

A Case Study in Jaina Transcreation: *Jalakrīḍā* in the *Nēmi* Narratives

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Introduction: Tellings and Retellings of the Nēmi Story, Eighth to Sixteenth Century

This essay is visualised as a longitudinal case study based on a number of textual sources in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsha and Kannada languages over a period of eight or nine centuries. It considers a short episode tangential to the narrative arc, which it uses as a prism to examine the evolution of two broad themes over a long period of time. The study is, by design, more selective than comprehensive, and raises more questions for further research than arrives at definitive answers. However, much of the material discussed in this essay has not been discussed before, or at least not in such diachronic collocation. Readers, even if somewhat dissatisfied with the open-ended and inconclusive nature of this essay, may yet find points of interest in this experiment.

The tale of Nēmi, the twenty-second *tīrthankara*, appears in a number of Jaina texts in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsha and Kannada, belonging to both Śvetāmbara and Digambara traditions – as a chapter in a *Triṣaṣṭīśālākāpuruṣa* anthology, intertwined with the Baladēva-Vāsudēva narratives in *Harivaṃśapurāṇas* or *Mahābhāratas*, or even a Nēmi-centric *Nēmināthapurāṇa*. The earliest of these narratives available to us is in the eighth-century Sanskrit *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* of Jinasēna. The tale of Nēmi continues to resonate within the Jaina religious consciousness through the centuries and is regularly retold up to the sixteenth century. Śāstri (1973: Chapter 2), whose book is a comparative survey of Kannada Nēmi narratives, discusses these sources at great length.

This essay does not attempt an exhaustive survey of all Nēmi narratives. I have drawn upon the literature survey in Śāstri (1973) and De Clercq (2009) to select a sample of twelve texts (summarised in *Table 1* below). The objective has been to include a robust sample of texts containing an account of the *jalakrīḍā* and associated events from all periods and languages, and from both Digambara and Śvetāmbara tradi-

tions in order to enable a reasonable reconstruction of the evolution of the incident in transcreation.

Table 1: Sources of Nēmi tales¹

	7 th –10 th c. CE	11 th –12 th c. CE	13 th –14 th c. CE	15 th –16 th c. CE
Digambara				
Sanskrit	Jinasēna, 783CE, <i>Harivaṃśapurāṇa</i> , (sarga 55) Guṇabhadra, 838–898CE, <i>Uttarapurāṇa</i> (parva 71)			
Apa-bhramsha	Puṣpadanta, 959–965CE, <i>Mahāpurāṇu</i> (88.17–88.23) Svayambhū, 9 th –10 th c. CE, <i>Riṭṭhanēmicariu</i> (53.14–54.10)			
Kannada	Cāvuṇḍarāya, 10 th c. CE, <i>Cāvuṇḍarāya-purāṇam</i> , (Chapter 39, <i>Nēmināthapurāṇam</i>)	Karṇapārya, 1160–1170 CE, <i>Nēmināthapurāṇa</i> (āśvāsa 13)	Bandhuvarma, 1235 CE, <i>Harivaṃśābhyudayam</i> (Chapter 13)	Maṅgarasa, 1409–1508 CE, <i>Nēmijinēśasaṅgati</i> (Chapter 32) Sāḷva, 1560 CE, <i>Nēmināthacarite</i> , <i>Cakra parva</i> (Chapters 58–59)
Śvetāmbara				
	Śīlānka, 867–869 CE, Prakrit, <i>Caūppan-namahāpurisacariyam</i> (Chapter 37)	Hemacandra, 1156–1172 CE, Sanskrit, <i>Triśaṣṭīśālākā-puruṣacaritra</i> (Chapter 9)		Kīrtiratna, 1438 CE, Sanskrit, <i>Nēmināthamahākāvyaṃ</i> (Chapters 8–10)

In the following pages I begin with a brief discussion of *jalakrīḍā* as a trope of epic poetry, followed by an outline of the incident as in the *Harivaṃśapurāṇa*. I then examine, in chronological order, the variant descriptions in Digambara sources, which form the bulk of my sample. In doing so, I focus mainly on the evolution of two themes: the changing position of Nēmi on the human-divine continuum and the changing

¹ I have used a combination of Śāstri (1973) and De Clercq (2009) to fix the relative chronology of texts in this table.

portrayal of relationships between the main characters involved in the *jalakrīḍā* incident, namely Kṛṣṇa, his wives and Nēmi. I then provide a relatively short discussion of Śvetāmbara Nēmi narratives, mainly to highlight the separation between the two traditions, which appear to have developed independently, though with significant and under-explored interactions.

I conclude with some thoughts on these shifting portrayals, which I call ‘refractions’, because though the authors in my sample are mostly agreed on the broad narrative arc of the *jalakrīḍā* episode, they nevertheless repeatedly change, restructure, omit and add to the details, providing a much richer and more colourful picture when read diachronically – much as a beam of white light passing made to pass through a prism is refracted into a rainbow of colours, producing a richer illustration of its interiority.

Jalakrīḍā as a Kāvya Trope, and a Prism

The *jalakrīḍā* is a spring, summertime or autumnal communal activity wherein a group of men and women go to a forest pond, tank or other waterbody to play in the water and cool off. At times it is preceded by playing in the forest (*vanakrīḍā*), making wildflower garlands and ornaments, playing on swings, and indulging in erotic encounters among vine bowers.² The erotic is a major subtext of both these pastimes. According to Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaḍarśa*, a seventh-century treatise on literary composition in Sanskrit, *jalakrīḍā* is prescribed as one of the ‘descriptive themes concerning the social order’ of the Sanskrit literary genre of *kāvya* or ‘courtly epic’ and of the *kāvya* genre in other languages such as Prakrit, Apabhramsha and Kannada.³ It is a frequent feature of *kāvya* and subject to inflection and modulation by the poet, his project and his times, as it is in these Nēmi narratives.

A particularly interesting feature of *jalakrīḍā* in most Nēmi narratives is Kṛṣṇa’s deliberate attempt, with the connivance of his women, to tempt Nēmi into worldly entanglements, from a variety of motives, and

² Vāgbhaṭa’s undated *Nēminirvāṇakāvya* (Chapters 7–10) in Sanskrit gives us an extensive description of *vanakrīḍā* followed by *jalakrīḍā*. It has been omitted from this study since it does not contain an account of the exchange between Nēmi and one of Kṛṣṇa’s wives, which is an important part of this study.

³ Along with festive gatherings and lovemaking, descriptive themes concerning the natural order include sunrise, sunset and the seasons, whereas narrative themes concern the political order and include councils of state, embassies and military expeditions (see Pollock 2003: 43).

with varying degrees of success. In this it departs from Daṇḍin's prescription as a 'descriptive' as opposed to a 'narrative' trope and becomes a means (though unavailing) within the narrative of the text to turn the arc of Nēmi's career in a certain direction. Therefore a study of this trope in its specific formulations by the various narrators of the Nēmi tale over the centuries sheds interesting light on two broader issues that modulate the transcreation of this incident – the first is the changing portrayal of Nēmi as a human male and as a *tīrthaṅkara*, reflected in his own emotions and behaviour as well as in his interactions with those around him; the second is the relationship at a human level between Kṛṣṇa, his wives, and his paternal cousin Nēmi, as evidenced by their interactions before, during and after the *jalakrīḍā*. The participants are Kṛṣṇa, his wives,⁴ Nēmi, Baladēva, and others such as Kṛṣṇa and Baladēva's unnamed women. Kṛṣṇa's wives specifically named in the *jalakrīḍā* incident are Jāmbavatī, Satyabhāmā and Rukmiṇī.

Jalakrīḍā in the Earliest Version: An Outline

The earliest account of the *jalakrīḍā* available to us is in the eighth-century Sanskrit *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* of Jinasēna, a Digambara ascetic of the Punnāṭasaṅgha.⁵ He tells us Nēmi is born to the Yādava kinsman Samudravijaya and to Śivādēvi, and is a junior paternal cousin of Kṛṣṇa. His birth is heralded by the conventional auspicious signs attending the birth of a *tīrthaṅkara*, and he grows up averse to worldly pleasures and to the life of a householder. He participates (actively per Jinasēna, but passively or not at all in other sources) in a victorious battle between the Yādavas and Jarāsandha.

Once in an assembly of the Yādavas in Dvārāvātī he defeats Kṛṣṇa in a public test of strength by arm-wrestling. As a consequence, Kṛṣṇa becomes concerned about Nēmi's potential to usurp his throne and attempts to lead him into worldly paths with the connivance of his wives. This is Kṛṣṇa's motivation to set up the *jalakrīḍā* and engineer

⁴ Kṛṣṇa wives, also characterised as his chief queens, are eight in number and include Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā, Jāmbavatī, Bhadrā/Kaikeyī, Kāliṇḍī/Mitravinda/Saibyā, Lakṣmaṇā/Mādrī, and Nagnajitī (*Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 10.71.041–42, 10.58.056–57). This also appears to be the accepted number of Kṛṣṇa chief queens in Jaina narratives; however, this list is clearly not standard, since Jaina authors give this list as Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā, Jāmbavatī, Susīmā, Lakṣmaṇā, Gāndhārī, Gaurī and Padmāvātī (*Uttarapurāṇa*, 71.126–127).

⁵ Possibly based in modern day Karnataka (Jain 1962, Introduction; De Clercq 2009); not much else is known about him.

an erotically charged interaction between his women and Nēmi. He organises a pleasure trip for the extended clan to the forest in the course of which both men and women indulge in bathing. As they play in the pond water, Nēmi is involved in an argument with one of Kṛṣṇa's wives who compares his masculine prowess (and, by implication, the social status derived therefrom) unfavourably to that of Kṛṣṇa. Nēmi is upset at this repudiation and in retaliation replicates Kṛṣṇa's three feats of strength, namely bending the horn-bow, blowing the Pāñcājanya conch and occupying the serpent-couch.⁶

Eventually, Kṛṣṇa arranges Nēmi's marriage to Rājīmatī, daughter of his kinsman Ugrasēna. Nēmi is unwilling but compliant. On the way to the wedding Nēmi sees penned wild beasts in distress and finds out that they have been captured for his wedding feast. This is the trigger for him to renounce the world. His renunciation, extended physical mortification and eventual attainment of enlightenment is the main doctrinal theme of the text. His enlightenment is commemorated in terms conventional to Jaina *tīrthaṅkara* narratives, after which he wanders the land preaching Jaina doctrine. He finally attains liberation on Mount Ūrjayanta in Saurāṣṭra.

There is considerable variation in many elements of the tale of Nēmi between Digambara and Śvetāmbara narratives, as well as within each sectarian tradition. In particular, there is little erotic overtone to the *jalakrīḍā* in Śvetāmbara narratives which appear to de-emphasise Nēmi's human emotions. Rājīmatī is also more prominent in Śvetāmbara narratives.

Refractions in Digambara Transcreations

Harivaṃśapurāṇa of Jinasēna

To recap Jinasēna's account of the events leading up to the *jalakrīḍā*: once young Nēmi, splendidly adorned in garments, ornaments, and unguents furnished by Kubēra goes to the Yādava assembly hall in Dvārāvātī called Kusumacitra, walking like an elephant in rut, accompanied by other princes. He is welcomed with due honours by Kṛṣṇa, Baladēva, and many other Yādavas gathered there. He is seated on a throne alongside Kṛṣṇa, like two male lions seated together, and engages

⁶ Several other miraculous feats of Kṛṣṇa are referenced in the Nēmi narratives but do not appear on this standard list of three which, it is implied, are the basis of his claim to be *ardhacakravartin*.

in cultivated discussion, which in due course turns to a comparison of relative physical strength. People variously praise Arjuna, Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, the Pāṇḍava twins, Baladēva, and Kṛṣṇa who lifted the great mountain, who picked up a weapon and shook other kings eager for display of strength from their position. Baladēva, having listened to all this, looks playfully at Nēmi, and says: “There is none in the triple world equal to the Lord Nēmi, the Jina. He can lift up the earth with his palm, he can spill the sea, he can move mountains with ease. Who could be greater than the Jina?”

Listening to this and looking at Nēmi, Kṛṣṇa says with a smile: “If your body is so powerful, should we not test it in a feat of strength?” Nēmi demurs: “Why wrestle with me here? If you wish to understand my strength, elder brother, move my feet from this seat by force.” Tightening his belt, Kṛṣṇa stands up and tries to pick up Nēmi’s feet but is unable even to move his toe. Drops of sweat drench his body, he pants, loses his smile and says: “Your strength is clearly beyond this world.” The matter ends there, but Kṛṣṇa is shaken and wonders about Nēmi’s intentions, “for the narrow-minded man is suspicious even of the Jina,” the poet tells us. From then on Kṛṣṇa outwardly honours Nēmi with many marks of respect and display of love. We are struck by the juxtaposition of Baladēva’s (and perforce the readers’) constant awareness of Nēmi’s supra-human attributes as arising from his foreordained Jina-hood, and of Kṛṣṇa’s very human attitude of insecure suspicion towards a paternal cousin (with presumably a good claim to the throne) whose actual and reputed physical strength was far superior to his own.

Next in the narrative sequence the Yādavas go to rescue Aniruddha, and upon their return, in spring Kṛṣṇa organises a *vanakrīḍā*. The poet gives us much detail about who forms the party, how they proceed to the forest and what they do there. Kṛṣṇa’s intention in taking them all to the forest becomes clear to us now – made insecure by Nēmi’s great strength and suspicious of his motives, Kṛṣṇa has formed a cunning plan to entrap Nēmi in worldly snares in order to preempt a power struggle. Kṛṣṇa’s women, obedient to his command, attempt to seduce Nēmi in the forest.

Kṛṣṇa’s women, capable of seducing men, obedient to his command, took Nēmi with them into the beautiful forest. One beauty, her mind and eye lazy with the intoxication of liquor, embraced her husband’s younger brother, frightened when swarmed by bees attracted to the fragrance of her breath as she plucked flower clusters from forest vines. One hard-breasted one kissed him on the chest, another sniffed him; one seized his hand with her soft hands, another turned his moon-face towards herself. Some fanned him with twigs of Sāla and Tamāla; others made ear-ornaments for him with fresh Aśōka leaves. Some, intending to embrace him, placed

garlands of various flowers upon his head and around his neck, and scattered Kuravaka flowers on his head (55.44–48).

The poet tells us Nēmi permits the attentions of Kṛṣṇa's women and enjoys the unending spring until summer arrives.

What are we to make of this? Was Nēmi tempted by the worldly paths being shown him, and Kṛṣṇa perhaps successful in his stratagem? Or was he merely trying to lull Kṛṣṇa's suspicions? In any case, Kṛṣṇa himself was not complacent. With the arrival of summer, he continues to spend time on Raivataka. Nēmi too, though instinctively averse to mundane pleasures, is importuned by Kṛṣṇa's women and plays with them in the ponds. The poet indulges us with a description of the women's seductive activities in the water. We must note here that the women who, obedient to Kṛṣṇa's command, attempt to seduce Nēmi are not named wives. Though they are called Kṛṣṇa's women, we cannot be certain of their social status. It is clear, however, that when called upon by Kṛṣṇa, his 'women' were obliged to provide erotic services to other men, whereas his 'wives' could freely refuse to perform even non-sexual services for other men, as we see below. It is worth also noting that this distinction between the two groups of women is maintained by all narrators who describe the *jalakriḍā*.

Eventually all emerge from the water and some women help Nēmi dress. But when he gives his cast-off wet garments to Jāmbavatī to wring dry, she repudiates him in no uncertain terms:

With an arch glance he prompted the incomparable Jāmbavatī, much honoured by Madhuripu, to wring the wet clothes cast off just then. She, who was clever of speech, quickly replied with trembling lips and a frowning glance of pretended anger. "Hari – the lustre of whose body and crown jewels is twice as bright as the hood-jewels of a crore of serpents, who is resplendent with the Kaustubha gem, who occupies his great serpent-couch, who is dark as cloud, who fills the world with the [sound of] his conch loud as thunder, who strings the powerful horn-bow, master of all kings, who has beautiful women – is my husband. Even he never issues me a command such as this. Who are you, that you dare command me to wring [your] wet clothes?" (55.58–62).

How are we to understand this? It is Nēmi who initiates this ambiguous exchange with Kṛṣṇa's wife, though in Jinasena's telling Nēmi's behaviour is not overtly erotic. And yet, if we rule out the erotic, how are we to interpret it? Was Nēmi deliberately provoking a quarrel and, if so, why? We can't be certain. It is however clear that Jāmbavatī understands this as a demand for an intimate service by Nēmi, and though not entirely displeased by it, repudiates him at a sexual level (though less explicitly than in some later Nēmi narratives as we will see) – because Nēmi has none of the public feats of valour to his credit that Kṛṣṇa has,

and which entitle Kṛṣṇa to mastery of kings and possession of beautiful women.

Many of Kṛṣṇa's women remonstrate with Jāmbavatī for having insulted the lord of the triple-world, though it is puzzling why Jāmbavatī's refusal to render an intimate, or at least a menial service, for a man who is not her husband be considered shameless. Jinasēna does not linger to make this clear, though later poets have much more to say on this aspect of the matter.

Nēmi is stung by Jāmbavatī's harsh words, and returning to the palace in Dvārāvātī quickly replicates Kṛṣṇa's three feats of strength – mounting the serpent-couch, stringing the horn bow and blowing the conch. The noise of the conch causes chaos in the city frightening men and animals. Kṛṣṇa pulls out his sword, rushes to the armoury, and sees Nēmi standing contemptuously on the serpent-couch. He realises Nēmi has acted out of anger at Jāmbavatī's taunting words and rejoices at it, for Nēmi has been provoked to passion by his women. Kṛṣṇa proceeds to arrange Nēmi's marriage with Rājīmatī.

In this denouement to the *jalakrīḍā* episode Kṛṣṇa clearly feels he has succeeded in entrapping Nēmi and neutralising a threat to his throne. The reader too, is perhaps meant to think that the cunning Vāsudēva has succeeded in debasing the Jina.⁷ And indeed, the Nēmi who begins this episode inherently averse to mundane pleasures, is enticed to flirt with Jāmbavatī, and when scorned by her, roused to great anger, under the influence of which he then demonstrates to her (and to the world) his immeasurable superiority to Kṛṣṇa in physical strength. This is not the conduct of a one averse to human passions and attachments. On the contrary, this is the conduct of a human man who fails the tests of both sexual temptation and anger – a fallible human being who, though generally uninterested in worldliness, is yet to reach the point of aversion to the world. On the continuum of human to divine, Nēmi is still recognisably human and Jinasēna's narrative is interested in tracing the arc of his journey from human to divine.

Uttarapurāṇa of Guṇabhadra

Writing about a century later, the Digambara ascetic Guṇabhadra gives us yet another account of Nēmi's *jalakrīḍā* with Kṛṣṇa's wives in his

⁷ We are told ten times in the first fifteen verses of the chapter that Nēmi is Jina.

Sanskrit *Uttarapurāṇa*.⁸ This is how he tells it: Having accomplished the conquest of his tripartite land Kṛṣṇa returns to Dvārāvātī and enjoys worldly pleasures with his many women. One autumn day water sports (*jalakēlī*) are held in a pond called Manōhara in which Kṛṣṇa's womenfolk participate. While splashing around in the water, Nēmi and Satyabhāmā (one of Kṛṣṇa's wives) have this pleasant and flirtatious exchange:

Satyabhāmā: "Why do you play with me as if I were your beloved?"

Nēmi: "Are you not dear to me?"

Satyabhāmā: "If I am your beloved, then whom would your brother go to?"

Nēmi: "To one who would satisfy his sexual needs"

Satyabhāmā: "Who is that?"

Nēmi: "Do you not know? You will soon find out."

Satyabhāmā: "Everyone says you are straightforward, but you are cunning nevertheless."

And when they finished bathing, Nēmi says to Satyabhāmā: "Beautiful one, take this bathing garment of mine."

Satyabhāmā: "What will I do with it?"

Nēmi: "Wash it."

Satyabhāmā: "[Why,] are you Hari [then]? He who occupies the serpent-couch, who strings the celestial horn-bow with ease, who blows the conch that fills space? Can you perform such feats?"

Nēmi: "I will indeed do what must be done" (71.132–137ab).

Returning to the city, Nēmi replicates Kṛṣṇa's three feats of strength, impelled by pride, "and [Nēmi] thought he had revealed his glory [for,]" the poet muses, "even a particle of passion or pride inevitably leads to a change [for the worse]" (71.140).

Kṛṣṇa learns of this interlude and its consequence with disquiet. He ponders it, wondering at this state of impassion unusual in Nēmi. He thinks Nēmi, ridden by the passions of youth (for all beings subject to *karma* must invariably be afflicted by sexual passion), must be made to marry, and arranges his marriage to Rājīmatī, leading to the familiar sequence of subsequent events.

The differences from the *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* are interesting – first, the location of the *jalakēlī* is a nearby pond (or tank) and it is not preceded by *vanakrīḍā*. Second, we do not know if Kṛṣṇa is even present at the *jalakēlī* when this interchange between Nēmi and Satyabhāmā takes place; nor do we know if Kṛṣṇa was complicit in Satyabhāmā's behaviour, but probably not, given his subsequent reactions. Third, the interchange between Nēmi and Satyabhāmā is an entirely human

⁸ This is the concluding part of the *Mahāpurāṇa* begun by his guru Jinasēna, the preceptor of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Nṛpatuṅga Amōghavarṣa.

one with explicit erotic overtones. There is no indication that Nēmi is aware of his impending Jina-hood, nor does he appear averse to human entanglements. When taunted by Satyabhāmā with Kṛṣṇa's feats of valour compared to his own insignificance, he appears intent on doing whatever must be done to win her over. In fact, the poet tells us he is impelled by manly pride in doing so, and moralises on this entirely human shortcoming.

We must keep in mind that Guṇabhadra is completing his guru's *magnum opus*, and must get through the lives of sixty-two of the sixty-three great men of Jaina lore, leaving him little opportunity to elaborate. The arm-wrestling test of strength between Kṛṣṇa and Nēmi is missing from the narrative and Kṛṣṇa's character lacks the insecurity portrayed by Jinasēna; his conduct towards Nēmi appears driven by concern (tinged by Jaina moralising) for a younger cousin, and he acts in good faith in arranging Nēmi's marriage. As we will see in following sections, Guṇabhadra is not alone in restructuring Jinasēna's narrative in this way. All the poets writing in the heyday of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas have done the same; I discuss this curious sleight of hand at the end of this chapter. Also, Satyabhāmā instead of Jāmbavatī appears to be the participant in the quarrel during the *jalakriḍā* here; though Svayambhū names Jāmbavatī instead of Satyabhāmā, the switch in later narratives to Satyabhāmā as the one who quarrels with Nēmi is itself an interesting, and may have come about with the progressive development of the characters of Kṛṣṇa's wives in narrative literature, both Jaina and Vaiṣṇava.

In summary, Guṇabhadra does not significantly alter the figure of Nēmi that comes to him from the *Harivaṃśapurāṇa*. Nēmi, destined as he is for redemption by renunciation, is still a human figure subject to human temptations and passions.

Mahāpurāṇu of Puṣpadanta

The Apabhramsha *Mahāpurāṇu* was composed by Puṣpadanta in the tenth century during the reign of Rāṣṭrakūṭa Kṛṣṇa III, under the patronage of one of his ministers (Puṣpadanta and Vaidya 1979: 21–24). Puṣpadanta tells us that having killed Jarāsandha, Kṛṣṇa established his rule and enjoyed worldly pleasures in Dvārāvātī. Nēmi too lives with them, enjoying divine pleasures of the flesh. At the end of monsoon, Kṛṣṇa goes with Nēmi and his womenfolk to bathe in the lotus pond Sīradhara.

The poet sees an opportunity to moralise in describing the pond and bathers. Speaking of the lotuses in the pond he says: “though endowed with pericarps like many virtues, though endowed with leaves like friends, nevertheless, lotuses are attacked by frogs, [for] whom does the company of water/fools (*jaḍa*) not harm?” (88.18.03–04). Puṣpadanta never lets us forget that Nēmi is the Jina, and yet he tells us Nēmi enjoyed the pleasures of the flesh. Is the lotus-attacked-by-frog metaphor the poet’s criticism of Nēmi’s (i.e., the lotus) participation in the erotic *jalakrīḍā*? Or is it instead a criticism of the women (frog) who, in treating Nēmi like a human male and making him the object of their erotic attentions, are in fact debasing the Jina? Is this a fault in the lotus or in the frog?

In a rapid change of mood in the next line Puṣpadanta moves on to the erotic antics of the bathers, describing the disarray of the women explicitly and with gusto, but as if to complete the whiplash effect upon his audience, he turns around with “another [woman] clung to prince Nēmi, as if non-violence [to] the spread of righteousness” (88.18.14) and we are back to Nēmi-as-Jina again. Then the poet comes to the exchange between Nēmi and Satyabhāmā:

Then Satyabhāmā splashed the excited Nēmi with water, like the Rēvā river splashes the Vindhya mountains. Even he, who is worshipped by Indra, Candra and Nāga, who is called Lord of the triple-world, was drenched by the women. With dancing eyes, the Lord who wore beautiful garments, playfully flung his garment upon [Satyabhāmā] [and said] laughing, “Wring out my loincloth”.

The beauty [was stunned] as if pierced with a lance, [for] women do not understand a man’s mind. [Indeed,] he was himself the lord of gods, the Jina, whose foot-dust is also worthy of worship – why should [she] not wring out his undergarment?

Then the Lord said, “You do not comply. I gave you an order. Why do you ignore it? Speak, speak the truth Satyabhāmā. Why have you made your face dark like a withered lotus?”

Then the moon-faced one whose eyes closed in shame replied to him: “Though your merits are abundant, replete with great success and wisdom, even so this is not worthy [of you], o great lord. My body is discomfited because of this [command of yours]. Have you blown the conch? Have you bent the horn-bow and strung it? Have you lain upon the serpent-couch? By what [right] have you have thrown your loincloth at me? You may be the brother of my husband, but are you Dāmōdara, God of Gods?” (88.18 *ghattā*–88.19).

Why were the Lord’s eyes dancing and why did he fling his garment upon Satyabhāmā? Indeed, she cannot be blamed for being stunned, or for being unable to keep up with the poet. But is she in on the secret known to the poet – that Nēmi is the lord of gods, the Jina? Apparently not, for she is embarrassed as if humiliated by a human male who, though noble and related to her, is not her husband. She tells him his

actions are unworthy, even of a man of great merit such as himself. For he has not done that which Kṛṣṇa has already accomplished and which entitle him to be god of gods.

The poet tells us: “when thus struck by [her] harsh cruel words, he felt [the blow] in his pride, and the supreme lord went quickly to Kṛṣṇa’s armoury” (88.19 *ghattā*) to repudiate Satyabhāmā by replicating Kṛṣṇa’s three feats of strength. Nēmi strikes the serpent couch with his palms, bends the bow with his left foot, and deafens the world by blowing the conch (88.20 *duvai*). Though Puṣpadanta calls Nēmi “Lord” and “Jina”, Nēmi is nevertheless still human, acting under the goad of human passions and emotions and is, demonstrably, yet to claim his Jina-hood.

Nēmi’s actions create chaos in the city; a shaken Kṛṣṇa reaches for his dagger (88.20.01–09). A servant comes to inform him of goings on: “Seizing your servant by force, Nēminātha entered the building, strung the bow, blew the conch and stamped the serpent on the couch. The deeds performed by you in succession to injure the Jaina faith,⁹ the powerful one has done all three of them at once” (88.21 *ghattā*). The poet is quite clear who is to blame: it is Satyabhāmā who has refused to wring out Nēmi’s garment, and instead in rudely repudiating him has precipitated a (political) crisis – for, the poet tells us, women are impolitic and make explicit that is better left hidden (88.21.03). She has polluted Nēmi’s mind and led him to act thus (88.21.06). Hearing this, Kṛṣṇa’s face darkens with jealous anger (for, naturally, “no one is pleased at praise of another”). Baladēva pacifies him, and betraying his awareness of Nēmi’s foreordained sanctity (just as in Jinasēna’s *Harivamśapurāṇa*), tells Kṛṣṇa he must not be jealous of the Jina’s powers. His pride humbled, Kṛṣṇa considers ways to neutralise a potential political rival (for “the strong kinsman who cannot be defeated must quickly be established in the forest”), though Baladēva continues to speak out for the peaceful nature of the Jina, who is destined to become an wandering ascetic (88.22.08). Kṛṣṇa cunningly decides to force the matter by marrying off Nēmi to Rājimatī, and so, on to the expected conclusion.

Like Guṇabhadra, Puṣpadanta too has omitted Kṛṣṇa’s humiliating loss in the arm-wrestling contest as the impetus for the *jalakrīḍā*, nor does he tell us that Kṛṣṇa connived with his wives during it; instead, he blames Satyabhāmā as the causal agent of the fiasco. Puṣpadanta’s Nēmi

⁹ The significance of *haya-jaṇa-savaṇa-dhammāim* is unclear – is Kṛṣṇa destroying the Jaina faith of the people by establishing himself as an alternate focus of veneration to the Jina? I thank the reviewer for the suggestion: “[the deeds] that have attacked/violated the *śramaṇa-dharma* for the people”.

too is quite similar to Guṇabhadra's, and not far removed from that of Jinasēna.

Triṣaṣṭīlakṣaṇamahāpurāṇam of Cāvuṇḍarāya

We have a brief account of the *jalakrīḍā* in the chapter on Nēmi in the tenth-century Kannada prose *Triṣaṣṭīlakṣaṇamahāpurāṇam* of Cāvuṇḍarāya (more commonly known as *Cāvuṇḍarāyapurāṇam*), a prominent minister and commander in the court of the Gaṅga kings Mārasīmha II and Rācamalla IV, feudatories of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. In Cāvuṇḍarāya's telling Kṛṣṇa establishes his rule in Dvārāvātī and enjoys worldly pleasures. One day, as all enjoy bathing in a pond called Manōhara with the womenfolk,

Nēmi gives his divine bathing costume to Satyabhāmā, who says flirtatiously, "why would I touch your cast-off garment? That is only possible if you have the prowess to occupy the serpent-couch, string the horn-bow and blow the conch with five openings (Cāvuṇḍarāya and Hampana 2006: 413).

Nēmi instantly does these things causing chaos in the city; the author does not tell us why Nēmi does this. Kṛṣṇa is unmanned by this feat of Nēmi, which he himself could only accomplish by several distinct penances. Fearing Nēmi's prowess, and realising that Nēmi is tainted by passion and ready for marriage, he seeks an alliance for him with Rājīmatī. Nevertheless, he is still afraid that Nēmi will seize his kingdom, and plots further to make Nēmi averse to worldly pleasures. He deliberately causes trapped and distressed wild beasts to be penned on Nēmi's route to the wedding, with expected results.

Cāvuṇḍarāya's account, though suffering from brevity, nevertheless gives us the main points of the narrative and is consistent with the previous ones; our understanding of the figure of Nēmi is confirmed but not enhanced. Cāvuṇḍarāya, like others writing within the Rāṣṭrakūṭa ambit, completely omits the arm-wrestling incident.

Riṭṭhanēmicariu of Svayambhūdeva

Svayambhū probably lived and wrote in the tenth century in the Kannada speaking regions of the Deccan; his particular sectarian affiliation is open to question, but on balance his texts appear to be closer

to subsequent Digambara narratives.¹⁰ The sequence of events in his Apabhramsha *Riṭṭhanēmicariu* is as follows: upon his return from rescuing Aniruddha, Kṛṣṇa organises a pleasure trip to the forest for his kinsfolk where all indulge in pleasurable pursuits of an erotic nature. Subsequently, exhausted, everyone enters a pond to bathe (53.14–15). In the pond Kṛṣṇa’s women try to awaken Nēmi’s sensuality by displaying their charms, attacking him with water and flowers (53.16–18). It is only towards the end of this description that we learn that they do this at Kṛṣṇa’s signal, but we are not told why Kṛṣṇa does this. In any case, they are unsuccessful, for bashful Nēmi rejects them. This is a rather different Nēmi from Guṇabhadra’s bold flirt.

Then, emerging from the water, Nēmi attempts to give his wet garment to wring out to someone among Kṛṣṇa’s wives, Kṛṣṇa having explicitly signalled him to do so. Again, we are not told why Kṛṣṇa does this – is it his intention to provoke a quarrel between Nēmi and his wives, leading him to act in a fit of pique? Or is this merely the squeamish poet attempting to remove any hint of sexual impropriety from the behaviour of the future Jina, by making husbandly sanction prerequisite to Nēmi’s actions? In any case, none of Kṛṣṇa’s wives appear willing to perform that service for Nēmi, pushing aside his garment with their feet, unwilling even to touch it with their fingertips (53.19.01–03). Jāmbavatī then speaks up to repudiate Nēmi thus:

Jāmbavatī said to him, “Throw it to someone else to wring”. The lady was secretly angry in her heart [and] instantly repudiated [Nēmi]. “He, at whose feet the tripartite land lies, he in whose hands the horn[-bow] twangs, he who sleeps on the serpent-couch, whose mouth blows the Pāñcajanya [conch] – even that Hari does not look to me [to perform menial service]. Who are you to throw your garment at me?” (53.19.01–08).

But Rukmiṇī (though apparently unwilling herself to perform the service demanded by Nēmi) is appalled at Jāmbavatī’s harsh words and cautions her:

“Do not insult him, friend, [for] what are the thirteen *cakravartins* compared to the Jina? Who can fight the angry supreme Jina, the crest of the triple world? The ocean is but a drop of water to him, the great celestial mountain is but a ball. The sky is merely twelve fingers wide, the earth is but a cow’s hoof-print. The summit of this world is his seat, he will enter the world of the Siddhas. The difference between the *tīrthankara* and the *rathāṅgin* (a reference to Kṛṣṇa as *ardhacakravartin*, or as

¹⁰ Śāstri (1973: 34) dates Svayambhū between 678–783CE, but De Clercq (2018: x) dates him to the latter half of the ninth century based on internal textual references to the Sēvuṇa dynasty in *Paiūmacariu* 63.6.3. Svayambhū’s Digambara vs. Śvetāmbara affiliation remains to be conclusively resolved, and scholars believe him to be affiliated with the Yāpanīya saṅgha (see De Clercq and Winant 2021: 227).

bearer of the discus) is as much as that between a mountain and a mosquito. Have you not seen the strength of your beloved? He is deceitful as he pleases in battle. [But] when the Jina extended his arm then [Kṛṣṇa] could not move even his finger” (53.19 *ghattā*, 53.20.01–07).

We now learn that Kṛṣṇa has previously lost the arm-wrestling contest with Nēmi, which may hint at his motives. But the real surprise Svayambhū springs on us is the manner in which Rukmiṇī praises Nēmi. For her at least, Nēmi is the Jina, and therefore immeasurably superior to any earthly king. In fact, she is quite clear-sighted about Kṛṣṇa’s human wickedness and Nēmi’s divine claims. Svayambhū does not represent Rukmiṇī as the disloyal wife; instead, for the first time in the Nēmi narratives, here is a partial articulation of Jina-bhakti.¹¹ The nature of the deity is described in awe-inspiring terms; but we must await the transcreations of later poets for articulations of Rukmiṇī as the bhakta who should have no reservations in serving the object of her veneration.

Nēmi overhears this exchange between the women and returns to Dvārāvati with it in mind (*maṇe dharevi*); once there, he replicates Kṛṣṇa’s three feats of strength (53.20 *ghattā*). Svayambhū calls Nēmi “Jina” at this point, but does not make it clear whether Nēmi is upset at Jāmbavati’s repudiation or is intent upon demonstrating the truth of Rukmiṇī’s claims about his Jina-hood. If we understand *maṇe dharevi* ‘as brooding upon it’ we may be tempted to read this as a human reaction to Jāmbavati’s scorn. But if we read it with no emotional overtones, and keep in mind Rukmiṇī’s ringing endorsement of his divinity, we may understand Nēmi’s subsequent actions as the Jina manifesting his divinity to the world. Svayambhū describes Nēmi’s replication of Kṛṣṇa’s feats of strength in the next chapter (54.01–04). He lies on the serpent couch, bends the bow and blows the conch, all three at once.

In the course of this description Svayambhū never lets us forget that it is Nēmi-Jina who performs these deeds, and gives us no hint of his inner emotional state. Nēmi’s actions predictably cause chaos in the city, and though Kṛṣṇa picks up his sword, he is brought to acknowledge Nēmi’s status as the Jina. He is nevertheless deceitful, and seriously concerned for his throne. He resolves to marry Nēmi off (54.05.04–08), while outwardly praising him. He arranges an alliance with Rājīmatī, and gathers wild beasts for the wedding feast with the ulterior motive of triggering Nēmi’s renunciation of the world, with predictable results.

In summary Svayambhū’s narrative hints at an interesting development in the nature of Jina worship. Nēmi’s actions are portrayed as

¹¹ I use the terms *bhakti* and *bhakta* as included in the Oxford English Dictionary to refer to religious devotion and religious devotee.

increasingly dissociated from human impulses and motives and he may have stepped into his divine persona before even passing through the various gateways to enlightenment.

Nēmināthapurāṇa of Karṇapārya

Anacker (2002: Introduction) considers the twelfth-century *Nēmināthapurāṇa* (or *Harivamśa*) of Karṇapārya composed in the *campū* style as the first complete Nēmi narrative in Kannada. Karṇapārya appears to follow Jinasēna's narrative sequence for the most part. Thus, once in an assembly in Dvāravatī, where Pāṇḍavas are also present, there is a comparison of peers on their valour and manly qualities. Some uphold Bhīma, others Baladēva, but Baladēva and Bhīma themselves uphold Nēmi. To this, Kṛṣṇa, hurt in his pride, suggests a bout of wrestling to test their relative strength. But he is unable even to bend a finger of Nēmi's and is humiliated, though later consoled by Baladēva's reflection that Nēmi is after all his brother (13.04–10).

In spring, Kṛṣṇa organises a *vanakrīdā* with no apparent evil intention (unlike in the account of Jinasēna). In fact, when Kṛṣṇa invites Nēmi, he addresses him in terms used to address a divinity (*dēva*, *surēndrāvanatāṅghripadma*, 13.20). All enjoy themselves at length in the forest and in the pond, though Nēmi as well as Kṛṣṇa and Baladēva appear to be spectators rather than participants. The women are disarranged and embarrassed by the vigour of the water sports. Perceiving this, Baladēva and Nēmi leave the pond; Kṛṣṇa too emerges surrounded by his women. Then the poet tells us:

When they were removing their wet clothes, at Kṛṣṇa's signal Nēmi, the benefactor of the world, gave his wet garment to Satyabhāmā, who said, "I am not so lowly as to wring your undergarment. Am I not the foremost among the wives of proud Kṛṣṇa?"

Rukmiṇī instantly scolded her angrily: "What is so great about us humans? Do not the celestials themselves sprinkle the Jina's bathwater upon their heads?"

Satyabhāmā replied: "Tell me, is the unsurpassed Cakri – who fought celestials in his childhood, in his youth lifted the mountain with ease, mounted the fearsome serpent-couch, and [strung and blew] such wonders as the divine horn-bow and the conch – not my husband? It is utterly inappropriate that I, the wife of such a great one, should perform menial tasks" (13.35–38).

Rukmiṇī continues to remonstrate with Satyabhāmā, emphasising Nēmi's entitlement to worship as Jina, and the good fortune of those who have the opportunity to serve him, eventually silencing her (13.39–40). Here we see that the Nēmi narrative has moved further into the

bhakti-mode by the twelfth century, and Karṇapārya expands upon Svayambhū's tenth-century portrayal of Nēmi as deserving of worship because his Jina-hood is foreordained. Satyabhāmā objects to rendering menial service to Nēmi, but only because Kṛṣṇa too is divine and is worshiped by celestials, and as his wife it is not right that she performs menial service. But Rukmiṇī tells her Indra's women themselves performed menial service to Nēmi's mother before his birth; his birth shook Indra's throne; Satyabhāmā is foolish to humiliate such a personage. So, not only is Nēmi a powerful divinity deserving of bhakti as his right, but also possesses a certain menacing divinity, which it would be foolish to provoke. We also see an articulation of the bhakta as one who must rejoice in performing acts of service for the deity. However, Rukmiṇī stops with telling Satyabhāmā what she is doing wrong and what she ought to do instead. We must wait for a fuller articulation of the obligations of bhakti to understand how it can transcend even marital taboos.

But what is Kṛṣṇa doing here? So far, he has not acted out of insecurity for his throne. In fact, having previously addressed Nēmi as a divine being, he appears to have offered Nēmi explicit permission to demand menial service from his wife. Is he aware of danger from Nēmi, not as a political rival, but as a divinity? Apparently so and with justification, for the poet tells us next that when they return to the city, Nēmi continues to brood on Satyabhāmā's words and he, who receives the homage of the gods, becomes angry (13.41). In his anger he mounts an elephant, and going to Kṛṣṇa's armoury attended by celestials, replicates his three feats of strength with ease, creating chaos in the city (13.42–43).

Baladēva and Kṛṣṇa hear it while seated in the Kusumacitra assembly hall and brandish their weapons in fear; Satyabhāmā, the dark shadow upon the clan, clings to Kṛṣṇa. When Kṛṣṇa is informed of Nēmi's deeds he is worried for his throne. Nēmi, who is already qualified by celestial acclaim, has an even better right to the throne after his feats, and should he claim it who could gainsay him? (13.46). He consults Baladēva urgently, who reassures him – *tīrthan̄karas* are dispassionate and reject the entanglement of earthly rule. But Kṛṣṇa is not convinced, for “among *tīrthan̄karas* there are those who lived first as *cakravartins* and then sought liberation”. Conceding this Baladēva undertakes to make Nēmi averse to the world (13.47), and consequently a marriage between Nēmi and Rājimatī is arranged. Here onwards the tale proceeds along the same lines as in Jinasēna's version.

In Kṛṣṇa's persistent anxiety that even a *tīrthan̄kara* may claim a kingdom, perhaps Karṇapārya echoes the twelfth-century zeitgeist, wherein

sectarian holy men of all types acclaimed as ‘preceptors to kings’ in the Deccan were de facto temporal rulers of large temple estates.¹² Therefore lesser kings (such as the *ardhacakravartin* Kṛṣṇa), although duly anointed, might find their perch insecure with good reason. In Nēmi’s angry response to Satyabhāmā’s rejection, we see the offended dignity of a deity rather than the humiliation of man. Though Nēmi is yet to renounce the world and attain enlightenment, he has already assumed the divine majesty that is his birthright.

Harivaṁśābhyudayam of Bandhuvarma

Bandhuvarma retells the Nēmi tale in the thirteenth century as part of another Kannada *campū* text, the *Harivaṁśābhyudayam*. In describing the *jalakrīḍā* he follows the narrative sequence of Karṇapārya with some changes. The forest setting of the previous narratives is now firmly suburban. When the Yādavas are established in peace and plenty in Dvārāvātī, one spring Kṛṣṇa goes to the pleasure garden to bathe in the stepwell accompanied by his queens, courtesans, and princes including Nēmi. The poet deals briskly with the erotic trope, telling us the women splash Nēmi with water, but he is as indifferent to their indiscriminate splashing as to their charms (13.08 *vacana*). He escapes them and emerges from the water along with Kṛṣṇa. Then,

Comprehending his brother’s signal and complying with it, the prince [Nēmi] said to Satyabhāmā: “Wring out my undergarment.”

She looked at him in rage: “Why should I wring out your undergarment? It is improper. It must not be [done]. Are you my lord? Does the great Goddess work for a living? I may be your sister[-in-law], but should you speak without regard for our relative status?” (13.09–10).

In scolding Nēmi why does Satyabhāmā compare herself to the great Goddess (*ādidēvi*)? We know too little about Bandhuvarma’s milieu to postulate anything with confidence; however, the thirteenth century marked the rise of Vaiṣṇavas in the lower Deccan in the Hoysaḷa ambit. In such a milieu, we may understand the pairing of Satyabhāmā and Kṛṣṇa as that of Śrī and Viṣṇu, and read sectarian overtones into Bandhuvarma’s verse. When Satyabhāmā scolds Nēmi, Rukmiṇī intervenes to describe his divine origins (13.10–12), along the same lines as in Karṇapārya earlier. But Satyabhāmā repudiates Rukmiṇī vigorously:

¹² For example, see Lorenzen 1991; Settar 1989: Chapter 2; Shanthamurthy forthcoming a and b.

“Is my lord’s prowess ordinary? The world knows his might in defeating the eight celestials that his enemy who heard [the news of his birth] sent as soon as Hari was born. Further – and do you not know this to be true? –

He lifted up the mountain to protect the cowherds, he clearly killed the horrible Kālīya snake, occupied the serpent-couch, strung the horn-bow, and easily blew the Pāñcājanya [conch]. Have you not heard how awesome Viṣṇu’s valour is? –

How he vanquished famous wrestlers? How he destroyed Kāmsa? What he did to Śīsupāla? Can there be greater [feats] than this?

Do you not know of his valour when [he] seized [his bride] Jāmbavatī? Have you forgotten how he killed Jarāsandha in battle and obtained the insignia of sovereignty, [and] the glory of ruling the tripartite land?

I, who am the queen of such a *cakravartin* – how dare anyone give me a [menial] task [to perform]?” (13.13–16).

We have here a more expansive recital of Kṛṣṇa’s miraculous feats than ever before, and he is explicitly identified as Viṣṇu (lending some support to the Vaiṣṇava sectarian perspective above). Moreover, Kṛṣṇa’s feats are all already accomplished, and his own, whereas the acclaim of Nēmi by celestials merely foreshadows his future career. Rukmīṇī continues to remonstrate with her, hinting at calamity if Satyabhāmā continues to cross the all-powerful Nēmi, but Satyabhāmā remains angry.

They return to the city where Nēmi, disgusted with the words of his sister-in-law thought, “What do women know of the prowess of great men? I will give her a little demonstration of what I can accomplish” (13.17 *vacana*). By the thirteenth century even a future Jina, aware of his own destiny, acknowledged by celestials, and even possessing devoted bhaktas, must still supply proof of his miraculous powers to convince doubting human followers, who after all have many more options to choose from in terms of sectarian affiliation. Therefore, Nēmi briskly replicates Kṛṣṇa’s three feats of strength and causes chaos. When he learns of Nēmi’s doings, Kṛṣṇa is stunned. He realises Nēmi is more worthy of the kingdom than himself and cannot be suppressed if he presses a claim; he becomes fearful (13.18).

In a departure from other sources, the poet next describes the arm-wrestling incident, though the main elements of the incident are the same as in other sources. Kṛṣṇa challenges Nēmi to a test of strength, perhaps to test a rival claimant to the throne, though the poet does not make his motives clear. He fails miserably, and humiliated and more afraid for his throne than ever, he takes counsel with Baladēva. Baladēva reassures him – Nēmi is destined for liberation, and they need merely hasten it. He arranges Nēmi’s marriage with Rājimatī leading eventually to Nēmi’s renunciation of the world.

It is clear that the thirteenth-century Nēmi is a foreordained deity, and he is merely navigating the set pattern of his career as a human

before his elevation as Jina. His deification is a foregone conclusion even to characters within his life-story, and the human aspects of his experience that lead him to enlightenment are almost caricatured. Yet, unlike the impassive, tranquil Jina, he is permitted anger towards the less-than-devoted and though he does not go as far as to menace them (as some of them fear), he nevertheless makes his divinity plain to the world by performing miracles – indeed, we may even suspect that he is forced to do so.

Nēmijinēśasaṅgati of Maṅgarasa

Maṅgarasa gives us another version of the Nēmi story in the *sāṅgatyā* meter in the fifteenth or sixteenth century. He combines elements from both Karṇapārya and Bandhuvarma in his account, beginning with the arm-wrestling contest between Kṛṣṇa and Nēmi. But it comes about in an unusual way in Maṅgarasa's telling: When some in the assembly request Nēmi to display his physical prowess, he extends his arm playfully. But Kṛṣṇa is unable to bend even a finger of Nēmi's hand, and though he bears down with all his might, he merely appears ridiculous like a like wooden doll on a stick (32.06–08). The celestials acclaim this feat of Nēmi with a timely shower of flowers. Next, when spring arrives, Kṛṣṇa “humbly begs Nēmi to perform a pleasure trip to the grove and the pond” (32.15). Jinasēna would hardly recognise this characterisation of Nēmi and of his relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Here Nēmi is fully the deity, going through the motions of his earthly life as if in divine sport (*līlā*), adored by people who already know that he is a deity, acceding to their requests to ‘perform divinity’. In a way this captures the sectarian zeitgeist of the fifteenth century, for this is the period when Śiva too is performing *līlā* on earth, manifesting himself as Allama, Basava and a host of other human saint-figures, as is Viṣṇu.¹³

They set out for the pleasure grove with Kṛṣṇa's women. Having wandered around a little, they enter the lotus pond and play in the water for a while. Then, when Nēmi emerges to change his garments, in keeping with his role as a deity performing divinity, he hands his undergarment to Satyabhāmā in *līlā*.

At Kṛṣṇa's signal, the benefactor of the world, Nēmi, playfully gave the undergarment he wore to Satyabhāmā, who said with great arrogance, “[I, who am] the chief

¹³ See Shanthamurthy 2020.

queen of the sovereign of the tripartite land of Bharata – would I touch cast off garments as if I were a utterly lowly person?” (32.19–20).

Satyabhāmā, who clearly does not comprehend Nēmi’s divinity, repulses him in anger. Rukmiṇī hears this and angrily upbraids Satyabhāmā, for even celestials sprinkle themselves with Nēmi’s bathwater and do homage to him (32.21), but Satyabhāmā will have none of it:

“Who on earth is the equal of the one who, when he was a child, fearlessly killed the demonesses who came [to attack him] in anger, who lifted up the Gōvardhana mountain with ease, occupied the serpent-couch, strung the horn-bow, easily blew the Pāñcajanya [conch] and killed the powerful Māgadha [Jarāsandha]? Should they tell me [to perform] menial tasks?” (32.22–24ab).

Rukmiṇī counters with an account of Nēmi’s claim to divinity – the celestial rites attending his birth, but Satyabhāmā flounces off unconvinced. Then, attesting to the salvific power of ritualised bhakti, the poet tells us that Rukmiṇī herself takes Nēmi’s garment with pure-minded servitude and desiring liberation (32.30). Rukmiṇī finally transcends marital and other taboos, and in performing menial service so dear to the deity and productive of liberation, manifests bhakti in its ultimate form: servitude. Kṛṣṇa and Baladēva too worship Nēmi with great devotion, offering him garments and ornaments and all return to the city.

As in Bandhuvarma’s account, on his way back Nēmi is roused to anger by Satyabhāmā’s arrogant words “as if water catching fire” (32.32). But, given his demeanour thus far, we can be in no doubt that Maṅgarasa’s Nēmi is offended by Satyabhāmā the sectarian ‘other’ and not Satyabhāmā the impudent woman. He quickly replicates Kṛṣṇa’s three feats of strength, causing chaos in the city and frightening both Kṛṣṇa and Baladēva. Kṛṣṇa is concerned for his throne and thinks: “This one has obtained the submission of the celestials, he is powerful. Should he seize my kingdom who can stop him?”. He consults Baladēva, who reassures him that the holy one will not let himself be entangled in mundane rule for it does not lead to liberation. Kṛṣṇa disagrees, for previous *tīrthaṅkaras* have first ruled as *cakravartins* and then sought liberation (32.41–46). Baladēva suggests they should find a way to make Nēmi averse to the world, and accordingly Kṛṣṇa arranges the marriage of Nēmi to Rājimatī and five hundred other princesses, and the narrative proceeds along familiar lines.

Nēmināthacaritre of Sāḷva

Sāḷva (or Sāḷava Mallēśa), writing in the Jaina enclaves of coastal Karnataka in mid to late sixteenth century, gives us yet another Kannada version of Nēmi, the *Nēmināthacaritre* (or *Sāḷvabhārata*) in the *ṣatpadi* meter. He begins with the arm-wrestling contest between Kṛṣṇa and Nēmi in the assembly in Dvārāvati, but interestingly, the assembly is called *Jinasabhe* and it is Nēmi who is enthroned there, attended by Kṛṣṇa, Baladēva, the Pāṇḍavas and celestials (50.02). Various people praise Bhīma, Baladēva, and Kṛṣṇa, but others uphold Nēmi as the Jina, and therefore unanswerably omnipotent (50.04). His pride wounded, Kṛṣṇa challenges Nēmi to a wrestling bout, but Nēmi tells him they need not go that far – Kṛṣṇa may merely try and move his foot from its footstool if he can; and he plants his left toe firmly (50.06). Kṛṣṇa exhausts himself trying to move the Jina's foot and is humiliated. Baladēva consoles him: Kṛṣṇa should take pride in the fact that he is the elder brother of Nēmi.

In spring Kṛṣṇa invites Nēmi on a pleasure trip to the forest. The women charmingly adorn Kṛṣṇa, Baladēva and Nēmi with forest flowers, and all proceed to the pond, when they bathe and play in the water. Unlike previous poets, Sāḷva transforms the conventional scenes of eroticism in the pond into scenes of worship, idealising them as bhakti: young celestial men play *ōkuḷi*¹⁴ in the guise of women with Nēmi (58.53); Baladēva places him on an artificial thousand-petalled lotus and pours sandal water (performing the *abhiṣēka* ritual) upon him, until he resembles the Jina Candraprabha; The women gaze upon him with worshipful devotion (58.53–54). Then:

As Nēmi exits the pond, the women stare at the Jina's [physical] beauty. He gives his wet garments to Satyabhāmā at Kṛṣṇa's signal. When he extends his hand, she recoils saying "What is this? Am I a serving woman? Am I not Kṛṣṇa's chief queen? Would I touch your soiled garment?"

The wise Rukmiṇī takes the garment and rebukes Satyabhāmā: "You should not utter abuse. At his birth, Indra and other [celestials] received the Jina's bathwater and sprinkled it on their heads. We are but lowly servants. Celestial women were house servants of his mother, and Indra serves the Jina."

Satyabhāmā, enraged at Rukmiṇī's words, says "Listen, daughter of Bhīṣmaka, who else is capable of performing [feats of strength] such as Hari, who killed Pūtiṇi and other demoneses in childhood, lifted up the mountain, occupied the serpent-couch, strung the horn[-bow] and blew the conch?" (58.57–60).

¹⁴ The traditional game of spraying each other with coloured water.

Rukmiṇī responds by describing Nēmi's divine birth compared to Kṛṣṇa's merely human prowess. She also places the claims of the guru above the claims of the husband (58.64), silencing Satyabhāmā. In apparent acknowledgement of this truism, Kṛṣṇa and Baladēva are described as adorning Nēmi with divine garments and ornaments, before all return home.

But Nēmi is angered by Satyabhāmā's arrogant words, for "can the thorn that pierces the mind be relieved unless one retaliates?" (58.66). As soon as they return from the pleasure grove Nēmi replicates Kṛṣṇa's three feats of strength. Kṛṣṇa is concerned for his throne and consults Baladēva, for "who can prevent our younger brother, who is worshiped by Indra, if he decides to seize the kingdom?" Baladēva reassures him, for "why should one, who rules the kingdom of liberation, hanker for the filth of mundanity?" But Kṛṣṇa counters that previous *tīrthaṅkaras* have indeed sought mundane rule. Finally, they conspire to make Nēmi averse to the world (58.70–73), arrange his marriage to Rājīmatī and five hundred other princesses, and the narrative continues as we know from previous discussions.

Refractions in Śvetāmbara Transcreations

Śvetāmbara authors appear to have decided early on that Nēmi as a future Jina cannot be permitted mortal motives, emotions or conduct even early in his life. Hence, they remove Nēmi from the erotic context or at the least distance him from it. Nēmi, who is aware of his Jina-hood, is consistently averse to sexual desire even as a youth. His family expose him to sensuality out of affectionate impulses in an attempt to settle him down as householder. When he is no longer able to avoid their importunities, he merely goes through the motions of mundane existence.

Of the three Śvetāmbara authors considered here, both Śīlāṅka and Hemacandra incorporate the *jalakṛīḍā* in their narratives. Hemacandra introduces the erotic as a *kāvya* trope with a robust description of the activities in the forest and pond, but places Nēmi on the scene merely as a passive patient and indifferent observer. Instead, Kṛṣṇa is the main participant in the *jalakṛīḍā*. Śīlāṅka goes farther than Hemacandra in cleansing Nēmi of the taint of the erotic: Nēmi is not even mentioned among the participants in the *jalakṛīḍā*, although he is clearly on the scene as the subsequent passages confirm. Kīrtiratna dispenses with the *jalakṛīḍā* altogether, proceeding directly to the family pressuring Nēmi to marry.

The arm-wrestling incident and Kṛṣṇa's humiliating loss – which in most Digambara retellings is his motive for polluting Nēmi with the erotic – is absent in Śīlāṅka. It is present in both Hemacandra and Kirtiratna as a way for Kṛṣṇa to assess his opponent, but since Kṛṣṇa's subsequent actions are impelled by affectionate brotherly motives towards Nēmi, it does not have the same causal force as it does in the Digambara versions.

Caüppannamahāpurisacariyam of Śīlāṅka¹⁵

Caüppannamahāpurisacariyam is a ninth-century Prakrit text of the *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣa* genre attributed to Śīlāṅka (or Vimalamati), in which the tale of Nēmi is intertwined with those of Kṛṣṇa and Baladēva. The *jalakrīḍā* occurs in the setting already familiar to us from the texts above. Kṛṣṇa returns to Dvārāvātī having vanquished Jarāsandha and is welcomed. One spring day when Baladēva and Kṛṣṇa are seated discussing household matters, they also discuss Nēmi's aversion to worldly passion: even though he surpasses others in matters of prowess, physical attractiveness and good fortune, he has no sensual desire; therefore, if anyone at all is able to lead him into the net of sensual pleasure by some trick, that would be a good thing (37.138–139). Someone then praises spring in a couple of well-turned verses and Kṛṣṇa decides: "A good opportunity has presented itself. The womenfolk led by Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā with their beautiful retinue, singing the spring *caccarī* song will captivate Nēmi under the pretext of bathing." Accordingly, he announces a pleasure trip. The next day, all proceed, dressed according to their status, and enjoy the *caccarī* dance.

The Yādavas then proceed to bathe. The poet tells us exactly what that was like: the splashing around turning the water red with body paint, the women shrieking, the men aroused by it. Having thus enjoyed themselves fully with various playful pastimes, the Yādavas come out of the water.

Then Kṛṣṇa sends his eight chief queens including Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā, and Jāmbavatī to entrap Nēmi. He puts them off with pleasantries. Then, Jāmbavatī speaks to him in anger: what is the point of his youth if he remains unmarried and chaste? The point of youth is to engage in sensual pleasures; furthermore, it is inappropriate for any respectable person to shirk this obligation – how much more so for one belonging to the Manu clan [like himself]? How can he hope to attain other *puruṣārthas* if he repudiates *kāma*? The youth of a good man without

¹⁵ I am grateful to Andrew Ollett for helping me read this passage.

a beloved is incomplete. Further, it is inappropriate for him to do otherwise [since] propagating one's lineage has been done by his parents too, and it is not wise for the great, like himself, to transgress the command of one's parents. So, in due course, he should make his youth successful by taking the hand of a woman (37.151–154).¹⁶

Nēmi, though unpersuaded, gives in, for (he knows, being the omniscient Jina that) doing so will lead to him to renunciation. A marriage is arranged with Rājīmatī, sister of Satyabhāmā, and thereafter the narrative proceeds along the lines common to all Nēmi narratives.

Triṣaṣṭīśālākāpuruṣacaritra of Hemacandra

The Sanskrit *Triṣaṣṭīśālākāpuruṣapurāṇam* of Hemacandra, the preceptor of the twelfth-century Gurjara king Kumārapāla, also provides us a version of the Nēmi tale. Hemacandra's version of the *jalakriḍā* follows the Digambara version more closely than that of Śīlāṅka, in that it is preceded by the arm-wrestling contest; however, there are significant departures from the Digambara narrative sequence. Once Nēmi, wandering around with princes, enters Kṛṣṇa's armoury and blows the Pāñcajanya conch, creating chaos in the city. Kṛṣṇa is made anxious that there is an emergent threat to his sovereignty. When he finds out that Nēmi is the author of the incident, he challenges Nēmi to an arm-wrestling contest wishing to test his strength. Nēmi defeats Kṛṣṇa with ease. Kṛṣṇa discusses his disquiet with Baladēva, who reassures him. A timely disembodied voice also prophecies Nēmi's renunciation of the world. Kṛṣṇa then summons Nēmi and makes him free of his women's quarters, though the poet does not tell us why. Then, one spring day the Yādavas go to the Raivataka garden to enjoy themselves. As Kṛṣṇa and his wives, Satyabhāmā and others, wander around with Nēmi:

It occurs to Kṛṣṇa that were Nēmi to turn his mind to sensual pleasures, beauty would find its purpose; moreover, it would be a brotherly thing to do on his part. Were receptive Nēmi to be often surrounded with temptation and excitement and their pleasurable consequences by him, his objective would be accomplished (8.9.58–59).

Kṛṣṇa sets to it:

His wives led by the clever Satyabhāmā understood his intention. They approached Nēmi with colourful flower ornaments. One brushing against him with her large high breasts from behind entwined his hair-knot with strings of flowers. Another wife of Hari placed a chaplet on his head standing in front, her upraised arm

¹⁶ The language in this passage is obscure in places and I have omitted translation of the similes in the original.

revealing her armpit. Another seized Nēmi's ear with her hand and placed an ear ornament in it as if [arranging] Kāma's banner. Another playfully placed fresh flower armbands again and again on his arms. Thus, they offered Nēmi seasonable civilities, but Nēmi treated them with indifference (8.9.61–66).

Spring passes, summer comes and all suffer from the heat. Kṛṣṇa, his women, and Nēmi go to bathe in a pond in the Raivataka garden. Here, the poet treats the erotic trope according to convention but with Kṛṣṇa instead of Nēmi as the main participant in the *jalakriḍā*. Nēmi participates at the insistence of Kṛṣṇa but remains unmoved. Kṛṣṇa's women repeatedly attempt to incite Nēmi to passion, as the poet tells us in some detail, but Nēmi continues impassive. (8.9.86–94). When they eventually emerge from the pond Rukmiṇī honours Nēmi, as if worshipping a deity, by offering him a seat herself and drying his body with her own upper garment (8.9.97). However, Satyabhāmā challenges Nēmi's aversion to sensual pleasures under the guise of pleasantries. He is the brother of Kṛṣṇa who has sixteen thousand women, while he has not even one. He is well-favoured, but celibate. She pressures him to accede to the wishes of his kin and marry. He wastes time as a bachelor – is he ignorant? dried up? impotent? Celibacy is not fitting for a young man; even the *tīrthāṅkara* Vṛṣabha was a householder first (8.9.98–105). Jāmbavatī too offers a similar example of Muni Suvrata of his own lineage. The family besieges Nēmi with similar pleas, and he gives in to their importunities though deprecating their ignorance. Kṛṣṇa arranges his marriage with Rājimatī, sister of Satyabhāmā, and thereafter the narrative proceeds along the lines common to all Nēmi narratives.

Nēmināthamahākāvyaṃ of Kīrtiratna

The Sanskrit *Nēmināthamahākāvyaṃ* of Kīrtiratna (or Kīrtirāja), a Jaina ascetic belonging to the Kharataragacchā, is a fifteenth-century retelling of the Nēmi tale belonging to the *mahākāvya* genre. Though the seasons are in full in swing, they do not move Nēmi to any stirrings of sensuality, “for the lion does not eat fruit though it lives in the forest” (8.54); clearly the *jalakriḍā* as a narrative device has no significance for the poet, and he omits it entirely.

Once, as Nēmi wanders about passing time, he happens to go into Kṛṣṇa's armoury. There, he playfully picks up the conch and blows it, causing chaos. Kṛṣṇa, desirous to test his strength, challenges him to a contest of arm-wrestling. Nēmi bends Kṛṣṇa's arm as if bending a lotus stalk, while Kṛṣṇa clings to Nēmi's arm like a monkey dangling from a

tree. However, Nēmi explicitly disclaims any interest in Kṛṣṇa's kingdom (8.64).

Nēmi's kin wish him to marry, and Kṛṣṇa asks the advice of his wives, "for they were skilled in such matters". One day, Satyabhāmā and other women of Kṛṣṇa address Nēmi: "Nēmi, charming youth falls away quickly; why do you waste it?" (9.04–06),¹⁷ and they urge him to marry and enjoy sensual pleasures natural to man. Nēmi repudiates the sensuality foolishly lauded by the wives of his brother, for it impedes the attainment of enlightenment. He forbids them from mentioning it again, "for only rustics discuss such matters" (9.27). But Kṛṣṇa's wives persist, addressing him as the Jina – it is his filial duty to marry. When his mother Śivādēvi also adds her voice, Nēmi reluctantly gives in, though he is indifferent. Kṛṣṇa arranges the marriage of Nēmi to Rājīmatī, and thereafter the narrative proceeds along the lines common to all Nēmi narratives.

Conclusion

The early Digambara sources appear to adopt a much more human formulation of Nēmi. He is described as a human male with impulses of playfulness, flirtation, hurt pride and anger which direct his responses to the main events of the narrative. He is playful in his arm-wrestling contretemps with Kṛṣṇa in the Yādava assembly, he flirts with Kṛṣṇa's wives in the pond (more explicitly in some versions than in others), and it is the anger of a man slighted by a woman which moves him to replicate Kṛṣṇa's three feats of strength. Finally, though I have not systematically examined the trigger that leads him to renounce the world, he seems to come upon the penned wild animals as a genuine happenstance on the way to his wedding, and his human response to their distress leads him to a moment of *éclaircissement* and consequent aversion to the world and its ways. In the later Digambara and Śvetāmbara narratives on the other hand, Nēmi (as well as everyone else) never escapes the awareness of his omniscient Jina-hood, and the insistent appearance of merely going through the motions of mundane existence saps Nēmi of humanity.

In addition, there are two noticeable developments in the treatment of Nēmi in Digambara narratives over time: first, the narrative elements are more clearly articulated as a causal chain of human motivations; second,

¹⁷ I do not translate the similes in the original.

the figure of Nēmi becomes more obviously divine. The treatment of the arm-wrestling incident is illustrative of the former development, which Jinasēna frames as the key to Kṛṣṇa's subsequent plotting to entrap Nēmi in sensual pleasures with the connivance of his women during *jalakriḍā*. This results in further humiliation and anxiety for Kṛṣṇa when Nēmi replicates his feats of strength causing him to urgently arrange the marriage of Nēmi to Rājīmatī.

It is interesting that Guṇabhadra, Puṣpadanta, and Cāvuṇḍarāya omit the arm-wrestling incident and attribute no underhand motives to Kṛṣṇa before the *jalakriḍā*. Svayambhū too merely mentions it indirectly and in passing – though they must all have had Jinasēna's version as a model. However, Karṇapārya and later authors reintroduce the arm-wrestling incident. One possible explanation is that Guṇabhadra, Puṣpadanta and Cāvuṇḍarāya were writing in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa royal ambit,¹⁸ where the connection of the king with Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa/Gōvinda was quite explicit, and from the ninth century onwards the dynasty claimed descent from the Yadu clan of Kṛṣṇa (Altekar 1934: 15–16). Any attribution of skulldugger to Kṛṣṇa, or explicit and gratuitous humiliation of him by a Jaina *tīrthankara* may have been a perilous textual device for the author, though it is interesting that the threat to Kṛṣṇa's throne from Nēmi does not appear to be a forbidden theme. This is not to suggest that the Rāṣṭrakūṭas were devout Vaiṣṇavas and the tableau of Nēmi defeating Kṛṣṇa with sectarian overtones of Jaina–Vaiṣṇava conflict could possibly have been offensive to them; instead, it is suggested merely that the tableau of a figure who bears the reign name of a Rāṣṭrakūṭa king being subject to defeat and humiliation by Nēmi may have been something that poets in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa royal ambit wished to avoid. Nevertheless, this is only an unprovable speculation, and therefore readers may choose to take this with some scepticism.

The second development is the premature deification of Nēmi by participants in the text, seen first in Svayambhū but becoming insistent thereafter, as revealed in Rukmiṇī's attitude. Another signification of the same phenomenon is Baladēva's reassurance to Kṛṣṇa after Nēmi replicates his feats of strength. Baladēva describes Nēmi as the Jina, and therefore indifferent to mundane rule. This is first seen in Puṣpadanta, though Baladēva does not explicitly call Nēmi the Jina:

¹⁸ Guṇabhadra was guru of Rāṣṭrakūṭa Kṛṣṇa II, a politically weak king (Altekar 1934: 99). Svayambhū too was writing in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa period but we do not know how close he was to royal circles. Svayambhū's sectarian affiliation which appears to fall between Digambara and Śvetāmbara may have influenced his narrative choices in ways that are unclear to us.

Baladēva said, “This is appropriate, brother you should not be jealous. He who causes the sun to tremble, at whose feet Indra falls, [who causes] the earth with mountains and oceans to move, who can cross the seven oceans, who is worthy of worship before any in the world – for him, the serpent couch is a couch of flowers. If he blows the conch and strings the bow, why do you make your mind hostile?” (*Mahāpurāṇu*, 88.21.08–12).

As in the case of Rukmiṇī, Baladēva’s description of Nēmi as the Jina becomes more explicit and more laudatory with each subsequent retelling.

One possible factor is the influence of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava bhakti movements in which deification of saint figures is common. They become prominent in the Deccan after the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, and last upto the Vijayanagara period and beyond. Based on epigraphical evidence at Shravanabelagola, Settar (1989: 31–70) notes that during the twelfth century, Digambara Jainas shift their emphasis from spiritual attainments to institution building under the control of a certain Mūlasaṅgha. The building and endowment of temples by Jaina laity specifically with Hoysaḷa royal connections is notable. Further research that combines epigraphical evidence with Kannada textual sources, and which is not restricted only to Jaina material would shed much light on this pan-sectarian ‘bhakti’ development as a broader social phenomenon.

A second possible factor in this development is the Śvetāmbara influence on Digambara narratives in the Deccan. Digambara Jainas experience a gradual loss of royal patronage after the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and are eventually marginalised in the Deccan. Settar (1989: 3–90) traces the rise and eventual decline of Digambara Jainas between 600 and 1900 CE, based on epigraphical and material evidence in Shravanabelagola, their preeminent religious stronghold in Southern Karnataka. This loss of political and social status is echoed in Jaina polemical texts such as the *Dharmāmṛtam* of Nayasēna (early twelfth century), the *Samaya-parikṣe* of Brahmaśiva (end twelfth century) and the *Dharma-parikṣe* of Vṛttavilāsa (mid fourteenth century). It is also evident in Śaiva narratives of sectarian triumph such as the thirteenth-century *Sōmanāthacāritre* of Rāghavāṅka in Kannada, which tells us of the violent conversion of the Jaina Surahonne *basadi* of Puligere in northern Karnataka into a temple for Śiva-Sōmanātha, as well as many other tales of destruction and displacement of Jainas by Śaivas.¹⁹ This is not to say that Digambara Jainas disappear completely from the Deccan. Though politically and socially weakened, they continue to inhabit southern Karnataka and even flourish in coastal Karnataka under the

¹⁹ For discussion and examples, see Ben-Herut 2016, and 2018: 199–229.

protection of the Sāntara and Āḷupa dynasties.²⁰ However, the social circumstances of Digambara Jainas and their interactions with the more prosperous Śvetāmbaras of the North and West (who continue to visit Shravanabelagola and leave epigraphical records of their ventures) are understudied and an interesting area for further research.

A consideration of narrative details also raises interesting questions about what it meant to be a woman bounded by the norms of marriage or other types of marital relationships in the changing social milieu of the Deccan from the ninth to the sixteenth century. Three such elements in and around the *jalakriḍā* incident are of interest – Kṛṣṇa's express consent to Nēmi handing his wet garment to one of his wives, the actual point of conflict in the quarrel between Jāmbavatī/Satyabhāmā and Nēmi, and the changing role of Rukmiṇī as the Jina-devotee extraordinaire. One must be cautious about making broad claims derived from the heuristics of a small sample such as those examined in this essay; any robust conclusions about gender relations in the Jaina or the broader social milieu of premodern Deccan must await a generalised study of the role of women in Digambara Jaina narratives and should be informed by the role of women in contemporaneous narratives of other sects. With this *proviso*, one may still note certain points of interest in the circumstances of the incidents discussed here.

In the sample of texts considered here, Svayambhū, Karṇapārya, Bandhuvarma, Maṅgarasa, and Sāḷva make it clear that Kṛṣṇa explicitly consents to (in fact, initiates) Nēmi's handing the cast-off garment to one of his wives, whereas Jinasēna, Guṇabhadra, Puṣpadanta, and Cāvuṇḍarāya omit any reference to Kṛṣṇa in Nēmi's handing over the garment. This appears to be a chronological evolution. This could be interpreted as follows: sometime after the tenth century the conduct of men towards the 'wife' of another began to be more closely regulated with due regard to the 'husband'. At the same time, a man was considered the 'master' of other women, for whom (and with whom) considerably greater license in interactions was permitted. This is evident from the descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's (unnamed) women enticing Nēmi in the forest and the pond. This cannot be said to be *prima facie* a Jaina social restriction. A study of narrative texts from the Deccan from different sectarian traditions would enable us to draw more robust insights in this regard.

²⁰ For a history of the Sāntaras and their religious affiliations, see Venkatesha 2000: 39-68. For a history of the Āḷupas and their religious affiliations, see Ramesh 1970.

The nature of the quarrel between one of Kṛṣṇa's chief queens – Jāmbavatī according to Svayambhū and Jinasēna, and Satyabhāmā according to the others – is also interesting because of the light it sheds on the social status of the woman. Jāmbavatī/Satyabhāmā rejects Nēmi's request for a personal service, not as socially transgressive in itself, but as beneath the status of the wife of a great personage such as Kṛṣṇa, even when this request is made at Kṛṣṇa's prompting in some cases. At the same time, some of these women do not reject Kṛṣṇa's demand that they sexually entice Nēmi in the forest and the pond – either because that was not considered a 'menial' service, or because they were not 'wives'. This again cannot be called a Jaina social phenomenon, and a broader study of contemporaneous texts should shed interesting light on the status of women that could determine (and be influenced in turn by) activities permitted to them.

Finally, Rukmiṇī's strong advocacy of Nēmi as Jina is interesting on two dimensions: the permission for 'chaste' women to perform menial and/or socially transgressive service demanded by a 'divine' man who is not the husband, and advocacy of such service by a woman of higher marital/household status such as Rukmiṇī and not by Kṛṣṇa himself (the husband concerned). This may be an aspect with social implications specific to Jaina communities, given the ubiquity of socially significant groups of male Jaina mendicant and sedentary ascetics in this period who depended upon women of lay households to provide them with sustenance, as well as the epigraphically attested prominence of lay women in religious undertakings in Shravanabelagola.²¹ At the same time, such ascetics were also a part of the Śaiva (and to a lesser extent Vaiṣṇava) social milieu, and once again, a broader study of narrative texts across these sects should shed interesting light on the matter.

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²¹ See Settar 1989: 31–70.

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