

Sindhu-desā 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 Vaiśālī, whose chief was Ceṭaka, in Sindhu-deśa or Sindhu-viṣaya, and furnished the following quotations¹ in this connection :

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- 1 *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 Apābhraṃśa work completed in A.D. 965 (chapter 98, section 9, P. L. Vaidya's edition, Vol. III, Bombay, 1941, pp. 241-243) —

“ सिंधुविसङ्गं वइसालीपुरवरि ।
घरसिरिओहामियसुरवरघरि ॥ २ ॥
चेडउ णाम णरेसरु णिवसङ्ग ।
देवि अखुद्द सुहद्द महासङ्ग ॥ ३ ॥
पियकारिणि वरणाहकुलेसङ्ग ।
सिद्धत्थङ्ग कुंडउरणरेसङ्ग ॥ १० ॥ ”

- (१) “सद्युक्ते सिन्धुदेशे वै विशाला नगरी मता ।
चेटकाख्यः पतिस्तस्य सुभद्रा महिषी मता ॥”

—*Vimala-Purāṇa*

- (२) “भ्रमन्सन्नेकदायातः सिन्धुदेशे मनोहरे ।
सिन्धुवेला समुद्रासिक्षेत्रशालोचट्टकप्रिये (?) ॥ ७ ॥
विशालाख्या पुरी तत्र वर्तते शालमण्डिता ।
धनधान्यनिधानैश्च देवनाथस्य पूरिव ॥ ८ ॥
सामन्तभवसंसेन्यश्चेटकः पतितां पुरीम् ।
तस्याग्रमहिषी रम्या सुभद्रा सुखकारिणी ॥ ९ ॥”

—*Sreṇika-Caritra*

- (३) “सिन्धुदेशे विशालाख्यपत्तने चेटको नृपः ।
श्रीमज्जिनेन्द्रपादाब्जसेवनैकमधुवतः ॥ ४ ॥”

—*Ārāḍhanā-Kathā-Koṣa*

- (४) “सिन्धुदेशे विषये भूमद्वैशालीनगरेऽभवत् ।
चेटकाख्योऽतिविख्यातो विनीतः परमार्हतः ॥ ३ ॥”

—*Uttara-Purāṇa* (75)

He then raised the question as to what might have been the reasons of the Digambara Jaina scriptures saying that Viśālā or Vaiśālī was in Sindhu-deśa, and made two suggestions² :

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

Secondly, there might have been a confusion especially because Ujjayinī in Avanti, too, was called Viśālā⁴ and there was a Sindhu river in the adjoining territory for which reason it was called Sindhu-deśa in the middle ages (8th to 15th centuries A.D.). The Digambara writers, Kamta Prasad Jain adds, lived more in the Ujjayinī side and hence they appear to have confused Ujjayinī (which was also called Viśālā) for the real Viśālā, little knowing that another Viśālā, different from their own, existed in Eastern India; moreover, Vaiśālī 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 Vaiśālī.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.

4 Cf. Kālidāsa in *Meghadūta* (I. 30).

5 *Jaina-Siddhānta-Bhāskara*, 3, pp. 51-52.

geographical position of Vaiśālī and Kuṇḍapura correctly; they simply used Sindhu-deśa or Sindhu-viṣaya 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 Tirabhukti⁶, 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—

“ कदाचिच्छेटको गत्वा ससैन्यो मागधं पुरम् ।
राजद्राजगृहं बाह्योद्याने स्थानपुरस्सरम् ॥ 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 :—

तीरभुक्ति
= (नदी)तीरभुक्ति
= नदीतीरभुक्ति
= नदी(तीर)भुक्ति
= नदीभुक्ति
= सिन्धुभुक्ति 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 (Kuṇḍagrāma) completely and what measures have been taken by the Vaiśālī Saṅgha, a premier cultural organisation of Bihar, for the revival of this Jaina *tīrtha* and centre.

Incidentally, we may add that *deśa* and *viśaya* 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 देशोऽस्ति विस्तारी जम्बूद्वीपस्य भारते ।
विदेह इति विख्यातः स्वर्गखण्डसमः श्रियः ॥ १ ॥
तत्राखण्डलनेत्रालीपद्मिनीखण्डमण्डनम् ।
सुखाम्भःकुण्डमाभाति नाम्ना कुण्डपुरं पुरम् ॥ ५ ॥”

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

“तस्मिन्वर्णमासशेषायुष्यानाकादागमिष्यति ।
भरतेऽस्मिन्विदेहाख्ये विषये भवनाङ्गणे ॥ २५१ ॥
राज्ञः कुण्डपुरेशस्य वसुधारापतत्पृथुः ।
सप्तकोटिर्मणिः सार्धां सिद्धार्थस्य दिनम्प्रति ॥ २५२ ॥”

—Page 460, Bhāratiya Jñānapīṭha ed.

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

“विदेहविषये कुण्डसञ्ज्ञायां पुरि भूपतिः ॥ ७ ॥
नाथो नाथकुलस्यैकः सिद्धार्थख्यस्त्रिसिद्धिभाक् ।
तस्य पुण्यानुभावेन प्रियासीत्प्रियकारिणी ॥ ८ ॥”

—Page 482, Bhāratiya Jñānapīṭha ed.

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

“अथेह भारते क्षेत्रे विदेहामिध ऊर्जितः ।
देशः सद्धर्मसङ्घाद्यैः विदेह इव राजते ॥ २ ॥
इत्यादिवर्णनोपेतदेशस्याभ्यन्तरे पुरम् ।
राजते कुण्डलामिख्यं..... ॥ १० ॥”⁹

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

