid). Likewise, every component of the yantra is a multivalent image.
Figure 4 Bhaktāmara yantra of all 48 ślokas (Digambar Version)
The above picture (Figure 4) represents a complete BhS yantra consisting of 48 shlokas. There are numerous shapes holding specific meaning to the objective of BhS yantra. Some of the general shapes are listed below:

**Swastika**

The Swastika is widely accepted across all religions. The shape, according to Jain theology, portrays four realms of life and is parabolic of terminating the vicious cycle of rebirths by destroying the miseries of the three realms (Fontana 1994: 57). In verse 26 of the BhS yantra, the symbol of swastika represents relief from the labor pains of a woman giving birth. It addresses the welcoming of a new being who is free from the miseries of previous life and took birth.

**Crescent**

The crescent symbolizes newborn, representing the powers to bring change in the form (Ibid 56). Like the crescent moon that changes its shape into a full moon and dispels darkness, the symbol presents the hope of light in the dark world. The BhS yantra of verse 20 is used for conceiving and fertility issues. As Dr. Jain mentions, couples feel a vacuum in their life without a child, the newborn bring in a ray of light into their life (Jain 2019:158).

**Circle**

The circle shape, due to no beginning or end, symbolizes infinity, perfection, and eternity (Ibid 54). It also represents male divinity. The yantra of verse 1 of Bhs mentions *prathamam Jinendram*, meaning the first Jina of the era. Lord Adinatha
is referred to as the first Jina of the born at the end of the third half (known as suṣama-duṣamā āśā) (Jaini 2000:327, Jain 1929: xiv Dalal 2007:27), he is considered to have lived millions of years ago.

**Lotus**

The lotus bloom is one of the kinds of prototype images utilized in yantras. By and large, focused on the pivot with its abstract diagrammatical petals pointing towards the circuit, it is the accurate form to show the unfurling of intensity or celestial substance. Because of its affiliation and movement, advancement, and the life-extending nature of prana (breath or crucial power of nature), "the lotus speaks to the out petalling of the spirit bloom during the time spent profound acknowledgment.

As seen in the picture above, these copper yantras have different shapes inscribed by shlokas, mantras, and ṛddhis. Boner alludes various diagrammatical figures like circle, square and triangle symbolize the infinite powers the sky, earth, water, fire, and so forth and recommend the proper gods/deities inalienable in them. She presents the picture as a system of meeting vertical, level, and slanted harmonies, set in a round field around the focal point, it is a circular track with spiral divisions (Boner 1962: 16).

She submits a general direction to the tantric idea of yantra – a straight chart with a mysterious noteworthiness. She compares the yantra and mandala with the idol, the figural composition. The three types of portrayals have indistinguishable capacities and are in this way equivalent and exchangeable. She contends that the figural structures are dependent on fundamentals unrevealed through 'yantras' and consequently both are comparable in work. The purpose of yantra, in a skeletal structure, is to aid in
meditation, wherein devotees pervade the lines with vitality flows and visualize them to be going through operational hubs of the body.

Though, Jains in the diaspora community alludes to the idea of healing properties of yantra and place them in their homes and temples. But it might be possible that the yantra may or may not be used by Jains for meditation. As John Cort has recently criticized the argument posed by Robert Sharf (2001) on promoting yantras as “objects of meditation” emphasizing that “fieldwork does not confirm their use as a calming meditative aid, at least in the Jain context” (Cort 2009:141). Instead, he suggests that these ritual diagrams “are used in long, complex rituals, involving extensive recitations and material offerings” (Ibid).

**Mantra**

Jain texts began to discuss the importance of mantras and spells by the early century CE. However, scholarship on South Asian religion suggests that in Jainism, the use of mantras is influenced by non-Jain traditions (Sanderson 2011:243) as Jain scholars find it difficult to explicate the place of these mantras in the Jain worldview. For instance, Jinasena’s *Adipurāna* (AP), a late 9th-century Jain text in Sanskrit, discussed an initiation rite wherein he recites the Panhcanamaskāra mantra (fivefold praise) in Prakrit by placing his hand on disciple’s head (AP 39. 42-43). The rite was performed to purify initiant from all his past bad karmas. Jinasena’s idea of *panhcanamaskāra* as a destroyer of karma might be understood as a later development by scholars which imitates the non-Jain tradition of the power of sound.
The *panhcanaṃaskāra*\(^{13}\) is the most popular mantra, confirmed by a majority of my respondents, recited in Jainism. Jain texts, by the medieval period, such as the *Adipurāṇa* named these praises as “mantra” motivated its recitation, attached with certain seed syllables (bījamantra), and practiced in a way that could cure diseases, remove obstacles, destroy karmas, etc. (Gough 2015:42). By the tenth century, Digambaras started considering these Prakrit praises as a mantra that can be inscribed on tantric diagrams (yantra, mandala, cakra) made up of metal, cloth, or any other auspicious materials. These mantras written on ritual diagrams were also used in initiation ceremonies and meditation practices to aid visualization for the attainment of superhuman powers. The other sect, Śvetāmbaras began to understand these praises as the first part of sūrimantra. In the eleventh century, members of the other image-worshiping sect, Śvetāmbaras, understood these praises as the first section of the sūrimantra\(^{14}\) and later inscribed on cloth (Gough 2015:18).

In most traditions, visual devotion through yantras is always accompanied by aural devotion through mantras. A worship performance is regarded as complete by the devotees when recitation of mantras is combined with contemplation on the yantras, mystical diagrams. As defined by Padoux, recitation of mantras is central in Hinduism, Buddhism as well as Jainism as a part of the ritual culture. He writes, “In all three of these traditions, [a] mantra is a formula or sound with a fixed and prescribed form, to be used

\(^{13}\) *namo arihamtanam, namo siddhanam, namo ariyianam, namo uvajjhayciam namo loe savva-sahunam* II (SkhA 1. 1)

Praise to the enlightened beings, praise to the liberated beings, praise to the mendicant leaders, praise to the mendicant teachers, praise to all mendicants in this world.

\(^{14}\) the mantra whispered into the ears of monks upon their promotions to the highest rank of mendicancy (acāryā)
according to certain rules and in prescribed circumstances and empowered with a general or specific efficacy acknowledged by the tradition wherein it is used” (Padoux 1990: 379). Their use may vary from soteriological to worldly desires, conveying a clear meaning or sometimes prove to be meaningless (Burchett 2008: 813). The efficacy of any mantra, chanted loudly, silently, or whispered, is intended to lie in its sound vibration. I argue proper pronunciation of a mantra or hymn is vital to achieving the desired results. In my interviews, I ask the question, what role does the correct pronunciation of the hymn play in the chanting process?

As a part of tantric rituals, the very hymn, BhS itself was considered as the “large mantra” (Cort 2000: 104) due to the efficacy of chanting verses. Some latter verses towards the end, from 38 to 46, were designated as the mantra that emphasizes removing 8 types of fears, as discussed in chapter 2. This trend was seen in Guṇākarasūri’s commentary consisting of 28 stories wherein he related each verse with a mantra and a story to reflect the efficacy of a hymn during demanding situations. My respondents agreed to the mantras associated with the hymn, however many of them prefer to recite the verses alone as they consider them equally powerful as a mantra. In one of my interviewees, Nalini Patil, a 42-year-old Svetambara Jain, living in New Jersey shared that she chants the entire BhS every morning. In the past, when her daughter was suffering from a migraine, she chanted 24 th shloka 27 times. She finds it difficult to chant mantra and Rddhi daily but was constant with the performance of shloka chanting every day. On being asked the reason behind it, she elucidates that due to her weak command over the Sanskrit language, she is afraid that incorrect pronunciation of the mantra can lead to negative consequences by the deity. She further
confirms that her daughter experienced some relief even with the chanting of shloka itself.

While there are some conceptions regarding the use of mantras and the language, the interviewees confirmed that pronunciation of any mantra is significant to evoke the deity residing in the mantra. The responses raise a few questions about what makes a mantra powerful. Is it the words or the deity or the seed syllables in it? Woodroffe writes, “Through the mantra the mind is divinely transformed, contemplating, filled by and identified with, the divinity in mantra form, which is a gross (sthulā) aspect of Devi, it passes into her subtle (sukshma) light form which is the consciousness beyond the word of Māyik-forms” (Jhavery 1944:33).

Another factor that influences the power of a mantra or the hymn is its author. The Buddhist Dharmakirti (ca. 7th century) asserted that the character of the author or the reciter of these mantras makes the incantation powerful instead of the content and language or contents of a mantra (Eltschinger 2008: 273-89). Nilima Kothari, an investment banker in California, belonging to the Terapanthi community gave her opinion on being asked “how do you think a mantra works”? She believes that the main reason behind BhS’ power is the circumstances under which Acarya Māntungā wrote it. She further adds, “The hymn’s potential of breaking chains and locks, freed a great acāryā from the punishment given by the king is one of the reasons why I and probably other Jains too believe in the glory of this hymn.”
How do mantras work?

The antiquity of religion has propounded the idea that sound if properly utilized, can affect the universe enormously, “bringing practitioners everything from material wealth to the ultimate religious goal” (Gough 2015: 37). Sanskrit philosophers, particularly Mimāmsakas, firmly hold the view that language has the power to bring change in the cosmos. Many canonical texts have benefitted from the association of Sanskrit with mantraśāstra (the science of mantras), as it creates a framework for the pronunciation of mantras in the right manner to obtain desired results. Unlike Hindus, Jains reject the supremacy of the Vedas and the Sanskrit language in ritual recitation. Instead of advocating for theories about the relationship between different languages such as Prakrit and the essence of cosmos leading to liberation. The earliest Jain religious texts denounced the use of mantras and vidyās (spells), perceiving them as an obstacle for mendicants to attain liberation. Scholarship on South Asian religions proposes the application of mantras in Jainism as a result of influence from other traditions. However, it is discouraging that proponents of Jain philosophy find it a tough time to theorize the application of mantras in the Jain worldview (Gough 2015:129).

Dr. Ramesh Mehta, whom I met in my online Bhaktāmara teaching class, is a neuroradiologist in Michigan and practices Jainism along with his profession. He tries to abide by the vows. He explains the working of mantra scientifically, as chanting or recitation is done to calm the brain. In response to it, the brain helps to form the neuronal pathway. Our brains have two types of pathways: Cholinergic pathway and the Dopaminergic pathway. He further explains, whenever the Cholinergic pathway is extremely high, it cools down the brain leading to more excitement and an increase in
activity. Our bodies release adrenaline or the adrenergic effect producing a fight phenomenon. In contrast, when adrenaline level and Choline level goes down, the dopamine goes up resulting in a positive effect on the brain, as shown by multiple researchers in the neurosciences. He sums up the process by citing an instance of a mantra. When we chant and meditate, our mind becomes mentally so complex due to our relationship with neurotransmitters. Later when those neurotransmitters go down, the brain get calmer and relaxed, heart rate slows down. He asserts, chanting regularly reduces the Adrenaline effect and improves the overall body condition. With a clear mind, we can focus, and concentrate on our goals and desires effectively.

Dr. Ramesh’s explanation is supported by Kapashi’s (2007) explanation as he describes the process of chanting in an empirical sense. He propounds that our human brain consists of several small cells known as neurons that are interconnected. During our thought process, certain neurons develop a strong path representing aspects of interpretation. The strongest path known as memory is strengthened by repeating the same action, for instance, reading a book multiple times. Similarly, chanting of mantra multiple times strengthens our pathways and thus gives us powers (131).

Another respondent, Dr. J. C. Shah, living in Los Angeles tries to inculcate the teachings of Jainism to the younger generation by promotion of pāthśālās and supporting teachers. He holds a similar view as that of Dr. Mehta. He says “definitely, mantra cools your mind.” When you give yourself some time for chanting or reciting a mantra, it
provides you some spiritual healing. In a way, this process helps an individual to get away from the rest of the world and submerging within self, in the soul.

A ritual practitioner, Mr. Narendra Shah from Long Island confirms that he has been keenly interested in puja rituals and participates at various locations. About the working of mantras, he responds, “I have not tried by myself. I heard about it but have not looked into it.” But he feels as practicing medicine for 40 years, there is a place for having spiritual guidance or spiritual part in the healing. It does help and by doing BhS, or Namaskār Mahāmantra, it helps to calm down- and brings in some spiritual aspect, in the total care of a person. It also helps your mental problems, emotional issues, it helps to control them to write.

One of the traditional understandings behind the working of stotra was its association with a sage. The Buddhist Dharmakirti in the seventh century elucidated that it was not the contents or language of a mantra that made it powerful, but the character of the author or the reciter of these mantras (Eltschinger 2008: 275). A retired special education teacher, whom I call my spiritual mother living in Miami is a believer of Karma theory and her life revolves around it. Having belief in Vedanta alongside, she accepts that she has not used any BhS mantras for herself to gain any materialistic benefit. But being familiar with the practice, she says that the mantras transferred accurately created positive energy, and positive energy can help to repair yourselves or others especially in this case BhS was written by an Acāryā who himself possessed extraordinary intellectual capabilities and the conditions in which he wrote the hymn makes its mantra more powerful.
Ekta Shah, a homemaker living in Weston attends most of the temple rituals. I met her during one of my temple visits at the Jain Center of South Florida for a fieldwork class assignment. She follows the vows and diet even in the USA where people tend to adapt according to the situations. She believes that faith is the primary factor in chanting Mantras. She adds, “If you see the Jain mantras, they are not man-made but they have emerged directly from a Gyaṇis (omniscient)/Bhagwan’s (god) soul, so it is in the purest form and the mantras have the power bestowed on them by the Gyaṇis. So, when we recite a mantra with utmost faith and surrender they create miracles hence leading to healing.” The mantras create positive energy around us and that helps to remove all the negative energies surrounding us. Just like the food nourishes the body for healing, the same way Gods’ mantras nourish the soul and hence giving it the power to heal.

Dr. Manju Jain, founder of Bhaktāmara Healing and Research Foundation and a practitioner of this healing therapy from Nagpur recently in a video discusses her plan of establishing Bhaktayatan- a Bhaktāmara Divine shrine in India. Popularly known among Jains and believers of this healing technique, Dr. Jain believes that due to the sound vibration of these shlokas, the one who recites feels an expansion in his aura (electromagnetic field). Her agenda of creating 48 domes in the igloo shape, dedicating each to a particular shloka. She adds, these vibes, whenever anyone chants reaches cosmos leading to change in akashic records (record of each soul’s journey in the cosmos). Each syllable is recorded in those records and whenever there would be fine-tuning, it acts a radio frequency, immediately the person gets connected to the divine energy, and chanting of any shloka even for just 1 time will help you to manifest.
In my opinion, based on the above responses, along with the external preparations for the process, a reciter must be mentally balanced internally. His/her mind should be able to focus on the mantra as well as invoking the deity associated with the mantra. It is easy to perform external rituals such as the arrangement of yantra, abstaining from eating salt, wearing washed clothes, lighting lamp, etc. however, for a mantra to work, the mind should be in pure calmness, faith, as many respondents mentioned is the essential factor in undertaking any healing ritual. The union of an individual’s (the one who recites) pure body without any fatigue and a pure mind helps in invoking the deity and so forth leads to the attainment of goal or healing in the individual.

Ṛddhi

The Jain narratives discuss several accounts of individuals including mendicants who have gained different Ṛddhis and Siddhis (extraordinary, magical, or miraculous powers) or labhdis (extraordinary attainments). Abhyadevasuri, in his commentary on the Sthananga Sutra\textsuperscript{15}, describes Ṛddhi as something abundant or plentiful (prachurā), or praiseworthy, commendable, or auspicious (prasasta), and someone who is endowed with Ṛddhis is pre-eminent or has superhuman qualities (atiśayās) (Sthānanga Sutra 5. 2. sutra 439-440). For instance, a Jain ascetic, Vajranābha, (who was later reborn as Rśabhnātha) and his fellow mendicants attained various miraculous powers, such as the ability to transform food in various ways, cure diseases by touch, walk on water, become invisible, fly through the sky, etc. including other intellectual attainments

\textsuperscript{15}It mentions five types of persons who are endowed with Ṛddhis, Arhats, Cakravartins, Baladevās, Vasudevās, and purified ascetics (bhiitivāda ānagārā), Abhayadevasūri
He further defines *labhdis* as manifestations of the different qualities (*guna*) of the souls present in all living beings – gods, hell beings, plants, animals, humans, and even the elements of earth, water, fire, air, and space (Ibid).

Ṛddhis were first connected to Bhs in the 14\textsuperscript{th} century when hymns started gaining popularity (Gough 2021: 14). While scholars of Jainism in the diaspora community admit that these ṛddhis were not a part of the hymn initially. My respondents inferred that later, these 64 ṛddhis were merged into forty-four/forty-eight ślokas to make it significant to mantraśāstra. Suzuko Ohira (1994: 98-162) notes that the discussion of these powers began around the fourth century CE in the Jain texts. The claims attached with these ṛddhis and mantras of BhS to aid healing are not immensely popular among the modern Jains. Most of them emphasize the chanting of śloka.

The list of powers can be found in the canonical literature of both the traditions. The *Trilokaprajñapti* describes the possession of 64 distinct types of these special powers by 1,452 disciples (*ganadhāras*) allocated to the tirthankaras (Gough 2015). These powers were further categorized into 8 types:

(1) *buddhi*: power of cognition and intellect

(2) *vikriya*: power to transform body shape,

\footnote{It is a Digambara Prakrit text (6\textsuperscript{th} – 7\textsuperscript{th} century ca) of yativrsbha which means “expositions of three world”.}
(3) kriya: power to perform special actions (kriya),

(4) tapas: power to perform austerities,

(5) bala: power related to physical strength,

(6) ausadhi: power of providing healing and cure,

(7) rasa: power to convert speech or food from ordinary to sweet,

(8) ksetra: the power over certain places

Taking the reference of Śakhamāḷāgama (SkhA), one of the earliest Digambara sources known, I will discuss some of the Rddhi attached with the BhS. Although the list follows in the order of the shlokas itself, I have taken a few of them that helps to cure disease and one that focuses on the intellect.

**kuttha-buddhi** (verse 6): A person imbued with exceptional memorizing skills following the instructions of his teacher as well as retaining the texts consisting of seeds (bija) in the form of words. He, in the form of his intellect, stores the power in a granary to avoid mixing (TP). One can recall the knowledge gained in minimum to a maximum of uncountable years (Dh). (Wiley 2012: 168)

Rddhis to cure diseases (Dig SkhA):

**Amarsausadhi** (verse 33): An ill-being, by the touch of the hand or foot of a monk, or from merely coming around him, becomes without illness (Wiley 174). On the other hand, Śvetāmbar text, Pravacansaroḍḍhara (PSa) describes Amara as touch. Disease of oneself or others are cured merely by the touch of a person imbued with such
kind of attainment. Hemacandra, along with touch of body adds that the touch of water and wind on the body of afflicted one can cure diseases. (Ibid 159)

khelauṣadhi (verse 34): The power of phlegm, saliva, discharge from the nose, and so forth, to cure diseases (Ibid 174). Khela refers to phlegm or mucus and jalla refers to the impurities (mala), according to Śvetāmbara text PSa, these impurities from different body parts turn into pleasant smell and cure all diseases through the one endowed with this power.

jallauṣadhi (Verse 35): Jalla means impurities dwelling on the surface of the body. This power, which is acquired from austerities, they cure diseases (Ibid 174).

visthuṣadhi (verse 36): Munis with this power can cure diseases with urine, excrement, and semen. The Śvetāmbara text refers Vishuda as parts of urine or excrement. These parts smell pleasant by the attainment of this power and cure one’s own as well as others’ diseases.

sarvauṣadhi (verse 37): Through the attainment of this power, diseases are cured by the touch of a muni who has undertaken difficult austerities, or by water or wind that has been in contact with his body parts such as hair, nails, and so forth (TP). All the impurities of the body, internally and externally, including seven secretions (dhatuṣ) chyle, blood, flesh, fat, bone, marrow, and semen, through this power, become medicinal (Dh). TP adds: 1) vacananirvisa: food of bitter taste or with poison, becomes devoid—merely by the speech of a muni. Or a being who has many types of diseases is quickly cured (TP 1085). 2) drstiniirvisa: One who has been poisoned or is ill is cured, merely by
seeing a muni (TP 1086). The Śvetāmbar texts describe sarva as all the body parts with foul smell transforms into pleasant smell and medicinal.

_aksīna-mahanāsī_ (Verse 45): With a small quantity of leftover food in the bowl (from which a mendicant consumed his food), even though eaten by the entire army of Cakravartin on the same day, the food is not diminished and remains full (TP). A muni (ascetic) with such kind of attainment can only exhaust the food.

The attainment of the above discussed ṛddhis results in curing diseases either by the touch of mendicant, or through the touch of water and air element on the body. The component parts smell pleasant, become medicinal, and cure the diseases. In the 9th century, a Prakrit commentary on the Śaṭkhaṇḍāgama, written by Virasenā’s Dhavala, he elaborates the composition and functioning of this praise. His commentary on these superhuman powers reflects on the Jain understanding of how they work. He concluded that Jains have emphasized “the power of invocations lies in their ability to modify karma, and they have this power not because of the language in which they are composed, but because of whom they praise” (Gough 2015: 61).

Although the attainment of these powers is essential for mendicants, it might be possible that laypeople were inclined to follow them due to benefits attached with these powers like the inexhaustible kitchen and curing diseases (Wiley 185). In the case of verse 45, Antarāya karmas are related to the power of the ‘unfailing kitchen’ and include the power (virya) of the body, speech, and mind. According to Jain Karma theory, these karmas are attached to the soul, With the attainment of these powers, karmas become functional, as in they are forced to give their results. Some of my respondents with
working knowledge of karma theory affirmed that chanting of ṛddhis-helps in eradicating bad karmas from the soul but there is no valid explanation that connects karmas with the healing powers of this hymn. While many commentators chose to remain silent on this subject I suspect that this is one of the reasons that little importance is given to the chanting of ṛddhis than shlokas by the diaspora Jains.

3. 5 Integrated healing through Bhaktāmara Components

I will explain the relationship between all four components through the diagram below (Figure 5) taking the example of 45th shloka.

**Shloka 45:** Udbhūta bhīshana jalodhara bhār bhugnāh
Śochyām dashāmapagtās chyuta jīvitāśah l
Tvapāda pankaja rajomrita digdha dehā,
martyā bhavanti makara dhvaja tulyarūpāh ll

**Ṛddhi:** Om hrīm arham namo akhīṇa- mahānasānam (Jhraum Jhraum namah swāḥ)

**Mantra:** Om namo Bhagwatī kṣudropadrava- shāntikarini roga kaśhta jwaropa shamanam shāntim kuru kuru swāḥ om hrīm Bhagwate bhaya bhīshana harāya namah

**Explanation:** The verse translates as the diseased ones, afflicted by dropsy acquiring a miserable condition, having no hopes of survival, when their bodies are rubbed with the nectar-like dust of immortality of your lotus-like feet become as beautiful as the god of love (kāma) and recovers from the disease.
Jains in the modern diaspora in the US use different approaches for healing. Out of the sample size of 30 interviewees, while chanting of shloka was essential for any healing procedure. I observed that 13 respondents chant mantras along with the shlokas whereas 8 of them prefer to chant all of them together. One of the interesting factors I would like to draw attention to the Jains who chanted shlokas, mantras, and ṛddhis together in the past or were continuing, most of them had a materialistic purpose attached behind the process. A young lady wanted to get a job as she was a recent graduate while an IT professional was chanting for his mother’s recovery from leukemia, a medical professional initiated the chanting for his son suffering from autism, a young couple chanted all the three components of BhS to overcome the battle of
Cancer. The practitioners chose a shloka based on their objective, follows the process of chanting shloka, ṛddhi and mantra for 9, 27, or 108 times depending on their convenience. The use of integrated (involving all the components of BhS) healing practice by the practitioners is not a matter of everyday ritual practice, rather it comes into the role during limited times or at the time of need.

3. 6 Theory of Sound and Language

Several attempts have been made to integrate different sensory elements in the healing process apart from visual components, mainly speech and sound. However, the question of whether the power of these sacred chants lies in speech, or the sound does not have a certain answer. In this section, analyzing Tambiah’s theory of language, I will try to establish the relationship between the nature of the language of BhS and Jains’ interpretation of the role of language in healing. Based on my respondents’ viewpoints, I argue that the efficacy of a mantra not only lies in the sound or the language but rather mantras are just a linking factor to establish a connection with the supreme power. There is a loosely knit consensus illustrated by Tambiah wherein he argues that power is in the words if chanted in the right way.

I would examine several responses provided by my respondents to demonstrate that one needs to have the right faith and Bhāva to establish the link to attain benefit from the stotra. Mrs. Pulin Shah, a murtipujak Jain, living in Miami credits Gandharas (Chief disciples of Tirthankaras) for writing the stotras. Due to the power of enlightened Gandharas who wrote the stotras in Sanskrit, recitation in the translated language (English, Hindi, etc.) instead of the original language (Sanskrit) certainly makes a difference for her. She posits, “one should learn that language as well as the meaning of words to get its true benefit, otherwise Bhāva will not emerge”. Two fundamental points
that arise from her explanation: firstly, any stotra is considered more efficacious if recited in the original language. Another point to consider here is words play a pivotal role to create Bhava in a devotee to perform the chanting rituals.

I will employ Malinowski’s (1965) theory of language here, known as “an ethnographic theory of language”. He stresses the pragmatic nature of language, that is, it acts as a means of gaining benefits, rather than a tool for communication or expression of ideas. He asserts that words are merely considered as actions (9) and “the effective force of such verbal acts lies in directly reproducing their consequences” (49). His perspective about the idea of “meaning” is derived as “meaning is the effect of words on human minds and bodies and through these on the environmental reality as created or conceived in a given culture” (53). In the above response, the BhS when chanted with a purpose, knowing the meaning of the recitation helps develop a relationship with the verse as each verse has a separate agenda and it would be easier for the reciter to perform rituals in a way leading to the achievement of the desired benefits.

Another informant from New Jersey, a Śvetāmbara Jain and a chiropractor by profession, affirms to the power of Sanskrit language as she says, “Original is original”. She further adds, “anyone who is willing to chant, they should chant in the same language only instead of using a translated version”. However, she opposes the idea of familiarity with the stotra language to understand its meaning. One can learn the mantra by heart and a deep understanding of its meaning in their preferred language will help an individual to connect their feelings (Bhāv) with the stotra. In this context, although it is important to chant the shlokas in original language due to the belief that mantras themselves have power, however knowing the meaning of the shloka results in developing a strong bond.
Dr. Rajesh Mehta from Michigan, who is a neurologist, agrees to the superiority of the Sanskrit language over others. Having belief in multiple faiths, he mentions that our old Indian medicine system like Ayurveda follows Vedic treatment, written in Sanskrit. Similarly, the BhS, penned by a sage with a prodigious intellect is “definitely going to have a stronger effect because of the collaborative power.” By collaborative power, he refers to the power of devotion of Acarya Māntungā that was put into the words of the BhS. What he said above indicates that “words alone do not have any power,” rather the writer makes them more effective.

I will reflect on Tambiah’s theory of language here. Tambiah states that rituals are considered effective due to the notion that power lies in the words, but it comes into effect only if recited in a particular context concerning other actions (176). He cites an example from his research on Sinhalese mantras that the ceremony commences with the chanting of mantra which commands the evil spirit in charge of the disease. “Hitting with sound” is a phrase used for summoning followed by the language of request and coercion (177-9). He also opines that if an individual holds a belief that the context and structure of a mantra vecan communicate with the gods or bringing any change, then it is justified rationally. This statement highlights that the rationality or irrationality, meaning or meaninglessness of practice could be justified by having a strong belief in the ritual. Some Jains in the diaspora community hold the belief that BhS has some power, but it is difficult to impose that the hymn holds some power due to the nature of the language. Tambiah fails to identify that the efficacy of any incantation not only relies on the language but also on the creator of those mantras.
While Dr. Jayesh Shah, who is engaged in pediatric practice in internal medicine and primary care, deals with patients over 90 years of age. He disagrees that language makes any difference in the chanting process. Any mantra would work as long as the reciter is fully engaged through his mind, body, and soul. As Fritz Staal illustrates the difference between meaningful and meaningless is essential in the context of normal language (265). Sometimes, the origin of mantras from a different language doesn’t have anything to do with the human language. Referring to Dr. Shah’s idea here, chanting in the original language is not a necessity as if the reciter is not well versed with the language, the connection would always be lacking due to semantic barriers.

From here, I will try to elaborate on the Jain theory of sound vibration and how it takes place in an individual. Jainism describes different subtle bodies as a result of the interaction of karma with the consciousness that directs our physical, mental, emotional, and social health (Jain 2015: 20). Healing through mantras takes place when there is a change in the frequency of vibration at the physical etheric level.

Meenakshi Sheth, an IT Professional in Chicago, expounds that mantras have energy. She explains further that by the energy she means praising that higher energy that is extended to invoking. Mrs. Sheth informs that, “without even understanding a word, through the power of the sound vibration it becomes easier to relate the meaning without words, I am able to connect with the mantra.” This illustrates another belief that the power of a mantra lies in its sound vibrations and not the words alone. According to the Super String theory of Physics, “everything in the universe including our body is in the state of vibrations” (Jairam & Sheth 2019: 49). The sacred words elevate the oxygen level in the brain integrating the left and right hemispheres of the brain resulting in the release of positive chemicals like endocrine. When the sound of mantras enters the subconscious mind, it helps in developing concentration, attention,
and energizes the body (Ibid). The consciousness is formed due to the development of patterns, ignorance, aversions, habits by coming in contact with the karmas. But how do the karmas affect the healing process? I will discuss this in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The chapter provides a sense of the Bhaktāmara rituals Jains perform for maintaining external as well as internal purity. A focused and calm mind results in the efficacy of stotra. We can infer that Jains in the modern diaspora community maintains ritual culture together with the devotional culture through BhS practice. While there is no standard healing process, BhS provides a liberal outlook to its practitioners where faith is an essential element. Many Jains including the medical professionals advocate the power of Bhs but there isn’t an individual energy force that works. This chapter presents different viewpoints of Jains who believe that each and every component of BhS has a healing property and if used well with firm belief, along with proper pronunciation can bring in a significant effect in life.
CHAPTER 4

Healers in the white Coat: Exploring the science of healing through BhS devotion.

“Religion without science is lame and science without religion is blind.”

-Albert Einstein

Introduction

It was 4:45 am and my alarm went off with a reminder for an interview in 15 minutes. The Zoom meeting was scheduled with a Bhaktāmara mantra healing expert, Dr. Pradeep Jain from New Delhi (India), who provides counseling and healing to people in different facets of their life using BhS. They have a clinic in New Delhi where they conduct their healing and counseling sessions worldwide. I asked, how do you heal people through this hymn sitting at your place? He responds, “healing is nothing but the transfer of energy and positive vibrations from one person to another and all you need is to establish a connection with the individual who requires healing.” My mind was puzzled with doubts and questions about the process and my knowledge of healing based on visual observations but somehow, I tried to concentrate on understanding his views.

As he was explaining the process and root cause of illness in the human body, he tells me that bodily illness is a consequence of our bad karmas in past life. But how do they affect us in the present life? He narrated a heart-touching case of a newborn baby girl. When she was born, her mother couldn’t see her for 20 days, as she was taken to the nursery because of an infection in the stomach. After she was discharged, within a few days she was admitted to the hospital again. She struggled for 6 months and lost her life. This narrative made me ponder over certain questions that form the basis of this chapter:
what bad deeds did a newborn baby do that she was afflicted by cancer? Is healing, then, merely a matter of the limited effects of karma, or can karma be somehow affected? Is it applicable only to Jains? How is an illness related to the karmas?

In this chapter, I investigate the attitude of modern Jains focusing on laypeople and medical professionals towards healing by BhS. How do they understand the connections between and among karma, illness, and healing? I argue that Jains theorize the *Bhaktāmara Stotra* not merely as a hymn of devotion but also as an instrument for providing bodily healing. Reflecting on the interview responses of householders and medical professionals in the diaspora community, the questions I ask try to identify how these Jains understand the relationship between medicine, mantras, and devotion. Do they think BhS healing is compatible or incompatible with modern science? I will start this chapter with a discussion on the role of scientization perceived by Jains in practicing their religion and their understanding of empirical research. The central theme of this chapter revolves around the medicalization of stotra from a scientific perspective of diaspora Jains of the USA. I will also elaborate on my definition of medicalization in this chapter.

4. 1 Counteracting Illness and karma through healing and devotion in Jainism

Jainism embraces a "consequentialist ethical system" (Vose et al. 2020: 416) wherein Jains lay the greater weight of the karmic outcome of action on the result and less on the intent with which it was committed. They believe our actions from previous lives have consequences on the present life and determine factors such as family, caste, physical
appearance, profession, etc. Unlike Christianity, wherein illness is viewed as something “sent by God, as a punishment for sin or as a trial for one who has not sinned (Dein: 52), Jainism regards illness as a result of an individual’s karmas. According to Jain doctrine, numerous souls reincarnate in different forms, contingent on their karmas. These souls, bounded by passions such as anger, greed, arrogance, attachments, have an innate tendency to attain liberation. Karma is considered the most important matter (physical) in Jainism, whose infinite physical particles float in the universe. Actions of beings attract these particles that get attached to the soul and trap it in the vicious cycle of rebirth (samsara). Even the thought of committing any action (positive or negative) has its implications. According to the Tattvartha Sutra (9. 10), the path to liberation of the soul showed by Mahavira can only be achieved by stopping the inflow of karmas through penance. As stated in the Uttaradhyayana Sutra,

\[ \text{evam tu sanjayassavi, pavakammanirasave} | \]

\[ \text{bhavakodi sanciyam kammam, tavasa nijarijai} \] || 30. 6

“Like this, once the fresh sinful karmic influx stops, through penance the restrained aspirant can destroy and shed the karmic bondages accumulated over billions of previous lives” (Lodha and Baya 2011: 177).

Penance is categorized into two parts, external that consists of fasting (anasana), charity (dana), abstinence from committing sins (stealing, injury, dishonesty, unchastity, and over-possessiveness), mortification (kāyakaleśa), eating less than desired (unodari), and renouncing delicate food (rasatyāga). The other category, internal penance, consists of spiritual self-study (svādhyāya), atonement (prāyaścitta), meditation
(dhyāna), humility (vinaya), and giving up all attachments and passions (vyutsarga) (Uttarādhyāyana Sūtra, 30. 6). Strictly speaking, observing the vows stops the influx of new karma, while penance burns off existing karma. These penances are performed by ascetics rigorously. However, there is some level of laxity in the case of householders.

Based on my interview responses, I argue that Diaspora Jains in the US strongly believe in karma theory and that it plays a significant role in the illness. Harkening back to the central theme of this section, how do Jains in the diaspora understand the correlation between illness and karma?

Mr. Rishi Jain, born and raised in the US, belongs to the Śvetāmbara community of Sacramento. Having fought and overcome cancer, he shares his observation about the connection between illness and karmas. He realized one day as he was walking in the hospital where there were no kids; but suddenly, he realized that there was a separate hospital for Children. He was surprised by the fact that there are kids who are also suffering from something deadly like this. He says, “Kids are born with diseases, or something happens to them at an early age. But can we ask what did they do? Why are they suffering from this?” He further adds, “As adults, we do stuff negatively, positively. Since we are at that age, where we can just differentiate between right and wrong”. But in the case of kids suffering, he believes that something that might have happened in their previous lifetime, something they did, is now affecting not only them but the people around them as well. He concludes his statement by referring to the soul as everlasting, and this soul interacts with so many different souls through this cosmic journey. And when something good happens with somebody or something bad happens with somebody, it is
because of a previous life experience or something they did in a previous life. How we treat people in this lifetime influences our future lives.

Another respondent, Dr. Matalia, living in New Jersey is a young medical professional who was born in the US. He admits that he has given a lot of thought to it. Keeping his logic and rationale to the side, he believes that if a person is very sick, that means he or she did something bad in the previous lifetime and, as Jains believe in reincarnation, it is related to karma. If someone did bad things and they go unpunished or bad things happened, then they are going to be punished in their next life. So there must be some truth to it. He says, “especially sometimes when some medical cures are not working, I think it’s just karma. And you just have to go through that phase and go through that suffering.” People always ask, like, why is this happening to this particular person? And why are these common treatments not working? He believes that the reason behind this could be karma. He continues, “I do also believe that we should try to get rid of as much of our karma as we can in this life. So, if we have to suffer, it’s better, so we get rid of the karma in this life and not have to carry it on to the next life.”

From what I discussed in the introduction in Dr. Jain’s patient’s case study and the views expressed by Rishi Jain; it is quite clear that Jains give credit to the karmas for every action that happens to them. The consequences of karmas must be faced by everyone. Rishi’s statement that the “soul is everlasting that interacts with different souls in the cosmos” indicates that karmas are attached to the soul and not to the body. When a newborn suffers from some kind of disease, that ailment is considered the result of his
past deeds carried forward to his next life. As Dr. Matalia puts it, karmas come into play where no cure works, which reflects that the attachment of karmas to the soul is directly correlated to illness and that cannot be treated even by medical science.

Another medical professional from Washington, a Śvetāmbara Jain, strongly believes that the karma part has a definite strong relationship with all of us. He experienced the role of karmas personally with his son who suffers from autism. He propounds, good and bad things happen simultaneously because of the karmas. Having been deeply engrossed in devotion towards his guru, he believes that his arrival in their life before his son’s diagnosis gave them mental strength to cope up with the situation. He says, “our guru came first and then my son's diagnosis with autism came. And we're just thinking if we didn't have our guru, and if we had son, my son’s diagnosis would come before, I'm pretty sure we would have been shattered.” The encounter with the guru took place because of his good karmas followed by his son’s diagnosis as a result of bad karmas.

A Jain scholar, a nun, and a research assistant in SOAS, Samani Pratibha Pragya, clarifies that there are eight types of karmas in total (Figure 6). Among them, *vedanīya karma* (feeling-producing) is further divided into two types *Sāta vedaniya* (pleasure producing) and *Asāta vedaniya* (pain-producing). People experience different phases in their life, from being physically fit and mentally sound to being infirmed due to discomfort and diseases in the body. She further adds that *vedaniya* karmas, the central factor, occur constantly in a rising state, and illness and ailments in the body are a result of *asātā vedaniya* karmas. Along with *vedaniya* karmas, there are four other factors such as
dravya (substance), kṣetra (place), kāla (time), bhāva (feelings).
The kāla (time), itself is a big factor, substance is a factor: what type of bhāva you have, what type of sthitis (situations) and time, all these have shown an effect of karma theory on illness. Samniji supported her point with an example of the recent pandemic rising all over, but every being doesn’t have the rising state at the same time. So, some are badly affected by it whereas others are immune to it. The intensity of karmas also matter, as one person suffering from COVID-19 had just mild symptoms while others died of this disease.

Taking this explanation into consideration, I ask what factors determine the intensity of karmas. As Jaini puts it, the duration of karmas’ attachment to the soul and their effects are determined by the degree to which original actions are concealed by a layer of kaṣāya (passions) such as anger and attachment (Jaini 2014: 113). I contend that Jains simply view the association of karmas with soul; however, due to the immaterial nature of the soul, there is no direct relation between them. This can be connoted as our experience bondage similar to our understanding from the experience of perception towards the association of immaterial consciousness and material object (ibid.: 114).
Dr. Jayesh Shah, President, Jain Center of Southern California, practicing Internal Medicine in private practice in a suburb of Los Angeles, calls this concept the “boomerang” effect. Whatever you sow, so shall you reap. Dr. Shah came to the USA in 1982 and believes his generation who came from India was imparted values to follow traditional Jainism that was divided into two major sects followed by different sub-sects. However, his ideology emphasizes a unified version of “the Jains” instead of being scattered into sects and sub-sects. Having served as the president of the Jain center twice, in his observation, the young generation tries to escape from the religion due to overemphasis laid on rituals (kriyā) and method (vidhi). He believes in the education of the real values of Jainism that can be applied in their practical life. Dr. Shah’s perspective adds a new dimension to the term “scientization” that I discussed earlier. Creating awareness among the youth towards their religion in a rational manner will keep them connected to their roots of being a Jain. Thinking aloud...
from a realistic perspective instead of a religious one, he says, “what you do, you pay the price for it”. Does that mean beings are themselves the cause of illness in our body? “Technically, yes!” he says, “Since karma theory is governed by cause-and-effect relationship and as Jainism does not believe in any creator or destroyer, instead the account of all beings is maintained by karmas that is nothing but a subtle material substance”. Identification of cause is the primary goal that will move us to the further step of investigating the cure of this cause.

4. 2 Cure to the cause

Many scholars establish a clear difference between the terms, “healing” and “curing,” defining the former one that falls under the broader concept wherein the scope of the latter one is restricted to physical health and the former has a wider concept that goes beyond physical health. As Susan Sered (2005) states, healing “has to do with the whole person, the infinite divine, and the enduring community”. The use of the phrase “infinite divine” points towards an approach of wholeness comprising of healing on a personal level— emotional and physical—as well as on a communal level. The participants are responsible for defining their subjectivity and “effectively de-centers dominant biomedical paradigms” (ibid.: 236). The understanding of healing in a wider framework differentiates it from curing.

As discussed in the previous chapter, mantras have the energy and vibration that bring healing into effect. In case of reciting and going deep into descriptive translation
of these mantras or any stotra, one praises and invokes higher energy from a deity of that mantra. The sound produced by the mantra itself has a meaning attached to it. What effect does sound have on the karmas causing illness in the body? Jairam explains the effect of sound on the structure of the body. She writes:

Healing occurs as recitation of sacred mantra changes the vibrational frequency level in the physical etheric body as Mantra attunes with the body. Super String Theory of Physics, as Vibrational Medicine, states that everything in the universe including our body is in the state of vibrations. Ailment-free body vibrates in natural resonance, the body begins counter frequency when disease sets in and the energy in the body are stuck. Mantra chanting releases the stuck energy, and the body returns to the natural state of resonance resulting in a cure of the disease (2019: 49).

The above phenomenon of the effect of sound due to the karmic structure is very well explained by one of my respondents, Dr. Samani Chaitanya Pragya from SOAS, London. Being a Jain nun and scholar of religious studies, she explains that karma is sound, and sound has vibration and in the same thing, the karma aggregates are also kind of vibration. So, the vibration causes a change in physical structure and is diluted. She cites an example of a Sonicare toothbrush wherein the plaque is removed by producing vibrations. She further adds, when an individual is engrossed in bhakti, the chemical structure of the human body affects due to a change in positive mindset, and feelings. Therefore, when these mantras are recited properly, they produce vibrations in the body and they counter and provide support. The positive vibration produced by mantras counteracts the karmic particles.

In the constant stage of discomfort due to any disease, I argue that some Jains perform bhakti realizing the true nature of the soul, as the soul is not the bearer of pain,
but the temporary body is. I asked my respondent how do you establish harmony between the disease and devotion during the suffering? Aarti Pulin Shah (discussed in chapter 3) provides her example. Suffering from muscular dystrophy and having a pessimistic view, she accepts the fact that despite surrendering oneself in Jina bhakti, this disease cannot be cured. But one forgets about their disabilities when engaged in devotion. She feels herself contented and fortunate to be able to perform bhakti by surrendering herself in their *carankamal* (lotus like feet). Performing devotion brings her peace, satisfaction, and a feeling of acceptance towards her karmas done in the past.

Another respondent, a member of Jain society of Tampa, Derāvāsi Mūrtipūjak, being married for 15 years but wasn’t able to conceive a child, shares the same philosophy as Mrs. Shah’s acceptance of her fate. However, she firmly holds faith in BhS, and if she does it for 21 days, she can have a child. However, she doesn’t feel the need any longer as she has found her satisfaction in devoting herself towards her guru, Nalinibhai. She shares her husband’s case of being hardworking but having a stagnant job for the past 10 years. She attributes the cause to be his past life karmas. In place of seeking a solution, she chanted BhS following a process that includes chanting of shloka 9 times in the morning along with quitting salt for 21 days and realize a positive change in her husband’s attitude. Gradually, he was able to eradicate his karma and found a job with promising growth and development in his career. His experience indicates that one can attain satisfaction over time while performing Bhakti, if not in the beginning. Also, Jains in the diaspora community pay homage to the gurus, mostly from India.

Rishi Jain having faith in the devotion through mantras, says that with the help of chanting mantras, we wash away the *Pāpanīya* Karma and evoke the *Pūṇya* Karma.
When *Pūnya* Karmas come to fruition, then all the negative energy blockages wash away and our body transforms into all nice and healthy, pure, pious, and our aura will expand. While my other respondent Nayanaben, living in New Jersey, a Śvetāmbara Jain, on being asked if devotion through chanting mantras can dilute the effect of bad karmas from the soul, acknowledged that devotion can help in eradicating bad karmas, if performed with heart, mind and full faith. However, if one performs chanting without any faith or feels negative about it—he will not see any benefit. By negativity and faith, she refers to the situations where a person is hopeless, stressed with a lot of problems, in that case, he cannot avoid negativity. She explains her point further with an example like human diseases that don't give up even after a person completes BhS chanting for 21 days (considered the ideal number of days) and don't get any results. But she advises that one should not give up and lose faith as everything works at the right time. The term, right time, here refers to a time where positive karmas come into fruition and things start happening in one’s favor.

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18 The trend has been seen in case of Rakeshbhai having a huge following among Jains in the USA. But I will not go in detail here about the shift in the cult among Jains to keep the research focused.
Explaining the role of devotion, Mr. Chandrakant Mehta from New Jersey states that the devotion is for the householder, i.e., for laypeople like us and it differs from the ascetic person. One takes time to reach that level as he explains the theory of devotion through the help of an example of a magnifying lens in the sun and if we put a paper on the other side, it can burn even if you keep the distance to the magnifying lens. Because the sun rays were scattered before, after putting a magnifying lens, all the sun rays become one large beam, and that beam can burn the paper. Similarly, our devotion is scattered around in all directions, and thereby it is not a ‘total devotion. He alludes further that once we develop that kind of devotion by praying and praising the Jinas through chanting Ṛddhis and mantras, wearing clean clothes, and with full concentration. Then, your devotion can be capable of eradicating bad karmas.

Jains, as discussed earlier, along with the internal purity of the mind, lay stress on the physical purity of the body done through bathing and wearing clean clothes. ‘Total devotion’ here refers to complete surrender to a Jina as they all share common virtues. One can attain a complete state of surrender by immersing himself in bhakti and developing faith in Jinas and their teachings.

4. 3 Is Jainism a scientific religion?

The relationship between religion and science has been debated among scholars, scientists, and philosophers as a matter of study for centuries. Gould (2002) argues that science and religion are two different domains and do not intersect at any point. He states:

Science tries to document the factual character of the natural world and to develop theories that coordinate and explain these facts. Religion, on the other hand,
operates in the equally important, but utterly different, a realm of human purposes, meanings, and values—subjects that the factual domain of science might illuminate but can never resolve.

He underscores the potency of each field’s aim to be based within the respective area of inquiry on its own. He explains that if religion fails to determine the essence of assumptions found legitimately within the realm of science, at that point scientists cannot assert any interpretation of ethical nature from the predominant information of the empirical structure.

Richard Dawkins (1998) criticizes his account of religion, not being separate from the world of science. Referring to Gould’s claim as unrealistic, he points out his claims of existence in part with religion are scientific claims. He argues that scientific claims would be accepted by religions willingly only if they support each other’s views. Francis Collins (2007) takes a midway here and believes that science and religion “partially overlap” and Gould’s claim of morals and ethics fails to determine naturalistic interpretation (95).

Keeping this distinction in mind, I use Aukland’s terms ‘scientization’ and ‘academization’ in this context for modern Jains to explain the interdependence of science and religion on one another. He argues that the scientization and academization of Jainism have led to changes in the life, values, doctrines, and understanding of Jains. He interprets Scientization as a process by which adherents of a religion appeal to modern science. On the other hand, academization is the process through which there is the establishment of academic institutions and practices by involving academic scholars and their hypothesis of religion. Flugel describes these processes as part of establishing
‘Jain modernism’. He argues that Jainism, in the matter of the new *Religionswissenschaft* (Science of Religion) was not formulated only as a religion, “but also as a world religion, both by colonial administrators and by Western-educated Jain community leaders, promoting the reformist agenda that now dominates Jain culture, especially in the global Jain diaspora” (Flugel 2012: 975). Based upon his definition of Jain modernism, I argue that many contemporary Jains envisage Jainism through the lens of modern science. Proponents of scientization wish to introduce changes in traditional beliefs and practices to adhere to modern science while maintaining their religious identity of being a Jain and adhering to its values.

Cort endeavors to define Jains as people who self-identify as Jains. He states:

> Part of the problem is that most scholars have identified Jainism as a reified body of doctrine that is essentially unchanging over time, whereas I view Jainism as the sum total of the practices and beliefs of all people who called themselves Jain throughout the centuries, as revealed in texts, inscriptions, buildings, images, paintings, and other historical records-in sum, what Wilfred Cantwell Smith has termed a "cumulative tradition. " (2002: 65)

Carrithers (1990) uses a traditional approach of defining Jainism as a set of beliefs and practices that are subject to change with time establishing their separate identity in the Indic religions (141-163). While both the center of the definition on Jain teachings, the reliance on the latter definition makes the task of ascertaining the impacts of science on religion simpler. Aukland has used distinction of the terms “science” and
“modern science” to characterize those activities we today link with physics, chemistry, and biology in their widest sense (2015: 197).

Taking reference from Lewis’ organization of seven categories of appeals to the authority of Science (Lewis 2011: 31-37), Aukland suggested the organizational structure into 4 categories of Jain appeals to science as:

(1) unspecific appeals: the reinvention of Jainism as scientific, reiteration of doctrines, practices, rituals, symbols through the language of science

(2) discipline-specific appeals specify natural sciences and the advancement of Jain teachers who are willing to modify doctrines and practices in conjecture with modern science.

(3) methodological appeals: remodel traditional praxis as empirical. This appeal compares religious scholars and classical experiments with scientists and scientific experiments respectively such as the development of meditation techniques making scientific claims.

(4) alternative science and technology appeals: refer to research ideas and practices outside the realm of mainstream science such as aura scanning (2015: 202).

While the above four appeals point out that the relationship is not “natural” or “apparent,” but is being constructed by specific Jains today. I will specifically build upon type 3 (methodological appeals) in this chapter to understand the epistemic overlapping of healing discourses that allow Jains to embrace empirical science-based medicine while engaging in faith-based healing practices. One of the general appeals used while describing Jainism is ‘it is not a religion, instead it is a way of life as it is
scientific.’ By adding scientific to the definition, I highlight an extension to the understanding of modernized Jainism by my respondents. Zaveri (1994: iii-iv) highlights the difference between boldly referring to Jainism as scientific and rearticulating Jain concepts in “scientific terms” by precisely asserting the efforts to synthesize Jainism with modern science.

In an attempt to familiarize me with these appeals in the Jain diaspora, I asked my respondents their understanding of the term scientization and how do they apply it in practical life? Ekta Shah, a young Śvetāmbara female, married in the USA and staying in a joint family, considers herself deeply rooted in the values of Jainism. She and her husband follow basic practices like avoiding root vegetables, eating before sunset, abstaining from any kind of addiction (vyasa), observing meditation (sāmāyika), actively performs rituals, devotional practices at Jain Center of South Florida and their dwelling place too and have been following the vegan diet from past 6 years in the USA. She defines Jainism in the USA as a perfect representation of “unity in diversity” because of harmony among different sects. In response to my question, she strongly believes:

The Jain principles are in equilibrium with nature and science and all the theories related to Jainism, told by our Tirthankaras are now being proved by scientists. For example, fasting (upvāṣa) in Jainism has been proven to have so many medical benefits to us like getting rid of so many diseases and now the same term is trending as intermittent
fasting in the world. Another example is *Ayambil oli*\(^{19}\) which has been proven to remove the worst of diseases like how *Shripāl Raja’s leprosy* got cured and now many people have experienced and are sharing that through *Ayambil Oli* they have cured their cancers that too without medicine. Simple examples of not eating after sunset are now being proved beneficial by scientists for managing health so every aspect of Jainism can be linked to science.

From her understanding of religion as scientific, several important points are worth noting. Penances, in Jainism, are considered important not only for ascetics but for householders too to shed their karmas. However, the possibility of curing leprosy or cancer through fasting, without medicine, poses several questions (Jain 2018).

In a couple’s interview with Rishi Jain (Sthānakvāsi) and Aparna Jain (murtipujak), working in the IT sector and tax auditor in the State of California respectively, (in Sacramento) revealed their life transformation story wherein religion, mantra and medicine played significant roles. Mrs. Jain has been sharing her wisdom about mantra healing through the *Bhaktāmara stotra* by organizing Zoom webinars and events worldwide about the healing technique. Her faith in the BhS became established when she faced a medical emergency in her own house: her husband was diagnosed with Leukemia. She believes that her husband was able to find the right match due to continuous chanting and Bhaktāmara mantra healing, for his bone marrow transplant and recovery after a long battle.

\(^{19}\) A type of fasting in Jainism wherein a person eats boiled food without spices once a day. known as Navapad (nine pious entities) penance. They had to do this for four and half years which results in Nine *Ayambil – Oli* (one every six months).
Mr. Jain considers himself ‘more analytical than religious’; he prefers to see results and facts rather than believing in something superstitiously. When asked about his perception of the scientific religion, he agrees that there is a lot of science behind all the practices in Jainism that we are not aware of. Taking the example of eating before sunset, he explains that at sunset, more bugs come out or there are more bacteria on the food that leads to contamination of food. He further adds, we follow the teachings of Tirthankaras disseminated 1000 years ago, carried forward by scholars, Jain philosophers, and Acharyas that is supported by scientific research on a sustainable lifestyle adapting to a plant-based diet, leading to better outcomes in life. The scientific research, understood by Mr. Rishi and many other respondents, is not restricted to non-Jain lifestyle positions, nominally supported by evidence of an outcome that coincides with Jain values. Rather, it provides an epistemological understanding of long-age tradition in a modern and scientific way.

In my view, Jains have expanded-on their understanding of religion that can be applied in different fields, be it in cosmology, ecology, metaphysics, public health, etc. I term modern Jains of the diaspora community as ‘seekers’ here, as they constantly engage themselves in seeking knowledge of the reality, taking teachings of Jainism and science hand-in-hand. While many Jains are rooted in the idea of mokšamārga (path of liberation), some of them hold a rational view focusing on fulfilling worldly needs first. Even if it’s not rational, but merely taps into the discourse of “rationality” to justify holding a faith position, when actual science would likely lead us to conclude some opposite point (e.g. the idea that there are more bacteria in food eaten after sundown). Mrs. Mallick, about whom I have discussed in detail below believes that
unlike Buddhism and Christianity, Jainism is complex. Buddhism appealed worldwide more to the people because it was simple, Christianity was able to establish a foothold due to missionary groups and the use of simple affirmations like mantras. She feels the need to introduce ‘some other kinds of appeal to a person except promising them a path to liberation. Having a roof overhead, feeding one’s family, earning a good income, and fulfilling all the basic needs are what is required to live a happy life before rushing to attaining liberation. According to her, Jain philosophy or any other doesn’t promise that kind of thing.

The beliefs of diaspora Jains involving scientific progress determine the dependency and congruency between Jainism and science. From the last 2,500 years, people have gradually distanced themselves from this ‘true religion’ (Cort 1990: 53). The Jaina path to liberation (mokṣamārga) is referred to as the true religion. This path can be followed only by a mendicant and involves gradual withdrawal from social interaction, and increasingly severe asceticism to wear away karma, culminating eventually in liberation. A universal and unchanging religion, that eventually emphasizes liberation, offers answers to the world problems universally, and acknowledges the following concerns of educated Jains and non- Jains (Tobias 1993):

(a) personal development through variation in lifestyle: the following vegetarianism and veganism (health, nutrition, etc.), practicing meditation,

(b) sustainable development based on self-restraint by performing various penances (tapas) like fasting,

(c) ethics of nonviolence and peace, and
(d) animal rights and ecology. (Flugel 2012:976)

The above implicit concerns provide primacy to Jain reflexivity of correlating Jain doctrine with scientific advancements. This modernistic view of proponents based on empirical knowledge of Jain religion globally is considered entirely different in comparison to the classical reforms and beliefs in India. This understanding offers a remodeled version of Jainism promoting ethics of non-violence (ahimsā) with the philosophy of many-sidedness (anekāntavāda).

4. 4 Jaina attitudes towards illness and medicine

From the beginning of the medieval period onwards, Jains ventured into the Indian medical literature history as authors and compilers of medical discourses. Medical practice, in pre-modern South Asia, advanced initially among the non-Brāhmaṇical ascetic and monastic communities. As Zysk puts it,

Jainas knew medical theories and practices, but because of the severity of their ascetic discipline, the cultivation and practice of techniques to remove and ease suffering operated essentially as a hindrance to spiritual progress. Hence Jainas did not codify medicine in their monastic tradition (2000:38).

Indeed, Jain texts characterize illness as a result of excess and lack of self-control. In Jainism, different canonical texts mention medical science with regards to the use of medicine by ascetics and laypeople. I will discuss some of them in this section to
confirm the existence of medical science. Out of 14 pūrvas\textsuperscript{21} the twelfth pūrva (extinct), known as Prāṇāvāya is assigned to the science of life. Short discussions of medical science are found in Ācāraṅgasutra\textsuperscript{22}, Pīṇḍa Nījjutti, Bṛhatkalpasūtra, Niśithacurṇī etc. Further, the oeuvre by Samanta Bhadra, Pujiyapāda, Hemacandra, etc., enumerates particular aspects of medical science. In total, there are over 1000 texts in Jain ethical doctrine presented by Jain ascetics and lay practitioners. These texts present normative standards for supporting congruent positions taken by practitioners within the discipline to treat illness with and without the involvement of medicine.

Mahavira is illustrated as the perfect example of self-control of mind and body as he never took any medicine for any ailments. According to Sthānāṅga-sūtra (SthS) (ca. third-fourth century CE), there are 9 causes of illness described that include overeating, eating the wrong kinds of food, staying up too late, sleeping too much, suppressing calls of nature, and sensual excitement. Another canonical text, Ācāraṅga-sūtra, connecting medicine to the idea of violence suggests that Jain communities acknowledging medical practice involve themselves in the violent acts by harming life forms:

Understand what I say. Declaring himself to be a Master of Medicine, he [the doctor] kills, pierces, divides, injures, extinguishes, violates, thinking, “I will do what has not been done before.” This applies also to the one whom he treats. What is the point of

\textsuperscript{21}The term Purva means ancient. 14 Pūrvas consists of teachings (knowledge of the universe) of 24 omniscient beings or Jinas. Purvas were disappeared 1000 years after the liberation of Lord Mahavira and remnants form the parts of philosophy and scriptures in Jainism.

\textsuperscript{22}Ācāraṅgasutra is the first Aṅga (body) of the Svetambara Jain canon (Āgama). This text, translated by Hermann Jacobi (see: Jain Sutras, Part I; Sacred Books of the East) and Acharya Mahapragya discusses the right conduct of Jain monks.
keeping company with ignorant people? He who receives [such cure] is also ignorant.

An ascetic does not [go for such cure]. Thus, I say. (Ācārāṅga-sūtra 1. 94)

All these causes point out towards a state of ignorance by excessive sleeping, avoiding nature calls, and violation of the central vow of ahimsa through overeating, wrong eating, and sensual excitement. The doctor is seen as violent instead of a protector or savior as he undertakes these activities that are violent and promotes himsā. One can prevent illness by obtaining control over senses and passions.

But how does BhS fit into the Jaina understanding of illness and medicine? BhS is considered as a drugless and non-invasive therapy (Jairam and Seth 2019: 48; Jain 2011: 1) Dr. Manju Jain has provided some scientific testimonials supported by medical reports in her book (2011: 13-27) that indicates a change in the size of the tumor, curing of deadly disease like cancer, Parkinson, effective in kidney dialysis, etc. According to recent research conducted by one of her students where Dr. Jain served as a guide, she claims BhS “as a preventive medicine (bulletproof jacket) for COVID-19 and another such type of diseases” (in a letter to her student). However, Dr. Jain and her students fail to provide research accepted by scholars and medical professionals working towards COVID. These claims seem to be rhetorical rather than empirical and are accepted by some Jains in the diaspora community as a method of the preventive tool.

As we discussed in Chapter 3, the hymn is considered to deal with issues from infertility, headaches, migraines, muscular dystrophy, cancer, etc. Dr. Jain and many other Jains like her are staunch believers of BhS healing and thus holds an attitude that BhS has a cure to all the problems of life if chanted with full faith.
4.5 Compatibility of Bhaktāmara Stotra with modern medicine and science

One might come across the repeated use of terms ‘science’ or ‘scientific’ while reading an introductory piece of literature on Jainism. Restating the definition of modernized Jainism by Auckland, that is presenting a rational form of Jainism in concord with other branches of science, discovering and applying the evident knowledge of Jinas in the present times. I derive my definition of medicalization in Jainism using the third appeal given by Auckland that remodels traditional practices as empirical. I argue that the “medicalization” of the BhS influences the ways diaspora Jains understand mantra-based healing practices. By medicalization, I refer to the specialized version of Jainism that is favored by the diaspora Jains due to the association of modern scientific findings with the conventional healing practice of BhS chanting.

I will discuss some mixed responses of Jain practitioners including laity and medical professionals in this section on their understanding of introducing BhS to the field of medical science. My first respondent, Anahita Mallick, a pediatrician, and physiotherapist from New Jersey has been living in the USA for 52 years. She thinks that modern science is truly becoming increasingly aware of its limitations. Modern science so far requires a lot of complementing things such as spirituality for science to be perfect. She asserts that medical science and mantras can go hand in hand but one without the other is handicapped. Having belief is essential whether you lean on mantras or medicine. I interpret her use of the term “handicap” as if one only practices spirituality and no science, that practicing is bad, but all science and no spirituality is equally disastrous. The combination of faith into medicine represents another kind of approach to reconciling Jainism and science, which is to accept that it is faith (or has faith as a constituent part), and is not entirely scientific, as other respondents indicate above.
Although she is a firm believer in Jainism and BhS, also discussed another facet of this practice. She reveals, “suffering is something that people of science do not associate with the bankruptcy of faith. People who think that they have not lived their life according to doctrines, all of a sudden will embrace it and practice the chanting during times of need.” Based on her experience, she says “she has seen people who flock to a guru, group of healers, temple, in their vulnerable times. Some may readily become a believer while others use the hymn and forget about it once the purpose is solved.” It seems to me some Jains reach to a decision of chanting BhS after exhausting all their options, instead of considering the hymn in the first place. During times of crisis, people pick the lowest fruit to satisfy their hunger. This indicates the preference of Jains that is constantly changing in nature and their purpose is to meet short-term ends of life. There is still a huge gap among the proponents of Jainism in accepting this practice and according to Mrs. Mallick, this gap can be reduced by intervention of modern medicine.

Another interviewee, a neuroradiologist in Michigan, disapproves of the idea of the compatibility of BhS with modern science as “modern medicine has not reached that stage yet where it can explain the interaction between the human body and karma and other relationship with the soul.” Though he acknowledges the research being conducted by researchers on the effect of chanting on neurotransmitters in the brain as discussed in chapter 3, he believes there are uncertainties as to whether modern medicine can ever explain how a hymn can help in curing a disease. Being aware of the powers of the hymn, he resorts to his belief of healing mentally, but he does not advocate for the possibility of curing kidney diseases or cancer through a hymn.
Keeping his belief in mind, I asked him if it is possible to demonstrate the effects of mantras? He remarks that mantras do have a synergistic effect. He considers mantra as a mental exercise equally important as physical exercises are to the body. Having a positive approach can help in faster healing and a clear mindset. This underscores the notion of some Jains and especially medical professionals who, while having an acceptance and concord with the hymn do not see any compatibility between BhS and modern medicine due to a lack of possible explanation behind how this practice works. Though most of the diaspora Jains agree to the power of hymn and mantras, some find it difficult to rationalize the process of healing.

A young physician in New Jersey aged 34 years, who was born and brought up in New York, Rahul Mehta, opposed this possibility of explicating the effects of mantras through science. He responds, “I don't know, I have faith, but I'm much more scientific-based so I'm not sure.” He doesn’t foresee any way of measuring the effect, “I am treating disease X with medicine Y for five years, and nothing was happening, and suddenly, overnight, he gets better. So maybe that sense, you can say, the medicine wasn't working earlier, but suddenly it worked”. He further poses a doubt that “It maybe has a relationship with his karma or faith but scientifically this doesn’t seem logical.” Pondering over Dr. Mehta’s views, there is a possibility that faith is suppressed by scientific thinking. It is hard to believe and credits to religion for a change that occurred overnight. Just like karma takes time in its fruition (as discussed above), similarly, the reaction time of medicine also varies.

While Ekta Mehta acknowledges this idea that there is a scope of indulging faith in medical science. But she thinks that there is a lack of awareness in the field of science about the power of the soul residing in the body. Even though body and soul are not one, a soul is responsible for the actions of the body, hence forming karmas. She illustrates
with an example that if a person is ill and there is no improvement because of taking medicines, then during that time the willpower of a person can be increased through the chanting of mantras given by a guru. It can certainly bring some positive change, but medical science can only see what’s outside but finds it difficult to measure the changes as a result of karmic actions caused in the soul. She alludes to the belief that medical science is not equipped with the resources (knowledge of religion/soul) to interpret the changes that occurred as a result of shedding karmas.

Sameer Surana, a civil engineer, staying in the USA for the past 10 years, felt the benefits of mantra chanting during critical times in his life. However, he feels that it is not possible to prove the role of mantras or change that occurred by mantras as science requires evidence. He concludes his point by showing an optimistic view that there will be something good coming up in this field, as a result of modernization. His views refer to the introduction of these alternative praxes of cures and he affirms his point by citing an example of Yoga practice. Earlier it wasn’t popular among the people but in today’s times it is used by a substantial number of individuals as an escape routine to treat their health issues and he identifies BhS as one of the alternative methods too.

As the Jain diaspora community is receptive to new themes and open thinking, the faith in healing through mantras could not be established at a universal level until science investigates the matter. While lay individuals generate a keen sense of faith in the concept of healing through BhS, medical experts find it hard to accept the possibility of curing a disease without the use of medicine.

**Conclusion**

In sum, we see that the dichotomy between modern science and mantras continues to
persist. The chapter identifies various positions discussed by my respondents that include evidence-based approach by science in accepting the role of mantras, suppression of faith by the scientific thinking, discrepancies among science and religion about the awareness of residing in the body that brings us to a conclusion that science is not up to Jainism. Medical professionals find it problematic to a blindfolded agreement to any and every outsider claims. While many of them use the hymn for attaining peace and mental health, BhS’s abilities to cure physical ailments still require several pieces of evidence to acquire its place in modern science. In my observation based on the interviews, many Jains in the diaspora choose to take mid-way as summed up by Dr. Mallick “one is handicapped without the other.” The Jaina understanding of using BhS as an instrument of healing cannot be solely derived from the experiences of some practitioners and their claims, instead, a need for numerous extensive scientific research may lead to some success. According to my respondents who experienced the effects of chanting on their own believes that there is a pathway that could be incorporated where modern medicine and BhS can work simultaneously to expedite the healing process but a group of modern Jains that including doctors and young Jains in their early 30s and 40s find the possibility to be uncertain.
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