To this day, few other stories in India are as popular and influential as the ancient legend of Rāma, of which the oldest extant literary version is the Sanskrit epic Rāmāyana by Vālmīki. Aside from Vālmīki's Rāmāyana thousands of other versions of the story have been composed over the past twenty-five centuries in diverse forms and languages by authors from different ideological, geographical and social backgrounds. These all constitute the "Rāmāyana tradition". A crucial generative characteristic of this tradition is its questioning within the boundaries of the tradition.

For, despite an undertone of idealism, the figure of Rāma is not devoid of controversy, leading to copious variants with reinterpretations, additions, etc., criticizing these acts implicitly and explicitly. One such tradition to have questioned in depth the Rāma story is that of the Jains.

This lecture will examine how and why Jainas, on the one hand integrated the character of Rāma into their world view, and, on the other hand, criticized the authoritative versions of the story.