

## MATERIALS USED FOR JAINA INSCRIPTIONS

Prof. D. B. DISKALKAR, M.A.

The materials on which Jaina inscriptions are engraved are of two kinds only—stone and metal. The Jainas do not seem to have favoured clay as a suitable material for the purpose as the Buddhists and sometimes the Brahmanical Hindus had done.

*Rocks and Rock temples* : A few Jaina inscriptions incised on rocks and on walls of rock-cut temples have been found in some places in India. If the Ājīvika sect founded by Gośāla was of the Jainas, the earliest Jaina inscriptions incised on rock temple walls can be said to be those in the Barabar and Nagarjuni caves in the Gaya district which record the dedication of the caves to the monks of the Ājīvika sect by the Maurya emperors, Aśoka and his grandson Daśaratha. These inscriptions are dated in the middle and in the last quarter of the third century B.C., respectively. But if the Ājīvikas were different from the Jainas, the earliest Jaina inscriptions are those engraved on the walls of the Udayagiri, Khandagiri, and Nilgiri hill caves in Orissa, at a distance of six miles to the south-west of Bhuvaneshvar. Out of the fourteen inscriptions there which are of the time of the Kalinga king Khāravela and belong to the second or first century B.C., the long inscription in the Hāthigumphā cave in Udayagiri is the most important. It gives a detailed biography of the Jaina king.

The Pabhosa (in Bundelkhand) cave inscription of about the same time seems to be Jaina (E. I. II. 243).

Other important Jaina inscriptions in rock temples of later dates are found at the following places—Udayagiri near Bhilsa in Madhya Bharat where a Jaina inscription of G. S. 106 (425 A.D.) is found which records that an image of Pārśvanātha was set up by Ācārya Gośarman, at Badāmi and Ellora. The rock temple at Sittanavāsai near Madras, excavated in the seventh century A.D. by the Pallava King Mahendravarman when he was a follower of Jainism, has beautiful frescoes.

Two important rock inscriptions of the Jainas of the tenth century are found at Panch Pāṇḍavamalai, Vallimalai and Tirumalai in N. Arcot district, where there were flourishing Jaina settlements (A.R.S.E.I. 889-90, p. 140, 1890 p. 10 and E.I.4.136). The former is in the Tamil script and Tamil language and the latter is in the Grantha script and Kannad language.

*Stūpas* : The Jainas are not really builders of stūpas like the Buddhists, but from the vast remains of a Jaina stūpa found at Kankālī Ṭilā in Mathura which are indistinguishable from those of the Buddhist stūpas, it seems that in the early period the Jainas also erected stūpas surrounded by stone railings with reliefs of various kinds on which inscriptions were engraved. One of the beautiful Jaina Āyāgapāṭas found in the ruins gives a picture of a Jaina stūpa. The ruins of the Jaina stūpa at Mathura have given us a number of donatory inscriptions exactly like the Buddhist inscriptions. These can be assigned to the first or second century A.D. Since no Jaina stūpa of the kind of a later date is found anywhere in India, it seems that the Jainas had given up the practice of erecting stūpas and had adopted that of building śikhara temples.

*Temples* : The Jaina temples were dedicated to the Tīrthaṅkaras or other minor deities of Jaina mythology. Except for a few iconographical and sculptural details, the Jaina temples do not differ from the Bhahmanical temples. The sacred places of the Jainas are always crowded with temples and the temples with Jaina gods and goddesses which generally bear inscriptions. If the temple is very important as at Śravaṇa Belgola it is always visited by pilgrims who leave behind records of their visits and donations. The constant repairs and additions to the old temple made sometimes by hereditary masons give opportunities for setting up inscriptions.

*Stone images* : The largest number of Jaina inscriptions are found inscribed on the pedestals of stone images of the Tīrthaṅkaras and minor Jaina deities set up from time to time in the Jaina temples. Idol worship being very popular with the Jainas, innumerable Jaina images made of stone and of different sizes, from colossal to miniature, have been found all over India even from Sindh (at Varavan) where at one time Jainism flourished. The origin of the Jaina image is uncertain though from the mention of a Jaina image in the Hathigumpha inscription of Khāravela of Kalinga of the first or second century B.C. as having been carried away as a war trophy by a Nanda king presupposes the existence of Jaina idol worship in the Nanda period, i.e. in the fourth century B.C. If the tradition, that images of Mahāvīra under the name of Jīvitasvāmi began to be worshipped even in his lifetime, is believed, idol worship can be said to have begun with the Jainas from the sixth century B.C. But Jaina images begin to appear only from the first century A.D. at Mathura and they became very popular only from the tenth century onwards as few

Jaina images dated in the intervening period of 800 years have been found. Naturally Jaina inscriptions of the intervening period are comparatively rare. The inscriptions which accompany the images are often useful for their identification and dating, though the *lāñchanas* carved on the pedestals in the centre and the symbols and designs auspicious to Jainas such as svastika, vajra, śaṅkha, bulls, elephant, goose, antelope, etc., are more helpful. The images of the Bodhisattvas and Tīrthaṅkaras found in Mathura are very similar. In that case the inscription on the pedestal is very helpful in identifying the image. In course of time Jaina iconography developed considerably and a number of minor deities began to be worshipped. Images of some of these are accompanied by a miniature figure of a seated Tīrthaṅkara carved over head. Setting up of an image being considered very meritorious by the Jainas the images were naturally inscribed recording the name of the donor, date and other details. What a large number of Jaina inscriptions must have existed can be imagined from this! Jaina images are generally made of black stone but sometimes of white marble also. They are very beautifully carved and sometimes very finely glossed. But they are of a stereotyped form devoid of anatomical details. They are standing erect or sitting with folded hands. They are perfectly naked among the Digambara Jainas. The question of nudity, however, does not arise if the statues are in a seated posture. Jaina statues of gigantic size are sometimes carved out of rocks in rock temples on hills in many parts of India. Some of them bear inscriptions but being exposed to the inclemencies of weather they have now become almost illegible. Many nude standing images of Tīrthaṅkaras, the largest of them being of Ādinātha and measuring 54' in height are carved on all sides of the Gwalior fort rocks. Some of them bear dated inscriptions which show that they were carved between 1440-1472 A.D. during the reigns of the Tomara kings, Dungarsimha and Kirtisimha.

Inscribed statues of Jaina saints and teachers and of rulers and Śreṣṭhis, who were great followers and patrons of Jainism are also found. Among the inscribed statues of Jaina saints may be mentioned the extraordinary colossal statue of Bāhubali or Gomateśvara in Mysore state—fifty-seven feet in height and cut from a single rock. It contains short inscriptions in Kannad, Tamil and Marathi of the eleventh century A.D. Many images of Jaina saints are set upon mount Abu. Among the images of teachers may be mentioned an image of Devasena, pupil of Bhavanandin, at Vallimalai (A.R.S.I.E. 1895, pr. 10) and among the in-

scribed statues of rulers may be mentioned the statue of the Cūḍāsamī ruler Mahipāladeva on the Śatruñjaya Hill dated V. S. 1371 (Inscriptions of Kathiawad No. 247).

*Pillars* : Stone pillars set up in Jaina temples are another popular material on which Jaina inscriptions are found. On the four sides of the square base of the pillar are engraved or set up in niches, technically called *Kāṣṭha-pañjara*, the statues of Tirthankaras. Sculptures of this kind are called *Sarvatobhadra pratimā* or Caturmukha and are found almost in every Jaina temple. The most beautiful and finely inscribed sculptures of this kind are found in Mathura. They were donated by Jaina devotees as the inscriptions on them record. The Kahaum (Gorakhpur District, U.P.) pillar bearing an inscription of G.S. 141 (460 A.D.) is noteworthy. It records the setting up by one Bhadra of a pillar with five figures of Adikartṛs, i.e. Tirthankaras.

Another kind of tall stone or metal pillars called *mānastambhas* surmounted by a statue and having inscriptions at the base are raised in front of Jaina temples. Excellent specimens of these are seen in South India, e.g., at Karkal in South Kanara District. The Jaina tower at Chitorgad is 80 ft. high. Instead of pillars sometimes raised platforms are set up on which footprints are carved or images are set up. Such platforms with footprints are found in a large number on the Pārśvanātha hill. Worship of footprints of Tirthankaras and preceptors is quite in vogue with the Jains.

A third kind of Jaina pillars bearing inscriptions are called *nisidhikalas* and are generally found in South India. They are raised to commemorate the fast upto death (*sallekhanā*) generally of a Jaina monk. In Jainism ascetism is greatly stressed even to the point of voluntary death by refusal to take nourishment on the part of those who have obtained the highest knowledge or who are *Kevalins*. (*Potdar Comm. Vol. p. 170*). Like the *viragals* the *nisidhikalas* have three panels : the first from the bottom contains the figure of the man or woman who died ; the second panel represents the person being carried in a *vimāna* accompanied by celestial dames to heaven ; the third panel has the figure of a seated Jaina flanked by two female *Caurī*-bearers. The plain surface of the stone bears the inscription giving details of the person who died by *sallekhanā*. Sometimes the four faces of the square pillar bear sculptures and inscriptions. One of the most important pillars of the kind is at Śvetasa-

rovāra at Śravaṇa Belgola which records the *sallekhanā* of the Jain preceptor Malliṣeṇa Maladhārideva in 1129 A.D. (E. I. III. 185).

**Stone slabs :** Jain inscriptions incised on stone slabs record notices of the building of temples, panegyrics of Jain sādhus and rulers and copies of Jain religious texts. Some of the praśastis are very long and beautiful like the Dholka praśasti of the poet Rāmacandrasūri containing one hundred verses. A majority of the stone slab inscriptions record grants of land, money or cattle towards the maintenance of Jain establishments, though the more common material for such grants is copper-plates. Land grants inscribed on stone slabs are generally found in South India. Like the Brahmanical land grants on stone, the Jain land grants bear sculptures in panels from Jain mythology and contain the figures of a Tirthāṅkara in one or more niches of it.

Of the numerous statues and architectural pieces none perhaps are so worthy of attention as the beautifully carved stone slabs which bear the technical name 'Āyāgapāṭa'. They are peculiar to the early Jains. (J.U.P. H.R.S. 1943, p. 58). Several of the Āyāgapāṭas bear votive inscriptions mentioning the name of the donor (Scythian period p. 147).

**Metal inscriptions :** A large number of Jain inscriptions are found engraved on metal images made of copper or bronze. Such images are preserved almost in every temple of the Jains. These images are also of a stereotyped form, one central image being placed on the pedestal and twenty-four or a smaller number of images being embossed on a metal plate fixed at the back of the main image. The inscribed portion is on the pedestal or on the back of the plate. Inscribed metal images are generally dated from the tenth century onwards though older images are at times found, e.g. the Jain bronzes dated in V.S. 744 found at Āṅkoṭṭaka in N. Gujarat (J.O.I. Vol. I, 264).

Like the Brahmanical land grants, the Jain land grants are incised on sheets of copper. Jain copper-plate grants are in no way different from the Brahmanical land grants except in the invocatory verses.

Copper-plates containing copies of Jain *yantras* or *Namokāra mantras* are peculiar to the Jains.

Silver plates inscribed with Jain sacred verses like the *Namokāra mantras* and Tāntrik formulas and *Rṣimaṇḍala mantras* are preserved in some Jain *bhandaras*.

*Silk and cotton cloth* : Old writings on silk, cloth, palm-leaf and paper, though they strictly come under the class of manuscripts or archives, are often considered as epigraphical material and hence a short account is given here of such material used for Jaina records. Silk and cotton cloth seem to have been sometimes used for Jaina inscriptions. Bühler had found a silk band with the list of the Jaina sūtras written in ink at Jaisalmere while Peterson discovered a manuscript written on cloth dated V.S. 1418 at Anahilapāṭan. A Jaina cloth painting or *citraṭa* found in Bikaner is inscribed with the name of a Jaina teacher named Taruṇaprabhasūri who lived between V.S. 1360 and 1440.

*Mss* : A number of palm-leaf manuscripts of the Jainas are preserved in the Jaina *bhandaras* in the north and south India. According to Muni Puṇyavijayaḥji, who has made a deep study of the Jaina Mss in several *bhandaras*, the Jaina palm-leaf manuscripts are dated from the eighth to the fifteenth century A.D. He states to have seen at least 3000 Jaina palm-leaf manuscripts. Jaina mss on paper preserved in some of the Jaina *bhandaras* in Gujarat, Rajputana, Karnatak, etc. and maintained with a feeling of sanctity by the Jaina communities in those places are dated from the 12th century onwards. The earliest Jaina manuscript on paper seems to be that of the *Kathākośa* by Jineśvara dated V.S. 1234 and preserved in the Jaina *bhandara* at Khambhat. The total number of Jaina manuscripts preserved in the several *bhandaras* runs into many thousands. It is worth noting that equal attention has been given by the Jainas for the collection and preservation of even non-Jaina manuscripts, the result being that some rare Brahmanical and Buddhist manuscripts are found only in the Jaina *bhandaras*. The paper manuscripts are fashioned and written in such a way as to remind us that palm-leaves formed the writing material before paper was introduced for the purpose. Specially prepared black ink was commonly used for writing the manuscripts though sometimes silver and green ink was also used.

Some of the Jaina manuscripts on palm leaf and on paper contain beautiful paintings as illustrations. The earliest illustrated palm-leaf manuscript according to Prof. M. R. Majumdar is of *Niśīthacūrṇi* dated V. S. 1157 prepared in Broach (J. Ind. Soc. Ori. Art 1942, p. 4). They are preserved in beautiful boxes made of leather, cloth and paper. Jaina paintings seem to be the oldest known Indian paintings on paper.