



Above: Jainism and interfaith engagement



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Dharmanath Network in Jain Studies impact report

An update on your support

August 2025



Dear friends and supporters of the Dharmanath Network in Jain Studies,

It is with great pleasure that I present this year's impact report for the Dharmanath Network in Jain Studies at the University of Birmingham.

This report offers an account of the Network's second year, a year marked by meaningful academic advancement, innovative teaching and collaborative research. It also demonstrates the expanding global reach of Jain Studies at Birmingham, as our colleagues work to increase the profile of Jainism in interdisciplinary and international conversations. I am particularly proud of the way the Network is shaping the next generation of scholars, from undergraduate students discovering Jainism, to early career researchers leading high-profile conferences and producing field-defining publications.

I'm also excited to announce, as you will read in this report, that with additional funding from Drs Jasvant and Meera Modi, we have recruited a Master's student for this academic year from India. This support is directly enabling a talented student to pursue research in this important field, and we look forward to sharing further updates on their progress.

This remarkable progress is made possible through the generous support of our partners and donors. On behalf of the College of Arts and Law, I would like to extend my sincere thanks for your vision, commitment, and trust in our mission. I look forward to seeing how the Network continues to grow in the years to come and to welcoming many of you to Birmingham at future events.

With warmest wishes,

Professor Helen Abbott
Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Arts and Law





I have enjoyed reflecting on the remarkable achievements so far of the Dharmanath Network in Jain Studies at Birmingham. In just two years, the Network has become a hub of dialogue and community, inspiring the next generation of thinkers while strengthening connections between academia and the wider Jain community. This success is a direct result of the generosity and trust of our supporters, whose vision continues to shape a lasting legacy. Thank you.

As Head of School for Philosophy, Theology and Religion at the University, it is a privilege to help carry this work forward, ensuring that Jain philosophy and practice are engaged with in ways that promote interfaith dialogue and global understanding.

Looking ahead, I am excited to see how the Dharmanath Network, in partnership with major projects such as the Global Philosophy of Religion, will continue to expand its reach and impact. Together, we are building something that not only honours Jain traditions, but also contributes to a more inclusive vision of philosophy and religion in the modern world.

Professor David Cheetham
Head of School, Philosophy, Theology and Religion





On behalf of the UK Jain community, I congratulate the Dharmanath Network in Jain Studies at the University of Birmingham for another successful year, showing growth and progress in teaching, research and publications. The spread of the Jain faith holds deep significance for the Jain community, while also offering valuable insights to a wider world searching for meaningful responses to today's existential challenges. Jainism's values of Ahimsa (non-violence), Aparigraha (non-acquisition) and Anekantavada (non-absolutism) show us how to live in harmony with both the environment and one another. The work the Dharmanath Network does in promoting them is excellent.

The Institute of Jainology is grateful to Professor Marie-Hélène Gorisse and Dr Jinesh Sheth for agreeing to present Jain viewpoints at important events at the Vatican and in the UK parliament. Discussions on the restitution of 2,000 Jain manuscripts from the Wellcome Collection to the Jain community represented by the Institute of Jainology (IoJ) are ongoing. The IoJ will then place the manuscripts in the University's Cadbury Research Library.

A delegation from Wellcome and the IoJ will visit the Birmingham campus in October 2025, hosted by senior leadership. We look forward to this immensely.

I am confident that with such strong foundations, the Dharmanath Network will go from strength to strength, and we send out good wishes for another successful year!

Dr Mehool Sanghrajka MBE
Managing Trustee, Institute of Jainology



Growth of the teaching offer in Jain studies

Now in its second year, the Dharmanath Network in Jain Studies at the University of Birmingham has continued to expand and deepen its work across teaching, research and engagement. This year has seen the strengthening of academic programmes, the growth of our research community, impactful international collaborations and a growing presence in public and interfaith forums, confirming Birmingham's place as a hub for Jain studies.



'I thoroughly enjoyed exploring Jain history and literature through the lens of gender and sexuality. Examining the stories of Rajimati and Subhadra, I found it particularly powerful to see how these women faced boundaries imposed on them and how their faith helped them overcome such limitations. It made me reflect on the gender-based constraints, both internal and external, that I encounter in my own life and how I choose to navigate or challenge them.



Helen Schneider

Student who studied the Gender, Sexuality and Religion module

The teaching provision in Jain studies continues to flourish. At first-year level, Jainism was introduced in two modules: Introduction to the Study of Religions (60 students) and Lived Religions (22 students). These classes explored themes such as agency and representation in South Asian religions, Jain adaptation in diaspora and digital contexts and responses to contemporary challenges, including environmental sustainability. As a result, many students chose to focus their essays on the theme of living as a Jain today.

At second-year level, Jainism was explored through a gender lens in a module exploring issues linked with gender and religion (67 students). Jainism stands out in its long-standing inclusion of women, yet the tradition's treatment of gender remains complex, from debates on women's potential for liberation, to their portrayal in literature and rituals and their place within religious communities. Future iterations of the module will incorporate reflections on masculinity and the roles of men.

At third-year level, two modules were taught: Buddhism and Jainism in Dialogue (13 students) and the new Ancient Roots of Yoga and Meditation (22 students). Both were well-received, with some of the highest attendance rates in the School. In November, Samani Pratibha Pragma, from Florida International University, joined the Buddhism and Jainism module for a comparative session on prekṣa dhyāna, a modern form of Jain meditation developed in the Śvetāmbara Terāpanth tradition and Buddhist Vipassana, a form of Buddhist meditation.

The module on yoga approached the topic holistically, covering metaphysics, meditation theory and physical practices shaping consciousness and the subtle body. The teaching made direct connections to students' lives in the UK. Guest speakers included Ruth Westoby, Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies (OCHS) and again Samani Pratibha Pragma, who discussed insight meditation practices online.

In the Department of Philosophy, Elliot Porter replaced Areti Theofilopoulou during her maternity leave. He taught a specialised module examining the ethical implications of harm and moral judgment in policymaking (113 students), which included discussions of the Jain principle of ahimsā (non-violence). Dr Marie-Hélène Gorisse remained in close collaboration with him throughout. Following her leave, Dr Theofilopoulou departed the University and her colleagues extend their best wishes.

Dr Christina Easton joins the department in September. She specialises in tolerance and education, with a forthcoming book titled *Teaching Values Whilst Respecting Difference*. A full profile will be included in next year's report.

Research in Jain Studies at the University of Birmingham

Postgraduate research in Jain Studies saw significant developments this year. Leonardo Stockler, from Pontificia Universidade Católica de São Paulo in Brazil, joined as a visiting PhD student from November 2024 to April 2025, supported by a Sandwich Doctorate Abroad grant. His project, *To Cross the Ford: Interactions Between Ascetics and Householders within the Jain Tradition*, includes a Portuguese translation of the *Rajpaseniya*, a Prakrit dialogue on the soul's independence from the body. He shared his research informally with colleagues and presented at two events: 'Jain Monks and Householders: Material and Symbolic Exchanges on the Path to Liberation' (Dialogues in European Jain Studies) and 'Similes, Analogies and Allegories in the Paesi Kahāṇayam' (Dharmanath Jain Studies Postgraduate Symposium).



'Drs Marie-Hélène Gorisse and Jinesh Sheth have been extremely generous and have guided my research in decisive directions. This team of scholars is integrated into a larger network of high-level research centres and they certainly favoured my experience here by enriching it with highly relevant intellectual encounters, together with the local Jaina community.

'This will have an important impact on the future projects of our department in Brazil, mostly because there is no intellectual ambient for the study of Jainism there, which highlights the utmost importance of these academic exchanges for the expansion of the Jain Studies field itself.

Leonardo Stockler
Visiting PhD, Pontificia Universidade Católica de São Paulo,
Brazil



The Dharmanath Jain Studies Graduate Symposium on 15 April 2025, organised by Dr Sheth, was a particular highlight this year. It brought together emerging scholars from across the UK, including Anubhav Jain, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), Kshitij Jain and Anthony Ruda, University of Oxford and Leonardo Stockler. The papers presented explored a diverse range of topics, including narratives, mathematics, ethics and philosophy, and led to fruitful discussions.



From left to right: Kshitij Jain, Marie-Hélène Gorisse, Lacy Quin, Anthony Ruda, Jinesh Sheth, Leonardo Stockler and Anubhav Jain



The last twelve months have been highly productive in terms of research, engagement and outreach. I presented papers, gave talks and joined panels at academic and public events, engaging with over 1,000 people. As a member of the British Academy's Early Career Researcher Network, I attended various conferences and workshops, most notably the Academic Book Publishing Conference, which offered valuable insights as I develop my monograph, *Anekāntavāda (Non-one-sidedness): Philosophy, Exegesis, Praxis and Debates*. I also began work on the Jain philosopher Amṛtacandra, leading to a panel accepted for the Annual Conference on South Asia.



Jinesh Sheth presenting at the Jain Workshop in Oxford in October 2024

I am immensely grateful to the Dharmanath Network and the Global Philosophy of Religion Project for their support and to Dr Marie-Hélène Gorisse for her ongoing guidance.

Dr Jinesh Sheth

Postdoctoral researcher in Jain Studies at the University of Birmingham

The online lecture series 'Dialogues in European Jain Studies: Connecting Around the Globe', co-organised with Ghent University and the Arihanta Institute, had another successful year. It included seven sessions, each featuring three specialists and a final session with five early-career scholars in dialogue with renowned Jain Studies expert John Cort. The series attracted an average of 50 participants per session. [Recordings are available here.](#)

Planning is also well underway for the international workshop 'History, Scripture and Debate: Studies in South Asia in Memory of Paul Dundas', which will serve as the inaugural event for the Dharmanath Network. Taking place from 12–14 September 2025 at the University of Birmingham, where Professor Dundas' library was donated, the workshop has already confirmed over 40 academic participants and several representatives of the UK and global Jain community. An event at the city ashram is also planned. The workshop will be followed by a symposium on Anekāntavāda led by Dr Sheth and a week-long reading group on the Akalaṅka's Aṣṭaśatī.

In further good news, Aarti Gulgulia has become the first recipient of the Dharmanath Scholarship in Jain Studies, 2025-26. She will pursue a Master's in *Reinterpreting Syādvāda: Malliṣeṇa, Jain Logic and the Evolution of Epistemological Pluralism in Classical India* and will be active in both the Dharmanath Network and the Global Philosophy of Religion (GPR) project. Her position was made possible through the generous support of Drs Jasvant and Meera Modi and the William Paton Trust.

Outreach: political, cultural and religious institutions

The partnership with the Institute of Jainology (IoJ) remains critical for progress. Representatives from the University of Birmingham were invited to present the Dharmanath Network's vision at the House of Commons during Ahimsa Day on 15 October 2024 and Mahavir Jayanti on April 2025. The University of Birmingham was also represented at the Mahavir Janma Kalyanak reception at 10 Downing Street.



Mahavir Jayanti at the House of Commons, April 2025

The Network participated in two interfaith engagements at the Vatican in collaboration with the IoJ. Dr Gorisse spoke on 'Christians and Jains to Build a Better Future by Embracing Diversity and Inclusivity' at the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue on 25 November 2024. She and Dr Sheth then presented at the Gregorian Pontifical University on 4 June 2025 on the role of hope and interfaith cooperation. Both presentations will be published by Vatican Press, expanding Jainism's global visibility in interreligious dialogue.



Above: Jainism delegates visiting the Vatican City in June 2025



Right: Jinesh Sheth at the Gregorian Pontifical University, Rome, June 2025

On 16 November 2024, members of the Dharmanath Network were welcomed by the Jain Center of Southern California. Activities included worship, academic presentations and the dedication of a magnificent wooden jñāna mandir (altar of knowledge), with the names of all academic positions in Jain Studies funded by Jaina donors carved into it. Professor Charlotte Hempel had the honour of cutting the ribbon at the inauguration.



From left to right: Jasvant Modi, Jinesh Sheth, Charlotte Hempel, Marie-Hélène Gorisse and Sulekh Jain



Charlotte Hempel cuts the ribbon with Jasvant

Discussions on the restitution of 2,000 Jain manuscripts from the Wellcome Collection to the Institute of Jainology (IoJ) are ongoing. The manuscripts will be housed in the University's Cadbury Research Library on behalf of the Jain community. A delegation from Wellcome and the IoJ will visit the University campus in October 2025, hosted by senior leadership.

Global Philosophy of Religion: Fundamental Spiritual Realities, Human Purpose and Living Well

A major milestone this year was the award of the £2.7 million Templeton-funded project Global Philosophy of Religion (GPR): Fundamental Spiritual Realities, Human Purpose and Living Well, led by Martin Pickup, Director of the Birmingham Centre for Philosophy of Religion, Marie-Hélène Gorisse, Lead of the Dharmanath Network, and Professor David Cheetham, Head of School, Philosophy, Theology and Religion. [You can read more here.](#)

The University of Birmingham is globally recognised in the field of philosophy of religion. This project supports greater inclusion of lesser-known traditions such as Jainism in mainstream academic discourse. It funds both theoretical and science-engaged research, as well as public engagement and impact projects. The first six project bids have already been awarded, with seven more to come. Each bid has attracted hundreds of highly competitive international applications, a testament to the vitality of the field and the growing recognition of diverse philosophical traditions.

As part of the project's outreach, Drs Gorisse and Sheth have delivered lectures and published on Jain philosophy in prominent venues. Dr Gorisse edited a special issue of *Religious Studies* (Cambridge University Press) on death and immortality, featuring a paper on Jainism by Ana Bajželj.

They will also co-organise and contribute to three major international conferences:

- 'Philosophy, Spirituality and the Meaning of Life', Manila, December 2025, with Southeast Asia Research Center and Hub
- 'African Philosophy of Religion', Calabar, Nigeria, February 2026, with the Conversational Society of Philosophy
- a third conference in India, TBC, 2027 (under discussion).

The GPR project also has a strong educational component. It provides stipends for MA students, a postdoctoral fellowship, mentorship support for junior scholars, funding for course development and Dharmanath Scholarships for MA dissertations in Jain Studies, the first of which was awarded this year to Aarti Gulgulia.

The Dharmanath Network beyond Birmingham

Dr Gorisse delivered the keynote address, 'The History of Jaina Studies in the UK', at the first Jaina Studies Conference at Oxford, Balliol College on 24 October 2024. Following this event, two PhDs in Jain Studies were secured at Oxford, a sign of the field's expansion.

She was also involved in appointing Ruth Westoby from the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies as a postdoctoral researcher on Jainism and the technology of the self and Pragya Jain as a visiting fellow working on Jain meditation, both starting in November 2025. Collaboration with both scholars is now underway.

In April, Drs Gorisse and Pickup visited the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign as part of a Bridge Grant to build institutional links and develop Jain Studies. Dr Gorisse also delivered a guest lecture in Anna Tosato's (Bhagwan Munisuvrata Swami Post-doctoral Research Associate) module 'Material Jainism: A Journey through Objects', using Claire Maes' photograph of white Jain nun robes in Ladnun to open a reflection on ahimsā. Anna later participated in the 'Dialogues in European Jain Studies', presenting on Jain performing arts in early sculpture.

The Jain Philosophy Research Group (Ana Bajželj, Anil Mundra, Jay Soni, Jane Allread, Dr Sheth and Dr Gorisse) met weekly online and held a one-week in-person workshop at the University of Riverside in November 2024. They presented their translation work on Akalaṅka's *Aṣṭaśatī* at the American Academy of Religion in San Diego and the World Sanskrit Conference.

At the World Sanskrit Conference in Kathmandu in June 2025, Dr Gorisse co-chaired the Jain Studies panels alongside Jay Soni and Eva De Clercq. Twenty-eight Jainism-focused papers were presented, including many by Indian early-career scholars. Multiple talks were delivered in Sanskrit. Dr Sheth spoke on 'Anekāntavāda and Ahimsā: A Reinvestigation' and Dr Gorisse presented on 'Epistemology and Theories of Karma Removal in Jainism'. A group visit to Nepal's only Jain temple followed.

Dr Gorisse also co-chaired the 'Global Critical Philosophy of Religion Unit' at the American Academy of Religion, the world's largest scholarly society in the study of religion. With Nathan Loewen, she organised panels on 'Ancestors' and 'Theodicies Under Suspicion'. The latter was so well received that, with Linsey McGoey and Alexandra Cox, the team wants to expand it to a 2026 conference titled 'Religious Discourse and Social Stratification: New Synergies.'



Delegates at the World Sanskrit Conference, June 2025



Jinesh Sheth presenting at the World Sanskrit Conference, June 2025



Marie-Hélène meets Pope Francis at the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue event in November 2024

Selected publications

Gorisse, M-H. "The Path on the Unattached Ones: Exploring the Renunciation Paradigm". In *Engaging Philosophies of Religion: Across Global Boundaries*, N. Loewen et co (eds.), Bloomsbury, 2025.

Gorisse, M-H. Entries on Jinaratnasuri, Vimalasuri, Amaru and Hemaçandra. In *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique des Littératures de l'Inde*, A. Castaing et co (eds.), Garnier Classiques, 2025.

Gorisse, M-H. "The sun that makes the lotus of the object of knowledge blossom". In *The Global Philosophy sourcebook*, M. Ruston (ed.), Sheffield: Equinox, 2025.

The team are also happy to announce the following works in progress that will be in print by the end of 2025:

Gorisse, M-H, co-ed. Anil Mundra. *Anekāntavāda: Sources and Varieties*, Special Issue of the *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Springer.

Gorisse, M-H. "Is Rāvaṇa The Universal Emperor? Prabhāçandra's Semantic Perspective." In *Anekāntavāda: Sources and Varieties*, M-H. Gorisse and A. Mundra (etds.), Special Issue of the *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Springer.

Gorisse, M-H, co-eds. Ahmad, Arana, Bordonaba, Heinsmann, Indraccolo. *The Handbook of Intuitions. Perspectives from Global Philosophy*. In *Logic, Epistemology and the Unity of Science*, Springer.

Gorisse, M-H. "Transformative Knowledge in Jainism. The practical dimension of Philosophy of Religion". In *Rethinking the topics, questions and categories of Philosophy of Religion*, T. Knepper and C. Dolinsek (eds.), *Expanding Philosophy of Religion Series*, Bloomsbury.

Sheth, J. R. "Niścaya-Vyavahāra Nayas and Anekāntavāda: A Reinvestigation with Reference to Kundakunda and Amṛtacandrasūri." In *Anekāntavāda: Sources and Varieties*, M-H. Gorisse and A. Mundra (etds.), Special Issue of the *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Springer.

Sheth, J. R. "On the Method of Anekāntavāda and Therapeutic Philosophy in Therapeutic Philosophy in Global Perspectives." In the proceedings of the *First International Conference on Therapeutic Philosophy in Global Perspectives* held at Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Karl-Stéphan Bouthillette (ed.), Springer.

Selected lectures given

Marie-Hélène Gorisse

Joint Sessions, UoB (13 July 24) 'Knowledge and liberation in Jainism'

Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Special Seminar – Open days in Indian Philosophy (5 Aug 24)
'Isolated or co-responsible? Perfected souls in Jainism'

Senior Seminars in Indian Philosophy, Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies (23 Oct 24) 'On how to distinguish curd and camels: The Jain-Buddhist dispute over non-one-sidedness of things'

Online lecture at the APA Central Division Meeting, Invited Workshop on Neglected Indian Philosophies (20 February 25) 'Suppressing and destroying karma: Jain epistemology of the soul'

Visiting Research Seminar in the Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion, University of Lancaster (26 February 25) 'Isolated or co-responsible? Perfected souls in Jainism'

Workshop 'Sanskrit Language Acts and Worldmaking in Philosophy and Religion' King's College (22-23 May 25) 'The Jain doctrine of perspectives. Disambiguating linguistic expressions as a tool for liberation'

Jinesh Sheth

Presented a paper at Jain Studies Conference, Oxford (Oct. 25, 2024) 'Anekāntavāda and Ahimsā: A Reinvestigation'

Presented a paper at the 98th and 99th Joint Session of Indian Philosophical Congress (IPC) at Annamalai University, Chennai, India (Dec. 19-22, 2024), 'Mind-Body Problem: A Jain Perspective'

Presented a paper at an international conference on Therapeutic Philosophy in Global Perspectives at Manipal Academy of Higher Education, MAHE, Karnataka, India (Jan. 13-17, 2025) 'Anekāntavāda as Therapeutic Philosophy: Some Unexplored Dimensions'

Delivered a talk at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay (Jan. 31, 2025). 'Is non-one-sidedness itself non-one-sided?'

Delivered an online talk and guided discussion at Philosophical Café, PPAI (May 23, 2025). 'Perspectives and Truth: Meditations on Anekāntavāda'

Delivered a talk online at Tattvavimarśa (An Online Monthly PhD Alumni Lecture Series), University of Mumbai (Jul. 11, 2025) 'Anekāntavāda: Some Unexplored Dimensions'

Thank you



This year has been profoundly rewarding, not only in terms of academic progress, but also through the friendships, shared values and mutual trust that continue to shape the Dharmanath Network. As someone who directly benefits from your generosity, I want to say thank you. Your vision, encouragement and support make this work possible and I carry that knowledge with deep gratitude every day.

Dr Marie-Hélène Gorisse
Dharmanath Assistant Professor in Jain Studies



Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT, United Kingdom
www.birmingham.ac.uk

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