Sindhu-desa Of Jaina Literature is Tīrabhukti (North Bihar)

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In 1936 the late Kamta Prasad Jain raised an important and pertinent problem relating to early Jaina literature and Indian political geography. He pointed out that some Digambara Jaina books placed Vardhamāna Mahāvīra's birthplace Viśālā or Vaisāli, whose chief was Cetaka, in Sindhu-desa or Sindhu-viṣaya, and furnished the following quotations\(^1\) in this connection:

\[1 \text{ Jaina-Siddhānta-Bhāskara, Vol. 3 (September, 1936), p. 50, foot-note. To these we may add the following from the Mahā-Purāṇa of Puṣpadanta, an Apabhraṃśa work completed in A.D. 965 (chapter 98, section 9, P. L. Vaidya's edition, Vol. III, Bombay, 1941, pp. 241-243)—} \]

\[“\text{सिद्धविवध वहरानाथीपुरवरि } || \]
\[परस्यिरोहामियसुरवरधरि ❈ २ ❈ || \]
\[चेफ्डा नाम श्रेष्ठ गिवध ＼ || \]
\[देवि अच्छद सुहद महाशद ❈ २ ❈ || \]
\[पियकारिणि वरणाहुङ्कुङ्कुर ❈ || \]
\[सिद्धस्थरु धुंडवरणेरस्तु ❈ १० ❈ ” \]
He then raised the question as to what might have been the reasons of the Digambara Jaina scriptures saying that Viśālā or Vaiśāli was in Sindhu-deśa, and made two suggestions:\(^2\):

First, it might be that the authors had equated Sindhu-deśa with Vṛji-deśa.\(^3\)

Secondly, there might have been a confusion especially because Ujjayini in Avanti, too, was called Viśālā\(^4\) and there was a Sindhu river in the adjoining territory for which reason it was called Sindhu-deśa in the middle ages (3th to 15th centuries A.D.). The Digambara writers, Kamta Prasad Jain adds, lived more in the Ujjayini side and hence they appear to have confused Ujjayini (which was also called Viśālā) for the real Viśālā, little knowing that another Viśālā, different from their own, existed in Eastern India; moreover, Vaiśāli lay in ruins as we know from the account of Hiuen Tsiang, and this factor might have easily led the Jaina writers to forget the real Vaiśāli.\(^5\)

We are of the view that the Digambara Jaina authors knew the

\(^2\) _Jaina-Siddhānta-Bhāskara_, 3, p. 51.

\(^3\) Jain does not offer any reason for the possible equation.


\(^5\) _Jaina-Siddhānta-Bhāskara_, 3, pp. 51-52.
geographical position of Vaiśālī and Kuṇḍapura correctly; they simply used Sindhu-deśa or Sindhu-viśaya as a synonym for Tirabhukti. Our explanation for this is as follows:

The oldest term for North Bihar was Videha. From the Gupta period (fourth-fifth centuries A.D.) onwards it came to be known as Tirabhukti, which literally means ‘the Province or Country situated on the Banks (of Rivers)’. In poetry synonyms are freely used. Hence ‘the Province or Country of Rivers’ could also be called Sindhu-deśa or Sindhu-viṣaya, because one of the words for river is sindhu.7

A confirmation of the explanation offered above is available when we find that the Jaina Uttara-Purāṇa (75) places the territory of Ceṭaka near Rājagṛha, the capital of Magadha—

“कङ्गाचिरणोत् गल्वा सैवेक्ष्यो मानश्च पुरूषः ।
राजाविजयं बाक्षोधयाने स्थानपुरसन्धेय || २० ||”

This means that these were neighbouring states.

Thus, in our opinion, the Digambara Jaina writers did not believe that Vaiśālī lay in Sind or the Indus valley or on sea-coast or in Central India. Its placing in Sindhu-deśa or Sindhu-viṣaya instead of Tirabhukti was only a literary nicety.8

In our opinion Tirabhukti was transformed into Sindhu-deśa or Sindhu-viṣaya in the following manner:—

\[
\text{तीर्थूक्} \\
= (नवी)तीर्थूक् \\
= नवीतीर्थूक् \\
= नवी(तीर)भूक्ति \\
= नवीभूक्ति \\
= सिन्धूभूक्ति or सिन्धुदेश or सिन्धुविषय.
\]

6 Cf. the legends on the seals discovered at Vaiśālī (modern Basarh, Muzaffarpur District, Bihar State) which give this word, Archaeological Survey of India Annual Report, 1903–04, p. 109.

7 Vide V. S. Apte’s Sanskrit-English Dictionary.

8 Elsewhere (An Early History of Vaiśālī, Delhi, 1962, pp. 228–237) we have discussed in detail as to how the Jainas forgot Vaiśālī and Kuṇḍapura (Kuṇḍag्रāma) completely and what measures have been taken by the Vaiśāli Saṅgha, a premier cultural organisation of Bihar, for the revival of this Jaina tīrtha and centre.
Incidentally, we may add that deśa and viṣaya have been used synonymously as seen in early Jaina literature itself:

1. Jinasena of the 8th Vikrama century says in Harivamśa-Purāṇa (1, 2):

   “अथ देशोऽविभिर् जात्रहीनस्य भारे ।
    विदेह इति विभवायः स्वर्गालोकस्य श्रियः ॥ १ ॥
    तत्रायुँपन्नकुमळीस्मिनाहस्यस्यादप्रभु ॥ २ ॥
    लुजाममुक्तामाति नामस्कुपुरे ग्रहम् ॥ ३ ॥”

2. Guṇabhadra of the 10th Vikrama century says in his Uttara-Purāṇa (74):

   “तस्मिनःनामात्रेऽववुप्ताकालाकालमिथ्यति ।
    मरतेःरथितविदेहायेः विषये मवनासः ॥ २५१ ॥
    राजस्य कुपुरे शताख्य वसुपारातलिः ।
    सस्कोटिनीश्च साधों सिद्धश्रेष्ठ दिन्मार्गित ॥ २५२ ॥”

   —Page 480, Bhāratiya Jñānapīṭha ed.

The same writer says later in that book (75):

   “विदेहाकालोऽनुपव्रते श्रुति ॥ ३ ॥
    नाथो नाथकुलवेदः सिद्धान्तवेदः विद्विदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदिविदि

3. Sakalakīrti (who died in A. D. 1464) says in his Vardhamāna-Caritra (VII):

   “अयेह भारे श्रेष्ठे विदेहामिष ऊँचोः ।
    देशस्य रमणस्यः विदेह इह राजाये ॥ २ ॥
    इत्यादिव्रणोऽन्वेय स्वश्यतरे पुरुष ।
    राजाये कुपुरेयकालमिषयुत्तमोऽपि ॥ ३ ॥”

9 Of these, No. 2 (second part) is quoted by Vijayendra Sūri in his Vaiśālī, 2nd ed. (Bombay, 1958), p. 40 and Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvīra, Vol. 1 (Bombay, 1960), p. 81; the remaining quotations are collected by K. Bhujbalī Sastri in Jaina-Siddhānta-Bhāskara, 10 (December, 1943), pp. 60–61, footnotes.