Colette Caillat (15 January 1921–15 January 2007)

M. Hara

One of the editors of the Indo-Iranian Journal, a member of l’Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, and Professor emeritus of the Université de Paris, Colette Caillat passed away on 15 January 2007. Her demise was reported all over the world by her friends and pupils, and on Thursday 26 January an obituary appeared in the newspaper Le Monde by her two successors, N. Balbir in Indian Studies and Georges-Jean Pinault in Historical Linguistics. Born in Saint-Leu-la Foret, the centre of the Ile-de-France on 15 January 1921, she completed in Paris her full life of eighty-six years on her birthday. Her death was deeply regretted both inside and outside France by her colleagues and pupils. Needless to say, in France she was the leading figure in Indo-logical Studies, but she also had an international reputation as a first-class scholar in the field of Indo-Aryan linguistics and as a lucid exploiter of Indian civilization. As one of her admirers and in the capacity of a junior colleague in the editorial board of the Indo-Iranian Journal since 1975, I shall write below a modest obituary of Colette Caillat as research scholar and stimulating teacher.

(1) Though primarily trained in Classics and in historical linguistics, her encounter with Jules Bloch (1880–1953) and Louis Renou (1896–1966) was decisive in her academic career, being conducive to the exposition of the linguistic problems of the Indo-Aryan languages and ancient Indian civilization. However, a second decisive encounter took place in Hamburg, namely her meeting with W. Schubring. At the suggestion of L. Renou, she visited Hamburg where she was introduced by this leading scholar in Jinology at that time to Jainism in general and to the text-critical studies of the Jaina monastic order and discipline. Her brilliant achievement in this field is crystalized in her three monumental books, Les expiations dans le rituel ancien des religieux jaina (Paris 1965), a joint-publication with W. Schubring,
Drei Chedasūtras des Jaina Kanons, Āyāradasāo, Vavahāra, Nisīha (Hamburg 1966), and Candāvejjhaya. La Prunelle-Cible (Paris 1971). Below, we shall give a brief survey of her first publication in book-form.

Preceded by an Introduction, the book consists of two parts, “l’organisation monastique” and “les expiations.” These two parts, however, are inseparably related to each other, for the expiation, which is composed of ten stages, starting from confession (āloyaṇā) and ending with exclusion (pāraṇciya), becomes effective only in the presence of the monastic organisation (sangha, gana, kula, parivāra, sambhoga) with its own hierarchic structure from novice (nava) to senior (thera). Here the Jaina monastic organization and atonement theory are lucidly analysed as they are reflected in the Sanskrit Tīkā stratum of the Cheda-literature (her principal source being Malayagiri’s tīkā of the 13th century). On the basis of this principal source-material, she tried to reconstruct its more ancient strata, which are referred to rather vaguely and unsystematically in the sutta and bhāṣya-literature, with a comparative evaluation of early Buddhist Vinaya-texts and Hindu Dharma-sūtras and Dharma-śastras. After careful reconstruction, she concluded that the atonement-theory as revealed in the Jaina monastic order is not intended simply for the punishment of faults, but rather is led by constant encouraging efforts to reform, guided, so to speak, by a genuine and human empathy with their common religious ideal. Yet, in this concluding passage, we notice also a sympathy of her own for understanding Jainism so warmly in a humanistic way.

Her second publication Drei Chedasūtras des Jaina-Kanons, Āyāradasāo, Vavahāra, Nisīha (Hamburg 1966), was a joint work with W. Schubring. Here she contributed the French translation of Uddesa-s 1-3 of Vavahāra with constant reference to her Expiations (pp. 48–69) in the note-section.

Her third publication in Europe was Candāvejjhaya, introduction, édition critique, traduction, commentaire (Paris 1971). The book is one of the Pañña(ya), Prakṛṣṇaka, which in 175 strophes discusses such problems as the relationship between teacher and pupil, asceticism, and so forth. Here is also discussed the problem of the fasting unto death (pandita-marana the wise man’s death) which becomes effective only with the assistance of one’s guru (guru-sagāse). The author’s introduction and commentary occupy two third of this book, where text-critical and linguistic problems are fully discussed.

Though not quite without precedent since Guerinot published La religion djaina; histoire, doctrine, culte, coutumes, institutions (Paris 1926), this branch of Indian Studies, namely Jainism, was by way of being the monopoly of German scholars until that time (A. Weber, R. Pischell, E. Leumann, H. Jacobi and W. Schubring). With these text-critical achievements of Colette Caillat, Jaina scholarship now had a solid foundation in France.

Her linguistic command over the Ardhamāgadhī and Māhārāṣṭri in which the ancient Jaina treatises are transmitted naturally led Colette Caillat to Pali and Buddhist studies. She participated in the Danish project of the Critical Pali Dictionary, which had been begun by V. Trenckner and continued by L. Alsdorf as editor in chief. She wrote articles in Volume Two from 1971 (is): Fascicule 7) to 1988 (edisaka Fasci-