Studies in South Indian Jainism: Achievements and Prospects

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With an humble beginning by the publication of a few reports about the Jaina community in the Asiatic Researches (Calcutta and London), Vol. IX, during the first quarter of the 19th century, and showing a notable progress with the rise of a host of scholars, both western and Indian, by the first quarter of the 20th century,1 Jainavidyā or Jainology nowadays has become a vast distinct field of study comprising many aspects of Jainism—historical, philosophical, doctrinal, literary, inscriptive, scientific etc; and the 2500th Anniversary of Lord Mahāvīra's Nirvāṇa recently can be said to have given a new philip to the study of all these branches of the field all over India and abroad too. Now the organizers of this unique Seminar, I should say, have decided upon the most relevant topic for deliberation viz., The Various Branches of Jainology: Achievements and Prospects; and I have chosen to reflect on the Studies in South Indian Jainism: Achievements and Prospects.

It is quite possible that the first team of Jaina teachers entered South India viz., the Telugu country through Kaliṅga as early as 600 B.C.; and were pioneers in bringing the teachings of Lord Mahāvīra to the South. But it is the second team, certainly a large one, headed by Bhadrabāhu and accompanied by his royal disciple Candragupta, which entered Karnata in 400 B.C. and established its first colony at Kalbappu, that radiated those teachings more effectively and extensively to the Southern and nearby regions in South India. The study of this early phase of South Indian Jainism, which can be said to have its beginning with B.L. Rice in 1909,2 progressed at the hands of scholars like Ramaswami Aiyagar and B. Sheshaghiri Rao,3 R. Narasimhachar,4 Vincent Smith5 etc. and the historicity of this south Indian tradition of the great Jain migration was almost established.

The next phase of studies in South Indian Jainism is found represented by the works of B.A. Salterore,6

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1. For further details vide 'A Short History of Jaina Research' in The Doctrine of the Jains, by Walther Schubring, Delhi, 1962, pp. 1-17.
S.R. Sharma, P.B. Desai, S.B. Deo, Kailas Chandra Shastri etc., wherein the religious history of South Indian Jainism with the corresponding political background, and based on tradition, inscriptions, monuments and literary evidence, has been very well depicted. Considerable light on the Yāpaniyas, the Kūrçakas, the Gommaṭa cult, the Yakṣinī cult, the innovations and adaptations etc., has been thrown in these works.

At this stage we can hardly forget the timely and relevant miscellaneous contributions, in different degrees, to this field by scholars like N. R. Premi, Hiralal Jain, A.N. Upadhye, Bhujabali Shastri, Jyoti Prasad Jain, B.R. Gopal, Sarayu Doshi, B.K. Khadabadi etc. Further, V.P. Johrapurkar’s findings on the South Indian Bhaṭṭaraka tradition as a part of his whole work and V.A Sangave’s findings on the South Indian Jaina Community as a part of his novel work, have added new dimensions to the studies in South Indian Jainism.

Moreover we have to remember with gratitude scholars like Robert Swell, T.N. Ramachandran, A. Chakravarti, S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, K.V. Ramesh etc. for their varied contributions to the different aspects of the hold of ancient and medieval Jainism, particularly in the Tamil country, as based on the Jaina inscriptions, monuments, vestiges, literature etc. Similarly we have to be proud of scholar like B. Sheshagiri Rao M. Somasekhara Sharma, S. Gopalkrishna Murthy etc. for enlightening us on the position of medieval Jainism particularly in the Telugu country as based on some Jaina living monuments, inscriptions, sculptures and vestiges.

The latest works connected with South Indian Jainism, as far as I know, are two. One is by P. Gururaj Bhatt, Studies in Tuluva History and Culture, which contains a separate Chapter (No XIV) on Jainism in Tuluva Country, wherein is given a brief interesting account of the late medieval Jainism along with its political, racial and cultural (including art and architectural) background. The other one is by R.P.P. Singh, Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka, wherein the author has given a religious history of Jainism in Karnataka from 500 to 1200 A.D. Admitting his claim on some novel features in the treatment of the subject, I find that he has also confused himself by mixing the significant Bhaṭṭaraka tradition with the Digambara monarchism in the Karnataka of that period.

After taking, thus, a bird’s eye-view of the salient achievements in the field of the Studies in South

1. Jainism and Karnataka Culture, Dharwad, 1940.
5. (i) These contributions are scattered in the form of various chapters of books and stray papers by these scholars, which are too many to be enumerated here.
   (ii) This list of scholars is not claimed as exhaustive.
8. Historical Inscriptions of South India, Madras, 1932.
10 Jain Literature in Tamil, Arrah, 1941.
11. History of Tamil Language and Literature, Madras, 1956.
12. The same as noted in No. 10, but re-edited by him with some additions and an introduction, Delhi, 1974.
13. For the contribution of the first two scholars, vide Preface to Jaina Vestiges in Andhra and for that of the third, this excellent monograph itself as a whole.
15. Delhi, 1975.

एक्षाद्यं जी वेषभूषणं जी पहराराज भविष्यवाण यथा
Indian Jainism, I propose, now, to present to this galaxy of scholars a few outstanding prospects or tasks that strike my mind at this hour, so that the interested and capable scholars may note them and exert themselves to accomplish them too in the days to come. I would enlist them, with some observations, as follows:

(1) *The Yāpaniya Saṅgha: its Origin, Growth and Merger*: It is well known that numerous references to the Yāpaniya Saṅgha are found in inscriptions and literary works. It was N.R. Premi who particularly drew the attention of scholars on some fortuitous of this compromising Sect.¹ Then some historians, religious and political, furnished some further details about it.² A.N. Upadhye instituted a systematised study of this interesting Sect by contributing three valuable papers.³ Recently B.K. Khadabadi presented some thoughts on Vijahaṇā, a characteristic feature of the Yāpaniyas.⁴ But a thorough study of this important Sect, which is said to be a product of South Indian Jainism, particularly Karnataka Jainism, is a desideratum. Some 25 years ago, V.S. Agarwal expressed that a detailed study of the Yāpaniyas could be presented in the form of an important research dissertation.⁵ Last year Muni Śrī Hastimallajī, who was staying at Raichur, had sent one of his follower-scholars to Dharwad to plan a line of study in this regard. This shows the need as well as importance of this prospect.

(2) *Reconstruction of the History of Jainism in Andhra Pradesh*: We know that the Telugu country was rather the first in South India to receive the gospel of Lord Mahāvīra through the first team of Jaina teachers moving through Kalīṅga. Later Jaina teachings must have penetrated into this region from the Kalbappu centre too. Thus Jainism must have flourished in this region to a considerable degree. But unfortunately owing to the Buddhist rivalry in the early days and the Hindu revival in the later days, almost all the Jaina literary works most of the Jaina inscriptions and monuments appear to have been destroyed. As a result of this and on some other ground, scholars have just surmised the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. as the possible Jaina period of prosperity in this region. But after going through the monograph entitled *Jaina Vestiges in Andhra* by S. Gopakṛṣṇa Murthy,⁶ I feel that a few more intensive and extensive efforts, after the manner of the one by this learned Professor, on the part of some enthusiastic archaeologists, epigraphists, and art specialists, would make some more material available for the primary reconstruction of the history of Jainism in Andhra Pradesh. I felt overwhelmed when I read about the existence of a Jaina University at Raydurg—a University in stone, with inscriptions mentioning the names of Jaina teachers belonging to the Mulasaṅgha and the Yāpaniya Saṅgha which was contemporaneous with the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Western Cālukyas.⁷

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2. Scholars like B.A. Saleore, S.R. Sharma, P.B. Desai etc.
3. These three papers are:
6. Already noted above.
(3) Reconstruction of the History of Jainism in the Western Coast of South India: Scholars like Saleatore, Desai etc. noted that several petty kings and chieftains patronised Jainism in the Tuluva country, and Mudabidri happened to be its last stronghold in the upper Western Coast of South India in the late medieval period. Then P. Gururaj Bhatt gave a better picture of this fact in this region. On the strength of some inscriptions and antiquities found in the Kerala region, some scholars have postulated that the 9th to 11th Cent. A.D. constituted a glorious period of Jainism in the Kerala region. But we do not have so far a good picture of Jainism that flourished in this region. It is learnt that the Bhāratīya Jñānapīṭha entrusted P. Gururaj Bhat to conduct this kind of study. But unfortunately he expired suddenly and I have no idea of what were the fruits of his study and who has resumed his work.

(4) Jaina Teachers and Social Uplift in South India: Much of the work done in South Indian Jainism is regarding its religious and political aspects in the main. Now we can take up its social aspect and treat it thoroughly. The Jaina teachers, sermons, and the stories, illustrations etc. in them, were the most effective media of social education in the early and medieval periods. The Jaina teachers always struggled to eradicate the seven vices (caṣpa-vāyasānas) from the masses and cultivate among them social virtues like compassion, truth, honesty, charity etc. Moreover the remarkable adaptability of Jainism to the contemporary social trends and local environments (keeping its basic tenets intact) can also be highlighted here. Keeping these and such other things in view, a social historian can take up this work for the full growth of the knowledge of South Indian Jainism.

(5) Contribution of Jainism to the Cultural Heritage of South India: This is one of the most important desiderations, which can also partly include the one noted just above. The tolerant attitude, accommodative nature, vegetarianism etc. available among the people of this part of the country, can be reasoned to owe much to the cultural impact of Jainism that gloriously flourished here. Tradition, political history, literature and above all the insessional wealth of this area, can be of great use in this task. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai observed “So far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, we may say that the Jainas were the real apostles of culture and learning.” Moreover, Saleatore long back understood the need of this work in the following words: “The contribution of Jainism to the culture of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh can be given in a separate dissertation.”

(6) Lastly, I have to pose a small problem but not of less importance. It is, Śātkaḥādōgama and Dīsti-vādā: Seemingly this problem is of a literary nature, but it has full bearing on South Indian Jainism—its tradition and its history. So far we were, on the strength of authority of eminent scholars like Hiralal Jain and A.N. Upadhye, under the impression that the Śātkaḥādōgama Volumes are the only surviving pieces of the

1. In their respective works noted above.
4. This is true even to this day.
5. Jaina teachers have told, and have been telling numerous stories to eradicate each one of these vices from the life of the masses.
lost Drṣṭivāda, the 12th Aṅga of the Jaina Canon. But Ludwig Alsdorf, a few years ago, has opined that this is not so. This sets aside not only our above noted impression, but also the important Dharasenacārya-Puṇḍadanta-Bhūtābali tradition underlying the composition of the Saṭkhaṇḍāgama Volumes, a singular manuscript (in Kannada script) of which has been preserved at Mudabidri. Now unfortunately we do not have amongst us Hiralal Jain or A.N. Upadhye to reconsider their view in the light of Alsdorf’s opinion. Hence, I with due respect to Alsdorf (whom I knew by meeting him at Ujjain) and to his valuable contribution to the Jaina studies, appeal to scholars like Kailasa Chandra Shastri to scrutinise this eminent German scholar’s opinion in the light of the internal as well as external evidence of the Saṭkhaṇḍāgama Volumes, form their views and publish them.

3. At the 26th Session of the All India Oriental Conference, 1971.