JAINISM IN SOUTH INDIA

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There may not be any other religion in India which is as much misunderstood and misrepresented as Jainism. Many scholars have asserted that it is an off-shoot of Buddhism and a revolt from Hinduism. Even an eminent historian like Arnold Toynbee has asserted that Bhagavan Mahavira is the "founder of Jainism" and that the Jainas were "amongst the fossilized relics of similar societies now extinct." He has also said that the Jainas of India could be seen to be fossils of Indian society developing under the Mauryan Empire. Mrs. Sinclair has opined that "both Buddhist and Jaina orders arose about the same time, the sixth century B. C., a period when constant wars between various little kingdoms must have made the lot of the common people hideous with suffering and oppression; and a man might well have longed to escape from all fear of rebirth into such a sorrowful world....."

Popular opinions like these have been oblivious to the advances that have been made by numerous research scholars, both Eastern and Western. The Vedas, which according to Hinduism are a revelation, contain verses in adoration of Surya, Indra and Agni. Jainism rejects the authority of the Vedas but the Vedas, however, refer to some of the Tirthankaras. The Rigveda contains references (astak 2, Varga 17) to Arishtanemi, the twenty-second Tirthankar while the Yajurveda refers to three Tirthankaras; Rshabha, Suparsva and Neminath (cantos 25 and 92). Dr. S. Radhakrishna accepts the tradition of the Jainas who ascribe the origin of their system to Rshabhadeva who lived many centuries back. He also

mentions that the Bhagavat Purana endorses the view that Rshabhadeva was the founder of Jainism. The Manusmrti contains a verse which states that in the beginning of the age (yuga) was born the first Jina to Marudevi from the eighth Nabhi Manu, who was the hero of action, saluted by the Gods and demons and propagated the rules of ethics. Besides mentioning these facts, the Bhagavat Purana gives details of advice which Rshabha gave to his sons; that advice is consistent with the principles of Jainism.

The finds in the excavations at Harappa and Mohanjadaro offer convincing support to the view that Jainism is an ancient religion, quite independent of any other. Sir John Marshall's monumental works refer to the seals found during the excavations of Mohanjadaro. The figures on plates xii and cxviii have been studied and are found to resemble Jaina vogis in the Kavotsarga posture. Prof. Prana Nath Vidyalankar has said that the inscription on Indus seal No 449 reads according to his decipherment as "Jinesharah." These excavations are said to be more than 4000 years old. "There can be little doubt" observed Sir C. V. Kumarswami Sastriar, the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, "the Jainism as a distinct religion was flourishing several centuries before Christ." One can, therefore conclude, without fear of contradiction that Jainism is a pre-vedic religion which flourished in India even before the advent of the Aryans to this country.

While the aforesaid conclusion is unassailable, there is not that convincing evidence about the

existence of Jains in the South even prior to the advent of the Aryans. Dr. P. B. Desai, while writing about the existence of "Jainism in South India" has mentioned that literary tradition in the Andhra Desa testifies to the visit of Lord Mahavira in the 6th century B. C. to the northern frontiers of Andhra Pradesha, then known as Kalinga desa for the propagation of his gospel. Nayasena, a Kannada poet who composed his Dharmamitra in 1112 A.D. had referred to Dhanada, a Jain prince of the Ikshvaku family, ruling over the Vengi Mandala which is identified with the territory of the Andhra Pradesha lying between the rivers Godavari and Krishna. There is evidence to show that Samprati. the grandson of Ashok had sent Jaina missionaries to preach their religion to this part of the country. The Satavahanas who ruled over the Andhra Pradesh were known to be patrons of Jains. There are many legends and traditions characteristic of Jaina faith attributed to this period of history.

Mahavamsa which is a Buddhistic work expressly refers to the prevalence of Jainism in Ceylon during the 4th century B. C. There is no reason to doubt the veracity of the references in the book. The inevitable conclusion to be drawn from these references is that the followers of the Jaina faith must have migrated to the South much prior to the 4th century B. C. and also settled in Ceylon.

That the Jainas migrated in large numbers is further strengthened by the fact that Bhadrabahu migrated to the South along with his royal disciple Chandragupta Maurya and about 1200 monks and nuns, when he foresaw with his insight that there was to be a severe famine in the North. An inscription of the 6th century A. D. found on the Chandragiri Hill at Sravanabelgola reads as follows: "Success. be it well. Victory has been achieved by the venerable Vardhamana, the establisher of the holy faith and the embodiment of the nectar of happiness resulting from the perfection attained; who has acquired supreme honour in the world by his inconceivable greatness and has attained the great position of an Arhat by the abundance of his religious merit which procured for him the name of Tirthankara..... Now indeed, after the sun of Mahavira.....had set, Bhadrabahuswami, of a lineage rendered illustrious by a succession of greatmen who came in regular descent from the venerable supreme rishi Gautamaganadhara, his immediate disciple Loharya, Jambu, Vishnudeva, Aparajita, Govardhana, Bhadrabahu, Krittikarya, Jayanama, Visakha. Proshthila, and Budhila, other Siddhartha, Dhritishena,

teachers,—who was acquainted with the true nature of the eight-fold great omens and a seer of the past, present and future, having learnt from an omen and foretold in Ujjayani a calamity lasting for a period of twelve years, the entire sangha (or Community) set out from the North to the South and reached by degrees a country counting many hundreds of villages and filled with happy people, wealth, gold, grain, and herds of cows, buffaloes, goats and sheep....Then separating himself from the Sangha, an acharya Prabhachandra by name, perceiving that but little time remained for him to live and desiring to achieve samadhi, the goal of penance associated with right conduct, on this high-peaked mountain-which forms an ornament to the earth and bears the name Katavapra....bade farewell with the herds of boars, pathers, tigers...dismissed the sangha in its entirety, and in the company of a single disciple, mortifying his body on the wide expanse of cold rocks accomplished samadhi....And in course of time seven hundred rishis similarly accomplished samadhi.... Victorious be the doctrine of Jina."

The hill acquired the name of Chandragiri on account of association with Chandragupta Maurya. The oldest temple on the hill is called Chandragupta basti. There is a cave in which there are foot-prints carved out and is known as Bhadrabahu cave. There are thirty-one inscriptions on this hill which refer to Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta.

These inscriptions cannot be brushed aside as referring to a fictitious incident. Vincent Smith, who has written a history of ancient India, admits the historicity of this event as having a "solid foundation in fact." While subscribing to this view, Prof. S. R. Sharma states that it was "a period of vigorous prosperity." B. L. Rice R. Narasimhacharya and Dr. S. A. Saletore have accepted the trustworthiness of the historical events as recorded in the inscriptions at Sravanabelgola. It would be most reasonable to infer that there must have been good population of Jains in South India to welcome Bhadrabahu, his twelve hundred disciples as also his royal devotee. Bhadrabahu would not have thought of the South in case he wanted to save the Sangha from starvation and hardship. There must have been sufficient number of religious-minded and rich Sravakas and Sravakis who could look after the munisangha.

It is expressly stated in the inscription at Sravanabelgola that many of the saints in the Sangha went further to the South. Like Asoka, his grandson Samprati spread the Jaina religion by construction of

temples and stupas. We find inscriptions in the Brahmi script in the caves of Ramanad and Tinnavalli situated within state of Tamilnadu. Even the Tamil literature establishes the existence of Jainism in this part, since ancient times. The last lamented Prof. Chakravarti held the view that the most famous book Tirukkurul was composed by Kundakundacharya. Tolkappiyam another old book in Tamil literature bears the most striking impress of Jaina concepts of religion and the universe. Dr. P. B. Desai has observed that another Tamil work Naludiar is couched in Jaina associations. According to tradition, this work is a composite composition of eight thousand Jaina monks departing from the Pandyan kingdom against the wishes of its ruler who was attached to their faith, as stated by Prof. Chakravarti in his book on Jaina Literature in Tamil.

Even to this day, we find numerous remniscences of Jainism speaking of its glory in the Tamilnadu. King Pandukabhaya who ruled this part in the fourth century B C. constructed in and round about his capital Anuradhapura many caves and rest houses for the Nirgrantha munis, as borne out by the Prakrit inscriptions. He also erected a temple in the city. This is an important landmark in the history of Jainism. Rajawalikathe, a Kannada composition of Devachandra, contains a number of collections of legends and traditional accounts of the Chola and Pandyan rulers of ancient Tamilnadu. epigraphic evidence to show that Visakhacharya visited this part of the country along with his disciples, as directed by Bhadrabahu and preached the tenets of Jainism to the inhabitants who were already familiar with the doctrines of that religion. This shows that even in the third century B. C. there were people who were followers of the Jaina religion. The research scholars of the Ephigraphist's office at Madras have discovered many caves on various hills; those caves contain beds carved out in rocks. Such caves are to be found in the hilly regions of Pudukottai, Madura and Tinnevelly districts of the state. There are water facilities near the caves, thus implying that ascetics must have lived in seclusion in these caves. Near the caves found on the hills like Annamalai, Marugaltalai and Sittannavasal, there are inscriptions carved in the Brahmi script but the language is Paisachi Prakrit.

Dr. P. B. Desai has noted that near the caves at Tirupparankuram, there are naked figures with cobra hoods indicating that they must be of Parsvanath Tirthankara. In the caves of Muttupatti, there are sculptures of Jaina deities on the boulders sheltering the beds. Many Jain idols have been sculptured in the

rocks on the Poygaimalai Hill. There are many other hills which abound in Jaina relics of early age. There are many such relics on hills in the districts of Arcot, Madura and other districts.

Kanchi and the area round about seem to have been the resort of Jainas under the Pallava Kings. Near Kanchi, there was the monastery of a Jaina monk by name Dharmasena; there are two temples dedicated to the Tirthankars Vrshabhadeva and Vardhamana, which are supposed to have been installed by Mahendravarman I, the Pallava King at the instance of his teachers Mallishena and Vamana. At a distance of two miles from Conjeevaram, we have a place called the Jaina Kanchi where there is the big idol of Bhagavan Vardhamana popularly called Trailokyanathswami. There is a large number of Jaina icons preserved in this place. One strange feature is that in this area there are many figures of Yaksha and Yakshinis carved out in many temples, leading to the inference that the worship of these guarding dieties was current in 800 A.D. or so.

Tirumalai hill hear Polur is a famous centre of Jaina antiquities. The village has a number of Jaina families. They are in possession of a number of Jaina scriptures on palm leaves in original Samskrit or Prakrit with Tamil commentary; Trailokva Chudamani, Tattvarthasutram, Jeevandharacharitamu, Gunabhadra's Mahapurana etc. There are epigraphs which relate to the period of Krishna III of the Rashtrakuta period (957 A.D.). Ponnur appears to have been an important centre where there is big idol of Adinatha Tirthankara; there are many icons of which the notable icon is that of Jwalama'ini. A Dravida monk by name Helacharya is reputed to be the originator of the cult of Yaksha and Yakshini worship which is more popular in the South than in the North. There are many places in the North Arcot, South and Chingelput Districts where Jains are found in good numbers.

Of all the States in the South, the Karnataka State is undoubtedly the richest from the points of Jaina Art, Architecture and literature. Sravanabelgola which was hallowed by the visit of Bhadrabahu in third century B. C later became the centre of pilgrimage when Chamundaraya erected the monolithic statue of $57\frac{1}{2}$ ft. in height on the Vindhyagiri Hill in about 981 A. D. It is unique from the point of its magnificence, grandeur and divine expression of smile on its face. A similar statue of Bahubali measuring $41\frac{1}{2}$ ft. is to be found at Karkala installed in 1432 A.D. while a third one measuring 35 ft. in height at Venur was erected in 1604.

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It is worthy of notice that each of the three has been carved out of a single rock and "commands respectful attention by their enormous mass and expression dignified serenity". They are all colossal statues of unrivalled dignity, as if preaching the Jaina message of Ahimsa and truth from the hilltops to the entire world. Kannada poets, ancient and modern, have sung the glory and grandeur of their monolithic calm and perfect harmony. The facial expression of each of these statues is one of deep contemplation. They however differ in the degree of perfection attained by the artist, the one at Sravanabelgola being superb in every respect.

The Jaina temples erected all over the South India are another contribution of Jainism to the architecture of India, if not, of the world. The manasthambhas or the tall standing pillars in front of most of the temples are wonderful conception. "In the whole range of Indian art", observes Smith, "there is nothing, perhaps, equal to these Kanara pillars for good taste", and decorative sculpture. The temples at Mudabidri have left a permanent impress on Indian architecture. Fergusson who is an authority on Indian architecture has observed that "nothing can excel the richness or the variety with which they are carved. No two pillars are alike, and many are ornamented to an extent that may almost seem fantastic. Their massiveness and richness of carving bear evidence to their being copies of wooden models. The Tribhuvanatilaka Jinalaya temple is a marvel of Jaina architecture". There are temples of exquisite beauty at Coorg. The temples at Sravanabelgola, Jananathpura, Hansoge and Halebeedu are spacious with individuality of their own. The pillars in the Shantinath Temple at Halebeedu have been so polished that the reflections of the individuals looking at them convey different figures both in size and posture. Similarly, the pillars of the temple at Belgaum are highly polished and strongly magnetic. The Chaturmukha-bastis at Mudabidri Laxmeshwar and Gersoppa are the best models of four-faced temples.

There are numerous temples at Aihole, but today there are Jaina images only in three temples, the Meguti temple being the most famous. The temple at the darga area of Bijapur has the idol of Bhagavan Parsvanath with a thousand-hooded Cobra. Banavasi and Bhatkat which were ones ruled by Jaina Kings have exquisite temples. At a distance of ten miles from Bhatkal, there is a place called Haduhalli deep in the midst of hills surrounding the area, there are three temples; one of them has beautiful images

of twenty-four tirthankaras with the most beautiful carved images of Dharnendra and Padmavati. Perhaps, the images seem to have been carved by the same sculpture who made identical images at Sriranagpatna situated at a distance of ten miles from Mysore.

In a short article like this, it would be impossible to give details of the numerous temples to be found in Karnataka and Tamilnadu. The temple adjoining the Math at Sravanabelgola and the cave temple at Badami bear witness to the wall-paintings which are clearly visible on the walls inspite of the lapse of hundreds of years. In the former, we have a picture of a Samvasarana with Bhagavan Parsvanath preaching the eternal doctrines of Jainism. The others illustrate the Jaina concept of lesyas of samsara and other puranic stories. There are some wall paintings at Kanchipuram and Tirumalai in the State of Tamilnadu. Aparat from these wall-paintings, we have manuscripts of Kalpasutra and of Bhaktamarastotra which illu trate the subject by means of paintings on the palm-leaves.

All the unique art and architecture would not have flourished in the South or the dakshinapatha if it had not been the stronghold of Jainism "since a hoary antiquity". Nandas, Mauryas and Satavahanas were rulers of the Deccan who patronised Jainism and promoted its spread. The Kadambas and Gangas were Jaina Kings. The Kadambas of Banavasi and the Chalukyas who succeeded Pallavas, were undoubtedly Jains. It is noteworthy that Simhanandi who was a famous Jaina Acharya was the Guru of the Ganga Kings, Madhava and Dadiga. Their capital was Kuvalalapura which is identified with modern Kolar in Karnataka. They ruled in about 250 A.D. Harivarma, the grandson of Kongunivarma (or Madhava) shifted his capital to Talakadu. Avinita, who hailed from this dynasty, was a great ruler of learning and earned a name for his just administration. Vijayakeerti who was wellversed in the Jaina scriptures was his Guru and adviser. Avinita's son Durvinita ruled in 482 A.D. under the guidance of the famous Jaina Acharya Pujyapada. Gangas were also a famous Jaina dynasty of Kings who ruled over Karnataka for about 300 years and had extended their kingdom as far as Nepal. Marasinha-II was a famous ruler whose prowess finds description in the inscriptions at Sravanabelgola in 866 A.D. (No. 38). He was a brave king and defeated the Chera, Chola and Pandya kings. He was not only learned in the Jaina scrip-

tures but also became a monk by being initiated into sanyasa by Guru Ajitasena who resided in the temple at Bankapura which is still standing as a monument in memory of the great Acharya and of the death by Sallekhana by Marasimha II in 975 A.D. as testified to by an inscription.

Chamundaraya was the Prime Minister of Marasimha and served the latter's son Rachamalla in that capacity as also in the capacity of a general. Anybody who has read the Ephigraphia Caranatica Vol. II will know how much Chamundaraya has been extolled for his valour, generosity and statesmanship. It is he who got the image of Bahubali at Sravanabelgola carved out. His Guru Nemichandra who is famous as a Siddhant-Chakravarti wrote a book on Jaina philosophy which he named as Gommatasara. Chamundaraya was himself a learned scholar and the purana that he wrote is known as Chamundaraya Purana. He also wrote a book in Samsrit known as Charitrasara. His contribution to Jaina art, culture, religion and philosophy is unique, not equalled by any other political figure in history.

The Chalukyas who ruled from 419 to 1156 A.D. were great patrons of Jainism in Karnataka. Among them Pulakesi I is very famous in history. He is also called Satyasraya and was the patron of Ravikirti whose famous inscription in Samskrit found at Aihole is noted for its diction, poetic grandeur and linguistic excellence, comparable only with that of Kalidasa. Vikramaditya II of this family is also famous in history. His queen Jakaladevi was a Jaina and built a temple at Ingalagi. It is this dynasty that patronised Pampa, the great poet and author of Adipurana.

The Hoysala Kings were also Jainas. The first king Poysala studied under a Jain monk by name Sudatta. Vinayaditya Il was the most powerful king of this dynasty and Shantideva Muni was his Guru. Ballala was another king of this line. Bittideva who was a famous king was converted to Vaishnavism by Ramanuja but his famous queen Shantaladevi who continued to remain a Jaina was the patron of art and literature. She built temples at Sravanabelgola and Halebeedu with the blessings of her Guru Prabhachandra. She adopted the vow of Sallekhana and died at Shivaganga as is borne out by an inscription at Sravanabelgola, though Shri K.V. Iyer has wrongly stated in his novel entitled Shantala that she committed suicide. Bittideva's general and prime minister Ganagaraja was a Jaina who under the guidance of his Guru Subhachandra did many

acts of piety and religion to advance the cause of Jainism. One of his generals was a Jaina lady by name Jakkiyabbe who was compared to Sita and Rukhmini. The treasurer was Hulla who built the famous temple Bhadrachudamani at Sravanabelgola, having installed idols of 24 Tirthankaras. He granted many lands in charity to the temples at Sravanabelgola, Koppal and Bankapur.

The period of Rashtrakutas (757 A.D. to 973 A.D.) was a glorious period in the history of Karnataka Jainism. Amoghavarsha was a Jaina. He was also called Nrpatunga. His book Kavirajamarga which is the first work in Kannada, mentioning the earlier writers. The Jayadhavala-tika was written by Virasenacharya under his patronage. Jinasena, the author of Parsvabhyudaya, was his Guru and has blessed his royal pupil at the commencement of his book. Amoghavarsha is credited with the authorship or Ratnamalika and has been praised by his co-pupil Gunabhadra for his wisdom and learning. Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar has stated that "of all the Rashtrakuta kings, Amoghavarsha was the greatest patron of Jainism..."There are many other kings of this dynasty who ruled in different parts of Karnataka.

Among the Kalachuri kings that ruled (1156-83) A.D.) over Karnataka, mention must be made of Bijjala. He was a king of great religious tolerance and had Basaveshwar of the Veerssaiva faith as his minister. In a contest between Jainas and Lingayats at Ablur, Bijjala is credited to have given a decision in favour of the latter. He ruled at Kalyana which is today named as Basava-Kalyana. It is most unfortunate that Bijjala was murdered and a large number of Jainas were converted into Virasaivas. The Ratta kings were another dynasty of Jaina rulers who have left their mark at Suandatti, Huli and Belgaum where they constructed some temples. The inscriptions traced from this area speak of their faith. Under the Vijayanagar Kings, there were many Jaina ministers and generals. During the periods of Ramanuja in Karnataka and of Saivas in the Tamilnadu, there were many persecutions of Jains who were converted to Vaishnavism or Saivism.

As Dr. Maurice Winternitz has observed, "it would take a fairly big volume to give a history of all that the Jainas contributed to the treasures of Indian literature. "The most noted writer in South India is Kundakunda whose numerous works on various aspects of Jaina philosophy, metaphysics,

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epistomolgy and logic number more than 84. Umaswati's Tattvarthasutra is known as the Jaina Bible. Pujyapada, Akalanka, Vidyananda, Prabhachandra and Srutasagara are some of the Jaina commentators from the South on Tattvarthasutra. Samantabhadra's Ratnakardanda-Sravakachara is a popular work on Jaina ethics. He has written many other books. Prabhachandra and Vidyananda are the other writers in Samskrit whose names must be mentioned with respect. Jinasen's Adipurana is quite popular.

Dr. Saletore has stated that "the Jaina teachers, as the intellectual custodians of the Andhradesa, the Tamil land, and Karnataka most assiduously cultivated the vernaculars of the people, in wrote in them great works of abiding value to the country. Almost all the early Jaina writers were profound scholars in Samskrit and the renowned classics in Tamil. Telugu and Kannada were produced by them. "So far as Kannada literature is concerned, R. Narsimhacharya who has written three volumes of Kannada literature, has called the period of Jaina writers "as the Augustan Age of Kannada literature". I have already referred to the earliest work: Kaviraja-marga which is the only work that mentions the boundaries of Karnataka as having spread from Godavari to Kaveri. The author has mentioned the names of earlier writers who were also Jainas. Pampa, Ponna and Ranna are called the Ratna-tray as of Kannada literature. Each of them composed a secular work as also a religious purana to serve the cause of the public as also of their own religion. Vikamrarjuna-Vijay and Adipurana, Ponna's Bhuvanaikaramabhyudaya and Shantipurana and Ranna's Gadaddhya and Ajitapurana occupy a special place of pride in Kannada literature on account of their poetic excellence and grandeur of conception. All the three poets flourished in the tenth century. Then came Nagachandra or Abhinava Pampa whose Ramayana and Mallinathapurana are unique for their descriptive power and facility of expression. E. P. Rice considers the Ramayana as unique since it preserves the Jaina version of that epic. Waddaradhane of Shivakotyacharya and Chamundaraya Purana of Chamundaraya are the only two earliest works in prose. Kabbigarakava of Andayya and Dharmamrita of Nayasena are two works which were written in pure Kannada without the use of Samskrit words. Nemichandra's Lilavati is a beautiful poem.

The contribution of Jaina writers and poets to Kannada literature has been so rich and varied that it forms a glorious chapter in the history of Kannada literature. Kesiraja's Sabdamanidarpana is a standard work on grammar and linguistics and stands unequalled to this day. Bhattakalanka Deva has written another valuable work on grammar, prosody and linguistics. Sridharacharya wrote a book on astrology while Jagaddala Somanath has written a book entitled: Kalyana-Karaka on medicine. Rajaditya has written a book on mathematics. Brahma Kavi has written a book called Samaya Pariksha on Jaina ethics. Bharatesha Vaibhava of Ratnakar Varni is a marvelous poem on the life of Bharat.

I have already referred to a few important works of Jaina poets in Tamil. Yasodhara Kavya, Chudamani, Udayanan Kathai, Nagakumara Kavyam and Neelakeshi are some of the Kavyas written by Jaina authors. Sripurana is a popular poem among the Jaina.

There were some Jaina writers and poets in Telugu but many of their works have not been available. As Dr. S. Krishnaswami Iyengar says: "There must be a Jaina period in Andhya Literature before the 11th century as in Kannada Literature, the absence of which is a mystery to be solved by historians. "Adharvanacharya was a poet well-versed in Samskrit and Telugu. He is said to have written a book on prosody and grammar at the beginning of the 13th century. Gokarna is another poet who wrote a book entitled "Kavijanasraya" Padma Kavi has written Jinendra Purana while Sarvadevayya has written Adipurana.

It is a unique feature of Jaina writers that they have contributed works of literary merit in all Indian languages. As Dr. Maurice Winternitz has said: "It would take a fairly big volume to give a history of all that the Jainas have contributed to the treasures on Indian literature." There is no Indian language in which the Jainas have not contributed to the secular or religious literature of different languages in our country. They were men of broad outlook, identified themselves with the people of the region where they settled and tried their best to enrich the spiritual, social and literary thoughts of that region. This speaks of their catholicity and mastery of languages.

"Today... the followers of Jainism are an insignificant religious minority in these areas in contrast to the rich contributions which the Jaina monks and laymen have all along made to the cultural heritage of this part of our land. There are Jaina caves on secluded but inspiring spots; there are temples which are fine specimens of art, sculpture

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