

Muni Jambūvijayajī

Homage and reminiscences

PROF. NALINI BALBIR

The 12th November 2009 will remain as a gloomy day for everyone as it brought the shocking and sad news that a jewel of knowledge and kindness has suddenly disappeared from this earth.

I am not among the scholars who sat in long discussing sessions with Muni Jambūvijayajī, but I had the privilege to meet him and have his *darshan* a few times during the last 30 years. Each meeting, however short it was, was inspiring and ennobling. Keen on teaching one topic or another of *dharma* and emphasizing the importance of vegetarianism, Muni Jambūvijayajī never failed to mention the name of his guru (and father), Muni Bhuvanavijaya, and Sankheshwar, a place where he always used to go back. His mother, an aged nun, was often around, in the *sādhvī upāśraya*. During one of my first stays in Gujarat, in 1980, I went with Dr. Kanubhai V. Sheth to Pāṭarī, a remote village near Upariyala and Viramgam, where Muni Jambūvijayajī was staying for the rainy-season. I was transfixed by this encounter, my first one with a Jain monk, and by the *vyākhyāna* which he delivered later in the afternoon. It was easy to see how much respected he was by all. I felt extremely moved when Muni Jambūvijayajī presented me with the first volume of his edition of Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra* with *svopajñavṛtti*, which, indeed, was the most appropriate book for me to read at that stage of my studies. The clarity of this edition, one among many others that Muniji has to his credit, and the vast erudition displayed in the critical apparatus which renders full justice to the wealth of material contained in the *vṛtti* by providing so much information, textual parallels, etc. are impressive. I was so keen to make this stimulating work known to others that I decided to write a detailed review of it (published in *Journal*

Asiatique 1983, pp. 428-432). Later on, I had the opportunity to meet Muni Jambūvijayaji in Palitana, in Sankheshwar, and, for the last time, in December 2003 on the day he had arrived in Koba. Followed by his retinue, he was welcomed in great pomp by all those who were present. This is indeed a cherished memory of a striking moment. With gratitude I then received from him a copy of his edition of Hemacandra's *Śabdānuśāsa* with *Laghuvṛtti*. This is a book I constantly use, especially for my investigations in Jain *praśnottaras*. They include the modest contribution I wrote for *Jambū-jyoti*, the felicitation volume in honour of Muni Jambūvijayaji (2004) and the one published in this commemorative issue of *Anusandhān*.

Muni Jambūvijayaji's activity is in direct continuation of that of Āgamaprabhākara Muni Puṇyavijaya to whom he paid an appropriate tribute on the occasion of the latter's completion of 60 years as a monk (see *Jñānāmjali. Pūjya Muni Śrī Puṇyavijayajī Abhivādana grantha*, Mumbai, 1969, khaṇḍa bijô, pp. 17-18). Like his illustrious predecessor, Muni Jambūvijayaji devoted a lot of his energy to produce high standard editions of several texts of the Śvetāmbara canon and was involved in the continuation of the Jaina Āgama Series. His vast expertise in philosophy, logic (Buddhist logic as well) and grammar resulted, among other things, in the monumental edition of Mallavādin's *Dvādaśāranayacakra*. This work of great importance for the history of Indian philosophy has aroused the interest of many western Sanskrit scholars in recent years and has made the name of Muni Jambūvijayaji familiar even to those whose primary concerns do not relate to Jainism. Several of us have benefited from Muni Jambūvijaya's knowledge which he was always ready to impart. His interactions with foreign scholars, who for some of them became his true disciples, also led him to write a few articles (in Sanskrit) for books published outside India. His *āśīrvāda* and contribution were requested for more than one scholarly occasion connected with Jain studies in Europe! I remember the Jain Conference organized in Warsaw

(Poland) by Piotr Balcerowicz, where a message in beautiful Sanskrit written by Muni Jambūvijayaji was read to the participants. An auspicious beginning, indeed.

Muni Jambūvijayaji's action went much beyond his own publications. A highly respected figure of the Jain community, he also considered his duty to improve the state of Jain libraries, and to guarantee the preservation and accessibility of the manuscripts. Such is the message he also conveyed in the Foreword he wrote to our *Catalogue of the Jain Manuscripts of the British Library* (2006), underlining the importance of preserving and cataloguing the heritage of Jain manuscripts in India as well. Indeed, his name will remain for ever attached to the Jaisalmer and the Patan *bhaṇḍārs*. Not only did he produce with his team a new catalogue of the Jaisalmer libraries. Open to the useful innovations of modern technology, he undertook the digitization of manuscripts in these two illustrious places. As reported by Royce Wiles, an Australian scholar who was present during a few months of 1998 when the project to replicate the Jain manuscripts in Jaisalmer was undertaken, "Muni Jambūvijaya on more than one occasion laid emphasis on the need to use the very best technical methods now available to pass on to future generations the spiritual/cultural heritage contained in these MSS. No expense was spared in setting up the equipment of the project and the technical facilities procured were in my opinion world-class" (*Bulletin d'Etudes Indiennes*, Paris, 16, 1998, p. 163). From what I know, the work in Patan has just been completed in spring 2009. Such achievements will remain for ever. We only hope that, inspired by Muni Jambūvijayaji's example, other people will continue to work in the same direction.

Muni Jambūvijayaji was truly the embodiment of perfection in knowledge and in character. One cannot but admire his simplicity, earnestness, commitment and energy both mental and physical, until the last instant of his life in this world.

C/O Sorbonne-Nouvelle University
Paris, France.