

<b>Institution: SOAS</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 33 Theology and Religious Studies</b>
<b>Title of case study: Promoting the Knowledge of Jainism around the World (Peter Flügel)</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Founded and chaired by Dr Peter Flügel, the Centre of Jaina Studies is the only academic institution outside India dedicated to the research and teaching of Jainism and as such is a significant node in the various global networks of those interested in this ancient, globalising, minority religion. Through its teaching, research and dissemination of new research in Jainism, it has attracted the participation of lay and monastic Jain communities from all over the world as well as individuals and organisations generally interested in the distinctive features of Jainism’s philosophical and cultural traditions and, for example, their application to art historical and aesthetic interpretations, yogic practice and current debates in environmental and animal rights activism.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Flügel’s extensive body of work, dating from 1996, treats a variety of themes in the history, anthropology and sociology of contemporary Jain schools and sects, and the socio-political and legal history of the Jain tradition. It is the depth of his knowledge of Jainism and breadth of subjects covered in his research that has enabled Flügel to create and sustain a unique environment for the development of research and study of Jainism. It specifically relies on and strengthens reciprocities between those studying the religion and those practicing it. The success of the Centre and its capacity to influence broad constituencies rest firmly on this knowledge base and the respect it commands.</p> <p>The plurality of subjects treated in his own work on Jainism since starting at SOAS in October 2000, and the Centre’s dissemination of the research of others, reveal the diversity of disciplinary and methodological approaches – including those of anthropology, art history, gender studies and diaspora studies – that now influence and shape the exploration of this lived religion. Flügel and the Centre of Jaina Studies during his Chairmanship have been instrumental in contributing to this shift away from the purely philological and archaeological studies of the past: Not only has this enlivened and strengthened the burgeoning academic discipline of Jaina Studies itself, but it has also attracted and engaged Jain community members and teachers as well as new constituencies including museum curators, art dealers and auctioneers, practitioners of yoga, and environmental and animal rights activists.</p> <p>Throughout his published work, Flügel actively counters notions of the static or timeless nature of the religion and the ascetic practices for which it is perhaps best known. He promotes a far more nuanced understanding of Jainism as a lived religion encompassing a plurality of not just mendicant, but also lay-inspired devotional practices, ethical and legal codes and customs varying across sect, caste, family and region. Output b below, for example, highlights the existence of a syncretistic form of devotional Jainism that is markedly different from the ascetic traditions outlined in canonical Jain scriptures.</p> <p>Careful consideration of the varieties of practice and belief within Jainism is also evident in output d, which contests the perceived uniformity implied by the term “Jaina Law”. Flügel charts the colonial creation of “Jaina Law” and how both agents of the modern Indian legal system and Jain reformers have sought to narrow this interpretation. Instead, he investigates four distinct interpretations of “Jaina Law” informed by jaina dharma, the conventions of monastic and lay traditions, modern concerns with the “personal law” of the laity and – as a consequence of the dominance of the Hindu Code that only indirectly recognises Jaina Law – by a somewhat evasive consideration of Jaina “customs” alone.</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

More recently Flügel's research has sought to draw the fundamental precepts of Jainism – non-violence and a respectful, non-interventionist approach to nature and animals – into dialogue with ecological conservation and animal rights movements.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

*The following represent those outputs of Dr Flügel that we believe have had the greatest impact on community members and others based on significant numbers of downloads and anecdotal evidence:*

- a. "The Invention of Jainism: A Short History of Jaina Studies." *Journal of Jaina Studies (Kyoto)* 11 (2005): 1-19.
- b. "Present Lord: Simandhara Svami and the Akram Vijnan Movement." In *The Intimate Other: Love Divine in the Indic Religions*, edited by Anna S. King and John Brockington, 194-243. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2005.
- c. "Demographic Trends in Jaina Monasticism." In *Studies in Jaina History and Culture: Disputes and Dialogues*, edited by Peter Flügel, 312-98. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- d. "A Short History of Jaina Law." *International Journal of Jaina Studies*, 3/4 (2007): 1-15.

#### Externally funded projects that supported the work above:

*Relic Worship in Jainism* (2000 British Academy SRC SG-31522, 2002) £4,450;  
*Socio-Demographic Analysis of Contemporary Jaina Monastic Orders* (2001 British Academy SCR SG-32893) £4,950;  
*Jaina Law and the Jaina Community in India and Britain*, with Professor Werner Menski (School of Law, SOAS) as principal investigator (2003-2006 AHRB Research Grant B/RG/AN9085/APN/16406) £226,350;  
*Jaina Rituals of Death* (2011 AHRC Fellowship AH/I002405/1 2011) £1,500.

#### Continuing research supported by:

*Johannes Klatt's Jaina-Onomasticon* (2012-2015 Leverhulme Trust Research Grant RPG-2012-620) £245,160.

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Despite the comparatively small size of Jain religious communities, numbering approximately four million in India, 150,000 in the US and 30,000 in the UK, it has been possible for the Centre of Jaina Studies to make substantial impacts on these minority religious communities in a short space of time: the important annual lectures and workshops began in 1999 and the Centre's founding in 2004. Throughout the period 2008-13, the Centre, under Flügel's Chairmanship, has provided simultaneously a platform for the dissemination of excellent new research and a welcoming space for lay Jains and monastics, many of whom regularly travel from India and the United States to attend the Centre's academic events featuring papers and presentations by Flügel and others working in the field of Jaina Studies and cognate disciplines.

In addition, the Centre's events, which are organised around key themes such as Jaina art, yoga and approaches to ecological conservation and animal rights, attract wider audiences of non-sectarian cultural, advocacy and other organisations as well as interested members of the general public. In recent years, members of Jain communities as well as non-academics drawn from a range of organisations have consistently outnumbered academic audience members, comprising 60-75% of the total of those present.

The following details the Centre's impacts beyond academe specifically in respect of enhancing Jain community education and cohesion, and by drawing research on Jainism into interdisciplinary events that attract the participation of varied constituencies.

## Impact case study (REF3b)

Amongst those from outside academia regularly attending Centre events are teachers and students of Jainism and representatives of community organisations and educational initiatives. Manish Mehta of the Federation of Jain Associations in North America has been attending the annual events since 2004, and has videotaped the presentations of research for dissemination to teachers of Jainism in the United States, of whom there are an estimated 600: *“I have often cited from Peter’s research, as well as disseminated highlights of past Jaina Studies Workshops across the North American Jain communities and Jain teachers.”* (1, below)

Teachers of Jainism in the UK have also profited from the Centre’s events. Shruti Malde, an ophthalmologist and teacher of weekly classes of Jainism in London to students between the ages of 13 and 16 has attended no fewer than eight annual lectures, sometimes in the company of her more mature students. (2)

Flügel has also provided advice to the Jain eLibrary, an electronic resource providing free access to more than 12,000 books, articles and audio files featuring material on Jainism to more than 24,000 registered users globally (3). Flügel suggested additional key holdings for the Library and provided details as to the locations in India where important texts could be found.

Aspects of the broader support for the community has been highlighted by Atul Shah, of Diverse Ethics, a company providing advice and training on diversity and ethics in the workplace (4):

*“Dr Flügel’s work has been a huge asset for the community in retaining its culture and influencing young people to take an interest and pride in this heritage. It has helped us to keep alive the spirit of reason and to open our eyes to the vast ocean that is Jain philosophy and culture.”*

The presentations and discussions of new research are particularly beneficial to community members according to Shah as the Centre’s events “open [community members’] eyes to the science of Jainism and to see outside narrow sectarian boundaries to the vastness of the philosophy, the literature, history and the arts and culture.”

Annual events in recent years in particular have been characterised by their interdisciplinary and often interfaith coverage of a range of topics including Jaina Art and Architecture and Jaina approaches to biodiversity and the welfare of animals and plants. This latter event, for example, attracted the participation of environmental and animal rights activists from the UK, India and beyond including representatives of The Bhumi Project, a worldwide Hindu environmental group and the UK’s Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society. Richard Ryder, the well-known animal rights activist and trustee of the RSPCA, wrote in August 2012:

*“The Conference had a significant impact on me, helping me to build relationships, learn about Jain and other approaches to the subject (...). I have since spread the news of this Conference to fellow members of the large animal welfare community internationally. It was good to meet speakers from other religions as well as from secular backgrounds. I think the Conference thus had a unifying effect. We felt drawn together by our common interest in animal life and its wellbeing.”*

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Manish Mehta, JAINA Vice-President (Midwest USA) & Chairman of JAINA Diaspora Committee, Ann Arbor, MI.
2. Shruti Malde, teacher of weekly classes in Jainism for young people.
3. Jain eLibrary: <http://www.jainelibrary.com/index.php> [Most recently accessed 25.11.13]
4. Atul K. Shah, Chief Executive Officer, Diverse Ethics.

5. Dr Richard D Ryder, noted animal rights activist and trustee of the RSPCA (and ex-Chairman of their Council)