

35. Extra-Ordinary Literary Personality Shri Jaya Bhikhhkhu

Birth and Childhood:

Shri Jaya Bhikhhkhu was born in his maternal native place of Vinchhia village in Saurashtra in 1908. Shri Virchandbhai Hemchandrabhai Desai and Shrimati, Parvatibai were his parents. His mother expired when he was only four years of age and hence his childhood passed in his maternal native place Vinchhia (Saurashtra). His paternal native village was Sayla (of Lala Bhagat) in Saurashtra. He had three names. In his family he was called by the loving name Bhikhabhai, in the group of his well wishers he was called as Balabhai and as a literary figure he is known as Jayabhikhhkhu which is his nickname.

Jaya Bhikhhkhu had his primary education at village Varsoda near Vijapur and then he studied at Tutorial High School, Ahmedabad in secondary section up to the English standard three. After this, he joined Shree Veer Tattva Prakashak Mandal, established by the late Acharya Shri Vijaya Dharm Sooriji Maharaj. He studied Sanskrit, Hindi, Gujarati and English for 8-9 years at Shivpuri, which is full of natural beauty small forests. Before this, he moved through Kashi, Agra, and Gwalior and at last came to Shivpuri.

He married to Vijayaben on 13-5-1930. His nickname Jaya Bhikhhkhu is made up by the combination of his and his wife's name. The part "Jay" is taken from his wife's name and "Bhikhhkhu" is taken from his own name of Bhikhalal.

There is courage and playfulness in his life. For his own development he believed that the blessings received from saints and teachers were more effective than learning in schools and colleges, lively acquaintance with this wide world was more educative than reading and the inspiration obtained from nature was more encouraging than books. He liked the book "Saraswatichandra" of Govardhanram Tripathi very much and he had taken encouragement for literary activities from him.

He started his activities of a writer in 1933 and started at Ahmedabad since then. He had been to Calcutta to appear at the examination of Nyaya Tirth and had put at Kenning Street. He was completing his studies and he had now the time to think for his future. He took three decisions: -

- (1) No to be in service of any one
- (2) Not to accept any inherited property and
- (3) to live only at the support of writings.

If a man putting his head in the lap of Saraswati-goddess of knowledge keeps some patience and tolerance, the goddess does take his care Jaya Bhikhhkhu firmly believed in this and his life is evidence to it.

His beginning life passed off as a journalist. He wrote in periodicals-Jain Jyoti and Vidyarthi for many years. In addition to this, he wrote the famous column "Int Ane Imarat" in Gujarat Samachar daily for several years. He wrote also in Zagmag, children weekly and also in Akhand Anand, Jankalyan, Gujarat Times etc. as and when he had spare time to write.

His style of writing was his own. He could make a very great creation out of a small incident or little substance if he felt that there is an element of humanity and interest for mankind. His novels were popular among Jains as well as non-Jains. There were people who had read one of his novels for 15 to 20 times. His stories were translated in Kannad and Telugu languages also. 13 of his books have received various awards from state and central Governments.

He was a leader in creating literature for children. He gave a unique direction to the literature. He had the gift of being a natural artist in literature. He adds his own experiences into it and thereby

innocent fun comes out very well coupled with the development and growth of child-life in easy and natural way. Thus, sweet smell is added to the gold by his unusual skill.

Jaya Bhikhhkhu has lived on the income of his writings. He has encouraged others to live like that. He was not limited himself by any narrow ideals of literature but has written in his own way, as per his will. He received some indication of his death and he gave following message to his family.

Everyone should live life like a sweet smelling candle. He died on December 24, 1969. One pillar of the Gujarati culture was lost. We can light a lamp with a lamp and accordingly, his son Dr. Kumarpal Desai has been famous as a writer, professor, journalist and an orator at a very young age.

Shri Jay Bhikhhkhu always longed for highest character and virtues. His literature also gives this message. After his death, Jay Bhikhhkhu Sahitya Trust publishes his books.

His Literary Works:

He was a life-long devotee of the goddess of knowledge (Saraswati). He has given about three hundred books to the motherland of Gujarat. The following are note worthy:

- Jain BAL Granthavli: Series 1 and 2: for children.
- Lives of the Great men: Lord Mahavir, Acharya BuddhiSagar Soori, Upadhyaya Shri PremVijayaji and Shri Rajendra Soori Memorial Granth.

He has written characters and lives of many other saints, Sadhus, mendicants in a very simple language, which would be read with interest by children, young and old.

It was believed that Jain stories were dry with only renunciation, detachment, penance and imaginary scriptural stories, Shri Jay Bhikhhkhu changed this belief entirely and now the Gujarati people of all castes, religions and creed read these stories with deep interest. Thus, Jay Bhikhhkhu propagated Jainism by way of literature of interesting stories.

His son, Dr. Kumarpal Desai has continued to give us high level literature through Jay Bhikhhkhu Trust since last few years. This literature is inspiring, awakening and above all it is enlightening also.