

Jainism in North Karnataka: Special Reference to Gulbarga District

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Introduction

Jainism is one of the major religions of the world. The 24th Teerthankara of 6th century B.C. Vardhamana Mahaveera advocated it. In due course of time, Jainism became very popular in India. It could spread rapidly in all parts of the country and wielded deep impression on various aspects of human life.

Jainism is not merely a set of principles and code of conduct, but a way of life. As a religion, it is a protest against the ritualistic practices culminating in pseudo spiritualism. It demises the authority of the Vedas and orthodox traditions of Hinduism. As a philosophy, it is realistic and pluralistic. It is empiricist in outlook. It bases its structure of philosophy on the analyses of experiences.

When Jainism was originated, is difficult to say, Jaina tradition says Jaina religion is eternal and it is perennial, though preached successively by the Teerthankaras, in different cycle of time (Altekar p.313).

Jainism in Gulbarga District

After 4th century B.C. it is said that Jainism entered into Karnataka and became a prosperous faith. From the beginning till the medieval period, Jainism has had wielded its influence in North Karnataka. Gulbarga region became a strong hold of Jainism. Great rulers like Rashtrakutas of Malkhed (Manyakheta), Chalukyas of Kalyani belongs to the Gulbarga region. Under their rule Jainism became popular and received royal patronage. Many Jainabasadis were constructed, even today the entire Gulbarga districts have remains of the basadis, but all were in dilapidated conditions and some of them were converted into Shiva temples images of Teerthankara, Yaksha, Yakshi, Kuber and many other Jaina relics were found outside the dilapidated basadis (temples).

At present Gulbarga is a district and Divisional Head Quarter in North-Eastern Karnataka situated between 76°.04' and 77°.42' Eastern Longitude, 16°.12' and 17°.46' North Longitude, covering 16,224 Kms. Gulbarga district has a unique history and cultural heritage. In the 14th century, it was a capital of Bahmani dynasty christened it as "Ahsanabad" after the name of Sultan Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah, then Gulbarga. "Gulbarga" is a Persian terminology; previously its original name was "Kalamgurgi" as mentioned in the inscription of Hunsihadgil, dated 1092 A.D. In this area, people used the same term 'Kalamburgi' perverted as Kalaburgi even today.

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Gulbarga region was ruled by various Royal Dynasties of Karnataka. They have enriched the history and culture of the region. Important rulers were Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta, Chalukyas of Kalyani, Kalachuris, Vijayanagara Emperors, Bahmani Sultans, AdilShahi Sultans, Mughals and many others. Thus, this land had many religions and cults, both Vedic and Non-Vedic religions. Both have left deep impressions on socio-religious life of the people. The Non-Vedic religions of Jainism, which could play an important role in Gulbarga region under the royal patronage of Rashtrakutas and Chalukyas, became popular cult. Rashtrakutas ruled their kingdom making Malkhed (Manyakheta) of Gulbarga district as their capital. It was a glorious period for Jainism. Greatest monarch of the line was NrupatungaAmoghavarsha; he was called as 'Jaina Ashok' in Karnataka history. During his period (814-878 A.D.), Malkhed was very famous as a centre of Jainism. It was a pontifical seat of Jainism. Eminent ascetic Jinasenacharya was its president. NrupatungaAmoghavarsha was very much influenced by Jinasenacharya. During the rule of NrupatungaAmoghavarsha, many JainaBasadis were sprung up in Gulbarga district. Places like Adaki, Aland, Bhankur, Hunsihadgil, Harsoor, Charanagiri, Ingalagi, Magatti, Gogi etc. served as Jainacentres.

Later in Chalukyan period also, Jainism gained royal patronage. Vikramaditya-VI and Someshwara-III were great patrons of Jainism. During their rule, Jainism became very popular. Most of the Jainabasadis and inscribed tablets were discovered in the district, which belonged to the rulers. They state glory and grandeur of Jainism in 11th and 12th century.

Eminent Jaina preachers and ascetics like Jinasenacharya, Gunabhadracharya, Mahaveracharya, Akalanka, Indranandi, Puspadanta and three gems (Tri-Ratnas) of Kannada literature namely Pampa, Ponna, Ranna flourished in Gulbarga region, during the rule of rashtrakutas and Chalukyas of Kalyani.

Royal Patronage

In Karnataka, from the beginning, Jainism got royal patronage and spread rapidly throughout the country. Karnataka is concerned many royal families i.e. Gangas, Kadambas, SatavahanasChalukyas of Badami and Kalyani, Rashtrakutas of Malkhed and a number of feudatories extended full support and royal patronage to Jainism. As a result of this, Jainism became a popular cult of the people and became the parallel force to Vedic religion. About 1/3rd of the total population of Karnataka were followers of Jainism. Each and every village and town has Jainabasadis. Distinguished Jaina scholars and poets, preachers and preceptors have made unique achievements under the royal patronage. If there would have been no royal patronage for great personalities like Veerasena, Jinasenacharya, Mahaveracharya and Gunabhadracharya, Shakatayana, Puspadanta. Poets like Pampa, Ponna, Ranna and Srivijaya and others would have been not appearing in the sky of Karnataka history and the condition of the Jainism in Karnataka would have been different.

Satavanas were the earliest rulers of Karnataka, who ruled from the first century to the second century A.D. They had extended liberal patronage to Non-Vedic religions like, Buddhism and Jainism simultaneously. Kunda-Kundacharya and eminent Jaina preacher flourished in 1st century A.D. under the royal patronage of Satavanas (Srinivas Murthy & Ramakrishnan p.37), who also served as a preceptor of Satavana Princess. Under their royal patronage, many Jaina philosophical works like, *Samayanusara*, *Rayanusara* and *Pravachanasara* etc, were written. He was the most distinguished preacher of Jainism. It is said that he stood next to Mahaveera. In the first century A.D. especially in

Gulbarga region and some parts of Karnataka, he has left deep impression on socio-religious life of the people, and many Jaina families of this region even today claim themselves to belong to Kunda-KundanvayaGotra (P.B. Desai p.193).

The early Kadambas of Banavasi had endowed for the sustenance of the Svetambara. It is clearly recorded in the 5th century copper plates. Mrigesavarma, the Kadamba king had donated gifts to SvetambaraMahasramanaSangha. In 5th century A.D. SvetambaraSramanaSangha existed at Malkhed (I.A. vol-7 p.37).

Rashtrakutas who ruled for 200 years in 9th and 10th century A.D. was an epoch making period of Jainism. Ruling monarchs of this family like, NrupatungaAmoghavarsha, Krishna-II, Krishna-III and their successors extended royal patronage to this religion and made it very popular religion in this region. NrupatungaAmoghavarsha who ruled from 814 to 878 A.D. not only patronized, but also embraced Jainism and lived like a Jaina ascetic. AmoghavarshaNrupatunga rendered valuable services to Jainism as Ashoka (Nagarajaiah p.21) did to Buddhism. Hence he is called as Karnataka Ashoka. AmoghavarshaNrupatunga who ruled his empire making for the first time Malkhed as his capital (Suryanath p.70), he or his predecessors did not build the city of Malkhed. The city was in existence long before their sovereign settlements. For the centuries it was thriving as a Jaina settlement. It was during the reign of AmoghavarshaNrupatunga, Malkhed became the capital.

There were many reasons to shift this capital city. Ascetics of Jaina monastery, hierarchy of influential Jaina officials and merchants were mainly responsible for the transfer of capital city to Malkhed (Nagarajaiah p.9). During the reign of AmoghavarshaNrupatunga, Malkhed became very famous for two reasons, as it was prestigious capital city under Rastrakuta Empire and as a famous Jaina centre in South India. Jinasenacharya an illustrious Jaina teacher flourished in the court of AmoghavarshaNrupatunga. Jinasenacharya also served as a preceptor of king Amoghavarsha. Under the royal patronage of Amoghavarsha, Jinasenacharya was able to establish the pontifical seat of Jainism at Malkhed (Desai p.194). It was under the royal patronage only Jinasenacharya was able to write epic works like Jayadhavala and Adipurana. Under this circumstance, other teachers like Gunabhadracharya, Mahaveracharya, Srivijaya, Shakatayana, Akalanka rushed to Malkhed and adorned the court of NrupatungaAmoghavarsha. Ganitasarasangraha of Mahaveracharya, graphically describes Amoghavarsha's initiation to Jainism (Suryanath p.17). Amoghavarsha worked for the spread of Shramana culture. During his reign special activity was displayed in temple building, particularly as he was a great patron of that sect, Jainism was at the zenith of prosperity during his long reign. He became religiously inclined that he is said to have, eventually abdicate the throne in consequence of the growth of the ascetic spirit in him. (Bombay Gazett. Vol-1 p.201) Reference appears in Aihole cave inscription as follows; 'AmoghavarshaPunahamRajamGaiutamire' means when king Amoghavarsha was ruling for the second time supports the above view.

Krishana-II was son and successor of AmoghavarshaNrupatunga who also extended royal patronage to Jainism like his father (Ibid p.10). Great religious teacher like, Gunabhadracharya was his preceptor. Under the royal patronage of Krishana-II, Gunabhadracharya completed the work of Adipurana started by his teacher Jinasenacharya (Nagarajaiah p.23). During the reign of Krishana-II, many Jaina temples were built and grants were allotted to them. Places like Malkhed and Mulgunda with temples and monasteries, had become prominent Jaina centers (Ibid p.23-24). Aryasena, Ajitasena, Kumarasena, Veerasena and other monks also flourished here. Preceptor Kumarasena

accepted the right of Sallekhana at Mulgunda and left for Koppanatirtha another great seat for Jaina pilgrim, to breathe his last on the sepulchral hillock there.

Indira-III was son and successor of Krishna-II, ruled from 914 to 929 A.D. He was also a great patron of Jainism. Due to the liberal religious policy of Indira-III many temples were built and donations were made. Srivijaya, General of Indira-III made Danavalapadu (A.P.) a nerve centres of Jainism. Lendeyarasa, the Governor of Indira-III, donated Vulevura village to Jaina establishment in 916 A.D (Ibid p.26-27).

Govinda-IV was one more Rastrakuta king who ruled from 930 to 936 A.D. was also in favor of Jainism. There is a reference in Asundi inscription about the endowment of land given by Nagayya to the Jinalaya in the reign of Govinda-IV.

Krishana-III was the last powerful king of Rastrakuta family. He came to power, when the Rastrakuta kingdom was on the verge of declining. During the reign of Krishana-III, Jainism reached greater stature of patronage and popularity (Nagarajaiah p.29). Shankaraganda was one of the Governors of Krishana-III a staunch believer in Jainism, gave liberal donations and grants to Jaina temples and monasteries. An inscription from UppianaBatgeri (Koppal District) reveals that he commissioned a Jaina shrine called Jayadirajinalaya. Krishana-III also patronized eminent Jaina poets, scholars. Poet Ponna, poet laureate of Krishana-III was a Jaina, adorned the court of Krishana-III, who wrote Shanthinathapurana, BhuvanaikyaRamabhudaya and Jinaksharamale. Krishana-III honoured this Jaina poet with the title of 'Kavichakravarthi' (Ibid p.152). Indranandi, the author of Jwalamalinikalpa, Puspadanta the author at Mahapurana, most celebrated Jaina teacher Vadighangala (Munjarya) flourished in the court at Malkhed under the royal patronage of Krishna-III (Ibid p.31). After Krishana-III, Puspadanta continued under the royal patronage of Karka and Kotiga, the last rulers of Rastrakuta dynasty.

Indira-IV, the grandson of Krishna-III was also a staunch follower and great patron of Jainism. He lived and died for Jainism (Majumdar p.290). He gave up his life by performing the Sallekhana vow as a true Jaina.

Kotiga and Karka (967-973 A.D.) were the last rulers of Rastrakutas. We have a few Jaina inscriptions of the reign of Kotiga and Karka. An inscription from Chitradurga District dated 968 A.D. mentions the fact that Jakkisundari, the wife of Pandayya, a Chalukayan feudatory of Kotiga, built a Jaina temple for which her husband gave a grant. Another inscription contents praising words for Jainism. KotigaNityavarasha who seems to have been also a Jaina by persuasion, Puspadanta also remained under the royal patronage of Kotiga in Malkhed. Under his reign only remaining works like Jasaharachariu and Nayakumarachariu written by him (Nagarajaiah p.40). When Malkhed was attacked and destroyed by HarashaSiyakaPuspadanta was resigning in Malkhed. About the destruction of capital city MalkhedPusphadantha has expressed his deep sorrow and agony as follows.

“Deenanathanam(Basavaraj p.81)SadaBahujanamprotpullaVallivanam

ManyakhetapurampurandarpureemLeelaharamsundaram

DharanathaNarendrakopasikhinadagdamvidagdapriyam

KvedaneemvasateemKarishimatiPunhasriPuspadantakavi”

Rastrakutas ruled up to 973 A.D. and the last rulers were Kotiga and Karka. Tailapa-II of Chalukyas lineage usurped the power removing Kotiga and Karka from the thrown of Malkhed and declared himself as an independent king. This is how once again Chalukayan rule started in Karnataka. In the beginning from 973 A.D to 1041 A.D. Chalukyas ruled making Malkhed their capital city. Later capital city was shifted to Yadgiri, Pottalakere (Potoncharlu) finally to present Basavakalyan. Even though, after the changes of political panorama with ups and downs, Jainism does not seem to have suffered in Karnataka, Gulbarga region particularly. It had maintained its status quo. Fortunately, new rulers too extended the same patronage to Jainism (Nagarajaiah p.42).

Chalukayas were originally the followers of Vaishnavism but gave equal importance and patronage to Jainism. They also built Jaina temples and monasteries and gave royal patronage to many Jaina poets, scholars and teachers giving them all types of facilities in their court. Most of the Jaina temples noticed in Gulbarga districts are assigned to Chalukayan period.

IravabedangaSatyasaraya was one of the great patrons who extended royal patronage to eminent Jaina poet by name Ranna who is one of the three gems of Kannada literature. Other two were Pampa and Ponna. Under his royal patronage only Ranna was able to write 'Gadayudha'. Indirectly it was helpful to popularize Jainism.

Jainism received great impetus during the reign of Chalukayan emperor Vikramaditya VI (1076-1127 A.D.). Most of the temples built in Chalukayan period were assigned to the period of Vikramaditya-VI and Someshawara-III. Chalukayan queens were also not lagging behind in encouraging Jainism. Chandaladevi Suggaladevi and Jakkaldevi were queens of Vikramaditya-VI (Desai p.230) who made grants to built Jainabasadis in their kingdom. Queen Jakkaldevi of Vikramaditya-VI commissioned one Jainabasadi at Ingalgi, village of Chittapur taluka. Queen Chandaladevi built Parsvanatha Basadi in a village Hunasi Hadgil (Ibid p.242) Gulbarga district, when she was ruling Aland 1000. Bommanalli inscription reveals the donation made by Dharaladevi (Gogi p.104), one more queen of Vikramaditya-VI.

Hunasi Hadgil inscription reveals an interesting story as follows; One day a sculptor, having secured audience with the Queen, was exhibiting an image of the God Mahmanikya (Mahaveera) and at that time the king happened to come there. Moved by her devotion, he exhorted her to purchase the image from the artist and enshrine it in her estate village Ingalgi. Accordingly Queen Jakkaldevi erected a decent temple and installed the image there in.

During the reign of Vikramaditya-VI, Parsvanatha Basadi was built in village, Hunasi Hadgil in Gulbarga District. This village was included in Aland 1000 province (Aland Sasira) being ruled by Chandaladevi, one more Queen of Vikramaditya-VI. A small unit of few villages in this province was under the jurisdiction a local officer named Choudaraya. He was Jaina by persuasion and a lay disciple of Balachandra Siddhantadeva. He constructed the said temple of Parsvanatha Teerthankara and made suitable donation of land. For this consent of ruling king or queen was necessary. Queen Chandaladevi and king Vikramaditya had given their consent to build this temple.

Three hundred Mahajanas (Representatives) of Sedam town built a Shanthinatha Teerthankara Basadi at Sedam in 1121 A.D. This temple was named as Brahma Jinalaya and made a suitable donation of land for its upkeep and conducting daily worship (Ibid p.273). His illustrious son Someshawara-III succeeded Vikramaditya-VI. He was also great patron of Jainism,

and built many temples throughout his kingdom and patronized many Jaina poets and scholars in his court. According to inscription No 5, found in Sedam (Ibid p.288), in the 12th Regnal year of Someshawara III, (1138) Mahajanas of Sedam town under the leadership of Bhimarasa, built a temple of Adinatha (Vrashabhanatha) Teerthankara and made suitable gifts to upkeep and conducting worship.

Another inscription is found in square pillar of stone set up on raised platform near the northern gateway of Sedam. It speaks the construction of a Jaina temple during the reign of Someshawara-IV (Desai p.303), in 1160 A.D. One more inscription is found in Chikkabasadi in Komati colony, which belongs to 13th century A.D., and speaks the construction of Parsvanatha Teerthankara Basadi. It is not known who the donor to this temple was.

Apart from the royal family members, feudatory chiefs, officials, nobles and heads of local bodies and merchants also contributed to the propagation and popularity of the Jaina faith by constructing the temples and shrines and by making munificent endowments for their maintenance.

Among the illustrious feudatories were Gangas, Rattas, Haihaya of Aralamunnur and MirantiMunnur, Banas, Kalachuri etc. One very important ruler AmoghavarshaNrupatunga was great patron of Jainism. He rendered valuable service for the popularity of Jainism in Karnataka. Hence he is called Ashoka of Jainas, who worked for the Jainism with the help of feudatory Gangas. Martial and political alliance between the Gangas and Rastrakutas brought them nearer. They had a shared goal to achieve and a common faith to follow Shankaraganda of Ratta family was one of the great patrons of Jainism. Haihayas of Alluru (ChittapurTaluka) were feudatories of western Chalukyas, were also great patrons of Jainism. They made Alluru of ChittapurTaluka in Gulbarga district as their capital city; hence they were called Haihayas of Alluru. They caused to build many Jaina temples and carving inscriptions.

Temples situated in Sedam and Adaki were built during the reign of Chalukyas of Kallyani. But as a feudatory of them Haihaya rulers also made donations to them. Mahaveera Teerthankara and Shanthinatha Teerthankara Basadis at Sedam and Koppa Jinalaya at Adaki were good examples of Jaina Temple built by Haihyas.

Banas were feudatories of Western Chalukyas. Like their masters they were also religious tolerant (Ibid p.311), gave equal importance and patronage to Jainism. Kalagi is a small village about 15 miles to the west of Chittapur which was the headquarters of the chiefs of the Bana family. They built temple dedicated to Parsvantha at Kalagi, now it is in desolated condition.

Some officials of the state under the Rastrakutas, Chalukyas and Haihayas rendered great service for the promotion of the Jainism. Chawdare Rakasaya, appears in Hunasi Hadgil inscription was officer under Vikramaditya-VI in Aland 1000 province, was an ardent follower of Jainism and actively advocated its cause by alienating a decent endowment to Jaina temple at Hunasi Hadgil. Adaki inscription is found near Pyati Hanuman temple, which gives the information of an officer, by name Kopparasa Dandanayaka, who was also a staunch follower of Jainism (Ibid p.274). He played a very important role in the construction of a Jaina temple at Adaki. This temple is named after him as Koppa Jinalaya. Dandanayaka Bhimarasa an officer under the rulers of Chalukyas of Kallyani and their feudatories Haihayas was a great patron of Jainism. In Sedam Jinalaya is situated near southern gateway was built by Bhimarasa. Chandiraja was one more officer who also promoted Jainism by constructing a Jaina temple at Sedam .

Some nobles, heads of local bodies, merchants joined hands with others in upholding the doctrine of Lord Jaina. This is illustrated by many examples. The chief Barmadeva mentioned in Shanthinatha temple inscription in Sedam, and that played an important role in the construction of Shanthinatha temple at Komati colony at Sedam. Three Hundred Mahajanas of Sedam too took leading part on two different occasions in the establishment of two temples namely Shanthinatha and AdibhattarakaBasadies in their locality. The rich community people and some merchants have also contributed to enrich Jainism. AsiyakaluMallishetty and SireyaKalishetty mentioned in Adaki inscription as they made liberal donations to construct Jaina temples in this locality. Merchants Raishetty and Somishetty are mentioned in Sedam inscription that they made donations to promote Jainism by constructing Jaina temples. KanchugarBasadi at Harsoor was built by Masannayya of local merchant (Nagarajaiah p.247).

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Fig. 1 Yakshi Kushmandini



Fig.2 Yakshi Padmavati

Photographs from NeminathaBasadiMalakhed

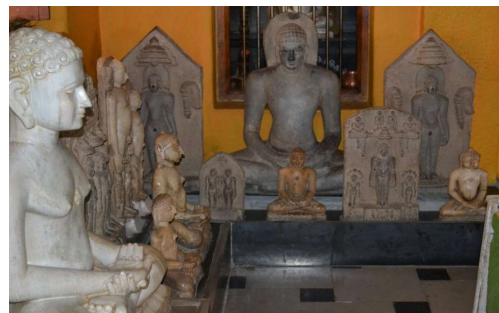


Fig.3 Jaina Sculptures and Relics