



Faculty Grant Report

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I have just returned from nearly four months in Mysore (January through April), where I studied Old Kannada intensively with a number of scholars: N. S. Tharanatha (University of Mysore), Prithvi Chandrashobhi (Open University, Mysore), H. V. Nagaraja Rao (retired from the Oriental Institute, Mysore), and Shubhachandra Jain (Kannada Institute, Mysore). All four scholars were extremely generous in sharing their time and expertise, and I was able to read closely a number of poetic narratives critical to my new research project on Jain literary practices in pre-colonial southern India. Particularly enlightening were Pampa's *Vikramārjunavijaya*, a ninth-century retelling of the *Mahābhārata* narrative that bears virtually no witness to the author's Jain affiliation, and Poṇṇa's *Śāntipurāṇa*, a tenth-century hagiography of the sixteenth *tīrthaṅkara*. Both texts quite obviously influence or serve as source material for Tamil Jain narratives of a slightly later period, allowing one to argue for the existence of a Jain sphere of literary practice that crosses not only from Sanskrit or Prakrit into local literary languages, but operates across specific local-language communities as well.

My primary purpose for going to Mysore—to become a more astute reader of Old Kannada poetics and poetic narratives—was certainly accomplished, due entirely to the generosity and good will of the scholars named above.

With the valuable assistance of both Professor Chandrashobhi and a student of Professor Tharanatha's, P. K. Srinivasan, I was also able to locate and scan a substantial number of important Jain poetic narratives in Old Kannada that have never been published. I am still very much in the process of sorting through these texts and determining which are most important to read first, but that will be a project for the coming months and year. Perhaps more crucially, I also now have a good sense of the lay of the land, so to speak, in terms of Jain archives and libraries throughout Karnataka, and that will serve me well on future trips to secure materials.

The generous grant from the South Asia Institute was largely spent on round-trip airfare and modest accommodations in Mysore.