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CONSTRUCTING JAIN GODDESS PADMAVĀTĪ IN GUJARATI LITERATURE

Venu Mehta

Abstract:

Worship of the goddess Padmāvātī emerged more than a thousand years ago. This article explores three songs about her in Gujarati by Paṇḍit Vīrvijayajī (1773-1852). By analyzing the style and form of his work, one learns a great deal about devotional liturgies that commemorate goddess Padmāvātī's protection of the Jina Pārśvanātha and, in turn, his protection of her.

Key Words: Padmāvātī, Jain goddesses, Paṇḍit Vīrvijayajī, Pārśvanātha

Mendicant and poet Paṇḍit Vīrvijayajī (1773-1852) was one of most praised and popular Jain authors from Gujarat, a state in the western part of India. He composed several religious literary works in both Sanskrit and Gujarati, including many liturgical texts for rite of worship of Jinas, such as the *Pāñca Kalyāṇaka Pūjā*¹ of Pārśvanātha². In *kaḷaśa*³ (water pot), the concluding part of this text, he makes a special mention of Padmāvātī, referring to her as the source of his success in completing this religious work. He writes:

In the Samvat year of 1889, on the day of *akṣayatritiya*⁴, I have earned such an immortal *punya* (good merit). Says Paṇḍit Vīrvijayajī that Padmāvātī-dēvī, who is the giver of [what is] desired, has helped in this accomplishing this work.

As part of my ongoing research on devotional practices to Padmāvātī in Gujarat, I have been exploring interesting accounts that celebrate Paṇḍit Vīrvijayajī's special relationship with the Jain goddess Padmāvātī. Vīrvijayajī was a *sādhaka*, a devotee of the goddess, and we are told that the goddess blessed him with extraordinary powers (*vidyās*, *labdhīs*, and *siddhis*), which facilitated his religious and spiritual endeavors. Jains⁵ of Gujarat see Vīrvijayajī's devotion to Padmāvātī as a mark of utmost *bhakti* for the goddess. Her popularity among Jains⁶ in Gujarat is unquestionable, and we can learn about her popularity by studying

¹ A pāñca kalyāṇaka pūjā is the rite of worship celebrating five auspicious events in the life of a particular Jina.

² Alternatively, called Pārśva.

³ kaḷaśa is the final sequence of the rite of worship.

⁴ is an annual Jain spring festival and falls on the third lunar day of the bright half of the month that corresponds to April/May.

⁵ Śvetāmbar Mūrtipūjak Jains.

⁶ Śvetāmbar Mūrtipūjak Jains.

distinct local devotional practices. In particular, the devotional literature dedicated to her, such as Paṇḍit Vīrvijayajī's liturgical texts, provides a privileged window into how Gujarati Jains venerate her. However, Gujarati *bhakti* literature for Padmāvati has remained understudied. This article examines how the literature on Padmāvati in the Gujarati vernacular has intensified devotional sentiments to her, elevating her status. This literature mediates Jain theology and philosophy as it negotiates her esoteric portrayal and exoteric identities. I discuss three songs to Padmāvati composed in the literary style of *cand* (a quatrain), a poetic genre that includes the metric system written in the Gujarati language between the seventeenth century and the contemporary time. I will show how these songs create and re-create her identity. More specifically, I wish to highlight the ways vernacular literature can be instrumental in constructing a deity's identity by generating and deepening devotional sentiments.

The songs (*śākta*) of Padmāvati succeed in two ways: First, the songs describe the goddess's '*svarūpa*', '*guṇa*', and '*karma*.' They describe her essential form, appearance, and ornamentations, as well as her virtues, attributes, actions, and roles. Second, the compositions portray Padmāvati as the Great Goddess and Mother Goddess, the feminine energy. These Jain *śākta* compositions are powerfully moving because they combine these two views of the goddess. Furthermore, they use tropes and language normally associated with Hindu goddesses. In Gujarati *śākta* songs, goddesses are traditionally rendered as divine, fierce, protecting, loving, and compassionate sources of energy, and as mother, a combination of qualities that makes them at once potent, responsive, and able to sustain an intimate, affective relationship with the believer. As these songs draw similarities with Hindu *śākta* songs, they prominently use Jain theological and philosophical aspects to construct a Jain identity for Padmāvati. I will begin with a brief overview of Padmāvati in the Jain world and then I will delve into the songs.

Lotus, Snake, and Padmāvati

The name Padmāvati can be translated as 'resembling lotus' or 'she who is of lotus.' The motif of lotus appears in many of her iconographical portrayals. Padmāvati is described as *śāsana-devatā* or *adhiṣṭhāyika*⁷, the protector deity of her Jina, Pārśvanātha. Nevertheless, the goddess hardly figures as the *yakṣī* (attendant deity) of Pārśvanātha before the 9th century CE. Moreover, sculptures of the *yakṣī* of Jina Pārśvanātha did not carry the name Padmāvati until about the 10th century CE. U.P. Shah postulated that

⁷ *adhiṣṭhāyika* is a female presiding deity; *śāsana-devatā*, *śāsana-devi* and *śāsanasundari* are used interchangeably.

Padmāvati replaced earlier *yakṣī* Vairoṭyā, a snake goddess and the 13th *vidyādevī*, during the 10th century CE because of her increasing popularity.⁸ We learn about Padmāvati from archeological evidence, a body of Jain literature that refers to her as a *śāsana-devatā* or *yakṣī*, the *tantra*-ritual texts on her, and myths. Early primary literature on Padmāvati is primarily written in Sanskrit between the eleventh to sixteenth centuries. It generally describes her role as a *yakṣī* of Jina Pārśvanātha and gives accounts of her *tantra* practices. As John Cort⁹ notes, most secondary sources on the Jains hardly mention the Jaina goddesses. With a few exceptions, the secondary material on Jaina goddesses has been written by art historians and has been concerned mostly with historical issues of iconography.

Padmāvati is easily recognizable by the serpent hoods over her head. She is known as a snake-deity attending and adoring Pārśvanātha along with her consort, *yakṣa* Dharaṇendra. The Jain cosmological system assigns a *śāsanadevatā* to a Jina. In the case of Padmāvati, Dharaṇendra, and Pārśvanātha, an interesting mythological legend not only tells us how they got associated to each other, but also explains Padmāvati's efficacy in the religious life of the Jain devotees. According to the story, a *brāhmaṇa* ascetic (*tāpasa*) Kamaṭha (variously called Kaṭha and Kaḍha) was practicing a penance called *pañcāgni-tapa* ("five-fire penance") surrounded by burning logs of wood. Prince Pārśva, upon seeing a pair of snakes burning in the logs of wood used for the fire-penance, pointed out to Kamaṭha the violence and killing involved in that practice. Enraged, Kamaṭha asked Pārśva to show in what manner violence is committed in that practice. Immediately, Pārśva broke the log of wood into two a pair of snakes came out.¹⁰ Although Pārśva rescued the snakes, the snake couple died immediately after the prince Pārśva chanted before them the *namaskara-maṅgala*¹¹. The snake couple was reborn as Dharaṇendra and Padmāvati, the king and queen of the *nāgas*. After death, Kamaṭha, was born as Meghamālī, the Monsoon Lord. Having renounced worldly attachments, Pārśva stood in deep meditation in the *kāyotsarga-mudrā*¹² under a tree. Meghamālī saw him, and recalling the past animosity, attacked him first in the shape of wild animals. Later, he

⁸ U.P. Shah (1987: 62 and 216-217).

⁹ John Cort (1987: 235).

¹⁰ The Digambara account differs from Śvetāmbar tradition by saying that not one but two snakes, one male and the other female, were burning in the log of wood. Śvetāmbar Mūrtipūjak Jains in Gujarat attend to the "two snake" version without any hesitation and believe it as a more relatable version particularly in the case of Padmāvati.

¹¹ Sacred Jain mantra/prayer.

¹² This is a meditation position in which, in indifference to the body, one meditates standing or sitting with the arms hanging down.

caused a severe thunderstorm which raised a flood of water drowning Pārśva up to his nostrils. Dharaṇendra, on seeing this with his clairvoyant knowledge rushed to the location along with his queen Padmāvati and protected Pārśva by covering his head with the seven hoods spread like an umbrella and entwining the monk's body with lengthy coils that lifted him above water. However, ascetic Pārśva remained indifferent to both the attacks and the protective steps taken by Dharaṇendra and Padmāvati throughout the period. Failed and repenting, Meghamālī bowed before Pārśva and gave up his evil ways.

Padmāvati also holds a prominent place in the Jain texts on *tantra* ritual. The most important text of her tantric rituals is the *Bhairava Padmāvati Kalpa* (*Manual of Rituals to the Fierce Padmāvati*) which was composed in Karnataka by the Digambara monk Malliṣeṇa in the tenth century (12th century CE, according to Shah 1997). Malliṣeṇa's composition of the *kalpa* glorified Padmāvati's prominence in the Jaina tantric system¹³. Many ritual texts in Sanskrit, such as *Adbhuta Padmāvati Kalpa*, *Rakta Padmāvati Kalpa*, and *Padmāvati Stotra*, make reference of her tantric practices, rites, and iconography.

Although there is a vibrant bhakti tradition in Jainism, gods and goddess are not the object of worship. Instead, deities like Padmāvati are held in high regard as model worshipers.¹⁴ Venerating attendant deities such as Padmāvati is seen as a popular cult, absorbed from a folk religion. Jain goddesses or *yakṣī*-s since the medieval period were often associated with *vidyā*-s, magical spells or invocations that could be used to obtain material objects or to satisfy worldly concerns. They can respond to the devotees needs and requests. Given the views of the goddess, we can also ask if Padmāvati can be worshiped beyond her tantric efficacy and responsiveness to human worldly needs. Can devotional practices be the source of (re)creation of her identity?

Three Cands on Padmāvati: Śākta Songs of Jains

It is challenging to trace the introduction of Padmāvati into the religious life of Jains in Gujarat. Whereas Padmāvati was one of the popular deities in southern India as early as the ninth century CE, her popularity is absent in the western part of the country until the eleventh century CE. M.A. Dhaky (1997: 66) notes that in

¹³ The system assimilated mantras, yantras, mudrās, and nyāsa characteristic of tantrism used for the accomplishment of ṣaṭkarman (six actions). The ṣaṭkarman are the rituals aims which construct the kāmya tantric ritual, the rituals that are performed to fulfill worldly needs and desires, or to avert a misfortune.

¹⁴ Lawrence A. Babb (1996: 79) notes that Jains offer a type of worship to some gods and goddess, and believes that they will respond to prayers as the Jinas do not and cannot grant worldly benefits.

western India, “the Śvetāmbara literature is totally silent on Padmāvati till early 11th century CE.” He adds that the Śvetāmbara tradition had adopted the goddess from the Jain tradition in southern India. Among various devotional practices, *bhakti* literature dedicated to Padmāvati serves as our significant evidence to explore how literary tradition of Jains in Gujarat has developed a special relationship with her.

The three devotional songs about Padmāvati on which I focus are verse-style compositions in older poetic style of Gujarati literature such as *cands*, a poetic folk quatrain to Padmāvati. By focusing on the content as well as style, I propose to explore the devotional *cand*-s songs as Gujarati Jain *śākta* literature.

The emergence of *śākta* songs for Hindu goddesses in the Gujarati language can be traced to the Cāraṇs. Cāraṇ, also known as Gadhavi, means a custodian of the keys of a fort. It is a community of bards and minstrels belonging to Gujarat and Rajasthan. Cāraṇs regard themselves as *devīputra*, direct descendent of the Mother Goddess of the Universe. They claim to have originated from the Śakti or Mother Goddess, the divine manifestation of the vital force behind all creation. The Cāraṇs have composed *cand* songs appeasing Mother Goddess. Cāraṇs glorify the universal form of the Mother Goddess. In Cāraṇī literature, the goddesses are central and glorified for their acts, blessings, power, valor, and worldly interactions with devotees.¹⁵

Jain *cands* on the goddess Padmāvati exhibit a style and form, structure, linguistic choices, motifs, and poetic devices, that are similar to the *śākta* songs of the Cāraṇs. In my view, Jain authors used the format of *cands* to expand the profile of the goddess, stressing in particular Padmāvati’s identity as feminine energy or divine feminine. In this process, these authors gave the goddess a Gujarati identity and intensified her Jain theological and philosophical affiliations.

First song titled, *Padmāvaticchanda* (*Padmāvati Cand*) is credited to the author Harṣṣāgara, a Jain mendicant author. According to the catalogue entry¹⁶, Harṣṣāgara either belongs to the Tapā *gaccha* or Pūrṇimā *gachha* mendicant orders. He composed it during the late sixteenth century CE (1584 or 1580). The song entry in the catalogue reads as: “Eulogy to Padmāvati, a Goddess.”¹⁷ Written in the *tribhaṅgī cand* meter and in old Gujarati, the song has ten verses and six lines of *kaḷaś* that contains author’s name. *Padmāvaticchanda* seamlessly narrates Padmāvati’s ‘*svarūpa*’,

¹⁵ Ratudan Rohadiya (2012) Gujarātnā Cāraṇī Sāhityanō Itihāsa.

¹⁶ Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts in The Government Manuscripts Library, Jaina Literature and Philosophy, Volume XIX:(Hymnology), Part 1, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (1957:313).

¹⁷ Ibid:313.

‘*guṇ*’, and ‘*karma*.’ The outro line that repeats at the end of each verse is redolent of Padmāvātī’s Jain identity and affiliation. The line goes this way:

“O! goddess (“*devī*”) Padme [Padmāvātī], the inheritor of the highest heaven, Mother (“*mātā*”) [Padmāvātī] is of Jain *dharma* and [of Jain] nobility.”

These lines follow from a longstanding *śākta* literary style in Gujarat. The goddess’s Jain affiliation is lauded by making explicit connection with Jain cosmology, ethics, and values. Padmāvātī is characterized as “bearer of victory of Jin Sāsana (Jain faith)”, “owner of right knowledge (*samyag-jñāna*), “embodied with chastity.” The poem proclaims “you are the mother *satī* (*a virtuous woman*)” (1, 2, 5). *Samyag-jñāna* is one of the three gems of the Jain doctrine, which effectively sums up the steps towards liberation. Padmāvātī’s portrayal as *satī* corresponds to the veneration for virtuous women in Jain faith.

She is described having utmost dedication towards Jain faith and subsequently she helps devotees to practice and enhance faith. The description goes this way: “you are enduring the integral tradition of venerating the qualities of Jina”, “you melodiously sing the glory of Jina”, and “you strengthen [Jain] faith and *dharma*”, and “you uplift [us] at the time of death, as [we have] been caught in the ocean of immense pain and [we are] trapped in bondage” (2, 9). Similar tropes are also repeated in the *kaḷaśa* section of the song.

Padmāvātī is then described as “*śaktimatī*” (8), the embodiment of feminine energy. She is praised for responding to the needs of the devotees because she is the manifestation of *śakti* or energy. Her nature as a *yakṣī* who responds to the worldly needs is reinforced with her portrayal as “*śakti*”, the feminine divine. The author uses the word, “*sevaka*” or servant for a devotee who seeks her help. She is glorified for giving what is wished by a devotee such as: “*śiva āsita kāmā prāgamarāmā guru abhirāma śaktimatī*” (8). The word, “*śiva*” can be translated as liberation and auspicious which is closer to Jain philosophy than to its Hindu connection with the deity Śiva. The line translates as:

You are the embodiment of the energy, you
reside in liberation as you are the energy who
gives whatever is desired, and you are adored
by [spiritual] teachers.

This way, Padmāvātī is depicted as a deity who responds to the requests of devotees. However, her role goes beyond worldly matters and is elevated to soteriological and spiritual endeavors. Similarly, in verse 7, she is requested to “incarnate and bless” (7) at the time of devotees’ petitions. Looking at the description of the goddess, we can analyze that she is simultaneously local, personal, worldly and universal, and not reducible to the material-

phenomenological world. This seems to be a way to preserve the doctrinal orthodoxy in the Jain tradition (as non-theist) while allowing for a vigorous bhakti strand within it.

The physical and cosmological description of Padmāvātī is found in verses 1 through 6. The physical description of Padmāvātī follows her appearance as found in the tantric ritual text, *Bhairava Padmāvātī Kalpa*. She is portrayed having *kurkkuṭa* as her vehicle (6). *Kurkkuṭa-sarpa*, a composite form of cock-snake (or cock) is her *vāhana* (vehicle), as we find its reference in the text, *Triṣaṣṭīśālākāpuruṣacarita* (c. 1160-1170 CE). However, interestingly, she is also given Gujarati cultural identity for her iconography and ornamentation in this *cand*-song. She is depicted wearing “*caranā colī*”¹⁸ (6), folk-style apparel for Gujarati women. In most Gujarati *śākta* songs, Hindu goddesses, are portrayed wearing similar dress. Both her Jain and Gujarati identity are found in the same verse.

We also find tantric aspects of Padmāvātī in the song. She is associated with “*cintāmaṇī mantra*” and “diagram of subjugation” (8). The notion of subjugation or “*vaśīkaraṇa*” is also found in the text, *Bhairav Padmāvātī Kalp*. Subjugation and gaining control over another person or *vaśīkṛta* is one of the six methods for achieving the ‘six acts’ listed in the *Bhairava Padmāvātī Kalpa* of Malliṣeṇa. Her association with the “*cintāmaṇī mantra*” is expression of her close relationship with Jina Pārśva to whom the “*cintāmaṇī mantra*” is dedicated. The song then continues to showcase the goddess’s efficacy by portraying her as the destroyer of evils and pain. In the last verse, she is described as a “courageous (“lioness”) holding a snake” and “a female snake who has poison” (10). It should be noted that this description as a female poisonous snake stands in contrast to her traditional tantric portrayal in which she is a remover of snake poisons. Padmāvātī is described as destroyer of evil spirits in this way: “*śākinī*¹⁹ *dākinī*²⁰ *nigrahaṇī*” that is, the destroyer of *śākinī* and *dākinī*, the evil spirits. This specific tantric aspect of her is also found in the tantric text, *Adbhuta Padmāvātī Kalpa* of Candrasūri. Chapter six of this text deals with the cure of afflictions produced by evil spirits, praising Padmāvātī for her ability to defeat these spirits.

The *kaḷaśa* section of the *cand* song contains six lines, including the author’s name. Again, Padmāvātī’s Jain attributes and Gujarati identity are shown side-by-side. She is portrayed as “true goddess”, “follower of right knowledge”, “attendant or resident of Jin *Sāsana*.” The text states “[she] carries image of Jina Pārśva upon her head” (11). Her Gujarati identity is brought into sharp relief

¹⁸ Alternatively called Caṇṭyā cōḷī in the Gujarati language.

¹⁹ Śākinī refers to a kind of evil spirit according to literature of Jain tradition.

²⁰ Female goblin.

when she is described as the: “goddess [who is] playing or performing *rās*.” *Rās* is a traditional Gujarati dance form played with sticks. Also, she is shown playing this Gujarati dance in the “*adho ākāśa*” (11), meaning in *adho-loka*, the place where *vyantara*-gods reside. As a *yakṣī*, Padmāvātī belongs to the *vyantara* class. Descriptions of Padmāvātī playing *rās* dance bear strong resemblance to how Hindu goddesses are described in the Gujarati *śaktā* songs. However, her twofold identities draw parallel between her Jain affiliation and Gujarati visage.

The second *cand* song titled, *Śrī padmāvātī Devīno Cand* (*Cand of Goddess Padmāvātī*), written in *doharo cand* meter, is attributed to an anonymous composer. Looking at its language, we can safely conclude that the song is composed no earlier than the nineteenth century. The first verse begins with a veneration to Jina Pārśva, depicted as the fountainhead of *siddhi*. However, Padmāvātī is immediately mentioned as present in close proximity to him (1). The author addresses the goddess as “*mātā*” (“mother” in the Gujarati language) throughout the song. This way of speaking to Padmāvātī is similar to how Hindu goddesses in pan-Gujarati tropes are addressed. For example, we find goddesses in Gujarati *śakta* songs addressed this way: Melaḍī Mātā, Khoḍīyār Mātā, and Bahucarā Mātā. The verse then concludes by paying a thousand homages to Jina Pārśva and Padmāvātī together.

The song throughout invokes other forms of Padmāvātī as several goddesses, mainly as Sanskritic and folk goddesses affiliated to Hindu traditions. A verse expressing this aspect goes this way: “manifolds are your forms (*rūpa*)” (5). Padmāvātī is depicted as Sarasvatī, Kālī, Lakṣmī, Jagadambā, Parameśvarī, Bālātripurāsundarī, Caṇḍīkā, Cāmuṇḍā, Gaurī, Jayā, Vijayā, and Aparājitā Āśāpūrā among many other goddesses. She is portrayed as having fierce and benevolent qualities associated with these goddesses. Padmāvātī is addressed as “*avatāra*, an incarnation of Kālī”, “destroyer of demons”, “provider of food”, “remover of affliction”, “delicate”, and “saver from hell or downfall” (2,4,5,6,7). Particularly, her portrayal as the goddess Āśāpūrā, such as “Āśāpūrī Annadā” or the goddess Āśāpūrā, who feeds (7) shows how the author makes Padmāvātī a Gujarati goddess. Āśāpūrā is understood as emanation of the Goddess Annapūrṇā, who is a popular goddess and *kuldevī* (“family goddess”) originating in Gujarat.

A minor tantric touch is found in the first line of the fifth verse which begins with Hrīm and Śrīm, the seed syllables. However, the same line extends her description as “She is the Dhṛti, Mati, Kīrti” (5). Dhṛti is the name of a goddess who resides over the *padmahrada* in Jambūdvīpa. Mati and Kīrti are descriptions of the qualities and virtues of the goddess widely used in the Jain tradition.

The author makes a concerted effort to promote devotional sentiments for the goddess by saying, “you are the mother who responds to the “*bhaktjana*” (devotees) and helps them” (8) and by engaging in “*sant* and *mahant* [performing] meditative remembrance [of Padmāvātī]” (7). Here, we notice the use of pan-Indian tropes mostly in Hindu traditions, particularly derived from saints and head priests of monasteries mostly in Hindu traditions. Referring to “*sant*” and “*mahant*” (saints and adepts) and using the term “*samara*” (“*smaraṇa*”) remembrance shows the author’s efforts to make Padmāvātī all-inclusive and amenable to other traditions too. The author is using the devotional tropes commonly used in Indian religious traditions. The song concludes by requesting the granting of three-fold “*varadāna*” or boons such as: *śrī*, *siddhi*, and *śāradā* which can be translated as wealth, auspiciousness, success, victory, knowledge, and wisdom.

Third song titled, “*Mahādēvī Śrī Padmāvātīnō Canda*” (“Cand of great-goddess Padmāvātī”), written in *harigīta cand* meter is authored by Naranbhai Chatrabhuj Mehta.²¹ Since nothing is known about the period of composition and author, it can be assumed that the author is a lay Jain. It is safe to judge that the *cand* song is written probably in the twentieth century. The song has a total of twelve verses. It is important to highlight that the song glorifies Jain aspects of the goddess through all the verses, beginning by calling Padmāvātī the “Mokṣalakṣmi” (Lakṣmi of liberation) and “Dharmapakṣī” (one who regards *dharma*) (1). With tropes such as “Mokṣalakṣmi” and “Dharmapakṣī”, the author most potently brings the goddess Padmāvātī close to Jain soteriological theology.

The first line of the song describes Padmāvātī as the guardian (*adhiṣṭhāyika*) of her Jina, “filled with *bhakti* and *Śakti*.” She is the “*nāyikā*,” the leading (female) protagonist figure among the “*mahādēvīs*” (Great-Goddesses) (1). She is prominently addressed as the best among all the goddesses. However, I note that this set of first two stanzas of the song and her traditional conceptualization as a *yakṣī*, a celestial figure representing the giver of material benefits, stand in contrast to her constructed identity as a feminine energy, aiding to liberation. In fact, we may argue that these are two opposing depictions. Using the technique of formal poetic pairing, the author here draws a formal parallel between the Jina and his *adhiṣṭhāyika*. While maintaining proximity between them, the author further elevates Padmāvātī by giving her the theological validity in the context of liberation, the highest goal of Jain tradition. The term, Mokṣalakṣmi does not remain just a metaphor for the goddess, but it is described as a virtue inherently possessed by her.

²¹ Nothing is known about the author.

Unlike the second song described above that addressed Padmāvati as *mātā*, this song calls her *devī*. There is no *tantric* trope in the song. Instead, Padmāvati is introduced as embodying signifying Jain philosophical aspects. The song highlights her qualities and actions as efficacious in pursuing soteriological and religious endeavors. The song proclaims “you arrive to remove the obstacles [of devotees]” at times when devotees do *bhakti* of Jina but when *karma* restrict their path. “With your support, many souls, filled with *bhakti*, have achieved success. Remembering you results in destroying sins (*pāpa*).” “You manifest to intensifying the efficacy of *prabhu* (Jina).” “You bring *bhāva* in *svādhyāya* and *sādhanā*” (1, 2, 5, 9). *Bhāva*, “state of mind” or motivation, *svādhyāya*, “study of self” and *sādhanā*, “spiritual endeavor” are integral religious aspects to Jain dharma.

In another set of descriptions, Padmāvati is glorified for having an integral role in several important religious acts. She is praised for her benevolent acts in the Jain devotional world as she supports Jain dharma (8). She brings the message of Sīmandhara²² to *ācāryas* (6). She resides in the procedure of *Pratikramaṇa* and *Navasmarāṇa* (7). She appears as “*Jogamāyā*” to protect the Jain dharma (8). If we analyze these descriptions, we can see that Padmāvati’s role and virtues are advanced. She serves as the link between the Jina Sīmandhara and spiritual masters. Then, as an inhabitant of *Pratikramaṇa*, the liturgical text that elaborates the ritual of confession and repentance, and *Navasmarāṇa*, a text that combines nine important *mantras* of Jain tradition, she certainly is elevated as the bearer of central Jain philosophical principles. Her portrayal as “*Jogamāyā*”, an aspect or personification of *māyā*, the illusionary power of God, possibly makes Padmāvati the personification of Jina or a feminine energy that manifests when required.

A total of six verses represents mainstream worship of the goddess. Padmāvati is elevated as the central object of veneration. “Your name is included among the list of Jain ascetics meant for remembrance, as the first act in the morning” (10). “Your sacred place is marked foremost among many religious places of gods and goddesses, and even Jina is worship at your sacred *tīrtha*” (11). “You also receive “*abhiṣeka*” or sacred bath along with the Jinās in the *tīrtha* of the Jinās, and this results in abolition of offense and dissolute merits” (8).

²² Jina Sīmandhara is a Tīrthāṅkara, who is said to be currently living in another world in the Jain cosmological universe.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have shown through the analysis of three popular Gujarati devotional songs, the significant contributions of this regional, vernacular literature to the creation and recreation of Padmāvati's identity. Hitherto, scholars have not paid enough attention to these contributions. The generativity of these songs lies in their capacity to depict vividly Padmāvati's iconography, attributes, and wondrous deeds, while also presenting her as a divine mother. Moreover, these songs simultaneously express the personal closeness and responsiveness of the goddess to believers. She responds to their worldly, everyday needs. She upholds Jain *dharma* in the quest for liberation from the karmic cycle. In other words, these songs balance creatively the orthodox—the affirmation of the core principles of Jain theology and philosophy—with the heterodox, grassroots bhakti beliefs and practices. Although Padmāvati remains associated with her esoteric identity, her portrayal as a feminine energy, a mother who can protect, heal, and reward devotees and help them in their religious endeavors as a manifestation of 'Śakti' is powerfully expressed in the three *cand* songs I discussed. The complex and dynamic identities of Padmāvati that emerge in these songs have undoubtedly contributed to the goddess's great popularity among Gujarati Jains.

Translations by Venu Mehta

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