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Section 10 : Jaina Studies

Exegetical strategies : the example of Samayasundara's *Kalpalatā*

Kalpalatā is the name of the Sanskrit commentary on the *Kalpasūtra* (Jinacaritra, Sthavirāvalī, Sāmācārī) written by Samayasundara, a Śvetāmbara Jain monk of the 17th century belonging to the Kharataragaccha. It is an extensive work which deserves an independent study. This preliminary investigation will concentrate on the methods used by the commentator and will try to describe what they reveal of his attitude towards Prakrit, towards Jain scriptures in general and towards the Jinas' lives and their impact on the followers' devotion. Instances of what could be called "vernacularization" of Jainism will be examined. Since Samayasundara is a member of the monastic elite who is in charge of conveying prevailing values to the community, his attitudes cannot be without significance and may depend on the time when he lived. Moreover, the importance of the *Kalpasūtra* in the preservation and re-actualisation of the tradition among lay followers, both as a text and as a source for paintings, is a well-known fact. The role played by the commentaries in this process will be assessed through Samayasundara's work.