

Conclusion

Of the sixteen *saṃskāras* (purificatory rites) that a Hindu is supposed to undergo, two are considered of paramount importance: the *vivāha*, or marriage, and the *antyeṣṭi*, or funerary rituals. An overview of the rituals and ceremonies connected with funerals and their different beliefs regarding an afterlife has been discussed above. We saw how there is no uniform pattern of ritual observance by the Hindus. This varied behavior has led scholars to accept many "Hinduisms," at least in the popular domain. Thus it is not easy to talk of just one way of observing rituals and one kind of belief in an afterlife. For instance, while the philosophical Hindu would believe in *mokṣa* as the ultimate goal defined variously depending on whether one is a follower of the path of knowledge, devotion, selfless action, or just the practice of Yoga, and also believe in repeated births and deaths till *mokṣa* happens, a religious Hindu, while paying lip service to *mokṣa*, would also believe in a heaven and hell and the world of the manes/*pitṛs*. He/she would also fervently believe that one's favored deity (*iṣṭadevatā*), whether Viṣṇu, Śiva, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, etc., has the capacity to intervene and save a person from the clutches of Yama. Stories abound in the Purāṇas about how just the utterance of the name of Viṣṇu or Śiva can save one from impending death.

However, in spite of the many rituals, ceremonies, and beliefs in afterlife, some core observances can be mentioned: the cremation, the collection of the bones/ashes and burying them or consigning them to a holy river, an observance of a period of pollution, giving of gifts that one can afford, a day of purification and celebration after the period of pollution is over, and remembrance of the dead soul on the *tithi* or astronomical day he/she passed away annually by the chief mourner who is normally the son. Similarly the notion of an afterlife determined by the *karma* that one has done in previous life/lives is also uniformly believed in. The belief in heaven or hell or the intervention of a preferred deity to save one's devotee is not something every Hindu believes in.

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12 Jaina afterlife beliefs and funerary practices

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Metaphysics

Jaina metaphysics is dualistic. Living beings are regarded as products of the amalgamation of the immortal substances, soul (*jīva*) and matter (*puṅgava*). This process of interpenetration produces *karman*, that is, in the Jaina interpretation, a dynamic aggregate of subtle atomic particles, held together by a homogenous receptacle, the karman body (*kārmaṇa-śarīra*), which, contingent on its particular structure, generates between two and four further types of bodies: the gross (*audārika-*), transformation (*vaiḥkriya-*), translocation (*āhāraka-*), and fiery bodies (*taijasa-śarīra*). The individual configurations of these bodies constitute all varieties of living beings existing in the lower- (*adho-*), middle- (*madhya-*), and upper-world (*ūrdhva-loka*) across four birth categories (*gati*): humans (*manuṣya*), gods (*deva*), hell-beings (*nāraka*), and animals and plants (*tiryāṅic*). Theoretically, at the outset of the body constituting processes, subtle matter is attracted and transformed into karman due to the soul's own meta-physical action (*yoga*), that is, volition, which is conceived as a vibration of its parts (*pradeśa*). Empirically, the interpenetration of soul and matter is without beginning and, generally, without end. Because the embodied soul's intrinsic quality of active consciousness (*uḥayoga*) is conditioned by karman, every act (*kriyā*) produces new karman particles, which function again as the seeds for acts of the same type in a feedback loop.

Because the soul continues to be tied to its karman body after the disintegration of the gross body, it automatically generates a new gross body. Immortal souls thus find themselves trapped in a potentially endless series of self-produced mortal bodies. As independent active substances, they possess, however, the capability of liberating themselves from the painful cycles of re-death. This is achieved through a willful reversal of the processes of embodiment. Classical Jaina doctrine teaches that the degree of violence (*hiṃsā*) and of the passions (*kaṣāya*), anger, pride, deception, deceit, and greed, involved in action determines type, quantity, and duration of the karman body, which conditions the actions, lifespan, form of death, and reincarnation of the embodied soul. By practicing non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) and renunciation (*pratyākhyāna*),

the embodied soul prevents the binding of further karman. Final liberation (*mokṣa*) from the cycles of re-death (*saṃsāra*) can be accomplished through the deliberate elimination of all remaining karman particles, primarily by the combined practice of physical asceticism (*tapas*) and meditation (*dhyāna*), a form of action that gradually brings an end to all physical action. (For details see the Prakrit primary sources cited by Schubring [1935/2000]; Umāsvāti's fourth-century Sanskrit *Tattvārthasūtra* [TS_{1,2}]; and Glasenapp [1925/1998]).

Religious practice

From the point of view of Jaina doctrine, the approaching disintegration of a gross body is not a calamity, but an opportunity. A practicing Jain, whether mendicant (m. *sādhu*, f. *sādhvī*, etc.) or lay-supporter (m. *śrāvaka*, f. *śrāvikā*, etc.), acting non-violently, as far as possible, and regularly practicing asceticism cum meditation, will at the end of life seek to perform voluntary death through fasting, a ritualised process, called "thinning out" (*saṃlekhaṇā* or *sallekhanā*), which produces an accelerated destruction of karman. If this course of conduct is followed through many incarnations, the point of final death (*āryanika-maraṇa*) can be reached, whose deliberative performance eliminates the remaining karman particles, and thereby liberates the naturally blissful and all-knowing soul forever from incarnation. This is the ultimate aim of the Jaina dharma taught by Vardhamāna Jñātiputra, called "Mahāvīra," the presumed last, but likely only, Jaina prophet (*jina*), traditionally dated from 599–527 BCE.

Contemporary mortuary practices

Today, the complete customary sequence of mortuary practices of and for a Jaina mendicant comprises seven distinct rituals and ceremonies, with complex sub-routines, performed by the dying mendicant him-/herself, by members of the local mendicant community, and by householders, usually members of a local Jaina lay community: (A) Voluntary death (*sallekhanā*), with the support of other mendicants; (B) Removal of the corpse (*nirharāṇa*), by mendicants; (C) Funeral ceremonies, related to cremation (*dāha-saṃskāra*), by laity; (D) Collection of the bone relics (*asthi-saṃcayana*), by laity; (E) Disposal of the bone relics (*asthi-visarjana*) or construction of a funerary monument (*stūpa* or *samādhi*) by householders; (F) Commemoration (*smṛti*), by mendicants and/or householders; (G) Veneration (*vandanā*) and/or worship (*pūjā*), by individual mendicants or laity.

A–E are the mortuary practices strictly speaking. They are performed only once, immediately before and after death. F–G are post-mortuary practices of commemoration and empowerment that are specifically connected with the site of cremation, bone relics, and the new incarnation of the mendicant's soul as a god in one or other region of the upper-world. Depending on the status of the deceased, the degree of attachment

of devotees, and other circumstances, they are either not practiced at all or annually or irregularly.

Precept and practice

The standard sequence of religious practices connected with the process of dying of a Jaina monk or nun, the disposal of the corpse, and the readjustment of the relationships of the survivors to the deceased is characterised by decreasing scriptural regulation and participation of mendicants, who by rule are only directly engaged in the above routines (A) *sallekhanā* and (B) *nirharāṇa*. It is believed that the soul leaves the body and is reincarnated almost instantly at the point of death. Funeral and post-funeral practices are therefore classified not as "religious" but as "social events," with a focus on a temporal physical object rather than on an eternal meta-physical object.

Fasting to death is prescribed in great detail in the disciplinary texts for mendicants in the Prakrit scriptures (*siddhānta*) of the Śvetāmbara and Digambara traditions. Beside world-renunciation, it is the most significant religious event in the Jain tradition. The only post-mortem practice performed by the mendicants in accordance with scripted rules is the removal of the corpse from their abode. All other funerary routines are performed by householders, not necessarily laity, according to custom. The routines of funeral and post-funeral ceremonies for monks (C–G) are nowhere prescribed. Paradigms are found in the Jaina narrative literature, however, with legendary and mythological characters as protagonists.

Voluntary death

Reliable guides to prescriptions for the "voluntary" (*sakāma-*) or "wise death" (*paṇḍita-maraṇa*) through fasting (*sallekhanā*), as opposed to the "involuntary" (*akāma-*) or "fool's death" (*bala-maraṇa*), by way of various types of suicide, etc., are Kamptz (1929), Deo (1956), Caillat (1972, 1977a, 1977b), Oetjens (1976), Settar (1989, 1990), Granoff (1992), Baya (2007), and Soni (2014).

Jaina funerary and post-funerary practices, especially the funerary practices for Jaina mendicants, have only recently been studied and compared with similar Hindu and Buddhist practices. (See Caland, 1896; Waldschmidt, 1944, 1948, 1950–51; Bareau, 1970–71; Flügel, 2015, 2017).

Funerary practices

From a participant's point of view, contemporary funerary practices for Jaina mendicants (B–E) can be divided into three parts: (1) removal of the corpse, (2) cremation,

and (3) collection and disposal of the bone relics. These subdivide again into a number of more or less invariable subroutines:

- (B) Removal of the corpse: a. Fasting (*caturtha-bhakta*), non-study (*a-svādhyāya*), meditation (*dhyāna*); b. Changing the clothes of the deceased (*vastra-parivarta*); c. Abandoning the corpse (*nīharāṇa*); d. Meditation, by reciting the hymn to the Twenty-Four (Jinas) (*caturviṃśatistava-kāyotsarga*).
- (C) Funeral: a. Preparing the dead body for public display; b. Veneration of the dead body: last sight (*antim-darśana*); c. Preparation of the funeral palanquin (*śivikā* or *vaiḥṇṭhī*); d. Funeral procession (*śava-yātrā*); e. Cremation (*dāha-saṃskāra*); f. Mantra.
- (D) Collection of the bone relics (*asthi-saṃcayāṇa*).
- (E) Disposal of the bone relics: a1. Discarding of the bone relics (in a river, etc.) (*asthi-samarpaṇa* or *asthi-visarjana*); or a2. Preservation of the bone relics: *samādhi* (*stūpa*) construction.

The principal routines, whether scripted or unscripted, are shared by all Jaina traditions. Most of them are traceable to canonical sources. Yet, an outline of the tripartite structure as a whole, encompassing the practices prescribed for mendicants and the customary routines performed by householders, cannot be found in any single text. The practices therefore need to be studied ethnographically and compared with the Jaina literary corpus.

Removal of the corpse

Basic disciplinary rules for the removal of the corpse of a common mendicant were prescribed already in the early canonical BKS 4.24 and elaborated in its commentaries, especially Saṅghadāsa's sixth-century BKB 5497–5565, as well as in the Digambara text BhĀ, composed by Śivārya circa the first century CE. In contrast to the paradigmatic high-class cremations for a Jina, depicted in the Jaina narrative literature, the BhĀ and the BKB prescribe in great detail the likely older procedure of simply discarding (*nīharāṇa*) the dead body of a common monk at a spot in the forest that is devoid of life. BKB 5503 specifies the materials – solid and smooth bamboo (*veṇu*) and wood (*dāru*) – for the “implement” (*uvagaraṇa*) which BKS 4.24 recommends to be used by mendicants to carry the body outside the temporary abode, if a monk dies at night and no householders are present.

It is likely that funeral rites performed by householders for deceased mendicants were at some stage added to the scripted practice for mendicants of simply removing the corpse from their abode. Because the use of fire is a form of violence to be avoided according to Jaina doctrine, texts on monastic or lay discipline do not mention any of the four ritual stages of the funerals outlined in late Vedic texts, summarized by Caland (1896: xii–xiii), which evidently served as the paradigm for both presently

observable Jaina funerary practices, and canonical narrative paradigms, including bone-relic preservation: (a) cremation (*upoṣaṇa*), (b) collection of the charred bones (*asthi-saṃcayāṇa*), (c) erection of a monument (*śmaśāna-* or *loṣṭa-citi*), (d) expiation (*śāntikarman*). Since Jaina funeral and post-funeral practices are unregulated, some are commonly identified with the help of Vedic terms, such as *dāha-saṃskāra* and *asthi-saṃcayāṇa*. However, no obligatory periods of mourning (*śoka*) or ritual impurity (*sūtaka*) are recognised amongst the Jainas, as in Brahmanism. There is no equivalent to *śāntikarman*. Rites of expiation are neither prescribed nor practised, not even by laity, after the death of a mendicant or a family member. Instead, mental purification through meditation is carried out and visits to senior Jaina munis and/or to Jaina temples are made.

Textual paradigms for Jaina funeral ceremonies

One of the oldest depictions of a Jaina funeral in the Jaina scriptures is the description of the funeral of the legendary first universal emperor Rṣabha (Pk. Usabha), who also became the first jina, in JDP 2.109–120, a Prakrit narrative text of the Śvetāmbara canon, dated to the latter half of the fourth century CE. It offers more detail than any other early text on the funeral ceremony for Rṣabha, conducted at the place of his *sallekhanā* on the top of Mt. Kailāsa, and must have served as a paradigm for subsequent funeral narratives. On evidence of the many parallels in modern Jaina funeral rites, it was the most influential template for the development of Jaina funerary ceremonies, certainly from the Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods onwards. Contrary to the older narrative of Daśaratha's funeral in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the accounts of the funeral of the Buddha (MPS), all key acts are performed not by humans but by gods under instruction of Indra (Pk. Sakka), that is, by ideal householders, who finally removed all bone relics for private worship at their abodes (*vimāna*) in the upper-world, combining functions of palace, stupa, and temple, so that no relics were left for human beings. The common trend towards idealisation of cultural heroes has here reached its logical conclusion. The following routines are described:

- 1 Veneration of the dead body
 - i threefold circumambulation from right to left (*tikkhutto āyāhiṇa-payāhiṇā*);
 - ii obedient veneration (bowing with folded hands) (*sussūsamāṇa pajjuvāsāṇa*);
- 2 Preparation of the funeral pyre (*ciyagā*);
- 3 Preparation of the dead body:
 - i bathing (*ṇhāṇa*) with water from the milk-ocean (*khīrodaga*);
 - ii anointing (*aṃulipāṇa*) with sandalwood paste (*gosīsa-camḍaṇa*);
 - iii dressing with loose white clothes (*haṃsa-lakkhaṇa paḍasāḍaya nīaṃsa*);
 - iv adornment (*alaṃkāra*);

- 4 Construction of a funeral palanquin (*siviyā*);
- 5 Cremation:
 - i mounting the body on the palanquin (*sīyā āruhaṇa*);
 - ii placing the palanquin on the pyre (*ciyagā ṭhavaṇa*);
 - iii lighting the fire (*agaṇi-kāya viuvvaṇā*);
 - iv extinguishing the funeral pyre (*ciyagā nivvāvaya*) with milky water (*khīrodaga*);
- 6 Gathering of the bone relics (*sakahā gerhaṇa*) by the gods;
- 7 Construction of a memorial (*ceiya-thūbha*) at the cremation site;
- 8 Collective celebration of the Tīrthaṅkara's liberation (*pariṇivvāṇa-mahima*) at the cremation site;
- 9 Eight-day-long festivals (*aṭṭhāhiya mahā-mahima*) on separate mountains in Nandīśvara;
- 10 Return of the gods to their heavenly abodes (*vimāṇa*) and worship of the Jina's relics (*jiṇa-sakahā accaṇā*).

The slightly later description of the Ājīvika Gośāla's funeral in Viy 15.139, 142, presents a similar sequence of acts, using almost identical words. The only significant addition is a depiction of the removal (*niharana*) of the body and of its transportation in a procession out of the city on a "thousand-men-palanquin" (*siviyā*), which evidently was not needed on the mountain peak, where Rṣabha starved himself to death.

The evolution of this paradigmatic structure of the monastic funeral and post-funeral ceremonies, applied to life-stories of Mahāvīra only in post-canonical texts, is difficult to reconstruct. The oldest lists of mnemonic keywords (*dvāra-gāthā*) referring to the funeral of Jaina mendicants can be found in c. first- through fifth-century passages of the *Āvaśyaka-niryukti* (ĀvN), whose redactions are attributed as a whole to the literary name Bhadrabāhu by the tradition. ĀvN 206, composed in Prakrit in the old anuṣṭubh metre, mentions the following four key funerary practices, said to have been introduced by Rṣabha: (a) veneration of the corpse (*maḍaya-pūṇa*), (b) cremation (*jhāvaṇā*), (c) funerary monument (*thūbha*), (d) words (of eulogy and commemoration) (*sadda*). No further detail is offered. The interpolated mūladvāra-gāthā ĀvN 366, composed in classical āryā metre, dedicates three of nine keywords for the first time to the funeral of Rṣabha himself, according to Jaina mythology the second ever after the funeral of his mother Marudevī. It does not include the veneration of the dead body, which after the liberation of the soul is, in doctrinal terms, not worthy of veneration anymore, but adds the construction of temples: (a) liberation (*nivvāṇa*), (b) cremation (*kuṇḍā*), (c) funerary monument (*thūbha*), (d) (Rṣabha) temples (*jiṇa-hara*). ĀvN 435 offers an identical sequence. Yet, it is the only early text of the *Āvaśyaka* literature that explicitly mentions the collection of bone relics in the form of a single keyword: "thigh-bone" (*sakahā*). While the removal of the relics by the gods is also narrated by Jinadāsa Gaṇin Mahattara's seventh-century ĀvC and Haribhadra's eighth-century ĀvṬ, in ĀvN 435 the cremation of the mendicants, who are said to have performed *sallekhanā* together with Rṣabha, is placed into the hands of the descendants of the

Ikṣvāku line (i.e. Rṣabha's son Bharata), as it is in the most polished version of the narrative in Hemacandra's twelfth-century Jaina universal history TŚPC. The *loci classici* on the worship of bone relics and reliquaries (Pk. *samugga*, Sk. *samudga*) by the gods are the narratives in the Śvetāmbara canonical texts JDP 2.109–120, Rāy 240, and Viy 10.5, which are later or from the same period as ĀvN 206 and 435, but earlier than ĀvC and ĀvṬ.

If the details of the legend reflect practices that were customary at the time of the composition, then the practice of cremation, followed by relic preservation (by humans or gods) must have been practised in the Jaina tradition early on. Though relic stūpa construction has been documented in contemporary Jainism (Flügel, 2008, 2011, 2012a), and traced back with certainty to the tenth century and likely five hundred or more years earlier (Flügel, 2010, 2012b; Dundas, 2013), apart from these mythical paradigms, there is however only circumstantial evidence of the practice of collection and veneration of bone relics amongst Jains in ancient India, certainly not for Mahāvīra, nor are there any Jaina texts detailing the construction of stūpas or *samādhis*, comparable to Vedic and Buddhist literature. Many commemorative funerary monuments are mentioned in Jaina literature, but only one ancient Jaina stūpa of the Kuṣāṇa period has been excavated to date. The question whether it contained bone relics remains open, but can no longer be answered, since A. Führer, the last excavator, reports finding and transporting to the Museum in Lucknow pots with ashes of Jaina monks from the site, which cannot be verified and dated (See Smith, 1901; Shah, 1955/1998; Flügel, 2010: 441f.).

Funeral procession

Unlike the common death of a householder, the death of a Jaina ascetic who has worked a lifetime for the purification of the *karman* body, and as a consequence will be reborn as a god, is a joyous occasion. In contrast to the solemn funeral of a common Jaina lay person, whose dead body is carried in a lying posture, covered from head to toe by a shroud, by male family members to the funeral pyre, on a simple bier (*siḍī* or *sīḍī*) constructed out of bamboo sticks that are laid out in the form of a ladder, as its name indicates (*siḍī* = *sīḥī*), and is cremated with slight variations in a standard modern Hindu fashion, the funeral of a Jaina ascetic, who purposefully purified and finally "liberated" the soul from its fetters to achieve salvation or at least a better rebirth, is conventionally celebrated by householders, as is in modern Hindu contexts the funeral of an old person who died a "good death" (Parry, 1994: 155, 157). While the participation of women is nowadays prohibited in common Jaina and Hindu funeral processions (though not in Vedic India: see *Āśvalāyan-agrhyasūtra* IV.4.2), females take part in the funerals of Jaina ascetics. As in the procession to the place of monastic initiation (*dīkṣā-yātrā*), the emphasis is not on the negative aspect of loss in renunciation or death, but on the positive potential to create new relationships.

The hope for a victory over attachment is expressed by the prevalence of royal symbolism in processions at weddings, Jaina initiations, and funerals. It is now an established Jaina custom to honour exemplary Jaina mendicants, as well as exceptional laity who performed the fast to death (*sallekhanā*) (see Williams, 1963), with a festive funeral procession to the cremation ground in an extravagant royal-style palanquin, inside of which the corpse will be reduced to ashes in a visually compelling act of transformation through fire. The corpse is carried on the shoulders of leading male representatives of the local Jaina community, behind an orchestra playing exuberant tunes, in a decorated funeral palanquin, resembling a royal litter, covered with a canopy, shaped like a palace or a temple, in a cross-legged, upright meditative posture, with the face exposed.

The exposed sitting posture of the deceased, the open display of the face, and the prescribed absence of mendicants during the funeral procession and cremation seem to be features unique to the funerals of Jaina ascetics. As a rule, in Hinduism, Buddhism, and in ordinary Jaina funerals, corpses are not carried in an upright position. Even kings are usually transported to the funeral ground in a lying position, with their faces covered. The significance attached to the sitting posture therefore indicates that the underlying comparison is rather between a parade of a living king, conveyed on the shoulders of men in a comfortable chair (*sukhāsana*), and the procession of a dead Jaina ascetic, who is expected to have been reborn as a king of gods in the upper-world. Cremation of the corpse in a meditative cross-legged "lotus posture" (*padmāsana*), as common today, could be an even later development (as in Hindu ascetic burials). The ancient Jaina narrative texts remain silent on this point.

Funeral palanquin

A funerary palanquin was once regarded as the exclusive privilege of royalty, and, until recently, could only be paraded in public with permission of the king. One of the oldest descriptions of an Indian royal funeral, in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* (Rām) II.65–77, that of King Daśaratha, father of Rāma, culminating in the collection of bones and ashes, mentions a funeral palanquin (*śibikā*) used for the procession of the corpse to the cremation ground (II.76.14). Waldschmidt (1948: 273, 344f.) pointed to the close analogy between the basic sequence of events in the description of Daśaratha's funeral and accounts of the funeral of the Buddha, who instructed his disciples to have it conducted in the same way as the funeral of a universal monarch (*cakravartin*).

The origins of this practice are obscure. With the emergence of the concept of the fourfold community (*cāturvarṇya-śramaṇa-saṅgha*), possibly as late as the fourth century CE (Viy 20.8.5), Jaina mendicants officially assumed the status of spiritual rulers for their followers, which they must have enjoyed for centuries. They began to be addressed as kings (*mahārāja*), and allegorically depicted as such in Jaina literature and iconography (Uv 16). However, because the use of regal symbols is prohibited for Jaina mendicants, the outward trappings of royalty can only be attached to them for brief moments, shortly before initiation, and between death and cremation. This

explains the creation of extended ceremonies for these occasions, which are organised by lay devotees to publicly celebrate Jaina values and Jaina mendicants as their paradigmatic representations. All early depictions of Ṛṣabha's funeral, JDP 2.101, ĀvC p. 222, the first Digambara version, Jinasena's ninth-century Sanskrit universal history ĀP 47.343f., and in a slightly different context BhĀ 1973, use the words *siviyā* or *sīyā* as designations for funeral palanquins. *Śibikā* is a term without obvious eschatological overtones. In the Śvetāmbara canon, it is also employed as a designation for the palanquins used for carrying mendicants-to-be to the place of initiation.

Ascent to heaven

The so-called *baikuṇṭhī* used by Śvetāmbara Jains in Rājasthān is an elaborate wooden structure made of a base of two joined carrying poles and a rectangular canopy, with a rib-vaulted dome made of bamboo rods conjoined by a pivotal timber nexus. The timber skeleton is internally and externally embroidered with shining fabric, and the pinnacles of the dome are decorated with metal pots and flags. Its conventional shape mimics a (*mahā-*) *prāsāda*, a temple or throne cum heavenly palace, literally "a seat in a conspicuous place." It is also called *deva-vimāna*, "vehicle" or "palace of the gods," because it represents a means of transport for a god's journey to heaven (*devaloka*) (as it were via the smoke of the cremation fire). In his description of Ṛṣabha's funeral, Hemacandra wrote: "Śakra laid the Lord's body on a bier that was equal to the best areal car" (TŚPC 13.253). The Digambaras today still prefer the term *vimāna* to designate their relatively modest funeral palanquins. The same symbolism is invoked by the Rājasthānī synonyms *bekuṇṭhī*, *baikuṇṭhī*, and *vaikuṇṭhī*, which derive from the Sanskrit adjective *vaikuṇṭhīya*: "relating to Viṣṇu's heaven" in the sense of "leading to Viṣṇu's heaven." Patel (1986: 163ff.) pointed out that the word *vaikuṇṭha* was first associated with Indra in late-Vedic texts. Later *vaikuṇṭha* became an epithet of Viṣṇu, and the "story attached to Indra has been transferred to Viṣṇu" (p. 168). The concept of a *vaikuṇṭha* heaven, the abode of Viṣṇu, was created around the ninth and tenth centuries, and further developed in later Purāṇas, such as the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. As a transferred epithet of Indra, a term that is also used to designate a class of gods of the Jaina upper-world, the use of the word *baikuṇṭhī* for Śvetāmbara Jaina funeral palanquins may even be older than the ninth century, given that middle and late-canonical texts already tell us that, as a rule, the souls of Jaina mendicants swiftly travel to and are reincarnated in the upper-world (*ūrdhva-loka*) as Indras and Indrāṇīs or other powerful heavenly beings. Bhattapariṇṇā v. 80 of the Mūrtipūjaka Śvetāmbara Jaina canon, conveys how through faith (*ārāhanā*) and proper conduct (*caritra*) higher rebirth is assured, and how, after death, the soul then "moves swiftly like a car towards good and high forms of being" (Kamptz, 1929: 39).

Late-canonical allegories such as this inform ritual practices, symbols, and post-funeral experiences even today. The visible enactment of the soul's imagined ascent to heaven (*vaikuṇṭha-gati*) by means of a procession leading to the ceremonial,

quasi-sacrificial, destruction of a funeral palace by fire (and its imaginary transformed recreation in the upper-world) demonstrates the continuing influence of Vedic imagery on the Jaina (and Buddhist) funeral ritual. The Jainised use of the word *baikunṭhī* for a Jaina funeral palace is itself an example for the complex co-evolution of Hindu and Jaina religious cultures. Although the names of their heavens differ, both traditions agree that with the help of heavenly palaces the gods can travel at will and very fast throughout the cosmos. The paradigmatic Jaina depiction of such a *vimāna* is the god Sūriyābha's palace described in the *Rāyapaseṇaijja* (Rāy) 351.

From ritual to ceremony

The terms *vimāna* and *vaikunṭhī* and the iconography of the Jaina funeral palanquins clearly express the unwritten purpose of the violent cremation ceremonies organised by Jaina laity for their religious virtuosi, that is, the symbolic transformation, in the eyes of the devotees, of the ascetic into a powerful Indra, or king of the gods. The change of status is pictured as the journey of the soul towards the place of its improved rebirth in the upper-world, of which the funeral procession marks, as it were, the beginning. Compare Oldenberg (1894/1917: 574) on the initial recitation of RV 10.14.7 and the supposedly "magical" effect of the procession to the cremation site for the advancement of the "soul" on its path, and Caland (1896 § 11: 20) on the late Vedic funerary cart (*śakaṭa, anaḥ*) which is described as a vehicle for the deceased to travel to the realm of Yama.

From a Jaina karman-theoretical point of view, the soul already left the body long before the cremation, which is usually performed within twenty-four hours after confirmed death, as highlighted by the separate keyword *nirvāṇa* in ĀvN 366. The Jaina funeral ceremony has therefore at best socio-religious functions. The cremation fire is neither the cause of the translocation and transformation of the old into a new body in heaven, as presumed by the sacrificial Vedic cremation (which it outwardly resembles) (see RV 10.16.2), nor of the translocation of the Jaina soul, but merely visualises the alleged dissociation of the soul through the acceleration of the decomposition of the body, its simulacrum, at a time when a vivid image of the deceased still persists.

As a symbolical performance, that is, a ceremony rather than a ritual, the cremation of a Jaina saint has religious functions as well. It offers participants the opportunity for generating merit (*puṇya*) by way of "approval" or "appreciation" (*anumodana*) of the completed saintly course of conduct and the resulting heavenly rebirth of an exemplary personality, whose pursuit of self-restraint has come to fruition. Like the obligatory *kāyotsarga* meditation, performed by mendicants after abandonment of the corpse of a deceased monk or nun, cremation rites performed by the laity are believed to offer opportunities for self-transformation, if they indeed result in an intensification of the personal realisation of the Jaina perspective on the transience of worldly existence in contrast to the immortality of the soul. In the minds of others, the dissociation of soul

and body is not a singular event, but a process that is complete only at the point of the visible dissolution of the body, not at the point of death. On the one hand, this explains the purpose of funeral rites, and, on the other hand, the religious priority given to the site of disposal of the body over the site of death. The visualisation of the effects of accumulated good karman as a journey to heaven also invites the conjecture that as a god reborn in the upper-world, who still cares about the remains of his former body, the deceased will help his devotees in the middle-world. Despite the official view of some Jaina traditions, such as the Śvetāmbara Terāpanth, that funeral rites are purely social events, a continuation of the relationship with the deceased is desired by most practicing Jains.

Jaina relic stupas

For similar purposes relics of well-known saints are clandestinely preserved and entombed underneath funerary monuments that are erected at the sites of cremation, and venerated in officially unacknowledged forms. All bone-relics are said to have been removed by the gods, in the case of the Jinās, and hence rendered accessible only in imagination, as symbols of the ideal path, but not as media for physical empowerment, as they are for the gods, who only possess transformation and translocation bodies, but not gross bodies. The now well-documented custom to annually remember the day of death of a famous saint and/or to venerate or worship their relics is unscripted and practiced variably often without any specific collective ritual or involvement of mendicants.

Afterlife

According to the Jaina scriptures, the souls of well-behaved mendicants will inevitably be reincarnated as one or other of the many types of gods in the heavens of the upper-world. Contingent on their behaviour, this possibility exists also for laity, especially for those who have adopted an ascetic lifestyle and performed *sallekhanā*. One of the earliest discussions of the question of the precise location of the rebirth of a common deceased monk can be found in part one of the NDK, a late-canonical work of narrative texts, which describes the life of the mendicant Megha. He was initiated by Mahāvīra, initially not well-behaved and hence reinitiated, then studied the scriptures, performed extended fasts, and died young on top of Mt. Vipula after taking the vow of voluntary self-starvation. After his death, the monks in his company left his mortal remains on the mountain, collected his paraphernalia, and returned them to Mahāvīra. Goyamā then asked Mahāvīra, in a similar manner as in Uv 66–189, where Megha had been reborn after his death and where he would be born thereafter. The omniscient Mahāvīra gave a precise answer: because Megha was of good character, studied all of the main sacred texts under senior monks, performed many fasts, and took the vow of

voluntary death, he was reborn as one of the highest types of gods (*deva*) in the region of Vijaya, "Victory," the eastern part of the topmost layer of the upper-world, known as Aṇuttara, "Beyond All." After three "oceans" of time, he, that is, his soul, will be reincarnated as a human being in Mahāvīdeha and finally attain salvation (*parinirvāṇa*) after the final death of its last body. The bodies of all living beings are mortal and subject to the cycles of death and rebirth across the three worlds and birth-categories. The worst bodies are those of the short-lived single-sensed elementary beings, called *nigoda*, technically belonging to plant-beings, which form the logical opposite of the liberated souls, and are reproduced in the same form by bad karman (*pāpa*). The best bodies are those of humans with only a very light load of remaining good karma (*puṇya*). Only those very special human beings can exercise their innate free will almost unobstructed by karman and reach salvation.

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13

Theravāda Buddhist afterlife beliefs and funerary practices

Rachelle M. Scott

In the assembly hall at Wat Sra Kaew in Ang Thong Province (about 100km north of Bangkok) is a large glass enclave with the body of the deceased abbot of the temple. Photos of the abbot, ceremonial fans, a wax figure, and flowers surround his decaying body. Many visitors linger before his corpse as they would before an image of the Buddha – using it as an opportunity to meditate on his life as well as the nature of death, impermanence, and suffering.

This memorial display draws our attention to the centrality of death in Theravāda Buddhism. Discourses on death pervade early Buddhist teachings and serve as a focal point for ritual and ethics. When speaking of death, Theravāda Buddhists place a single death within a broader context of multiple deaths and rebirths. This is due to the belief that all sentient beings are trapped within the realm of *samsāra* (cycles of rebirth and re-death) until one has reached liberation through the attainment of ultimate wisdom (*nibbāna*). The tradition of Theravāda Buddhism offers a number of views on death, as a series of endings and beginnings. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the context of a Theravāda Buddhist funeral, which in most cases marks one end and ushers in a new beginning, or in Buddhist terms, a further becoming. For a select few within the Buddhist world, however, the funeral may mark the end of a long journey towards the cessation of suffering. This chapter will examine death in the Theravāda tradition through the lens of funeral practice, which incorporates normative discourses on death and suffering as well as karmic tales of fortune and woe.

Discourses on death in Theravāda Buddhism

The Theravāda tradition is often characterized as the oldest school of Buddhism. While recent scholarship has raised legitimate questions about the authenticity of the label "Theravāda" to refer to the tradition (Skilling et al. 2012), it nevertheless is a useful category to refer to monastic, discursive, and ritual traditions in South and Southeast Asia that were linked in varying ways to Theravāda texts, practices, and systems

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