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Section: Buddhist Studies

Panel: Scriptural authority and apologetics in the Indian religio-philosophical environment

Omniscience of the Jina and the truth of Jainism

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The paper analyses doctrinal and soteriological roots of the idea of omniscience in Jainism, as something independent of genuinely historical roots of the idea. The thesis is that omniscience was a vital component of Jaina soteriological enterprise, which is thereby rendered meaningful, to the extent that without the Jina's claim of omniscience Jaina soteriology would argumentatively lose its convincing force. Further, the paper demonstrates how the idea of omniscience was used by Jaina philosophers to prove truth claims of their religion, and how the logical structure of such arguments were flawed. In the final section, the paper draws some parallels between Jaina attempts to prove the truth of their doctrine with similar attempts undertaken by Dīnnāga and Dharmakīrti.