

SOUTH ASIA NETWORK GHENT

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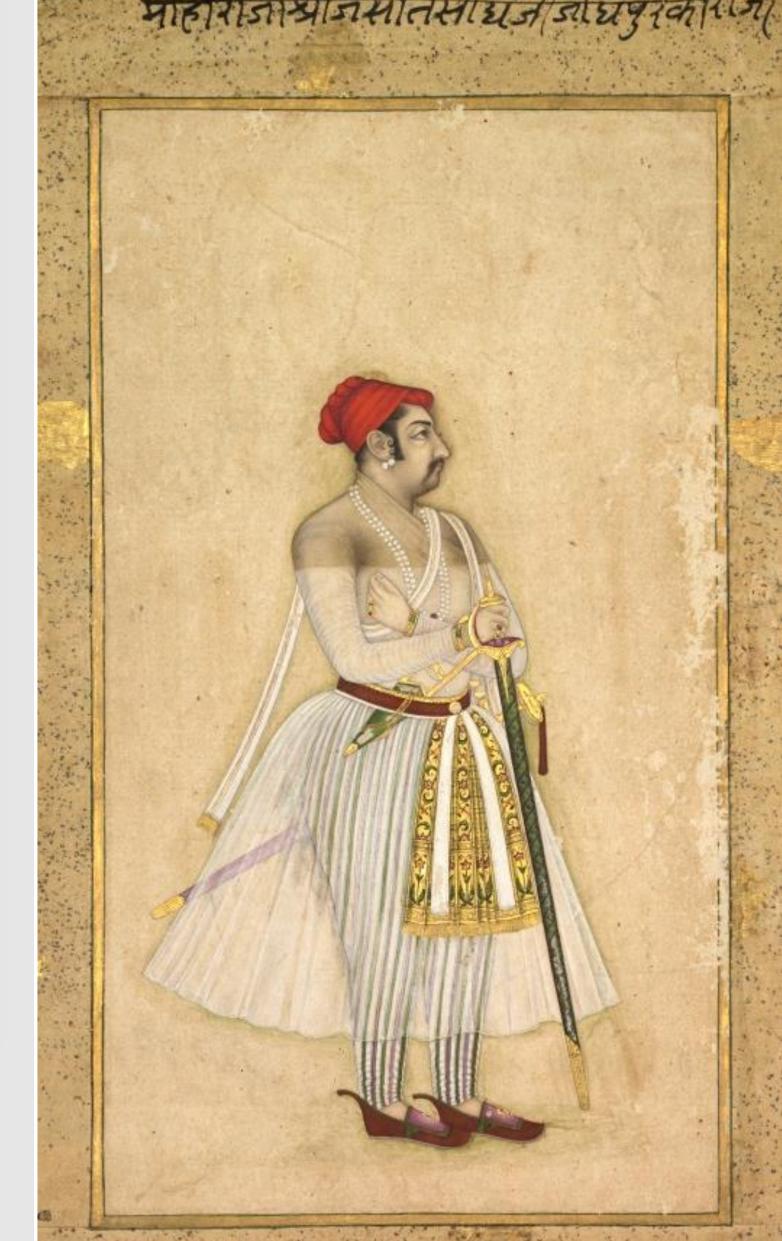
HOW WOULD A KING WRITE ABOUT PHILOSOPHY? VERNACULAR VEDĀNTA THROUGH THE WORKS OF JASVANT SINGH I

What?

This project investigates the literary persona of King Jasvant Singh of Jodhpur/Marwar. He was a key political figure of 17th century India, important vassal and general of the Mughal crown.

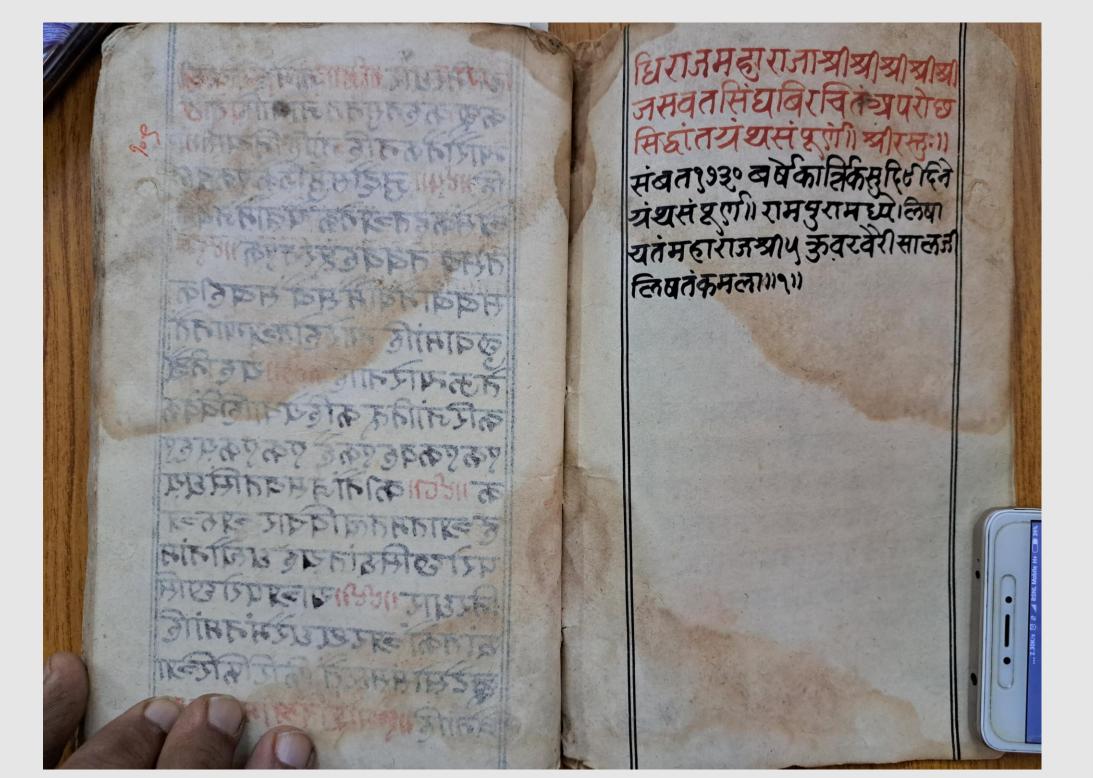
He was also the author of several works in a variety of Old Hindi, called Brajbhasha, an aspect so far understudied by research.

However, his works are crucial documents to deal with the process of vernacularisation in the field of philosophy. They treat the tenets of Advaita Vedanta, perhaps the foremost school of Hindu philosophy up to this day, based on the interpretation of the Upaniṣads, the most recent part of the Vedas.



Jasvant's vernacular works

- The Enjoyment of Bliss
- Light on the Experience
- The Doctrine on the Beyond Perception
- An Instruction on the Doctrine-s
- The Essence of the Doctrine-s
- The Drama of Wisdom



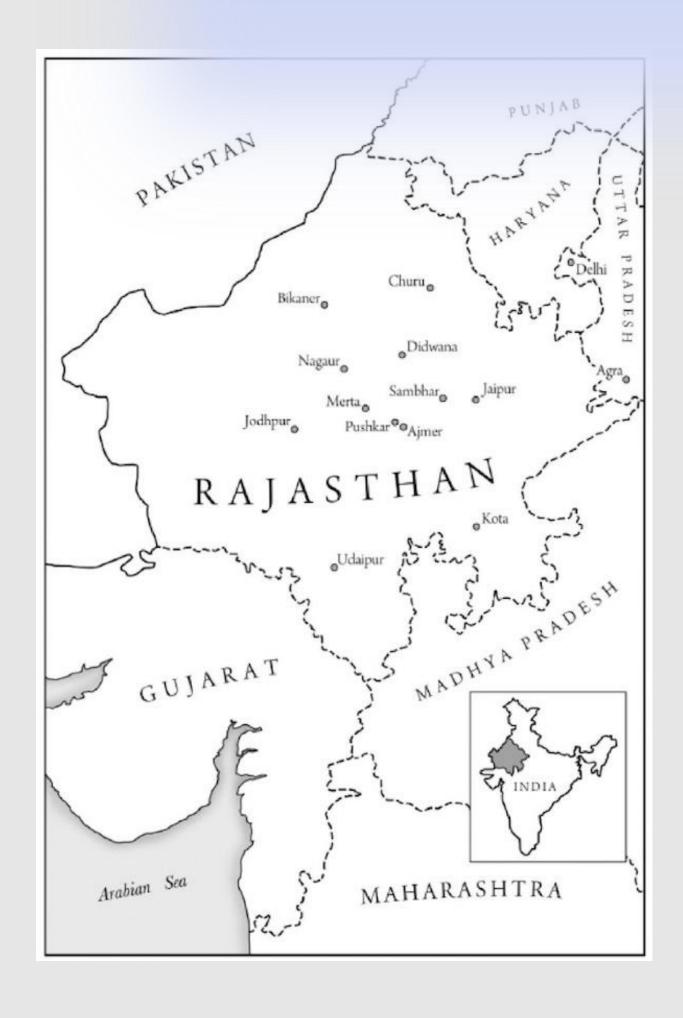
Why?

We are accustomed to study Indian philosophy
through Sanskrit sources and think that philosophy
was conceived and communicated in this language
exclusively and its technical literary genres (śāstra).

Even so, scholars have demonstrated that in the
second millennium the domain of Sanskrit over
scholarship was complemented not only by other
cosmopolitan languages such as Persian, but also by
vernaculars such as Brajbhasha. From the end of the
16th century, authors started composing manuals of
poetics in Brajbhasha, for Brajbhasha poets. Jasvant
was the author of one such manual – why not to think
that he attempted to do the same for Advaita
philosophy?

Some Research Questions

- What were the literary genres of Jasvant's works?
- Did he draw from Sanskrit technical literature or/and from contemporary vernacular models?
- Does he mention Sanskrit literary precedents?
- Were Advaita philosophical authorities known to him and how?
 Does he place himself in the tradition?
- Why was he writing about philosophy in the vernacular?
- Who was reading and commissioning his texts?
- Can we think of his being an author of philosophical texts as a political strategy?



How?

- Close reading, translation and analysis
- Comparison with other Advaita works and vernacular literature
- Mapping the circulation and reception of his works through their manuscripts

