



# The Empires of the Near East and India

SOURCE STUDIES OF THE SAFAVID, OTTOMAN, AND MUGHAL LITERATE COMMUNITIES

Edited by Hani Khafipour



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Cover image: Illuminated frontispiece to Farid al-Din 'Attar's *Mantiq al-tair*  
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*Dedicated to the silent multitudes in the annals of history, to those who were  
bereft of their humanity by the folly and greed of empire builders: the slaves, the  
disabled, farmers, craftsmen, and women whose unrecorded thoughts and action  
made learning and the production of knowledge possible.*

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Four languages are represented in this volume: Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. The translations are rendered into English using contemporary grammar and syntax. Effort has been made to remain as close as possible to the original language; however, where literal translation would have made the passage incomprehensible, approximation has been adopted.

Finding a single transliteration system for a large project that encompasses four languages and several academic fields proved difficult. The system adopted by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES) without macrons and diacritics was embraced for its simplicity and widespread use in various fields of area studies. The borrowed Arabic terms into Persian and Turkish are transliterated based on their common written form in the host languages, thereby retaining the linguistic variations and demonstrating the diversity, as well as the shared textual and oral traditions, of the literate communities. For example, for the Ottoman sources, variations such as the Arabic *madrassa* and the Turkish *medrese*, shaykh al-Islam and şeyhülislam, Muhammad and Mehmet, and so on have been maintained in accordance with IJMES's guideline to "either transliterate or use the modern Turkish orthography."

Dates are rendered into Gregorian unless shown otherwise in places in which it was vital to retain the Hijri date, such as in image captions, chronograms, seals, and calculations seen in the occult sciences chapters. In such special cases, both dates are provided.

Bibliographic citations are in accordance with the *Chicago Manual of Style*, seventeenth edition. The bibliography includes both the works cited in the essays as well as the translated sources. The books and articles listed in each chapter's "Further Reading" section are omitted from the volume's bibliographies unless the works are also cited in the essay.

### IJMES TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM FOR ARABIC, PERSIAN, AND TURKISH

#### CONSONANTS

A = Arabic, P = Persian, OT = Ottoman Turkish, MT = Modern Turkish

	A	P	OT	MT		A	P	OT	MT		A	P	OT	MT
ء	—	—	—	—	ز	z	z	z	z	ك	k	k or g	k or ñ	k or n
ب	b	b	b	b or p	ژ	—	zh	j	j				ory	ory
پ	—	p	p	p	س	s	s	s	s				or ğ	or ğ
ت	t	t	t	t	ش	sh	sh	ş	ş	گ	—	g	g	g
ث	th	ṯ	ṯ	s	ص	ṣ	ṣ	ş	s	ل	l	l	l	l
ج	j	j	c	c	ض	ḍ	ḍ	z	z	م	m	m	m	m
ح	—	ch	ç	ç	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	t	ن	n	n	n	n
خ	kh	kh	h	h	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	z	ه	h	h	h <sup>1</sup>	h <sup>1</sup>
د	d	d	d	d	ع	ʿ	ʿ	ʿ	—	و	w	v or u	v	v
ذ	dh	z	z	z	غ	gh	gh	g or ğ	g or ğ	ي	y	y	y	y
ر	r	r	r	r	ف	f	f	f	f	ة	a <sup>2</sup>			
					ق	q	q	ķ	k	ال	a <sup>3</sup>			

<sup>1</sup> When h is not final. <sup>2</sup> In construct state; at. <sup>3</sup> For the article, al- and -l-.

#### VOWELS

	ARABIC AND PERSIAN	OTTOMAN AND MODERN TURKISH
Long	ا or آ ā	ā
	و ū	ū
	ي ī	ī
} words of Arabic and Persian origin only		
Doubled	ئِـئِـ iyy (final form ī)	iy (final form ī)
	ئِـئِـ uww (final form ū)	uvv
Diphthongs	اَؤْ au or aw	ev
	اِئِـ ai or ay	ey
Short	ا a	a or e
	و u	u or ü / o or ö
	ي i	i or i

For Ottoman Turkish, authors may either transliterate or use the modern Turkish orthography.

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- Önkal, "Müseylimetülkezzâb," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, <http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/dia/pdf/c32/c320069.pdf>.
18. The lands under the rule of non-Muslims. For more information about *dar al-harb*, see Ahmet Özel, "Dârülharb," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, <http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/dia/pdf/co8/co80389.pdf>.
19. Yazid b. Mu'awiya (d. 683) was the second Umayyad caliph. As he was the caliph and allegedly gave the orders at the time when Husayn b. Ali (d. 680) was executed, Shi'is had a special hatred for Yazid.
20. The difference in the opinions about giving damnation to Mu'awiya and Yazid probably results from the fact that the former was a companion of the Prophet and the latter was not. In Sunni understanding, all companions of the Prophet are above all criticism; insulting any of them must be punished.

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## III. A Mughal Debate About Jain Asceticism

AUDREY TRUSCHKE

Mughal ruling elites frequently hosted debates between representatives of different religious communities. Most well-known are the discussions initiated under the auspices of Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) in the 'Ibadat-khana, the house of religious debate, in the 1570s. Although the 'Ibadat-khana has been widely cited in modern scholarship, it remains a poorly understood institution.<sup>1</sup> Scholars remain uncertain about even the basic details of the 'Ibadat-khana, such as its physical location, and, more important, have mistakenly considered the 'Ibadat-khana coterminous with all Mughal-sponsored religious discussions. On the contrary, many imperially directed debates concerning religious matters took place in other arenas. Some debates featured different Muslim groups. Others also included members of other traditions, such as Hindus, Jains, and European Christians. There is no single record of these religious and theological exchanges, but individual discussions are recorded in Mughal chronicles and other Persian-language texts, some authored by visitors to the Mughal court.<sup>2</sup> In addition to Persian sources, Sanskrit texts offer a wealth of information in this regard. In particular, a cache of Sanskrit works that date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries record numerous religious discussions held at the central Mughal court that featured Jains, a religious minority group in India. Here I translate a religious debate described in one of these works between Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–1627) and Siddhicandra, a Jain monk well known to both Akbar and Jahangir, about the appropriateness of Jain ascetic practices.

Sanskrit works on the Mughals that were authored by Jain intellectuals are little known in modern scholarship but constitute a formidable body of materials and

contain extensive historical information about the courts of Akbar and Jahangir. Six such texts were penned between 1589 and 1653 that add substantial depth to our understanding of Mughal court culture.<sup>3</sup> These works chronicled many events at the imperial court and especially focused on relations between Jain religious leaders and the ruling elite. None of these Sanskrit works have been translated into English, and few Mughal historians know Sanskrit. Thus it is unsurprising that these rich texts have been largely ignored to date in modern scholarly treatments of the Mughals. Sanskrit works on the Mughals also suffer from the widespread assumption that Sanskrit writers were not historically minded, and so (the logic goes) we cannot trust their narrations of real world events in the same way that we can rely upon the veracity of Persian-language court chronicles. Contrary to this misleading assumption, the general outline of much of what is discussed in Jain-authored Sanskrit texts concerning imperial events is confirmed by Mughal court chronicles and other historical materials, including inscriptions and European travelogues. The details of many specific episodes need to be understood within a literary framework, as I discuss below.

Mughal religious discussions with Jain ascetics occurred in the wider context of Jain relations with the imperial court. Jain monks first entered the royal court in the 1560s, early in Akbar's reign. These Jains were largely monks from Gujarat and were members of the Shvetambara branch of Jainism (and, within that, primarily of two major sects, the Tapa Gaccha and the Kharatara Gaccha). From the 1580s to the 1610s, Jain monks enjoyed a continuous presence at the courts of Akbar and Jahangir.<sup>4</sup> Jain ascetics served in a wide variety of capacities in the imperial milieu, including acting as companions to the kings, informants for a wide range of Sanskrit knowledge systems, and participants in religious debates. Both emperors at times exhibited behavior informed by their Jain interlocutors. Akbar reportedly ordered a Jain religious ceremony performed to counteract a curse on Jahangir's daughter who was born under ill-fated stars.<sup>5</sup> Jahangir once swore a vow of nonviolence, in part, under Jain encouragement.<sup>6</sup> Akbar and Jahangir also both took an active interest in Jain religious hierarchies and occasionally sought to interfere in this realm. For example, Akbar raised the internal ranks of specific Jain leaders. The debate translated below narrates an instance in which Jahangir sought to alter Jain renunciation practices.

The debate between Jahangir and Siddhicandra about Jain asceticism occurs at the end of a text penned by Siddhicandra himself, titled *Bhanucandraganicarita* (Acts of Bhanucandra). Siddhicandra wrote the *Acts of Bhanucandra* primarily to chronicle relations between his teacher, Bhanucandra, and Emperor Akbar. He proclaimed in the second verse of the work: "Bhanucandra, the protector of sages, gained fame and good fortune by enlightening glorious Shah Akbar, the best of men. The Jain teaching flourished as a result, and so let this part of Bhanucandra's story be heard in full detail."<sup>7</sup> The work contains four chapters, the final of which continues for several years after Akbar's death in 1605. The debate translated here occurs at the end of the final chapter and, in addition to Siddhicandra and Jahangir,

also features Bhanucandra and a cameo appearance by Nur Jahan. The discussion centered around the question of whether Siddhicandra was justified in renouncing sex, wealth, and material comforts at such a young age (he was in his twenties). The debate also engages with the extent of Mughal royal authority, and Siddhicandra was ultimately condemned for daring to disobey Jahangir's royal order to take a wife and accept an appointment within the Mughal administration. The debate concluded when Jahangir, tired of arguing, issued an imperial order (*farman*) exiling Siddhicandra and all other Jain ascetics from populated centers across the Mughal polity. The final verses of the *Bhanucandraganicarita* celebrate that Jahangir soon rescinded this order and Jains once again moved freely across the Mughal Empire.

Although Siddhicandra ended his tale on a positive note, the final cessation of Mughal relations with Jain ascetics would occur only a few years later. Jahangir issued another proclamation exiling Jains shortly after withdrawing his initial ban. This second ban also did not remain in place for long, but it seems that Jain monks were not able to recover their status at Jahangir's court.<sup>8</sup> Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb had no known ongoing relations with Jain religious leaders, although both had dealings with Gujarati-based Jain merchants.<sup>9</sup> Thus the debate about asceticism marked the beginning of the end of relations between the Mughal kings and Jain monks, although Siddhicandra does not overtly acknowledge this in his narrative.

This debate serves several purposes in the *Acts of Bhanucandra*. In large part, it was an opportunity for Siddhicandra to defend the virtues of Jain monks who engaged with worldly courts. Links between monks and courts had long been a source of anxiety within the Jain tradition. Many Jain monks worried about both the reality and the perception that laxity could occur among renunciants who spent time enmeshed in the material comforts of court life.<sup>10</sup> In this debate, Siddhicandra refused to be swayed toward rescinding his vows, despite staggering consequences for himself and all other Jain monks within Mughal domains. At the end of the episode, he even added a positive gloss to the affair by noting that Jahangir's temporary exile afforded him the opportunity to work off some bad karma.<sup>11</sup> The debate and the resulting temporary exile thus showed the strength of Jain convictions and ultimately justified decades of royal relations as acceptable and even beneficial for Jain religious leaders.

The episode also serves as a coda for Siddhicandra's narrative of Jain-Mughal relations, largely through the prism of Bhanucandra's life. We are uncertain of the exact composition date of the *Acts of Bhanucandra*, but it was likely penned c. 1620, when imperial relations with Jain monks had ceased. Accordingly, the work was unlikely to be instructional for Jain readers who might have wished to forge future ties with the Mughal ruling elite. But it was nonetheless an important account of more than thirty years of imperial connections with Jain religious leaders. In this sense, the identity of Siddhicandra, the author, is pertinent. Siddhicandra had spent much of his youth at the Mughal court and so perhaps penned this work, in part, to make sense of a formative aspect of his own life, especially his dual location within a luxurious court and a strict ascetic tradition.



Last, the debate features a critical discussion of Jain religious ideas. Both Siddhicandra and Jahangir engage with Jain philosophical concepts and deploy arguments that are time-honored and convincing from a Jain perspective in support of their respective positions. As I have argued elsewhere, Jains in Mughal India found the imperial elite to be readily available and thoughtful interlocutors regarding a consideration of Jain religious precepts.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, Jain readers probably took quite seriously the challenges posed to their religious practices in a Mughal courtly environment and their own responses.

Modern readers ought to take this debate as recorded by Siddhicandra as true in its occurrence and overall arc. Significant evidence in the form of texts and inscriptions from multiple sources and languages confirm the veracity of the event and the subsequent exile of Jain monks.<sup>13</sup> Persian sources mention nothing about this specific debate between Jahangir and Siddhicandra, but Mughal histories discuss Jain celibacy, and so there is a precedent for Jahangir's interest in the topic.<sup>14</sup> In addition, Siddhicandra's teacher, Bhanucandra, who appears in this episode, is listed along with two other Jain monks among the learned men of the age in the *Akbarnama*,<sup>15</sup> and thus the imperial record confirms the appearance of specific Jain monks at court.

Nonetheless, in strict historical terms, Siddhicandra's narrative is probably inaccurate in some of its details. For example, Siddhicandra represents this debate as occurring entirely in Sanskrit (except for one verse in Hindavi, Old Hindi), whereas it certainly took place either in Persian or a form of Old Hindi. Siddhicandra was fluent in Persian, by his own admission,<sup>16</sup> and Hindavi was a common spoken language at the imperial court. In contrast, we have no evidence that Jahangir (much less Nur Jahan) could converse in Sanskrit. Also, the framework of the discussion rests on shaky historical grounds at certain points. Perhaps most obviously, Nur Jahan appears in the audience hall and participates in the conversation. Her involvement is rhetorically powerful given Jahangir's emphasis on the virtues of marriage but flies in the face of scholarly consensus regarding Mughal purdah norms.<sup>17</sup>

Despite such imprecisions, we cannot responsibly take the poetic liberty to reimagine the past that is deployed by Siddhicandra as evidence that his *Bhanucandraganicarita* is totally unreliable. We must find other, more nuanced ways to understand this source, which offers both a compelling record of previously unknown imperial events and a unique, literary view of Mughal imperial dynamics. Below I offer some specific ideas about how the literary aspects of Siddhicandra's narrative add to our understanding of Mughal India. In addition, we ought to recognize that texts in early modern India, including Mughal imperial chronicles, were often reformulated to express timeless truths rather than banal historical accuracy. In this sense, we should pause before condemning the *Acts of Bhanucandra* as fiction. For Siddhicandra and his Mughal interlocutors, this narrative captures truth in its most important form.

For moderns, too, the debate about Jain asceticism is all the richer for its literary elements, which communicate a great deal about popular perceptions of the

Mughals and how early modern thinkers chose to write about the Mughals in Sanskrit. Siddhicandra draws upon both Persianate and Sanskrit traditions to describe Jahangir. In this episode, he refers to Jahangir as a king using a range of vocabulary, including pure Sanskrit words (for example, *maharaja*, *ksitipa*) and also Sanskritized Persian terms (for example, *shaha* from *shah*, *sutratrana* from *sultan*). The work also invokes the emperor's ruling title Jahangir (*jahangira*) and the term *sphuramana* (royal order), which has the double meaning of *farman* (in Persian) and "a thing which goes forth" (in Sanskrit). At times, especially in the second half of the debate, Siddhicandra depicts Jahangir as a skillful philosopher and more in line with Jain thinking than Siddhicandra. The king deftly deploys the Jain concept of relativism or multiple viewpoints (*syadvada*), for example. And as the narrator of the episode, Siddhicandra lauds his opponent who "grasped Jain philosophy." However, Jahangir also appears as a hopeless drunkard and oversexed earlier in the exchange. The debate ends when the king abandons logic and resorts to violence, ordering an elephant to crush the obstinate Siddhicandra.

Much of the episode takes place within a squarely Jain context. The broad social setting is, of course, Jahangir's royal court, but the content of the debate concerns Jain ideas, Jain practices, and largely Jain-focused arguments on both sides. Even when Jahangir brings up arguably non-Jain perspectives, these were of concern within the tradition. For example, he mentions God at one point. A single, all-powerful deity would strike many modern Jains as incompatible with their religion, but Jain monks at the Mughal court argued quite vehemently for their status as monotheists.<sup>18</sup> The emphasis on Jain concerns probably reflects Siddhicandra's expected Jain audience for his text. Nonetheless, there are moments when Siddhicandra admits the relevance, even the necessity, of a Perso-Islamic perspective. Perhaps most notably, in response to a specific challenge from Nur Jahan, Siddhicandra cites as a precedent for his youthful renunciation the story of Ibrahim ibn Adham of Balkh, who disavowed all worldly possessions, including his crown, as a young man. Moreover, Siddhicandra introduces this Islamic example with the sole Hindavi verse in the entire *Bhanucandraganicarita*. The invocation of a story known to the Mughal elite in a language understood at court signals the decisive role of Mughal royal authority in this imperial debate.

This episode ultimately glorified Siddhicandra and justified his commitment to asceticism, but perhaps not as strongly as Siddhicandra intended. Even in the face of disastrous consequences, Siddhicandra refused to counteract his vows. In the end, his rightness in doing so was even recognized by Jahangir, who warmly welcomed him back to court after a short period of exile. Nonetheless, the well-worded objections of Jahangir and the political peril of this debate continue to percolate in the reader's mind. In particular, the king's exiling *farman* articulates an influential, time-honored position among many Jains, namely: monks belong in the forest rather than at court. Moreover, presumably most early modern readers knew the final end to this story, that is, the cessation of relations between Jain religious leaders and the Mughal rulers following Jahangir's second exile of Jain monks. Given

this conclusion, it is far from clear that Jain ascetic vows are compatible with the expectations of Mughal courtly life.

For moderns, there are multiple values to reading this episode and the *Acts of Bhanucandra* overall. This is an almost entirely untouched historical source that narrates previously unknown events at the Mughal court. This particular debate provides insight into how Mughal elites engaged with the practices of other religious traditions, especially those perceived as in conflict with imperial wishes. In addition, Siddhicandra revealed much about Jain concerns with how monks operated in a Mughal political space and provided an alternative view of the Mughals, one that comes from a non-Muslim perspective. This episode contains much hard historical truth, but it also offers many literary and religious insights that are grounded in creative rather than factual details. Historians still often need to be reminded that perceptions of the past are no less important than the truth of the past and arguably far more interesting. Accordingly, modern scholars should value Siddhicandra's historical narrative for both its historicity and its literary narration. Ultimately, Mughal historians might take up the broader challenge of the *Acts of Bhanucandra* and think anew about early modern conceptions of truth as not being confined to the historical realm but as equally important in literary terms.<sup>19</sup>

### TRANSLATION

One time Jahangir, lord of the earth, was nearly overcome with unbridled affection and said to the most excellent teacher Bhanucandra: "Siddhicandra is unique, kind, beautiful, and virtuous. Let him spend some time with me every day." Upon hearing Siddhicandra's teachings, the king's hair stood on end with joy. He served at Siddhicandra's feet like a bee attracted to a lotus. So much time passed thus under Siddhicandra's instruction that the monk's chain of virtues spread across the four directions. The king's mind held fast to him with unbreakable love such that he even neglected his royal elephants. Due to excessive affection, Siddhicandra was also unable to tear his thoughts away from the king, like an elephant sunk deep in mud.

One time across the entire earth the sky was whitened by moon's rays that were like the waves of the flowing Ganges.<sup>20</sup>

*When the moon rose, it was as if all mountains became as white as Mount Kailash, trees seemed like white umbrellas, a lump of clay appeared as cream, the ocean became like pure milk, creepers seemed like pearl necklaces, fruits were like conch shells, and people of all nations looked like those from the white island.<sup>21</sup>*

*Innocent cow herders put down their pots, thinking that the cows are giving milk.*

*Young women likewise tuck blue water lilies behind their ears, taking them to be white lotuses that blossom under the moon.*

*A forest woman collects jujube fruits that she mistakes for pearls.*

*For whom does thick moonlight not cause confusion?<sup>22</sup>*

*On a pavilion women grasp around with the hope of gaining a pearl necklace.*

*In the cow pen cow herders try to churn the milk that appears to be gathered in pots.*

*Gardeners desiring flowers attempt to gather up the moonlight as if it were jasmine.*

*Who is not perplexed by looking at the luminescent rays of the confusion-inducing moon?*

*A cat licks the moon rays as they hit a bowl, thinking them milk.*

*An elephant, seeing them through the trees, takes them as lotus stalks.*

*At the end of lovemaking a woman draws them from her bed, believing them to be her clothes.*

*Look! The bright moon has confounded this world.<sup>23</sup>*

*Bees, who are usually enchanted by the smell of flowers, become confused and wander around unable to identify white water lilies.*

*See how pairs of swans, even though they are close companions, look up.*

*Even mad elephants, who have freed their mutual hostility out of desire, slowly begin to doubt a female elephant that has been touched by the rays.*

*An elephant touches its trunk to its tusk, which drowns in the net of moonlight.*

*Nearly blinded, a Chamara deer apprehensively wraps its white tail around its stalk-like neck.*

*A swan tearfully laments upon looking at her offspring that seem like jewels.*

*How can I describe even the milk ocean and the Himalayas? Both are surpassed by the moon.*

*Have heaven and earth been anointed with camphor? Have they been smeared with sandalwood paste?*

*Have they been purified with mercury? Have they been rubbed with crystal?*

*Such doubts arise when the full moon is out, which refreshes white lotuses, teaches the vows of erotic love,*

*is a mirror for young women everywhere, and is a friend to Chakora birds.<sup>24</sup>*

At that time, while Siddhicandra was lecturing about some of the best saints, the king's mind wandered elsewhere for a bit, and he said: "You, who are attached to Parabrahma—how many years have elapsed since your birth?" Siddhicandra replied: "Twenty-five." Then it dawned on the glorious shah that Siddhicandra's problem was similar to that of a male cuckoo bird cooing on a mango tree within a forest of religious practice. Jahangir said,

You possess signs that you are fit to be an earthly king. O friend, you are resplendent with the radiating beauty of youth. Given that your age is suited for pursuing fiery young women, why do you abandon sensual pleasures and give yourself to austerities?

Under the guise of a gleaming smile, the sage replied firmly with a voice resounding like a drum,

Good people do not ridicule initiation at a young age. For the wise do not hesitate to begin drinking nectar. Which is better suited to austerities: youth or old age? Death lurks everywhere for living beings. O raja, there is no vigor in old age, and without vigor how are there austerities? A mendicant knows the delusion in such ideas. Under the guise of grey hair the mind mocks a man who undertakes difficult activities in old age. Austerity, like the blade of a sword, annihilates the formidable enemy of sin from prior lives and this existence. Serious people respect this. Like the sun, austerities reveal truth and falseness and give clarity to good people, rescuing them from the lull of darkness.

King Jahangir, his eyes rolling about on account of alcohol, erupted at him with a roar:

In the prime of youth, which is the domain of God of Love, how do you keep your mind from wandering?

Siddhicandra replied,

I keep my mind firm through knowledge and also protect it with other things, just as you draw an elephant with a hook.

Then the emperor said,

Without such knowledge, how can I properly understand what you have said?

Siddhicandra responded,

Knowledge is not relevant in this matter. Just as Brahmans have turned their minds away from the luxuries that you enjoy, likewise I, who have never tasted such flavors, have rejected worldly pleasures since birth. People know that a wife who follows her dead husband into

the fire and immolates herself is mentally detached from her relations. It is likewise for the minds of ascetics who are absorbed in contemplating Parabrahma and immersed in an ocean of tranquility. Those fish in a sea of happiness cannot be derailed by kings or emperors. They walk a pure path and strive to acquire virtues. They serve the needs of others and are abundant in meritorious acts. They lack greed but happily take vows. Those ascetics are their own lords, independent even of the gods. Their minds are detached from worldly pleasures, and people can infer that they have virtues such as extreme nonattachment.

When he was spoken to thus, the king stood there for a long time, pondering the speech's import, drowning in ecstasy, and with the hair of his handsome body standing on end.

*Like a beloved of the God of Love who shoots flower-arrows under a blossoming tree,  
like a Lakshmi from the ocean, which is full of jewels that are lustrous  
good fortune,  
is your most beloved, primary queen, Nur Mahal.<sup>25</sup>  
It is as if the smile on her moon-like face cannot be outdone, not even by  
light.*

*She was radiant, her fingers like delicate buds and adorned with flowers  
for fingernails.  
Her pair of creeper-like arms were served by the king's eyes, as if by black  
bees.  
She had a girdle around her low slung hips.  
Due to excessive sadness, her waist had grown thin.  
Her locks of black hair shone in all directions,  
like a night that follows her face according to movement of the moon.  
Her face is fanned by the entire world with chowries that are lovely eyes.  
Her queen of faces possesses a stalk-like neck.  
Her mouth can be compared to a lute that makes sweet sounds.  
Her straight teeth glittered like pearls in her mouth.  
Although her feet are lotuses, the swan does not serve them  
because the swan is put to shame by her graceful gait.  
Among all her limbs, this alone is a great flaw:  
No seeing person has had such pleasure for centuries.  
In the harem, the king's mind took pleasure in her.  
Even when lakhs of constellations were visible, his eye is drawn to that  
moon-like beauty.*

Then the beloved wife of the emperor said,

Wherever there is youth, speech that reflects soundness of mind is impossible.

Having heard her words, an emboldened Siddhicandra responded,

It was not so for the king of Balkh, who conquered his senses as a young man. Thus they say [in Hindavi<sup>26</sup>]: "He gave up 16,000 palaces, eighteen lakh horses, and the city of Balkh for the sake of his Lord."<sup>27</sup> There is no distinguishing quality whatsoever either in youth or the absence thereof. One could have soundness of mind exclusively from the power of merit accumulated in a prior life, whereas some mendicants have absolutely no mental soundness from childhood. Similarly, mosquitoes fly through the air, but elephants do not. Many older people are obsessed with material objects. Therefore, age is not the cause of mental stability.

Nur Mahal, puffed up with pride, answered him sharply,

But ascetic practices are celebrated at the end, for people who have had their fill of sensual pleasures. Only people who have enjoyed all types of sensual delights should renounce them. They are proper renunciators, unlike those who have not even tasted such pleasures. Those ascetics who have not even sampled worldly enjoyments are best called wild beasts because they do not know truth from falsity. Men who always enjoy a particular thing come to loath it. Is it no different for someone who partakes of worldly pleasures in regard to such joys. The mind mostly pursues unseen objects. Accordingly, the mind of a man who has denied himself sensual gratifications will long for them alone.

Siddhicandra replied with a sweet, respectful, and firm speech,

The exact opposite of what you profess happens these days. In the Age of Perfection and other virtuous times, men who had enjoyed sensual pleasures became renunciators. But in the Age of Destruction, renunciators often themselves partake in worldly delights. In the Age of Perfection people went to dwell in the forest even before their hair turned gray. But for people born in the current Age of Destruction, even when their entire body has gone gray, they still cling to earthly pleasures. These days young people stick to their ascetic vows, but the old break the vows they have taken.

Then glorious Jahangir responded,

I have heard everything you have said, and it is all reasonable. However, you should not be following the path of a sage at this time. Your body appears as fresh and fragrant as the buds of a Champaka tree. Is it acceptable to throw a fire made of chaff on a jasmine bud or to split a lotus stalk with a saw? Would it be desirable to bind leather straps onto a silk dress or to throw soot in one's eyes? Would it be good to violently hammer a glass jug? Would the wise approve of thrusting swords into the center of a plantain tree? Young man! Why do you want to bring sorrows such as plucking out hair by the root on your body, which is as delicate as the stem of a shirisha flower?<sup>28</sup> Of the four stages of life, being a householder is the best, because others depend on you for support. You are like an ocean surrounded by rivers. Thus be like my son, marry, and enjoy my ocean of good fortune.

Everybody knows that the essence of this existence is found with fawn-eyed women. Therefore, take a wife as I wish and your life will find fruit in the acquisition of sons. For even villagers revile a tree that does not bear fruit. Begging for food is said to be inferior even to a piece of straw. Are you not ashamed of doing something so unworthy? Your beauty, truth, and constant learning shine in all directions. But these virtues are all cancelled out by your insistence of walking on foot.<sup>29</sup> All that is made by the Creator is for our enjoyment. Pursuing that object, we become happy above all. You are full of sorrow in this world. And you will also be full of sorrow in the next world because you are intent on transgressing the path prescribed by God.<sup>30</sup>

Having heard the sultan's well-reasoned argument, Siddhicandra promptly gave a bold reply,

All that has been laid out by the king is true and good. It would stir the heart of an impassioned man but never the heart of a renouncer.

Hearing the response of this wise man, the king issued a rejoinder that would astonish even great scholars,

Only the minds of men adjudicate between virtue and vice. Without the mind, there is no shirking of duty. Even if something is a sin here, it is to be repelled with good intentions, just as leanness caused by fasting is to be curbed by eating wholesome food. There are rules and exceptions in the duty (*dharma*) of ascetics, and both are to be remembered by all. Therefore it is foolish for everybody to grasp a single viewpoint. The truth of multiple viewpoints (*syadvada*) is to be understood in all things by those who speak of relativism (*syadvada*). For them, endorsing a single view would be called falsity.<sup>31</sup> O wise one, having abandoned your obstinacy and consenting to my speech, enjoy pleasures as you wish. What wise man would err in his own advice?

After hearing this judicious speech of the shah, who grasped Jain philosophy, Siddhicandra fearlessly replied thinking only of his own obligations,

This advice is fine for a timid man, but a man of conviction does not transgress his obligations one iota, not even with his last breath. After even the smallest transgression, righteousness is eviscerated. Otherwise, how could a tiny thorn render a man lame? A desire for which some purifying act will probably have to be done should be avoided from the start. It is best not to touch mud because you will need to wash it away later. Exceptions are only meant for those who lack the will to walk the path of precepts. But for the strong, there is an exception only for exceptions! Those who have mastered their minds do not adopt multiple viewpoints (*syadvada*) regarding sin. Even those who espouse the theory of relativism (*syadvada*) do not claim its absolute truth. In previous lives I had wives and children. But there was no righteousness in those lives. Therefore, why should I renounce righteousness for such things? All people cherish life, as do I. But I would let life go without hesitation before violating the obligations I have chosen, even a hair.

Then the ministers and others at court began to murmur, saying things such as,

Damn this man's foul stubbornness! Although wise he has brought about grave misfortune for the sake of a trifling matter and become his own worst enemy.

But Siddhicandra stood strong, unperturbed, and paid these remarks no mind. King Jahangir spoke in fury,

Do you dare to show me contempt! Do you not know my power? When angered, I am the God of Death before your eyes, but when happy I am a wishing tree of paradise. Now you will reap what you have sown with your poisonous obstinacy!

Having spoken thus the king, appearing like the God of Death himself, ordered a vicious, malicious elephant to be brought in. The elephant was mad. Like a dark, shining mass, it rained down sheets of fluid. It bared its tusks, appearing like a dark storm cloud with flashes of lightning shining forth. It seemed the totality of the sky, the width of the Vindhya mountain range, and like the teacher of cruelty even for the God of Death. The elephant roared, showing its upturned tusks and conquering all directions. With thrashing limbs it destroyed even the name of everything that is visible. It was a powerful river tearing apart, one by one, turrets on the city walls and tents. As if full of a great violent turn, it raised up from afar. Then, the elephant, its fame sung by bees that were greedy for its rutting juice, was led in by its drivers as commanded. Fearing that mad elephant, other elephants uprooted tree trunks in pride and then dropped them on their roots and rashly ran away. Fleeing horses ran out of breath and attacked each other, rising up in anger to block the road. Even animals do not usually injure those who have fallen in plain sight, and heroes retreat when the weapons have fallen from their hands.

The king said,

Accept the life of a householder and enjoy sensual pleasures with lovely women. Consent to ruling over some land and gain horses and elephants. Obey my command fully, otherwise I will send you as a guest to the God of Death.

Having heard this, Siddhicandra spoke,

This suffering will be difficult. But it will be only for my benefit in accordance with the obligations of duty.

The king angrily responded,

This fool will not come to his senses without harsh attacks and excessive force. Now see the results of your foolish stubbornness!

He then unleashed the fierce elephant that appeared like a large, dark, inauspicious cloud thundering at the end of the age. That raging beast, whom the entire world heard with sounds that filled the sky, seemed as if he would shatter the very directions. Then, having seen that Siddhicandra was undisturbed, the king was astonished and ordered exile to the forest instead of death for disobeying his order. Fearless, Siddhicandra accepted this and left. The glorious shah issued an imperial order to be sent forth everywhere that,

Other renunciants that wander my kingdom are to dwell in the forest because the forest alone is an appropriate residence for ascetics who are free of desires.

The shah, having positively judged the best of expositors, Bhanucandra, who possessed good fortune and countless virtues, kept him at court. Meanwhile Siddhicandra, demonstrating the pure seeds of enlightenment for good people, arrived at the great town of Malpur. According to the request of the local congregation and the entreaties of their leader, Siddhicandra passed the monsoon season there without incident.

One day the glorious sultan was seated in court, feeling joyful. He noticed that Bhanucandra was visibly distressed, as he often was. He called him to come close and inquired affectionately, "What is the cause of this great sorrow that I now see in you, glorious one?" Bhanucandra replied,

By reason of worldly existence, my sorrow is due to the ultimate cause. Nothing else could effect those who are free of desires, feel no attachment, and renounce the world. Nonetheless, O maharaj, I am oppressed now by being separated from my star student who is far away.

Having heard Bhanucandra's words and having remembered Siddhicandra's stubbornness in his own practices, the king thought to himself, "Damn me! Under the sway of confusion I failed to honor his doctrines. Like an owl I had no desire for the sun and instead was a friend to darkness." Dejected by his own error and despondent, but clear-sighted, he issued an imperial order to go forth calling for the return of Siddhicandra. Having received that order, which was like a happy ending for him, Siddhicandra set out from Malpur with the vigor of birds. He entered Agra on foot, accompanied by all sorts of grand festivities. Siddhicandra's fame reached every corner of the earth.

One auspicious day Siddhicandra visited the king. Having seen Siddhicandra, the king lavished praises on him, saying,

You are blessed among the blessed, praiseworthy among those highly praised. In the entire world, who is your equal? You are the single crown jewel of goodness. You are honored among the honored. There is nobody else like you in the world. You have not faltered in your

duty, not at all! O angerless one, forgive my bad action, because among the entire earth, you alone, good one, are virtuous.

Siddhicandra, who had attained fame, spoke to the repentant king with illuminating words that were like moonlight shimmering in the ocean of wisdom,

But you committed no sin, fortunate one! Rather you did me a favor. I was able to destroy bad *karma* on account of your invaluable assistance. If you committed any sin on my account, then please forgive me for causing bad *karma* to accrue to you.

The emperor, overcome by goose bumps and his eyes welling with tears of joy, repeatedly entreated Siddhicandra, "Tell me what to do, and I will act at once!" Hearing the words of the king, Siddhicandra quickly replied,

Let all the sages that were previously exiled from imperial lands return. Let them be pleased and teach as we wish, like before.

Having heard that speech, the king said, "Let it be as you wish." He then had a written order drawn up and sent. In every village and town, as before, holy men were welcomed by the faithful with grand festivities.

## NOTES

1. For overviews of the 'Ibadat-khana, see Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign, with Special Reference to Abu'l Fazl*, 1556–1605 (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975), 104–40; Syed Ali Nadeem Rezavi, "Religious Disputations and Imperial Ideology: The Purpose and Location of Akbar's *Ibadatkhana*," *Studies in History* 24, no. 2 (2008): 195–209.
2. A relatively recently discovered and still little utilized work that discusses several religious discussions under Jahangir is the *Majalis-i Jahangiri*. 'Abd al-Sattar ibn Qasim Lahawri, *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, ed. 'Arif Nawshahi and Mu'in Nizami (Tehran: Miras-i Maktub, 2006).
3. In chronological order: Padmasagara, *Jagadgurukavya*, eds. Hargovinddas and Becardas (Benares: Harakhchand Bhurabhai, 1910), dated 1589; Jayasoma, *Mantrikarmacandramshavaliprabandha* with the commentary of Gunavinaya, ed. Acharya Muni Jinavijaya (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1980), dated 1594; Devavimala, *Hirasaubhagya of Devavimalagani with his own gloss*, ed. Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Sivadatta and Kashinath Pandurang Parab (Bombay: Tukaram Javaji, 1900), c. early seventeenth century; Siddhicandra, *Bhanucandraganicarita*, ed. Mohanlal Dalichand Desai (Ahmedabad-Calcutta: Sanchalaka Singhi Jain Granthamala, 1941), c. early seventeenth century; Hemavijaya, *Vijayaprashastimahakavya* with the commentary of Gunavijaya (Mumbai: Shri Jinashasan Aradhana Trust, 1988), c. 1632; Vallabha Pathaka, *Vijayadevamahatmya*, ed. Bhikshu Jinavijaya (Ahmedabad: K. P. Modi, 1928), dated 1653.

4. For an overview, see Audrey Truschke, "Jains and the Mughals," *Jainpedia*, November 2012, <http://www.jainpedia.org/themes/places/jainism-and-islam/jains-and-the-mughals.html>.
5. The earliest narration of this event in Sanskrit is Jayasoma, *Mantrikarmacandramshavaliprabandha*, vv. 359–64. Among the few, brief references in secondary literature is Shridhar Andhare, "Imperial Mughal Tolerance of Jainism and Jain Painting Activity in Gujarat," in *Arts of Mughal India: Studies in Honour of Robert Skelton*, ed. Rosemary Crill, Susan Stronge, and Andrew Topsfield (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2004), 223–24.
6. Ellison B. Findly, "Jahangir's Vow of Non-Violence," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107, no. 2 (1987): 245–56.
7. Siddhicandra, *Bhanucandraganicarita*, 1.2.
8. Mohammad Akram Lari Azad, *Religion and Politics in India During the Seventeenth Century*, (New Delhi: Criterion, 1990), 119–20.
9. Shalin Jain, "Piety, Laity and Royalty: Jains Under the Mughals in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century" *Indian Historical Review* 20, no. 1 (2013): 77–90.
10. For example, see Phyllis Granoff, "Jinaprabhasuri and Jinadattasuri: Two Studies from the Śvetāmbara Jain Tradition," in *Speaking of Monks: Religious Biography in India and China*, ed. Phyllis Granoff and Koichi Shinohara (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1992), 36.
11. In Jain thought, karma is a physical substance that adheres to an individual's *jiva*, thereby prompting rebirth and preventing liberation.
12. Audrey Truschke, "Dangerous Debates: Jain Responses to Theological Challenges at the Mughal Court," *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 5 (2015): 1311–1344.
13. Inscriptions and texts authored by a Jain group known as the Kharatara Gaccha about interceding in the aftermath of this event confirm that the argument and exile actually occurred, see Azad, *Religion and Politics in India*, 119. Later vernacular texts also corroborate the episode. Mohanlal Dalichand Desai, "Introduction," in *Bhanucandraganicarita* (Ahmedabad-Calcutta: Sanchalaka-Singhi Jain Granthamala, 1941), 57n88.
14. For example, see Abu al-Fazl's section on Jainism in Abu al-Fazl ibn Mubārak, *A'in-i Akbari*, ed. H. Blochmann, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1867–77), 2:97–111.
15. Abu al-Fazl, *A'in-i Akbari*, 1:233–35.
16. Siddhicandra, *Bhanucandraganicarita*, 4.90, 4.104. *The Kadambari of Banabhatta and his son (Bhushahabhatta) with the commentaries of Bhanuchandra and his disciple Siddhichandra*, ed. Kashinath Pandurang Parab (Bombay: Pandurang Jawaji, 1940), 483, v. 5 of *tika*.
17. Siddhicandra himself notes that Nur Jahan remained confined to the harem just before he represents her as entering the assembly hall in order to join the debate.
18. Truschke, "Dangerous Debates," 14–25.
19. Siddhicandra, *Bhanucandraganicarita*, 4.221–358. In my translation, I have frequently added in the names of Siddhicandra and Jahangir for the sake of clarity. In the Sanskrit original, both names are far less frequently mentioned, but it is nearly impossible to lose

- track of who is speaking because Siddhicandra is referred to with the honorific plural, whereas Jahangir merits only the singular.
20. Several of the following verses describing the moonlit night are cited from other Sanskrit texts; several appear in multiple places.
  21. Cited by Vallabhadeva, *Subhasitavali*, ed. Peter Peterson and Durga Prasad Dvivedi (Bombay: Education Society's Press, 1886), 342, #2002.
  22. Cited in commentary on 10.36 in Vishvanatha, *Sahityadarpana*, ed. Durgaprasad Dvivedi (New Delhi: Daryaganj, 1982), 532.
  23. This verse is found in several places in Sanskrit; for example, Vidyakara, *Subhashitaratnakosha*, ed. D. D. Kosambi and V. V. Gokhale (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 165, v. 9. Also see translation in Daniel H. H. Ingalls, *An Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry: Vidyakara's Subhasitaratnakosa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 274.
  24. This verse is found in several places in Sanskrit; for example, Vidyakara, *Subhashitaratnakosha*, 164, v. 4. Compare to translation in Ingalls, *Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry*, 273–74. In Sanskrit poetry, Chakora birds drink moonlight.
  25. Nur Mahal is an alternative name for Nur Jahan.
  26. The following line in Hindavi (Old Hindi) is the only vernacular verse in the *Bhanucandraganicarita* (4.271).
  27. Although Siddhicandra does not give the name of this renunciant king, it appears to be Ibrahim ibn Adham of Balkh.
  28. Jain ascetics pluck out their head hair by the root.
  29. Jain monks typically eat donated food and also walk on foot rather than use animals, carriages, or (today) cars to minimize harm to other living beings.
  30. I translate *ishvara* as God.
  31. In 4.304a, read *syadvada eva sarvatra*.

## FURTHER READING

- Andhare, Shridhar. "Imperial Mughal Tolerance of Jainism and Jain Painting Activity in Gujarat." In *Arts of Mughal India: Studies in Honour of Robert Skelton*, ed. Rosemary Crill, Susan Stronge, and Andrew Topsfield, 223–33. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2004.
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