The text I propose to read a fragment from, is the *Dharmaparīkṣā* (‘Examination of Religion’) by the Digambara Jain layman Manohardās. This is a Jain didactic narrative that tries to examine and argue why the Jain tradition is ‘true’ (*samyañc*) and why other traditions, more precisely the dominant Brahmanical tradition, are not. The *Dharmaparīkṣā* by Manohardās is not a unique narrative, but belongs to what I call a textual tradition of *Dharmaparīkṣās,* existing of several versions of the same story written from at least the tenth century by Digambara Jain authors, and later by Śvetāmbaras, until at least the eighteenth century in different languages.

The narrative makes its argument within a frame structure that is filled with substories that refer to and satirically criticize Hindu Purāṇic and epic episodes. As such, the *Dharmaparīkṣā* should be understood within the tradition of *Jain Purāṇas* and Jain versions of the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*.[[1]](#footnote-1) Other than this, the *Dharmaparīkṣā* is often compared to the Jain *Dhūrtākhyāna* ('A Tale of Rogues') because the works have a similar frame structure, common narrative motifs, and because both texts are satirical towards religion.[[2]](#footnote-2) Being a narrative text with a satirical undertone to criticize other religious traditions, the *Dharmaparīkṣā* was most likely meant to be heard or read by a Jain lay audience, with the purpose of directing them back on the correct Jain path and affirm the Jain path as the one true tradition.

The main narrative of the *Dharmaparīkṣā* tells the story of two Vidyādharas, humans with extraordinary powers (*vidyās*)such as the ability to fly, in search of the truth. One of them, Manovega, is a devoted Jain. He is concerned about his friend, the other Vidyādhara called Pavanavega, who has strayed from the right religious path and who is especially drawn towards the Brahmanical religion. In search of help to get his friend back on ‘the right track’, Manovega goes to Ujjayinī where he meets a Jain monk Jinamati. Hearing Manovega’s problem, Jinamati advises him to take his friend to Pāṭalīputra, a city dominated by Brahmins, portrayed as experts of the Hindu scriptures. There, Manovega engages in discussions with the Brahmins, each initiated by the narration of an incredible story he has invented about his life. From this point onwards the narrative frame takes on a repetitive structure in which, for every few substories, the two Vidyādharas take on a different disguise before entering the city of Pāṭalīputra. In this way, every time they enter Pāṭalīputra they play a different character to instigate the curiosity of the Brahmins living there. Noticing the two peculiar newcomers, the Brahmins approach them and ask them who they are, upon which Manovega answers with an incredible story from his life. When the Brahmins do not believe him, Manovega justifies his story by referring to parallel episodes from the Hindu epics and *Purāṇas*. In this way, he proves the inconsistency of Purāṇic Hinduism. After every such discussion the Vidyādharas go outside of the city. There, Manovega explains to Pavanavega didactic passages from the Jain doctrine. In the end Pavanavega is converted and accepts the vow of a Jain layman.

The fragment I would like to read is set within the discussions with the Brahmins and is one of the first substories of the text. Having entered Pāṭalīputra in the disguise of grass- and wood-sellers, Manovega (together with Pavanavega) is asked by the Brahmins to tell them who they are and what they come to do in the city. Manovega does not immediately respond to this request, but first tests the Brahmins if they are not too foolish to believe and understand what he will say. To this goal he explains, in several substories, ten types of fools: the lover, the evil-minded, the common fool, the stubborn, the bilious, the fool of the mango, the fool of the aloetrees, the pierced fool, the fool with sandalwood, the fool with milk. The story I want to read is the first of the ten fools, about the lover who is blind to the falsities of his beautiful wife.

In order to read the passage, I have provided two texts: the first is the Braj text by Manohardās (in two manuscripts) and the second is the Sanskrit eleventh-century version by Amitagati (edition), on which Manohardās has (explicitely) based his version. The version by Amitagati is not the oldest one, but it is the most popular version of the *Dharmaparīkṣā*.

The fragments starts, **in manuscript 616 of BORI**, on page 41 of the pdf (folio 20) from the third line counted from below (verse 75): *revā nadī*... It ends on page 54 of the pdf (folio 26) verse 4.

**In manuscript G 24** of The Jaina Siddhant Bhavan in Arrah the fragment starts on page 68 of the pdf (folio 33) from the third line counted from above (verse 80): *revā nadī*... It ends on page 89 of the pdf (folio 44) verse 10.

The corresponding fragment in Amitagati's text is *pariccheda* 4 verse 47, until *pariccheda* verse 76.

1. The Jain versions of the pan-Indian purāṇic and epic narratives are clearly distinct from the better-known Hindu versions (where Vālmīki’s and Vyāsa’s renderings are considered as authoritative), and often explicitly criticize these Hindu versions (see e.g. De Clercq and Vekemans, forthcoming). The critiques in the *Dharmaparīkṣā* point out similar 'mistakes' of the Hindu versions as the Jain *purāṇas* and epics. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The *Dhūrtākhyāna* is a satirical frame story, best known in the Prakrit version by Haribhadra, about five rogues who play a game of telling incredible stories, which they argue to be credible by referring to purāṇic stories. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)