The *Rāmāyana* of *Valmīki* and the Jaina *Purāṇas*

— Dr. Upendra Thakur

Although there is no sanction for the Brāhmanical way of life in Jainism, the epics nevertheless exert considerable influence on ideas and messages, legends and myths and moral of Jaina mythology. A study of the early texts of *Jainism* would show that the epics occupied a prominent position among the Jainas during the period of the redaction of the Jaina canons. They served them not only as guides in mundane affairs but also as perennial sources of inspiration on ethical and spiritual planes. This resulted in the influx of a number of non-Jaina customs and practices into the Jaina society. The popular appeal of these elements was so great that the Jaina savants had to formally sanction them towards the end of the first millennium A.D.\(^1\) In fact, the epics exerted such a tremendous influence on the minds of the adherents of the faith that it became difficult for the Jaina preachers to win them over, to pure Jainism. They found the epics more inspiring than the Jaina works,\(^2\) which is confirmed by the fact that the first Jaina *Purāṇa*, by such a staunch advocate of Jainism as Vimalasūri, relates to the life-story of Rāma, and the Jaina versions of Rāma-biography, by far, outnumber the Purānic works on any individual *Śālikāpurūṣa*.

The influence of the epics has been so great with the protagonists of the Jaina faith that they, directly or indirectly, recognised it “by way of reactions shown against these works in the introductory portions of their *Purāṇas*".\(^3\) A close analysis of the reactions of the Jaina authors would make it clear that the Jaina *Purāṇas* have been considerably enriched by the ideas and plots taken from the epics. The circumstances leading to the borrowing of various ideas and themes by the Jaina authors may be explained by the fact that the majority of the Jainas were converts from the Brāhmanical faith, brought up in the Brāhmanical epic-Purānic environment,\(^4\) which is further testified by the elaborate *Dikṣānwayakṛyās* to be performed by the converts before they were received into the Jaina faith. Infact, an impartial analysis of the Jaina customs and manners, beliefs and superstitions would clearly prove that they were chiefly moulded by the ideals set forth by the two great epics.\(^5\) Difference in their religious practices resulting from the change of faith made

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आचार्यांतर्न भी देशभक्षण जी महाराज अभिनवस स्नान
no significant change in their age-old mental frame, and for centuries the epics remained their principal
guides which served as a suitable outlet for their emotions and aspirations. This necessitated incorporation
of some myths and legends of universal appeal in their corpus, though in somewhat Jainised way.¹

It was probably this state of affairs that led to the inclusion of the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata
in the Jaina curriculum of education before the compilation of the Jaina canons.² In the Anuyogadvāra the
recitation of the two epics is referred to as a compulsory rite to be performed without fail.³ But, the intro-
duction of “that hybrid education produced a reaction which was not conducive to the progress and pop-
ularity of the faith, for it began to dampen people’s conviction in the Jaina religion in which, the lay adherents
could not find any scope for the realisation of their ideals.”⁴

A close examination of the methods by the Jaina thinkers to counteract the ascendancy of the epics
and “to ensure the unswerving adherence of the lay to the faith”,⁵ would show that the Jaina authors adop-
ted the very method of the great epics—the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata which in the beginning they had
condemned. The same epican ideas and plots, under the garb of Jainism were reproduced by the Jaina
authors, showing clearly that they endeavoured “to provide the common people with some such documents
as could serve as suitable substitutes for the Brāhmaical epics and Purāṇas”.⁶ Thus, they utilised the epic-
Purānic tradition in their own pantheon with necessary modifications with the result that almost all the
epic-Purānic gods and goddesses, Gandharvas and Yakṣas and a host of other mythical figures as well as
myths and legends connected with them were fully assimilated in the Jaina religious beliefs and the Purāṇas.⁷
The nature and contents of the Jaina Caritas and Purāṇas as well as the tone and technique are strikingly
similar to those of the epics. “It has been rightly said that with the exception of the Purāṇas written in
Prākṛta and Apabhṛṣṭa, all the Purāṇas are composed mainly in anuṣṭubha metre—a favourite metre of the
epics—with occasional introduction of later Kāśya diction.”⁸

II

Coming to the Rāmāyana, we find that Vimalaśūri’s Paśmacariya (c.100 A.D.) is the earliest
existant non-canonical literary Śvetāmbara work written, according to the poet himself, 530 years after the
emancipation (siddhi) of Lord Mahāvīra. This Jaina Purāṇa narrates the story of the Vālmiki-Rāmāyana
though “in a Jainised way”.⁹ As regards the details there are many points of difference, nevertheless the
general run of the narrative makes no significant departure from the traditional accounts of Rāma’s exploits.
A study of this work, in between the lines, would show that even where changes have been introduced, the
similarities are really “far more striking than the differences”.¹⁰ The introductory portion of this Jaina

¹. S.D. Jha, op cit., p. 16 ; Also cf. Uttarāḥdyāyanasūtra which is replete with such references.
². Cf. Anuyogadvāra, Su. 25.
³. J.C. Jain, Life in Ancient India as depicted in the Jain Canons, p. 170.
⁴. S.D. Jha, op cit., p. 16.
⁵. Ibid, p. 16.
⁷. Ibid., p. 17.
⁸. Ibid , p. 17.
⁹. V.M. Kulkarni, Paśmacariya, Intro. pp. 5-6 ; “The Origin and Development of the Rāma-Story in
Puraṇa is quite interesting as it shows how the Jain authors reacted against the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki despite the fact that they have drawn heavily from the great Indian epic.¹

This celebrated poem of Vimalasūri is also known as Rāghavacaritam. A study of a few verses of the second chapter of this work marks out clearly his attitude towards the Brāhmaṇical Rāma-story, represented by Vālmiki. The work undoubtedly shows Vimala's deep familiarity with the original Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki to which he has referred by name, and has also mentioned, 'described in the original version, using almost the same language'². His description of Kumbhakarana and his undisturbed sleep for six months is on the same pattern as we have in the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa.³ But, as a devout Jain and a firm believer in the doctrine of non-violence he is not prepared to believe that the demons (Rākṣasas) of Lāṅkā consumed animal flesh. He calls these Rākṣasas as Vidyādhāras, "though sometimes he forgetfully calls them also Rākṣasas"⁴ who are throughout his work portrayed as staunch Jainas. Although he writes the story of Padma (Rāma), he actually eulogises, in the first half of his story, Rāvana who "like Naravāhanadatta, appears in this poem as perfect knight-errant. As a matter of fact, the ghost of Naravāhanadatta looms large in all the literary works beginning from Vimalasūri down to Hemācandra."⁵

Vimala not only shows his full acquaintance with the events narrated in the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa, he was also thoroughly conversant with its language. Although he criticises the earlier poets by contemptuously calling them Kukavi (bad poets), māḍhal (fools), he actually follows in their footsteps and freely borrows phrases and expressions of the original Rāmāyaṇa. Moreover, while telling the story of Rāma and Rāvana he also brings in something about different Jainas tirthaṅkaras and other interesting details, obviously a product of his own imagination.⁶

A comparative study of the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa and the Prākṛta poem of Vimala leaves us in no doubt that the latter, (1st century A.D.), has deliberately followed the original Rāma-story although he has shown his Jain bias here and there.⁷ However, the work of Vimalasūri forms the foundation on which later Jainas writers such as Raviśena, Svayambhū and others "built lofty edifices."

The Vasudevahindi is another non-canonical Śvetāmbara text written by Saṅghadāsagani Vācaka and Dharmasnāganī in the Guptan period. It is probably the earliest imitation of the famous Bhāratīya Rāmāyaṇa written by Gopaḥyya in the Paścāti language in the time of the Sātavāhanas. The story of Rāma, as given in this text, is almost entirely taken from the original Rāmāyaṇa though, like the Padmacarita we come across deviations in respect of certain characters such as Lakṣman, not Rāma, killing Rāvana. Similarly, a perusal of Haribhadra's Samarātic-chakahā leads us to conclude that his only purpose was to ridicule the stories of the Hindu epics and Purānas.⁸

The second great work belonging to this category, in chronological order, is the Padmacarita or

1. Pañmacariya, 2. 107-117; 3. 8-16.
3. VR. VI. 60. 27-63 & VI. 61.28.
6. For other details see Ibid., pp. 274-77.
7. For details see Ibid., p. 278; Nathuram Premi, Jaina Sāhityaaura Itihāsa (Hindi), Bombay, 1956, pp. 87-101; Jagadish Chandra Jain, Prākṛta Sāhitya Kā Itihāsa, p. 527ff.
8. For other details see Jagadish Chandra Jain, Prākṛta Sāhitya Kā Itihāsa (Hindi), Varanasi, 1961, pp. 390 ff.
Padma-Purāṇa (A. D. 678) of Raviśeṇa,1 which is a faithful Sanskrit version of the Prākṛta Paśmacarīya of Vimalasūri. However, the interesting point to take note of in this connection is that Raviśeṇa imitates Vimalasūri wholesale but makes no acknowledgement of his indebtedness to the latter anywhere, probably because the former was a staunch Digambara, and the latter a devout Śvetāmbara. The introductory chapter of this work also betrays the same critical attitude2 towards the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki as in the Paśmacarīya. It has been rightly suggested that “the way, in which the reflection is found, is an obvious evidence of the author’s anxiety for minimising the fame and popularity of the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa among the Jainas lay. This undoubtedly proves that the Rāmāyaṇa was fairly popular and accurately known and widely studied among the Jainas during this period. As regards the accounts of the families of Rāma and Rāvaṇa the Jainas had no well-established tradition howsoever to fall back upon. Vimalasūri himself says that the Rāma-story existed in the form of a list of names and was handed down from teacher to his pupil in regular succession.” The Jain authors although claim a very old tradition for their legendary narratives, yet there seems to have been an earnest desire on their part to invest their versions with an element of antiquity and authenticity with a view to proving an ancient tradition of the Rāma-story in Jaina mythology.

It seems that before the advent of Raviśeṇa on the literary scene, there flourished one Kirtidhara who attempted to translate the Prākṛta Kāvyā of Vimala, but the popularity of Raviśeṇa’s work completely overshadowed the poem of Kirtidhara which was almost forgotton in subsequent years. The Padma-Purāṇa or Paśmacarīya is not a mere translation, it is a brilliant piece of poetical fervour, and the description of war-preparations and love-scenes remind us of Bāṇa’s style which seems to have inspired all his writings.

The Rāghava-Pāṇḍotivya or Dvissandhāna, an epic in eighteen cantos, was composed by the well-known Dhananājaya about whose personal life we know nothing except that his father was one Vāsudeva and his mother one Śrīdevi. This work has been highly spoken of by many eminent poets including Rājaśekhara. The theme of this work is based on the two Hindu epics—The Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata and “unlike most Jaina works the characters are not represented as embracing the religion of the Jinas”. Dhananājaya was inspired by the writings of the great Sanskrit poets such as Kālidāsa, Bhāravi and Māgha, and he in turn inspired the later Jaina poets and philosophers from 800 A. D. which is evident from a study of their works.

The Harivānśa Purāṇa of Jinasena (A. D. 783) is another great work in this field and is considered to be the earliest known Jaina version of the Brāhmaṇical Harivānśa. It is true, Jinasena has introduced many changes as regards the detailed description of the exploits of the members of the Hari-dynasty, nevertheless the main theme does not in the least betray any departure from the original account given by Vālmiki in his Rāmāyaṇa. This is particularly true of the gnomic-didactic and descriptive passages containing both ideological and phraseological parallelisms: for instance, verse 77 of the eighth parvan of the Ādi-Purāṇa2 of Jinasena which describes the utter impermanence of the worldly objects is somewhat akin to-

3. Paśmacarīya. : नामालिकायनिबन्ध आयरियं परिपरायं सवं । बोधाको सुमस्तिः वर्तनविन्द समाजः ॥
5. Ādi-Purāṇa, 8.77 : भस्मु हुःशाहयमवः सदा सनिधिस्म धनम् । संयोगा विप्रयोगाय विषदताश सम्पदा।
the one, found in the Vālmiki-Rāmāyana. When Jinasena describes poetically the autumnal moon-lit night, the influence of Vālmiki can be clearly discerned. Like Vālmiki he also conceives “the starry night with the brilliantly shining moon as a lake abounding in lilies and occupied by a swan”. In fact, the description of the autumn by Jinasena is “an ingenious imitation of the VR which has given the former not only a powerful vocabulary of literary terms but also whetted his imaginative brain for the graphic description of several situations”. The pen-sketch presented by Jinasena of the autumn bellowing of the excited bulls—enraged at the right of the counterparts and ready for fight, “with reddened eyes, and scratching ground with their hoofs” is almost similar to the one given by Vālmiki in his Rāmāyana. In other words, if we make a close and careful comparative study of all the Jainā Purāṇas on the one hand and the Rāmāyana on the other, we shall come across several cases of verbal agreement between them. Besides the Hari-dynasty, Jinasena, while describing the exploits of Vāsudeva, shows his “ingenuity in inventing new situations by blending together the materials borrowed from the Vasudevahṛdayā and the Bṛhatkatha”.

Gupabhadra, like his great preceptor Jinasena, was also an accomplished poet who had composed the last portion of his teacher’s great work, the Ādipurāṇa and the whole of the Uttara Purāṇa. But, he has also deliberately distorted the story of Vālmiki as given in chapters 67-68 of his work which depicts Daśaratha, like the Daśaratha Jātaka, as king of Vārāṇasi, Sītā as daughter of Rāvana and Mandodari, one Subālā as Rāma’s mother, and Laksmana as son of Kekayi. This story of Gupabhadra follows closely

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1. VR. II. 105.16:
   सत्व शयना निषया: पतनात्ता समुखबारः ।
   सौयोगः वियोगोगात्त मरणात्त च जीवितम् ।

2. Cf. the following two verses:
   तारकाकुमुदकोषम् नम: सरसि निषयने ।
   हृदयाते स्म हीतात्सुपथिक्षुकरायतः ।
   (Adi-Purāṇa, 26.27).
   दूषाप्रणाम कुमुदकोषम् महामुद्रेऽचनलिन्य विभाषतः ।
   प्रश्नात्सुत्तमा निर्दृष्टाये ताराग्राहकोषिनि विषयस्वरूपम् ।
   (Rām. Kiśk. 30.48).

4. Cf. the following verses:
   दार्पद्धुरा: घरोत्सवात: ताप्रोक्तेशः ।
   बुध: प्रतिवन्दोक्तितवद: प्रतिसवनु: ।
   (Mahāpurāṇa of Ādiṣena, 26.42).
   दूषाप्रणाम: नायप्रणामः: पशुपतिनामः ।
   मनोक्ताः: स्मर्यम् तृप्तवधा तृप्ता गव: महामुद्रान् नवनितः ।
5. Cf. the following:
   न च संकुचित: पत्न्य येन बलो हुतो गवः ।
   समये तिष्ठ तुस्यां ना बालिपरमनाम: ।
   (Rām. IV. 30.81).
   ना साहस्यतेषाय नाम: संकुचितो न स: ।
   (Trisastitalakāpurusascarita of Hemacandra, 7.6. 189 b.).

आचार्यरत्न Ω वेदांशुर जी महाराज अभिनव ग्रन्थ
the story told in the *Adbhuta-Rāmāyaṇa*. Similarly he has brought in many changes while treating the story of the *Mahābhārata*. But, unlike other Jaina poets, Guṇabhadra has the frankness and sincerity to advise his readers to consult the original text for details.\(^5\)

The *Dhūṛtākiṁya* of Haribhadra is an interesting composition containing five *ākhyānas* or stories which are full of satirical remarks on the various characters in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇas*, true to the Jaina tradition of ridiculing the Hindu epics.

Svayambhū's *Pātimacarī*\(^3\) (C. 700-900 A. D.)\(^4\) is the third known work on the life-story of Rāma. Written in *aprabhaṁśa*, the work follows Vālmiki more closely than those of his predecessors, and like Vālmiki he has also divided his work into five books, called *Kāṇḍas* which, with the exception of the first *Kāṇḍa*, bear the same names as in the *Vālmiki-Rāmāyaṇa*. As to the nomenclature of the first *Kāṇḍa* it has been rightly suggested that the author has, like the earlier Jaina *Purāṇakārās*, followed the novel tradition of absorbing the *Rākṣasas* of the *Vālmiki-Rāmāyaṇa* from their abominable *Rākṣasa*-hood by portraying them as the off-springs of the Vidyādhara race. As the first book deals with the origin of the Vidyādhara, it has been styled as *Vidyādhara-kāṇḍa*. The five *Kāṇḍas* as named by Svayambhū are as follows:

(i) Vijjāhara-kāṇḍa (*Vidyādhara-kāṇḍa*).
(ii) Ujjhā-kāṇḍa (*Ayodhya-kāṇḍa*).
(iii) Sundora-kāṇḍa (*Sundara-kāṇḍa*).
(iv) Jujiha-kāṇḍa (*Yuddha-kāṇḍa*).
(v) Uttara-kāṇḍa (*Uttara-kāṇḍa*).

Except in the first *Kāṇḍa*, there is no remarkable difference in details so far as other *Kāṇḍas* are concerned. The spirit of the age, which accepted one Supreme Soul of the universe, the highest Reality (*Parātātra*), effected emotional integrity among the various sects of Hinduism, and this trend also seems to have influenced Svayambhū to a large extent. Inspired by the idea of essential unity among the divergent god-concepts, he applies to the Jinas all the popular names and epithets of the gods such as Nārāyaṇa, Dīnaka, Śiva, Varuṇa, Hari, Brahmā, Hara, Buddha etc., and these have been used to suggest one Absolute Reality, *albeit* in the form of the *Jina*.\(^5\)

The *Mahāpurāṇa* of Puṣpadanta (950-965 A. D.),\(^6\) also known as *Trīśāṣṭimahāpurusagunānākāra*\(^7\) is a voluminous book written in *aprabhaṁśa* and follows closely the *Mahāpurāṇa* of Jinasena-Guṇabhadra. As the title shows, the book deals with the life-stories of all the sixty-three great men of Jaina mythology, but the most remarkable thing about the author is that Puṣpadanta, unlike his predecessors, does not criticise Vyāsa: on the other hand, he shows high regards for his reputed literary achievements and his list enumerates the works of Patanjali as well as the *Itihāsa-Purāṇas*, Bhāravi, Bhāsa. Vyāsa, Kālidāsa, Caturmukha, Svayambhū, Harṣa, Droṇa, Bāṇa\(^8\) and others whose thorough study is unavoidably indispensable for one who

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5. S.D Jha, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
8. *Mahāpurāṇa* of Puṣpadanta, 1.9.3-5.
wants to become a good poet. This shows that Puṣpānta must have been quite conversant with the works of these great authors. "However the sense of spontaneous acknowledgement of Vyāsa's importance later gives way to sectarian prejudices against the immortal poet",¹ as Puṣpānta, in the introductory part of his version of the Rāma-Story, betrays the same reaction as is found in the works of other Jaina authors. Surprisingly all his praise for Vyāsa turns into hatred for him and, along with Vyāsa, Vālmiki also becomes his principal target of attack “for deluding people with their (false) teachings”². But, all the popular Epic-Purānic names and epithets of the Brāhmaṇical trio given by Jinasena to the first Jīna further shows how greatly he was influenced by the Indian classics in general and the Rāmdyana in particular.

But, Śilāṅka, author of the first known Śvetāmbara Purāṇa³ (868 A.D.), entitled Caūppanamāhāpurī-sacariya, makes a pleasant departure from his great predecessors in this respect. He does not criticise either Vālmiki or Vyāsa, and shows high regards for the Māhābhārata to which he alludes as the Bhāratakathā.⁴ While telling his Rāma-story, he follows Vālmiki more closely than his Jaina predecessors.⁵ Hemacandra has in most cases hinged together different tales of the epic-origin to suit the taste of the faithfuls. Some of the epican and Purānic episodes have been interspersed with the purpose of illustrating some points and a few others, mentioned with a view to lending “charm and colour to the contextual description.”

In the twelfth century Hastimalla wrote four plays such as Vikrānta-Kaurava, Subhadra-Maithilikāyāṇa and Añjanā-Pavanaṇjaya. The first two are based on the themes from the Mahābhārata and the last two on the Rāmdyana of Vālmiki. The narrative and characters as depicted in this work are modelled on the same pattern as in Gunabhadrā’s Uttar-Purāṇa, and as such need no detailed mention.

However, we shall be badly mistaken if we believe that this influence was one-sided. As we know, various faiths developed side by side and derived the sap of life from the same sections of people, who also professed the same cult and creed. It is, therefore, natural to expect these religious faiths exercising mutual influences in the field of religion and ethics. In the present study we have simply tried to discuss mainly those elements which were either unknown to, or neglected or even ridiculed by the compilers of the Jaina canons, but were later incorporated into the corpus of the Jaina Purānic literature “under the pressing influences of the Brāhmaṇical Epic-Purānic tradition.”⁶

2. Mahāpurāṇa, LXXIX, 3:11 : "यवन-मात्र यवनिष्ठि महापुराण क्रमरुप्ति परिहार ।"

के बिद्यमान सर्वदृष्टिपरिपूर्वक पद्मचंद्रम्।
बाणाशालिकियां प्रभूत्तलद्वृत्त नोमतं भर्तम्।
माज्ञकारसुधा-समुद्रपुत्र-सीतवम्।
अनुज्ज्वल भूमि कायं सरस्वत्या गुंधाति ॥

किंतु ही विद्वान् अविक्रिया को सुन्दरता को बाणों का अवलोकन करते हैं और किंतु ही पद्मि को सुन्दरता को, किमु युगार्थ नह त किमु युगार्थेन दीपित युगार्थेन हो बाणी का अवलोकन करते हैं। सज्जन युगार्थेन को कायं अवलोक युगार्थ िह, शुम्भारादि रशों से युक्त, सौम्यं से शोभ:स्तरित और उदारमण्डलार्हत अवश्यो मतिक होता है िह सरस्वती देवी के मुख के समान भाषण करता है।

अशापकजिसेन, आपियुराण, पर्व १, स्लोक ६५-६६