

## Medieval *Barahmasa*: Theological Overtures

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India is a country of rich oral traditions, and folk-songs comprise a major portion of orality. One such folk-song is *barahmasa*, which is one of the oldest living songs, and has been sung/written in almost all the vernaculars of North-Indian region. *Barahmasa*, primarily, is a woman's song: wherein, a *virahini* – a female lover/wife separated from her beloved/husband, sings in first person the song of *viraha* (love in separation) at the backdrop of twelve months of Hindu lunar calendar – *Chaitra*, *Vaisakh*, *Jyestha*, *Asadha*, *Sravan*, *Bhadon*, *Ashwin*, *Kartikka*, *Agrahayana/margasirsa*, *Pausha*, *Magha* and *Phalgun*. The present research gives a critical analysis of the medieval phase of *barahmasa* poetry; wherein, it was reinvented by the poets of three major spiritual movements, i.e. Jainism, *Bhakti* and *Sufism*.

**Keywords:** Barahmasa, Medieval, Sufi, Bhakti, Jainism, Folk

*Barahmasa* is one of the oldest Indian forms of poetry. It is composed of two words, *barah* – twelve, *masa* – month, and is popularly referred to as 'the song of twelve months.' The form of *barahmasa* intrinsically interweaves poetic muses with a month-wise description of changing seasons of the Hindu lunar calendar<sup>1</sup>. Before its transference to the written word, *barahmasa* has been much popular as a folk song. Although the idea of its origin has always been debatable, it is suggested by a number of critics that *barahmasa* is originated from the poetic tradition of *shad-rituvarnana* (description of six seasons); the latter had been existing since the time of the ancient Indian scriptures like the Vedas, the Puranas and the famous Indian epic, the Ramayana. In the later period of its evolution, it was transformed into the poetic genre of *barahmasa*. As an established generic tradition, *barahmasa* essentially depicted a *virahini* – a female lover/wife in separation from her beloved/husband, singing in first person the song of *viraha* (love in separation) against the backdrop of twelve months. With regard to the medieval period of its evolution – which is the primary focus of the present research – the form of *barahmasa* was reinvented by three popular socio-religious movements prevalent during the deviant spells of medieval period, i.e., Jainism, *bhakti* and *sufism*, which repurposed *barahmasa* to set new trends of faith. Although it

has been equally popular in the modern Indian languages like Hindi, Punjabi, English and others, the present article discusses the medieval aspect of *barahmasa* poetry.

As is well known, the spiritual movements mentioned above questioned the dominant theological structures of their time. For instance, *bhakti* movement was a challenge to the hierarchies of *Brahminical* Indian society, and to the institutionalization of religions which had rendered the accessibility of God only to a few privileged castes. On the other hand, *sufism* – though it never challenged the authority of Quran – stressed on its emotional, spiritual side, and united people across different religions and castes through its mystical experience of the “Supreme-Beauty” (Vaudeville 38). As far as Jainism is concerned, it is assumed to have existed centuries before the growing prominence of *bhakti* and *sufi* traditions during medieval period; its propagation during the said period was only a continuation. Being an established religion already, it had its own set of institutionalized beliefs which attracted a number of Indians. Several medieval Indian poets belonging to the above mentioned socio-religious movements availed the poetic frame of *barahmasa* to construct and communicate their own religious worldviews: while the names of *sufi* and *bhakti* poets like Mulla Daud, Malik Muhammad Jayasi, Baba Farid, Bulleh Shah, Kabir, Meera and Guru Nanak are well-known, Vinayacandra Suri and Jinapadma Suri were the two famous representatives of the Jain stream of poetry.

Since these poets often used ‘love’ as the principle metaphor in their poems (though in their own peculiar ways), the form of *barahmasa*, with ‘love’ as its intrinsic theme, came in handy to them. Reciprocally, the infusion of different spiritual faiths metamorphosed this love song into a religio-philosophical message. However, it is worthwhile considering here that ‘love’ as an emotion then was not to be interpreted in purely mundane terms, for it acquires several figurative meanings when placed in context of the socio-literary movements presently under study – Jainism, *bhakti* and *sufism*. Since all three of them are marked by philosophical distinctions, their metaphorical approach towards ‘*viraha*’ is distinctly reflected in their *barahmasa* poems. How these poets distinguished their own religious worldviews from others despite using the same poetic pattern of *barahmasa*, and why *barahmasa* – despite substantial characteristic differences between these movements – became a common poetic tool for all these spiritual endeavors is an idea that invites some critical attention. Although, *barahmasas* written under the influence of Jain, *sufi*, or *bhakti* thought are many, three representative texts (one each from all the three fronts) have been selected to devise a comparative analytical frame: “Rajal-*Barahmasa*” (*Neminatha-Chatuspadika*) (c.1269) by Vinayacandra Suri (**Jain**), “Bara Maha” (*Guru Granth Sahib*) (c. 1520 A.D.) by Guru Nanak (***bhakti***), and “Nagmati-*Barahmasa*” (*Padmavati*) (1540 A.D.) by Malik Muhammad Jayasi (***sufi***).

## The Jain *Barahmasa*

Charlotte Vaudeville in her monograph *Barahmasa in Indian Literatures* (1986) demonstrates the possibility of Jain preachers being the first to use *barahmasa* to disseminate their religious teachings. It is a well-known fact that Jainism does not validate the conventional idea of God being wholly distinct from the human beings; contrarily, it proposes the idea of the innate capacity of every human being to attain the state of Godliness. Since Jainism was an established religion with a number of religious and philosophical treatises written on it, its principles and codes of conduct have always been very clear and well-defined. The ethical system of Jains is based on five principle vows that are to be followed to attain liberation: *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), *achaurya/asteya* (abstinence from stealing), *brahmacharya* (chastity), and *aparigraha* (non-attachment towards worldly things). (Banerjee 6) *Barahmasas* written by Jain *munis* (monks) are but the poetic parables to propagate this ethical path.

The Jain *barahmasas* – most of which were written in Old-Gujarati – are almost always an allusion to the mythical story of Yadava Prince Neminatha or Nemi, who was the twenty second *Tirthankara*<sup>ii</sup> of Jain religion, and was a cousin to the popular Hindu God icon, Krishna. The legend of Nemi's life is not always mentioned, but it is always to be taken as the background of Jain *barahmasas*. The hero Nemi is deeply loved by princess Rajimati or Rajal, who is the daughter of another Yadava King Ugrasena. Though already a bit disenchanted with the ways of the world, Nemi is still convinced by his family members to marry Rajal. However, as soon as the wedding procession reaches Ugrasena's palace, he sees and hears in the palace courtyard thousands of screaming animals that were to be slaughtered for the marriage feast. Filled with compassion, he decides not to be the cause for this mass slaughter. Refusing to marry Rajal for this reason, he renounces the worldly ways, and walks away for penance to the holy mountain of Girnar. On the other hand Rajal, since she had already accepted Nemi as her husband, is left grief-stricken. Inconsolable due to the separation from her beloved, she sings the song of *viraha* against the backdrop of twelve months. Thus:

In the month of *Shravan*, the clouds roar loudly,  
and my body is burnt in the fire of separation  
Flashes of lightening, to me, are like devouring monsters:  
O my friend, how shall I survive without Nemi?  
(“Rajal-Barahmasa” 98)

The poet Vinayacandra Suri chooses to put his *barahmasa* into a dialogue form, which takes place between the heroine Rajal and her *sakhi* (female friend). Such a rendition of *barahmasa* is unconventional in the sense that the presence of a friend in earlier *barahmasas* used to be implied: the emotions and expressions of the *virahini* was the focal point of earlier *barahmasas*. While the *virahini* (female lover in separation) addressed her feelings to a friend, there used to be

no response from the other end. Interestingly, such is not the case in Jain *barahmasas*. First of all, the friend in “Rajal-Barahmasa” neither exists in absentia nor fades into insignificance; rather, she is vocally present throughout the poem. Secondly, her dialogic presence serves an important purpose in the development both of the poem and the narrative of Jain ideal: while Rajal takes the usual course of expressing her sorrowful feelings, her friend, parallelly with the passage of each month, keeps persuading her to forget Nemi, who has deserted such a loving wife. She even tells Rajal that “there are many husbands just as good as Nemi” (102), and that she should “take another husband” (101) to taste the joys of her youth. Rajal’s friend in Jain *barahmasas* symbolizes all the worldly desires and temptations, everything that – under the banner of Jainism – is considered as bad, inferior, lowly, corrupt and immoral. And against this personified character are to be pitted the Jain ideals of non-violence, non-possession and chastity, which are embodied in the persona of Nemi (the Beloved/Husband). And both the personifications are artistically coalesced in the *barahmasa* sung by princess Rajal (the female Lover).

Even though Nemi has left her on the day of their nuptial ceremony, and is the direct cause of her present misery, Rajal is in no way willing to hear a word against him. It is quite different from the ordinary *viraha-barahmasas*, wherein the *virahini* even took the liberty of calling her husband a “fool” (*Barahmasa*, Baisaldev-Ras 56), and also reprimanded him for being so unromantic and insensitive. Here contrarily, the phenomenal stature of Nemi remains inviolable. Such insulting words like “cruel” or “coward” – if at all they occur in attribution to Nemi – are used only by her friend. While Rajal, despite all her predicament, keeps extolling Nemi: he is the “sun” amongst the “stars” (98), an “elephant” amongst the “donkeys” (101); “the Ocean of Compassion” (99) without whom she “will give up both youth and life!” (103).

Beginning with the month of *Shravan*, Suri narrates the dialogue between Rajal and her friend for the whole year, thus simultaneously experimenting with and retaining the beauty of folk *barahmasa*. The poet gradually takes the dialogue towards the last month of the year, i.e. *Jeth*. In this month of unbearable heat, princess Rajal, while sharing her agony with her friends, becomes unconscious. And immediately after her revival, she utters these words: “I have grown disgusted with this world... Let me practice Dharma, let me serve at my Husband’s feet” (104). Consequently, in the intercalary<sup>iii</sup> month (which is supposed to personify “all the virtues of six seasons”), princess Rajal turns to Jain asceticism. Thus:

Followed by her five friends and all her attendants  
for the love of her spouse, Rajal departed for Girnar:  
There, together with all her friends, the heroic Rajal  
took initiation from her lord [Nemi].

For the love of prince Nemi, at Girnar

The princess Rajal turned a *Siddhi!*

(“Rajal Barahmasa” 105)

Charlotte Vaudeville writes that the Jain monks were quick to avail the “*viraha-gitas*” (songs of separation) “to disseminate their ascetic teaching, and the change from *viraha* to *vairagya*, i.e. from a lament for solitude to an attitude of contempt for the world and its fleeting joys occurs as a natural development” (Vaudeville 27). She emphasizes that considering their unswerving negation of the worldly attachments, and renunciation of the same as the only possible resort, “the pathetic tone of rain song was ideal for their purposes; the *viraha* thus seems to have been the Jain preacher’s natural ally” (Vaudeville 37). It becomes very evident how Jain poets reinvented *barahmasa* and transmuted it to a theological end. Vinayacandra Suri’s “Rajal-*Barahmasa*” (*Neminatha-Chatuspadika*) is just one specimen in this experimental series.

### **The *Bhakti Barahmasa***

The emotion of ‘love’ takes on a different meaning in the *barahmasa* of medieval *bhakti* poetry. The poets of *bhakti* movement used the personal longing of *barahmasa* as a devotional exercise. *Viraha* has been a significant theme in the medieval *bhakti* poetry. Although other *bhakti* poets like Kabir and Raidas did not write *barahmasas*, it is difficult to decline their inclination towards what Charlotte Vaudeville, in her book *Barahmasa in Indian Literatures*, refers to as the “spiritual *viraha*.” (43) She aptly quotes Kabir’s verses articulating this “*viraha* theology” (43): “Do not abuse that Virah / for Virah is a King: / The body that contains not Virah / is forever a burning ground.” (Vaudeville *Kabir* 164)

As far as the socio-religious context of the movement is concerned, *bhakti* poets denounced all the institutionalized approaches towards God, and suggested instead a more personal and less pedantic path to reach out to the divine. *Barahmasa* served as a ready device to enlighten the people with this belief. Famous medieval poet Guru Nanak just had to cast a metaphorical framework around this old song: the *virahini* in his “Bara Maha” becomes a metaphor for the devotee, and the husband symbolizes the omnipresent God, while the love-song of twelve months of separation becomes a prayer-song of intense devotion. However, to make the context clear, Guru Nanak – before the beginning of *barahmasa* – pays a tribute to the omnipotent God. This short poetic prologue, while on the one hand, extols the God by addressing it as the creator of all living beings, because of whom all “created beings enjoy bliss or suffer sorrow” (Nanak 1060); on the other hand, it creates a metaphorical background for the *barahmasa* that is to follow.

Sisir Kumar Das in his book *The Mad Lover: Essays on Medieval Indian Poetry* writes that *bhakti* poetry “emphasized lived experiences over the doctrine, *bhakti* or devotion in relation to *jnana* (knowledge), equality in the face of Brahminical hierarchy and emotion over intellect; and in literature and culture too, the non-classical, folk and *desi* cultures challenged the domination of

the classical, the urban and the *sastriya*” (Das 37). *Barahmasa*, as a form, catered to all these essential principles of *bhakti* movement. The folk-song of *barahmasa* was completely people-oriented and was popular amongst the languages that belonged to the ordinary people. In addition to that, Guru Nanak embarks to formulate an unorthodox religious paradigm which ardently proposes – against the existing religious systems of its time – a monotheistic approach towards God: “To know that the one Lord abides throughout the ages, is for me all the worship and all charity.” Nanak’s “Bara Maha” also attacks the extant religious practices and rituals of the ailing society. In another verse, he writes: “to taste the great essence of the Lord’s worship alone is to bathe in the holy waters” (Nanak 1062). Imagining himself as a Bride and the God as her spouse, Nanak completely humanizes the relation between the God and the devotee, and there remains no formal distance between the two: “If the Lord comes not into the Bride’s home, O, how will she find peace? Separateness tugs at / her heart and wears it off” (1060). Nanak avails the thematic structure of *barahmasa* figuratively to depict how a devotee feels being separated from the divine. Thus:

In the month of *Bhadon*, I am led astray by illusion; and though full of beauty, I grieve.  
The earth is covered with water, the seas are brimful: now is the time to enjoy  
The whole black night it rains but where is Peace for the young bride; the peacocks and the  
frogs shriek.

(“Bara Maha” 1061)

Another reason why *barahmasa* became an attraction for *bhakti* poets is the central feminine voice of the song. It is worthwhile analyzing why a devotee-poet preferred femininity for expressing his devotion towards the divine; especially when retaining their original physical identity (male) could have been a natural alternative. Famous Indian literary critic A. K. Ramanujan in his essay “On Women Saints” has an interesting insight to offer in this regard:

The male takes on female personae: they are feminine, yearning, passive towards a male God. Before God, all men are women. But no female saint, however much she may defy male-oriented ‘relational’ antidotes, takes on a male persona. It is as if, being already female, she has no need to change anything to turn towards God. Like the untouchable and the low-caste saint, she needs shed nothing, for she has nothing to shed: neither physical prowess, nor social power, nor punditry, nor even spiritual pride. (Ramanujan 277)

Ramanujan’s argument is deeply influenced by the life and writings of the famous Kannada *bhakti* poet Akka Mahadevi, whom he primarily discusses – along with other female *bhakti poets* – in this essay. In one of her *vachanas*<sup>iv</sup>, Akka Mahadevi glorifies Lord *Shiva* addressing him as “the haughty Master / for whom men, all men / are but women, wives” (*Speaking of Siva* 31).

Nevertheless, if what Akka Mahadevi says in her *vachana* and what Ramanujan suggests in his essay has an element of truth, *barahmasa* seems to have been a natural upshot. Without any “physical prowess” and “social power”, the *virahini* in *barahmasa* song has no control over her circumstances, her happiness depending wholly upon the benevolence of her husband. Accordingly, Guru Nanak, in his “Bara Maha”, also chooses to become a *virahini*, who is “meek” and “powerless”, and who only “by his (God’s) grace... becomes like her Lord and attains merit” (Singh 1061). Because the *bhakta* or devotee, when he takes on the female personae, does not have to shed his ego to come closer to the divine, for there is no ego or pride to shed; which males in medieval India would possibly acquire because of their social privileges or their monopolistic access to the God and its divine knowledge.

Unconventionally, bhakti poetry made devotee the focal point of worship. Though God remains the almighty, omnipotent source of creation, *bhakti* poetry made devotee the axis around which the realm of worship revolved. Consequently, the dynamics of religious devotion were redefined, shifting its focus from God-to-devotee to devotee-to-God. We shall now analogously proceed to the *sufi barahmasa*.

### **The Sufi Barahmasa**

Before analysing Nagmati’s *barahmasa* in the *sufi* text *Padmavati* by Malik Muhammad Jayasi, let us briefly understand the complex idea of *sufism*. First of all, it is significant to note that *sufism* never challenged its allegiance to the Quran; almost all the books written on *sufism* unequivocally testify its religious origin and adherence to Islam. It is rather defined by Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi in his book *A History of Sufism in India* (1978) as an “inward or esoteric side of Islam; it may, for the sake of convenience, be described as the mystical dimension of Islam” (Rizvi 18). The idea gained momentum because of Islam’s perpetual indifference towards the emotional aspect of the God-devotee interface, which gave impetus to the idea and practice of *sufism* in social and religious life. This emotional dissatisfaction with religious orthodoxy was in fact a general feeling in the medieval period of Indian history. The same was then expressed through several socio-literary movements. However, contrary to *bhakti* poets, many of whom questioned the teachings of their religious scriptures, *sufi* poets tried to accentuate the emotive side of Islamic worship without putting Quran to question, thus retaining the popular Muslim support while extending its reach to non-Muslims as well.

Unlike the *barahmasas* of Jain or *bhakti* tradition, where independent poems themselves stood for the philosophical message, *sufi barahmasas* were rather written by *sufi* poets of Oudh as a part of the larger philosophical narratives; such *barahmasas* were “long lyrical pieces included in *premakhyanas*, love stories with an allegorical meaning” (Vaudeville 12). Nagmati’s *barahmasa* in Muhammad Jayasi’s epic poem *Padmavati* is the “most polished specimen of the kind.” (12)

The poetic form of *barahmasa* features another shift when studied in context of *sufism*. Purushottam Agrawal in his essay “The Erotic to the Divine” states that “Sufi philosophy attributed femininity to the divine, but not to the devotee” (Agrawal 64). Consequently, in *sufi* allegories including Jayasi’s *Padmavati*, “it is the hero rather than the heroine who is prey to the torture of *viraha*; the *virahini* (female lover) of folk tradition becomes a *virahi* (male lover in separation) in Sufi works” (Vaudeville 38). On the other hand, it is also true that the female-song of *barahmasa*, as Charlotte Vaudeville argues, “was too old and well-established for Sufi writers to be able to make” this gender-transposition easily (Vaudeville 38). Therefore, *sufi* poets, rather than attributing the song of *barahmasa* to the hero, put it in the mouth of the heroine (always the ancillary heroine, the first, neglected wife), thus retaining the attribution of *barahmasa* to the neglected female lover/wife, the *virahini*; while at the same time, the male hero as *virahi* remains the central focus of the story. Accordingly in Jayasi’s *Padmavati*, the hero of the story (King Ratansen) stands for the devotee (*mushaqin*), the heroine (Padmavati) symbolizes divine Beauty, and a parrot, with some extraordinary qualities and wisdom, becomes the spiritual guide (*murshid*) of the devotee; whereas the song of *barahmasa* is sung by the first wife of the hero (Nagmati). Muhammad Jayasi’s *Padmavati* is a verse novel telling the story of King Ratansen and princess Padmavati, with Nagmati as Ratansen’s first wife. Hiramani, Padmavati’s pet parrot gives an exquisite description of her beauty to King Ratansen. The description leaves an indelible imprint on Ratansen’s heart, and he immediately faints after hearing the vivid account of Padmavati’s beauty. When he regains his consciousness, he feels as if he has woken up from a heavenly sleep, and “has lost the knowledge” that he gained in the “city of Immortality” (Jayasi 84). He says: “Now my spirit is there, and here is only my empty body; how long will it endure, without the vital principle?” (84). The King becomes inconsolable while deeply engulfed in Padmavati’s beauty, and remains firm in going to Simhala-dvipa to conquer his spiritual goal. Hiramani shows Ratansen the path of penance, saying that “The kingdom of Simhala is a difficult thing, you will not attain it by warlike preparation. That way is a way on which he goes who has renounced the world: who is a Yogi<sup>v</sup>” (86). Taking Hiramani’s wisdom, King Ratansen turns into an ascetic, and sets out on his spiritual quest.

After facing many difficulties and hardships, and also with the help of the divine intervention of Mahesh (another name for Lord Shiva) and Parvati. King Ratansen is united with princess Padmavati. However, parallel to the delightful period of their marriage, runs the course of Chitaur’s sorrow: Ratansen’s mother and his first wife, Nagmati are left grief-stricken because of Ratansen expedition towards Simhala-dvipa. This is the point where Nagmati, being full of despair, sings the song of *barahmasa* to express her agony:

*Baisakh* has come, so great is the heat  
that sandal-scented corselet burns me:  
The sun itself, feeling the heat, turns towards the Himalaya

but *Viraha* turns his chariot straight at me !  
In that dreadful fire, I am consumed— O my beloved, overshadow me,  
come and put out those live coals:  
At your sight, your wife will find relief,  
come and turn this inferno into a flower-garden !  
(“Nagmati *Barahmasa*” 72-73)

The message of Nagmati’s predicament and Chitaur’s desolation so disheartens Ratansen that he decides to go back to his province. Consequently, taking their leave they finally reach Chitaur, where the King re-begins his life with both his wives in happiness.

Jayasi then brings another turn to the story when a courtier named Raghava Chetan is banished from Ratansen’s kingdom for speaking the untruth. To avenge his insult, he straightway goes to Delhi, and gives an amorous description of Padmavati’s beauty to the emperor, Shah Alauddin so as to entice him to attack and seize Chitaur. The latter immediately sends an envoy with a message, asking King Ratansen to send Padmavati to Delhi at once. A battle ensues after Ratansen’s righteous refusal to send Padmavati to the emperor’s capital. The story ends with Ratansena’s death, while his wives Nagmati and Padmavati immolate themselves in their husband’s pyre and turn into *satis*<sup>vi</sup>.

The most significant aspect of *sufism* is the seeker’s renunciation of worldly desires and a complete abstinence from material possessions; in other words, someone who “leaves the unreal world in the real sense in order to dwell in the world of Reality (*al-Haqq*)” (Bhatnagar 5). Accordingly, Jayasi’s narrative advances with King Ratansen’s renunciation of all his worldly possessions, and his endorsement of an ascetic disposition to pursue his spiritual goal. Finally, after facing many difficulties, he becomes successful in winning Padmavati’s love and affection. But the duration of this metaphorically spiritual union is short, and the story ends with the hero’s death. *Sufi* writers chose a tragic ending for their stories because of their ardent belief in the *sufi* idea of *ishq*, i.e. “an inextinguishable fire, a mortal torment consuming those whom it possesses, bearing them inexorably towards death” (Vaudeville 38). It ultimately leads the devotee to the “mystic state of *fana*, i.e. the absorption of the soul in God.” (Bhatnagar 10)

*Sufi* mysticism entered Indian subcontinent when *bhakti* movement was already gaining momentum, which resulted into many cross-cultural ideas and responses. In India, *sufism* “adapted itself to the Indian traditions and borrowed many practices from folk worship” (Parveen 39). *Barahmasa* in this context becomes quintessential. It suggests a symbiotic rather than antithetical relationship between Hindu and Islamic cultures. Kavita Punjabi aptly compares this effortless and non-political exchange of words and values with “our modern-day constructions of secularism”, which she argues, is a “much impoverished version of the living beliefs and practices of the people

who lived in close proximity and considered participation in each other's culture not as a threatening, but as formative of their identities" (Punjabi 22). The *viraha* of *barahmasa* poetry became readily translatable to the *sufi* idea of '*ishq*.'

The poetic endeavors within the domains of Jainism, *bhakti*, *sufism* marked a significant philosophical turn in the history of *barahmasa* poetry. Notwithstanding the differences between the three spiritual movements discussed in this chapter, it can be rightly inferred that all of them – in one way or the other – diverged from the orthodox conceptions of the Divine, and substituted it with new spiritual frameworks that were open to all, irrespective of all kinds of sectarian and religious differences. The same was infused in the poetic structure of *barahmasa*, which was then elevated from a kind of conventional song to a mode of renewed worship.

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<sup>i</sup> In India, a year is usually composed of six seasons, namely *basanta* (spring), *grishma* (summer), *varsha* (monsoon), *sharada* (autumn), *hemanta* (early winter) and *shishira* (late winter): each of these seasons is further comprised respectively of two consecutive months of Hindu lunar calendar – *chaitra-vaisakh*, *jyestha-asadha*, *sravan-bhadon*, *ashwin-kartikka*, *agrahayana/margasirsa pausha*, *magha-phalgun*.

<sup>ii</sup> *Tirthankara* or *Arihanta* is considered as a "spiritual teacher" who guides and helps human beings to conquer *samsara* (cycle of births and deaths) by teaching them the *Jina-Dharma* (the principle tenets of Jainism).

<sup>iii</sup> An extra month that is inserted in the Hindu lunar calendar every third year, to make it coincide with the solar year.

<sup>iv</sup> *Vachana* is a form of poetry that flourished predominantly in Karnataka, and other neighboring parts during 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century *bhakti* movement (*Shaivism*).

<sup>v</sup> A person who tries to discipline his body and soul by renouncing all the worldly attachments, and by leading a simple but hardened life.

<sup>vi</sup> It is an outdated Hindu custom whereby a widow used to immolate herself in the husband's funeral pyre to prove her loyalty and dutifulness to her husband.

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