CONTRIBUTION OF PRAKRIT TO JAINA CANONICAL LITERATURE

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The Jaina canonical works constitute an important section of Prakrit Literature. Jainism admits in this era twenty four Tirthan karas who are responsible for the promulgation of the religion of dharma from time to time. The 22nd was Neminatha, the cousin of Krsna, the 23rd was Pārsvanātha whose Historicity is accepted now; and the last was Mahavira (599 to 527 B.C.), whom Buddhist texts mention as Niganthanataputta. He was senior contemporary of Buddha, he came from a ruling clan and he was related to the royal families of Magadha. preachings of Mahavira and his disciples have come down to us in the Jaina Agama or the canon in the Ardhamagadhi form of Prakrit language. Exigencies of time, especially a famine, required its first systematisation by the Pataliputra council, some time in the 4th Century B.C., which was followed by subsequent attempts from time to time, attributed to eminent teachers like Skandila, Nagarjuna and Devarddhi. There are a few texts of individual authorship too. The canon, as it is available today was systematised, rearranged, redacted and committed to writing by the Vallabhi Council under Devarddhi in the middle of the 5th Century A.D. The earlier lists of canonical texts, possibly as classified at the time of earlier compilation are preserved to us in the canon itself.



The most recognized classification, possibly of the Vallabhi council itself, is that the Āgama contains 11 Angas, 12 Upāngas, 10 Prakirnakas, 6 Chedasūtras, 2 Cūliasūtras, 4 Mūlasūtras.

ELEVEN ANGAS:-

- 1. Ayaranga (Acaranaga)
- 2. Süyagadanga (Sütrakrtanga)
- 3. Thananga (Sthananga)
- 4. Samavāyānga (Samavāyānga)
- 5. Viyāhapaņņattī (Bhagavtī)
- 6. Nayadhammakahāo (Jīnātrdharmakathā vyākhayā prajīnapti)
- 7. Uvāsagadasāo (Upāsakadasānga)
- 8. Antagadadasão (Antakrddasā)
- 9. Aņuttarovaviyādasā (Anuttaraupapātikadasā)
- 10. Pannavagrana (Prasnavyakarana)
- 11. Vivāgasuyam (Vipākasūtra)

TWELVE UPANGAS :-

- 1. Ovavaiya (Aupapātiks)
- 2. Rāyapasēņīyam (Rājaprasniya)
- 3. Jīvajīvābhigama
- 4. Pannavanā (Prajnāpanā)
- 5. Sūriyapaņņatti (Sūryaprajnapti)
- 6. Jambūdivapannatti (Jambūdvipa prajfiapti)
- 7. Chadapannatti (Chandraprajñapti)
- 8. Kappiya (Kalpikā)

- 9. Kappāvadamsiya (Kalpāvatamsikā)
- 10. Pupphiya (Puspika)
- 11. Pupphacula (Puspacula)
- 12. Vanhidasā (Vṛṣṇidasā)

TEN PRAKIRNAKAS:-

- 1. Causarana (Catunsarana)
- 2. Aurapaccakkhāna (Aturapratyakhyana)
- 3. Mahapaccakkhana (Mahapratyakhyana)
- 4. Bhattaparinna (Bhaktararijñā)
- 5. Tandulaveyābyam (Tandulavaicārika)
- 6. Santhāraga (Samstāraka)
- 7. Gacchāyāra (Gacchācāra)
- 8. Ganivijja (Ganividya)
- 9. Devindatthava (Devendrastava)
- Maranasamahi (Maranasamādhi)

SIX CHEDASŪTRAS ;-

- 1. Nisiha (Nisitha)
- 2. Mahānisiha (Mahānisitha)
- 3. Vivahāra (Vyavahāra)
- 4. Āyāradasā (Ācāradasā)
- Kappasutta (Kalpaūtra)
- 6. Pañcakappa (Pañcakalpa)

TWO CŪLIKĀSŪTRAS ;-

- 1. Nandisutta (Nandisūtra)
- 2. Anuyogaddāra (Anuyogadvāra)

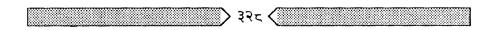


FOUR MÜLASÜTRAS ;-

- 1. Uttarajjhayana (Uttarādhyayana)
- 2. Dasaveyāliya (Dasavaikālika)
- 3. Āvassaya (Āvasyaka)
- 4. Pindanijjutti (Pindaniryukti)

The 12th Anga, the Drstivada, which included the 14 purvas is lost. The contents of the canon are guite varied and cover almost every branch of human knowledge, as it was conceived of in these days. The texts like Acaranga, Daśavaikālika gives a detailed account of Monachism as practised in Eastern India in the days of Mahavira. Jīva Jivabhigama etc. fully discuss the Jaina ideas about living beings. Upāsakadasāh, Prasnavyākaraņāni etc setforth the and regulations of a householder's ideas Jñatadharmakathah, Vipākasūtra and Nirayāvavaliyāo give good many holy legends which are moral in all their aspects and didactic in purpose. Sūryaprajñapti etc, discuss Jaina Cosmology. Sütrakrtanga, Uttaradhyayana etc contains brilliant moral exhortations, philosophical discourses and amusing legedns and some of their sections are fine specimens of ancient Indian ascetic poetry. Nandisūtra gives details about Jains epistemology and the texts like the Bhagavatisutra are encyclopaedic in contents. Some of the stories are said in the age of Aristanemi, in some places the pupils of Parsva and Mahavira are holding discussion and in most of the lessons preachings are attributed to Mahavira and his disciples.

Devardshigani arranged and redacted the already existing tests of the canon as a consistent whole probably by standardising descriptions, passages and the use of synonyms in a certain text and by merely referring to them



in others by terms like 'vannao', 'Jāva' and numerals. The cross references do show the working of one hand. Though the matter of the present upangas is as old as that of the Angas, the division of upangas, to correspond to Angas is an innovation perhaps after the Pataliputra council. It is not known to earlier lists preserved in the original contents of works like the Prasnavyakaranani upto the final redaction, re-shaffling and transposition of parts have taken place; and they can be detected even now. Some of the Niryuktis clearly show that they have in view a slightly different arrangement of matter in some places; and W.Schubring has shown how some lines from the Sütrakrtanga require to be re-arranged for a consistent interpretation. Further, we have a large number of prakirnakas, but only some of them are admitted to the canon.

Though the Ardhamagadhi canon was redacted in the 5th Century A.D., the major and substantial portion of it is as old as the Pataliputra Council in the 4th Century B.C., in addition to the traditional account. This has been proved by the absence of any reference to Greek Astronomy in the Canon and by the nature of metre and language of its older portions. The first parts of Ācārānga and Sūtrakṛtānga are considered to be the oldest stratum of the canon, and some lessons from the Chedasūtras and a few sermons from the Uttarādhyayana and Bhagavatisūtras may be ranked by their side.

The canon described above, is authoritative only for the Svetāmbaras and it is not admitted as genuine by the Diganbaras who have their pro-canon. According to the Svetāmbara tradition, the knowledge of the 14 pūrvas went on decreasing and by the time of Devarddhigaņi the 12th Anga which included the pūrvas disappeared. Now



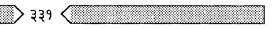
and then, gathas from purvas, possibly from traditional memory, are quoted even by late commentaries. There is a similar tradition of the digambaras about the gradual loss the Anga knowledge. There is sufficient evidence to indicate that the sacred texts were studied in monastic seminaries and handed down from teacher to pupil often in mutual isolation in distant parts of the country. Due to lapse of memory, lack of continuity of study, obscurity of technical details and passing away of outstanding custodians of scriptural knowledge etc, some or other branches of study must have fallen into oblivion in some or other branches of study must have fallen into oblivion in some seminary or the other. Any specialised branch elaborately preserved in one seminary, it is quite likely, gradually came to disowned by others on account of certain differences in dogmas grown in the mean time. That is how, in all probability, the Digambaras came to disown the Angas and the Drstivada was considered as lost by the Śvetāmbaras. Portions of the Drstivada, it has been lately shown by Dr. Hiralal, lie at the basis of the Prakrit-SamsIrot commentaries and Kasayaprabhrta which with huge Prakrit-Sanskrit commentaries have been brought to light. limited studies that have been carried on do indicate that both of them (Digambaras and Svetambaras) had a common literature once, and even today common matter expressed in almost identical terms, can be detected in the early literature of both. A full estimate of early Jaina literature and the ideology embodied therein is possible only by studying comparatively the older works preserved by both sections of the Jainas.

The canon comprises works of different origin and age, and naturally it is difficult to estimate its literary character. The redaction has brought together distinctly separate parts

of works. Some are in prose, some in verse and some in prose and verses. The prose of Acaranga contains interwoven manifold difficulties of interpretation. The old prose works are diffused in style with endless mechanical repetitions. Some works contain pithy remarks pregnant with meaning. didactic sections present vigorous exposition in a fluent style. The standardised descriptions, obviously siming at a literary effect are heavy in construction with irregular compound expressions. The rules of monastic life are full of details and the dogmatic lessons show a good deal of systematic expositions. There are narratives containing parables and similes of symbolic significance. There are exemplary stories of ascetic heroes and there are debates on dogmatic topics, in addition to biographical details about Pārsva, Mahāvīra and their contemporaries. The canon when studied along with Pāli tests, yields valuable information about contemporary life and thought.

Mahāvīra is said to have preached in Ardhamāgadhi form of prakrit, which, therefore, is the name of the canonical language. The older portions preserve archaic forms of language and style. These gradually disappear in later works, and there is seen the influence of linguistic tendencies well known in Mahārāṣṭri which was evolving as a literary language in the early centuries of the Christian era. Such a modernisation was inevitable in course of oral transmission especially because the Śvetāmbara monks were already using the Prakrit not only as a language of religious scriptures but also as a vehicle of literary expression. In the verses common to both the Digambara tests soften the intervoclic consonants, while those of the Svetambaras lose them leaving behind the vowels.

Prior to the Pataliputra Council, at the time of Chandragupta Maurya, a body of Jaina monks, on the



advent of a famine, migrated to the South under Bhadrabahu, Lest the scriptural knowledge might fall into oblivion, after the famine a council of monks was called at Pataliputra to compile the canon, but the canon so compiled was not acceptable to those who had migrated to the south. The conditions of famine had possibly created a gulf between the practices of monks that remained in Magadha and of those that had gone out to the south. Differences about dogmas and practices might have been there even earlier, but scholars look upon this as the possible seed of the Jaina Church into Svetambara and Digambara. explains to a certain extent, why the Digambararas disown the Ardhamagadhi canon of Pataliputra. To satisfy the religious needs of community, they began jotting down their memory notes which have survived to us in the form of many prakrit texts that deserve to be called the pro-canon of the Jainas. The earliest of these are the Satkhandagama and Kaşāyāprabhrta which are the remnants of the Drstivada. The commentaries of Virasena and Jinasena (816 A.D.) incorporate earlier commentaries in Prakrit and they indicate what an amount of traditional details was associated with the original sūtras. They deal with the highly technical and elaborate doctrine of karman which is a unique feature speciality of Jainism among Indian religions. Among the works of the pro-canon, the Mulacara of Vattakera and the Ārādhana of Shivārya have a close kinship with the canon, and give elaborate details about the monastic life, its rules and regulations. The Prakrit bhaktis are a sort of devotional compositions of daily recitation.

A large number of works is attributed to Kundakinda, but only a few of them have come down to us.

His Pancāstikāya and Pravacanasāra are systematic expositions of Jaina Ontology and epistemology and his Samayasāra is full of spiritual fervour. Yativṛṣabha's Tiloya-Pannatti covers a wide range of topics and has served the purpose of a source book. The compilation or composition of all these works based on traditional material, might be assigned to the early centuries of the Christian era.

A good deal of Prakrit Literature has grown round the canon itself by way of explanation, detailed exposition, illustration through tales and topical systematisation. On some canonical texts there are the Niryuktis, a sort of metrical commentaries which explain the topics by instituting various enquiries. They are attributed to Bhadrabahu and are undoubtedly anterior to Devarddhi's Some of them in turn, on account of their systematic exposition, accuracy of details and solidity of arguments became the object of learned labours of great scholars. For instance Jinabhadra kdamāśramana (609 A.D.) wrote highly elaborate Bhasya in Prakrit on the Āvaşyaka Niryukti round which has grown a little world of literature. Bhasya and Curni commentaries are found on some works. Bhāṣya is an elaborate exposition, at times incorporating and supplementing the Niryukti verses of the text in prakrit, while Cūrni is a prose gloss written in a bewildering admixture of prakrit and sanskrit.

This, in brief, is the contribution of Prakrit to Jaina Canonnical literature.

