

# JAINISM IN SOUTH INDIA

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In South India, Jainism is little more than a name. Even serious students of religion in India paid little attention to it. In a population of nearly 60 crores of people, Jainas may constitute nearly some 3 million people<sup>1</sup>. But the influence it wields, its contribution to the development of Indian culture, commerce and industry is out of proportion to their population. Jainological material is so rich and varied and so much extended in time it is impossible to write about it in few pages. Because of this limitation the paper will be simply a fringe study and a general survey.

In this brief paper an attempt is made to trace the rise of Jainism as religio-philosophical system, its contribution to Indian Philosophy, Religion, Metaphysics and Logic, Art and Architecture, languages and literatures, and also a brief summary of its history in Andhra Pradesh.

The Jainas claim hoary antiquity for their religion. Vishnu and Bhagavata Puranas also mention this fact. The tradition says that during the time of the Mahabharata War Jaina order was led by Neminatha, the 22nd Thirthankara and he belonged to Yadava family. The order gained strength during 8th century B.C., under Parsvanatha, the 23rd Thirthankara.

1. The Digambaras are found chiefly in South India, North Western provinces, East Rajasthan and Punjab; The Svetambaras in Gujarat and western Rajasthan and a sprinkling of them all over India.

In Parsvanatha we have the first historical beginnings of Jainism. Mahavira was born in the middle of the 6th century B.C. It appears he was influenced to a great extent by Gosala and the followers of Ajivaka sect also. According to one tradition there were 5 heretical sects. They are :

1. Akriyavadins of Purana Kassapa,
2. Anuvadins of Pakuda Kaccayana,
3. Ajivakas of Makkhali Gosala,
4. The materialists of Ajita Kesa Kambalin, and
5. The sceptics of Sanjaya Belattiputta.<sup>2</sup>

All these systems including Buddhism and Jainism were considered as Non-Brahmanic or Sramanic systems. The common feature of these systems are :

1. They challenged the Vedas
2. Admitted all members to their community
3. Observed a set of ethical principles
4. Practiced a detached life to get liberation
5. Accepted renunciation.

These sects indicate there were two trends of thought, Brahmanic and Non-Brahmanic even from earlier times and these two trends influenced Indian Philosophy and Religion equally.

2. Agnosticism of Sangaya influenced Mahavira's Syadvada. Agnanavada declares that of thing beyond our experience the existence or non-existence or simultaneous existence and non-existence can neither be affirmed nor desired. Prof. Oldenberg is of the view that even the Buddhist conception of Nirvana was influenced by agnosticism.

The records of the Buddhists and Jainas about the philosophical ideas of those days are of great importance to the historian of religions. The similarity between some of those heretical doctrines on the one side, and Jaina or Buddhist ideas on the other, favours the assumption that the Buddha as well as Mahavira owed some of their conceptions to these very heretics.

#### **Contribution to the development of Languages :**

The Jainas have played a very important role in the linguistic development of the country. Sanskrit has all along been the medium of sacred writings and preachings of the Brahmanas and Pali that of the Buddhists. But the Jainas utilised the prevailing language of the area for religious purposes. Thus they developed Prakrit and other regional languages.

Of late rich literature produced by the Jainas came to light. The literature in Apabhramsa is worth mentioning. This language is a link between the Sanskrit, Prakrit, the classical languages on the one hand and modern Indian languages on the other. It is surprising to note that the earliest literature in Kannada and Tamil is also of Jaina authorship.

#### **Jaina Ethics :**

Contribution of Jaina ethics to Indian ethical theories is also note worthy. It is different from the Bhakti Marga of the Bhagvatas, Jnana Marga of the Vedantins and Karma Marga of the Mimamsakas. Jainism holds that all the three must coexist in a person, if he is to walk along the path of salvation. Taking the analogy of medicine, faith in its efficacy, knowledge of its use, and the actual taking of the medicine. All these three are essential to effect a cure. Similarly the suffering soul can be cured by Ratnatraya, the three principles of Right faith, Right knowledge and Right conduct. The doctrine of Ahimsa though found in the epics, was preached on extensive scale, by the Jainas and Buddhists. Ahimsa must be observed both by the saints and the laymen according to Jainas and Buddhists, where as in classical Hindu tradition it was meant only for the Sanyasis.

#### **Metaphysics :**

The tenets of Jainism are not always easy to grasp mainly due to two reasons. Firstly on account of our relative unfamiliarity with the ancient background and secondly on account of highly complex and perplexing system of innumerable divisions and sub divisions in the Jaina order.

In metaphysics there is some general likeness between Sankhya and yoga on the one hand and Jainism on the other. Dualism of matter and Soul is accepted by all these systems. Souls are like substances like Monads and they are characterised by intelligence. The actual difference between the souls is caused by their connection with the matter. Jainas and Sankhyas believe matter to be of indefinite nature and it can become anything.

The summarise Jaina philosophy the living and the non-living, by coming into contact with each other forge certain energies which bring about birth, death and various experiences of life. This process could be stopped and energies already forged destroyed by a course of discipline leading to salvation. A close analysis leads to 7 propositions :

1. There is something called living,
2. Something called non-living,
3. the two come into contact with each other,
4. The contact leads to production,
5. This process of contact could be stopped,
6. The existing energies could be exhausted,
7. The salvation could be achieved.

These seven propositions are called seven tattvas or realities by the Jainas. "The first two great truths are that there is a jiva or soul and that there is an ajiva or non-soul. These two exhaust between them all that exists in the Universe.

#### **Contribution to Literature :**

The contribution of the Jainas to Sanskrit and other Indian languages is noteworthy. Dr. Winterniz says that there was a close connection between Jaina and post Vedic literature. The story of Jajali and Tuladhara (M. bh. XXII, 261-64) the fable of the Hunter and the pigeons (M. bh XXII, 143-49) and the legend of Mudgala in Mahabharata (V, 23-40) indicate this close relation<sup>3</sup>.

Prof. Hertel has shown that their contribution to narrative and story literature is much. He says that the Jainas have preserved much of Indian tales that otherwise would have been lost to us<sup>4</sup>. They have also compiled great collection of tales. Kathakosa by Subhasilagani, Kathankakosa by Jinesvara, Kathamahodadhi by Somachandra (1448 A.D.) Katharatnakara by Hema Vijaya (1600 A.D.) are some of them.

3. Jaina contribution to Indian Literature, Winternitz, p. 6.
4. Ibid, p. 10 See also the literature of the Svetambaras of Gujarat, Prof. Hertel (1922)

They wrote many *charitas* and *Prabhandas*. The *charitas* are legendary biographies of the Thirthankaras, Chakravartins and Rishis. *Prabhandas* contain stories of famous monks and laymen of historical times. *Sthaviravalicarita*, *Prabhandhacintamani* of Merutunga and *Prabandhakosa* of Rajasekhara gives us a glimpse of the social and cultural history of those times.

Some of the novels are *Somaraiccakaha* of Dhanavala (romantic epic in *Apabhramsa*) and *Somadeva Suri's* (959 A.D.) *Yasastilaka* are of this type. It has also been shown by Prof. Hertel that the popular recensions of *Pancatantra* are the works of the Jainas. *Dhananjaya Srutakirti* wrote to prove his mastery in *sleshas* by writing *Raghavapandaviya* (1123-1140 A.D.)

The Jainas have some books written in drama style also. *Mohaparajaya* of *Yasopala* narrates the story of *Kumarapala's* conversion to Jainism. Many of the poetical works are written in the *apabhramsa* dialect. The Jainas also have lexicographical writings. Their contribution to grammar is also noteworthy. According to some scholars the grammatical writing *Siddha-Hemchandra* by *Hemchandra* is in many respects better than that of *Panini's* Grammar. The oldest *Prakrit* lexicon is the work of a Jaina scholar, *Paiyalacchi Namamala* of *Dhanapala* (972 A.D.)

Jaina's philosophical literature is rich. *Umasvati* whom Prof. *Suali* would place as early as 300 A.D., in his *Tattvarthathigama Sutra* expounds the doctrine of categories and theory of *Pramanas*.

*Siddhasena Divakara* in his *Nyayavatara* wrote for the first time a treatise on the means of proof (*pramana*) and the methods (*Naya*) of comprehending things from particular stand points. *Devasuri* (1086-1169 A.D.) wrote *Syadvada Ratnakara*. Even in 17th century we have great logician in *Yaso Vijaya Gani* who wrote great number of works on Logic.

Another commendable thing in some of these Jaina philosophical works is their liberal attitude towards other religious beliefs. A study of *Shaddarshanasamucchaya* reveals this. They dealt about many of the sciences and even on politics Jaina contribution is noteworthy. *Somadeva Suri*, the author of *Niti Vakyamrta* can be compared well with the classical Indian *Niti* writers like *Kautilya* and *Sukra*.

## Arts and Architecture :

The Jainas have a due share in the development of Arts in the country. In honour of their saints they erected Stupas as the Buddhists with their accessories of stone railings, umbrellas, decorated gateways and pillars and statues. The *Gomateswara* statue at *Sravana Belagola* (10th Century), the colossal reliefs carved on the rock face near *Gwalior* (15th Century A.D.), the *Hathi Gumpas* in *Orissa*, *Pava puri*, *Rajagiri* in *Bihar*, *Girinar* and *Palitana* in *Kathiawar*, possess temples and architectural monuments of different ages. The Jaina marble temples at *Mount Abu* in *Rajasthan* belonging to the eleventh century and later, carry to its highest perfection the Indian genius for the invention of graceful patterns and their application to the decoration of Masonry.

## Andhra's Contribution to Jainism :

For the spread of Jainism the south played a vital role. We find evidence for it in Jaina literature. During the reign of *Chandragupta Maurya* (4th Century B.C.) *Magadha* was ravaged by a 12 year long famine. Some Jainas under the leadership of *Bhadrabahu* came to the South and by that time Jainism was a flourishing religion in the South.

In "*Hari Bhadrīya Vritti*" it is written that the King of *Kalinga* who ruled during the time of *Vardhamana mahavira* was a friend of *Vardhamana's* father and *Mahavira* came to *Kalinga* and preached his religion.

*Dharmamrita*, a classic of 12th century A.D., mentions that even during the times of 12th *Thirthankara*, *Vasupujya* Jainism was prevalent in the *Andhra* country. Tradition also says an *Anga* king come with his three sons to *Vengi* who later became Jainas and built a city known as *Pratipalapura* which is some where near modern *Bhattiprolu*.

The Jaina tradition also mentions that *Asoka's* grandson *Samprati* became a *Svetambra* Jaina and spread the religion in *Kalinga*. The *Andhra* and the *Kalinga* countries might have been strongholds of non-Vedic religions for long, for *Bodhayana* says that whoever goes to *Kinga* must perform *Prayachitta*<sup>5</sup>,

During the regime of *Kharavela* (2nd century B.C.), Jainism spread into many regions of Northern *Andhra* and *Orissa*. The rock caves at *Khandagiri* and *Udayagiri* bear testimony to the same<sup>6</sup>. The

5. *Bodhayana* 1.1.30, 31.

6. See *M. Somasekhara Sarma's* article in *Telugu*, in *Vijnana 'Sarvasvam'* Vol. III.

Satavahana rulers of Pre-Christian era who ruled a vast territory which now comprises of Andhra, Maharashtra and Karnataka states were also influenced by Jainism. 'Kalakasuri prabandha' writes that one of the Satavahana rulers of Pratistanapura used to attend a Jain monk's discourse.

### JAINISM IN KARNATAKA

Even before the reign of Chalukya king Pulakesi the (7th Century A.D.) Jainism was a dominant religion in the Karnataka. All the later kings like Vinayaditya, Vijayaditya helped jaina saints in spreading their religion. During Vatapi Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas in whose kingdoms much of Andhra (mainly Rayalasema and Telangana regions) was a territory influenced by Jainism as these kings were great patrons of this religion.

During the Rashtrakuta king Nitya Varsha Indra Vallabha (915-927 A.D.) Bodhan was his capital and even now it is considered by the jainas as one of their Adima Thirthas. The famous Jain Acharya Somadevasuri of that time wrote many books and spread the faith the Telangana region.

From 2nd century B.C. upto 800-900 A.D., there were no inscriptions bearing the dates of that period. It might be the period of Jain decline in Kalinga and it was only during that period the Vedic and the Buddhist religions began to flourish in Kalinga.

Tradition says that in a village known as Gangaperuru in Rayalasema, a Jain monk known as Simhanandi Acharya lived. The princes who fled from a town known as Vijayapura in northern India, sought his protection and later founded the famous Ganga dynasty with his blessings. Excavations conducted at Danavulapadu in Cuddapah district revealed the extent of spread of Jainism in that area.

The founder of Eastern Chalukya dynasty Kubjavishnuvardhana (624-641 A.D.) was brother of Pulakesi II. During his period Vijayawada was a great Jain centre. His Danasasana (762 A.D.) indicates that he was a great portion of Jain religion.

Ramatirtham in Visakhapatnam district was both a Buddhist and Jain kshetra and now it is a famous Hindu kshetra. Excavations at Penugonda in East Godavari district revealed that it was once a Jain religious centre. At the time of Kullotunga Chola son of Raja Rajanarendra, Munugodu in Sattenapalli taluq was a Jain kshetra. Another inscription of 1178 A.D., reveals that Bhogapuram in Visakhapatnam Dt. was having Jain temples. In Nellore district upto 13th Century there were Jain temples.

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### Spread of Saivism and Vaishnavism and decline of Jainism :

During the 12th and 13th centuries Saivism began to spread in Andhra and there used to be religious debates over these religious faiths. There were many clashes between the followers of these faiths and of the Jain Bastis (centres)<sup>7</sup> were destroyed by the Saivites. Panditaradhyacarita of Palkuriki Somanatha and Sivaratrimahatmya of Srinatha gives evidence to this fact.

It is a wonder that though Jainism was prevalent for more than 1500 years in Andhra only one book written by a saint of this area is available now. It is Jinendra Kalyanabhyudaya by Appayacharya (1241 Saka era).

While Saivism became popular during Kaitiya kings, Vaishnavism became popular during Vijayanagara kings. Spread of these religions led to the decline of the Jain faith. But Jainas have their pilgrim even now. Kollipaka in Nalgonda district is a Jain kshetra and Penugonda in Anantapur district is one of the Jain chaturdasa mahavidya sthams.

For an Archeologist and epigraphist who wishes to study Jain history Andhra provides a rich source<sup>8</sup>.

'Padu' were all Jain villages. In many places in Andhra we find wells known as Jainabavulu. They are of a particular type of construction. They are covered by lids so that animals in the streets may not fall in the nights. Similarly in many villages we find idols called as 'Sanyasi Demullu'. All such villages were once Jain villages. Many such villages are found in Coastal Andhra.

### Its relevance :

To understand Indian Philosophy and culture in broader perspective study of Jainism is essential. As Prof. Hopkins puts it, Jainism "represents a theological mean between Brahmanism and Buddhism"<sup>9</sup>. Then assuredly a serious study of Jainism becomes incumbent on all who may seek to understand aright either the early Brahmanic ritual or

7. Basti means a village flourishing with Jainas and Jain temples.

8. It is said that many of the towns with a suffix

9. E.W. Hopkins, The Religions of India, p. 283.

the trenchant and for long effective Buddhist protest which that elaborate ritual evoked"<sup>10</sup>.

The interest of Jainism to the student of religion lies in the fact that it goes back to a very early period and to primitive currents of religious and metaphysical speculations, which also gave rise to the oldest Indian philosophies like Sankhya, Yoga and Buddhism. It also shares their theoretical passivism and the practical ideal of liberation<sup>11</sup>.

Jaina approach to truth saying that it has many facts leads to relativism though not to pluralism. Their acceptance of the uniqueness of each soul and stress on individual effort to reach kaivalya makes it a humanistic religion. The ills of the 20th century are absolutism and ideological dogmatism. These attitudes will lead the world to catastrophe and more so in a nuclear age.

The Jainas say our affirmative predication is dependent on Svadavya, Svakshetra, Svakala and Svabhava. If it is paradravya, parakshetra, parakala and parabhava it can be negatively predicated. This approach to understand alien religions, cultures, political and social systems will lessen the tensions in the world and improve our quality of life and make this planet a better place to live. As Ratnasekhara in Sambodhasattari says "No matter whether he is a Svetambara or a digambara, A Buddhist or a follower of any other creed, one who has realised the self sameness of the soul, i.e., looks on all creatures as his own self, attains salvation"<sup>12</sup>. □

10. Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson, The Heart of Jainism p. XI.

11. See 'Jainism' in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.

12. Radhakrishnan, "Indian Philosophy", Vol. I, p. 328.

## AVADHU ATMAJNAN MEN RAHANA

(अवधू ! आत्मज्ञान में रहना !)

Avadhu, live in the realization of soul  
never say anything to anyone

One who realizes the self, knows all beliefs  
fighting

In the heart does not keep onesidedness,  
sees two-coloured wings

All sorrows and sickness end, becomes  
immortal and unchanging

Does not believe in *muum* and *tuum*  
breaks the worldly bondage

He keeps in his mind and soul the form  
which is invisible, incomparable, ultimate

He forsakes the pleasures of physical sight,  
with determination follows intuition

One thief is very active and militant  
he is found all over the world in sly

One has to keep vigilant and not permit  
him to enter the house secretly

One who leaves one and takes up the other  
only fans the fires of passion

Suri Rajendra's saying you ponder  
keep yourself on vigil, well-equipped. □

( Contd. from page 32 )

were attracted to the campus of the temple to witness performances. The Hindu shrine, being the centre of culture, formed the appropriate venue for the stage.

The activity of this stage was not limited to dramatic performances alone. Prabandhas and Campus in Sanskrit, drawing their theme from the

epics and Puranas of India, were also put on the stage with suitable arrangements and adaptations. In short, the stage went on to preserve a lively tradition of an art which is rightly called by Kalidasa as the only source of pleasure in different ways to men of different tastes.<sup>10</sup> □

10. *Malauikagnimitra*, I.4.