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Jaina education in early India: A historical outline

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Abstract

Jain system recommended liberation as the ultimate aim of education. Liberation according to Jain tradition is of two kinds, Jivan mukti and Dravya mukti. The system lay emphasis on social, economic and spiritual aim of education. The history of Jain education is primarily a history of south India. The Jains were instrumental in propagating and spreading education in Karnataka. To begin with chaitya, basadis and mathas were religious centres but later on it developed into educational centres. Jainism had stressed on universal education through mother tongue. In course of time Jainism laid emphasis on co-education as well. Both men and women were allowed to stay and study the Jain scriptures in the monasteries. Jain education received a boost from several royal dynasties of the time such as Kadambas, The Ganges, The Chalukiyas of Badami, the Rashtrakutas and the Hoysalas.

Keywords: Jaina, education, chaitya, basadis, liberation

Introduction

The history of Jainism in Southern India is primarily the history of religion in Karnataka. It is true that in Karnataka Jainism was a more popular religion from early second century to the end of the fourteenth century A.D. In this period several rulers of various dynasties and their officers, patronaged this religion, Jaina monks and educational centres. An inscription from Kuppattur tells us that Jainism had spread throughout Karnataka. During this period the Jainas played an important role in spreading education in Karnataka. To begin with Caityalayas, and Basadis were religious centres but soon they attracted students and also became educational centres.

Important characteristics of the Jaina system of education

Jainism denounces caste system or any hierarchy of classes in society. Hence, Jainism believed in universal education through the mother tongue, perhaps a consequent of its denouncement of caste system in society.

The Jaina acharyas always used the language of the masses as the medium of instruction. The system of co-education, and women's education were the other important aspects.

Centres of Learning

While temples, ghatikas, agraharas, brahmapuris and Mathas were centres of Brahmanic education, the basadis also called Chaityalayas and jinalayas played a prominent role as centres of Jaina system of education and the Jaina and tradition. Earlier, the Acharya were not confined to any particular place but they moved from one place to another. But later, basadis, and mathas, asramas were constructed for the Jain munis and acharyas. They became the centres of learning. Kings, queens and other members of royal families gave support to these centres of learning and some of them became very famous. The inscriptions mention different names for basadis, like Koyil-Basadi, Chaityalaya, Jinalaya, etc. Several basadis were named after the Thirthankaras for example, Neeminatha basadi, Parasvanatha basadi, Santinatha basadi at Rayabaga, Kandgal and Belgaum respectively. Sometimes, basadis were named after the builders. An inscription dated 1138 A.D. from Sravanabelagola states that the Chaityalaya built by Bopanna in the place was named after him. Similarly in Sravanabelagola, Santala, the chief queen of Hoysala Vishnuvardhana, built a basadi named after her as Savati Gandhavarana Jinalaya and also she made a grant for the worship and feeding the ascetics there. Another inscription from Chamarajanagara tells us that a certain Niravaidya built Niravaidya jinalaya there. The Chalukya king Ganga Permadi constructed Permadi jinalaya at Baligame Nagagonda the village headman of Nidoni built the Nagagounda basadi at Nidoni, in Bijapur district.

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These basadis were great centres of learning. This becomes clear from what Nayasena has written in his Dharmamrita; "King Arimathana knew that if he sent his son to a basadi, he would become learned and intelligent. There are instances to show that Jaina teachers taught not only in the basadis, but also in their own houses. It is known from an inscription from Lakshmesvara dated 730 A.D. which states that Udayadeva Pandita taught his disciple of Pujiyapada at his own house, for which donations were made by Chalukya king Jaisimha.

From the story of Sukumaraswami found in Vaddaradhane, we learn that Suryamitra kept Agnibhuti and Vayubhuti, sons of Kashyapi, in his own house and taught them without expecting anything in return. We also find therein, that Suryamitra who was seated on a metal seat (LOHASANA) and teaching his pupils when Agnibhuti and Vayubhuti went to his house. This itself is a sufficient proof to show that education was given by the Jaina teachers in their own houses, just as it was done by Hindu teachers. Inscriptions clearly indicate that there was a basadi in almost every village in Karnataka as Jainism. Koppala and Sravanabelgola were the most famous centres of education.

Commencement of Education

According to Vedic tradition, Hindus began their education after the initiation or upanayana ritual. The Jaina students had to begin their study at the age of five or a little later. Before going to the teacher's house, a student had to worship Jaina. The Jnana Chandra Charite of Payana describes the education of Jnanachandra as follows - After five years, he worshipped the Jaina and started to write the Siddhamatrika with great wisdom, sitting at the holy feet of his supreme Guru.

Varushavaidagalu-Jinapuj -eyamadi

Varagurugal samipadolu gurunu siddamatrakeya
vraddiyolu ta baredanu bahujanme yindu.

Another Jaina work, Dharmamrita tells us that Vajrakumara began his education at the age of five. The passage runs thus:

"Bamikkamaydu varushadandu jainopadya yara
samipadolulalikkuvudum"

Teachers

The Jaina teachers are commonly referred to as Tammadi, Oja, Upadhyaya, Guruvadi, Acharya, Goravi Bhattaraka, Gurugal. Inscriptions do not enable us to understand differences if any in these reference made regarding teachers.

The Rayapaseniya Sutta, a North Indian work in Sanskrit, divides the teachers into three categories, viz.,

1. Kalacharya an Acharya of Arts and Science
2. Silpacharya an Acharya of Art and Architecture and
3. Dharmacharya, an Acharya of religion and theology.

Students

The male students were called Antevasi, Mani, Gudda Sishya, Vidyarthi. The women students were called Guddi sishye Kanti, or Ganti.

The Jaina teachers expected their students to live in their houses to be endowed with enthusiasm, possess thirst for knowledge, soft speech and good conduct.

Strength of a Classroom

It seems that there was no strict rule regarding the number

of students studying under a teacher. The teacher could take as many students as possible for him to teach. The number ranged from 28 to 300 students under the control of a single teacher. An inscription dated 1100 A.D. from Sravanabelgola tells us that Chaturmukha a Jaina teacher had 84 students. Another record of the same place mentions that there were 300 students under Gunanandi Pandita. The students were well-versed in the Tarkka, Vyakarana, Sahitya, Agama and debates. A record dated 1118 A.D. mentions that kanak Srikanti had 28 students.

The teaching methodology

One of the prominent historian S.B. Deo states that the method of Jaina teaching was scientific and it comprised of five important parts, viz.

1. Vachana (Reading),
2. Prachhana (Asking questions),
3. Anupreksa (Pondering over),
4. Amhaya (Learning by part), and
5. Dharmapalesa (preaching of religion to masses).

Debate and discussion method was also used for teaching. The Sravanabelgola inscription mentions Akalanka, who was a famous Jaina preceptor and who is said to have defeated the Buddhist monk in a disputation at the court of king Himasitala of Kanchi. Another inscription of the same place records that Devakirti Pandita had outbeaten the Charvakas, Bouddhas, Naiyayikas, Kapalikas and Vaisesikas and others.

Cordial relation between the Teacher and the Students

On the basis of the Uttaradhyayana, H.B. Jain says that the relation between the teacher and the students was cordial and modest. He further says that just as a rider was happy in driving a good horse so also a teacher was delighted in educating a good pupil, and just as a rider was tired in driving a bad horse, so also a teacher lost interest in imparting knowledge to a silly pupil. If the teacher was angry, it was duty of the pupil to make him happy by his affection, to honour him with folded hands and to assure him not to commit any fault in future.

In epigraphs we come across students referred to as Antevasin and Chatra. This shows that both the teacher and the pupils lived near each other and under the same roof. This automatically resulted in a close relationship between the teacher and pupils as that between the father and his children. In the Vaddaradhane, referred to earlier, Agnibhuti and Vayubhuti, sons of Kashyapi, lived in Suryamitra's house for a period of eight years and studied all subjects.

Curriculum of Study

Inscription of the period, do not give us direct evidence of the subjects studied in the Jaina monasteries. But it can be said that Jaina Siddhanta and other scriptures were studied, and also life history of the Tirthankaras. Several inscriptions of Sravanabelgola describe the Jaina monks as Traividya, Traividya Chudamani, Traividya-ottama, Traividya-chakresvara, Traividya-deva Traividya Yogisvara, Traividya-ratnakara. An inscription from the same place dated 1129 A.D. mentions that Hemasena was well-versed in the Traividya i.e., Tarka, Vyakarna and Siddhanta. Meghachandra, a Jaina teacher was also well-versed in traividyas. B.V. Sirur states that the subjects taught in the Jaina monasteries were not only the subjects of religious importance, but also secular subjects, like Traividya's viz.,

Vyakarana, Tarka, Jaina Siddhanta, Nighantu, Alankara, Chandassu, Vakyakosa, Sahitya, Kavita, Sastra, Ganita, Vaidya, Ayurveda, Ratnaparikshe, Garudakosa, Indrajala, Mahendrajala, Parakaya, Vaddaprayoga, Nagesvara, Salilastanbhava, Pavakasta, Bhana-Sastra stabhana, Pharanavidya etc. Several Jaina monks are highly praised for their great scholarship. An inscription of 1024 A.D. from Marol, records that the scholarship of Jaina teacher, Anantaviramuni comprised of all Vyakarana, Lexicon, Mathematics, Erotics, Astronomy, Science on Prosody, Law, Music, Rhetoric, Poetry and Drama, Philosophy, Politics, Siddhanta and Pramana. An inscription from Sravanabelgola dated 1123 A.D. describes Divakaranandi as the abode of three sciences on account of his great proficiency in grammar, logic, and philosophy. Thus it may be concluded that the above mentioned subjects might have been taught in the Jaina monasteries and also in the houses of teachers.

Co-Education

The main character of the Jaina system of education was its encouragement to co-education. Several epigraphs from Sravanabelgola bear evidence to this. In an inscription of 1047 A.D. we find that when "the kings and the queens, generals and others gave donations, it was believed to be for the arrangement of food and clothes to monks and nuns (Rishis and Aryakkas). Here it may be said that this kind of donations to Aryakas, was a kind of an incentive to women to come forward and receive education. Another inscription of 1168 A.D. records that a grove of four hundred trees of areca nut, one mattar of rice field and three mattars of land of black soil were donated to Rishis and Aryakas, for their food and clothes. It shows that both Rishis and Aryakas studied together in the basadis. The epigraphs of the period, tell us that in the Jaina educational centres there were both men and women teachers. Students whether male or female studied under the teachers whether they were male or female. Inscriptions from Sravanabelgola mention that lady students like Dhandikuttarevi goravi was studying under Perumala Guravadigal (Perumala guravadigala sishye dhandikuttarevi Goravi). Nanabbekanti under Abhiyanandipanditadeva, Sayiabbekanti under Kumaranandibhattaraka, Srimatiganti under Divakaranandi, Achaladevi under Balachandra, Lakshimimati Dandanayakiti wife of Gangaraja, under Sri Prabhachandra Siddantadeva, Santala, the queen of Vishnuvardhana, under Prabhanchandra-muni. The male students studied under a female teachers, for example Brahmagouda was the student of Ratrimatiganti, Jagamanachari studied under the Maliyabbeganti, Bichagouda was the disciple of Makabbekanti.

An inscription dated 1118 A.D. states that the monastery of Sravanabelgola there were about 28 students who studied under a lady teacher namely, Kanakasrikanti, consisting of both the sexes. Both men and women were allowed to stay and study the Jaina scriptures in the monasteries. Several epigraphs mention that in the basadis like Goravara basadi Mattavarada basadi, Soratura Baladeva jinalaya, Kuyibalada basadi, Nadiharala halliya basadi, Pulagereya Anesajji basadi, Honnavadada tribhuvana tilaka jinalaya. Both male and female students stayed together and studied under one teacher. These references show that the co-education system existed during the period under study. The Jaina lady teachers (kantis) had read and assimilated the scriptures, and

taught the same to their disciples. There are references in the inscriptions to the fact that they were well acquainted with the scriptures. A record from Sravanabelgola states that, Anantamati Kanti practised, according to the prescribed rules, the twelve kinds of penance on earth. Another inscription from the same place mentions that sasimatiganti, who possessed noble qualities had done an extensive study of the scriptures. A record dated 1129 A.D. tells us that Hariyabbe was well-versed in the Sastras. A certain Baladevayya of Soratur in Dharwad district, built a basadi there. Huliabbajjike a lady disciple of SriNandi Pandita who was probably well-versed in Jaina scriptures, became the head of the basadi. After worshiping her feet, Baladevayya donated a piece of land for that basadi. Attimabbe, the wife of Nagadeva, known as Danachintamani, had prepared one thousand copies of the Santinathapurana of Ponna, at her own expenses and provided the facility of its study among the devout Jainas. Pampa in his Adipurana mentions that a certain Pandite as a great scholar. She taught a lady student srimati reading, writing and painting and made her a great scholar. In the Dharmamrita there is a reference to child-widow, Narayana Datte, who later studied Tarkasastra and got the title of Sapanugraha-Samarthe.

Jaina Mathas

Inscriptions, although infrequently, make references to Jaina mathas also, which served as educational centres in ancient and medieval Karnataka. Members of the royal family, generals, and officers, made liberal endowments to these mathas. For example, a record of Kadamba king Boppadeva dated 1182 A.D. from Sikaripura taluka, tells us that he made land grant to the Jaina matha at Chikkamagadi in the same taluka. Another record dated 1077 A.D. mentioned that, Kadamba queen Malaladevi gave a donation to the Kuppaturu matha. Like Hindu ascetic the Jaina monks also were great scholars. There are several records, which say that the monks of a matha were great scholars. A record from Magadi dated 1182 A.D. states that monks like Munichandra, Bhanukirti and Siddantadeva lived in the matha there.

Royal Patronage

Karnataka was ruled by several dynasties like the Kadambas, the Gangas, the Chalukyas of Badami, the Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas of Kalyana and the Hoysalas. Under these dynasties Jainism received due recognition and patronage. It was a popular religion in Karnataka, Sravanabelgola, Koppala, Manneketa, Humcha, emerged as a great centres of Jain religion and arts. Inscriptions under study provide us with several instances of the members of the ruling families and their officers making gifts to Jaina basadis. From inscriptions of the early Kadambas we learn that the Jainas used to stay in one place during the rainy season, at the end of which they used to celebrate the well-known Pajjushana ceremony as laid down in the scriptures. The Devagiri plates of vijaya siva Mrigesavarma record the division of the village, Kalavanaga into three parts, each part being made over for the holy Arhat, for worship of god Jinendra and for the maintenance of the ascetics belonging to Svetapata and Nirgrantha sects. The Halsi plates of the same king record that for acquiring merit for his deceased father, Mrigeshavarma built a jinalaya at Palasika and made a gift of 33 nivartanas of land.

Later, king Ravivarman made a grant of 15 nivatthanas of land for the anointment of the god Jina at the same place, on the full moon days without fail. The Harsi plates of Harivarman record a grant of land made to the Sangha and the Jaina monks of that place. The Ganga rule was the golden age for the Jainas as the rulers of this line were Jainas themselves. During this period Jaina ascetics, and basadis received many grants from the Ganga rulers. For example, a record from Malavalli dated 909 A.D. states that king Nitimarga exempted the tax on sheep and other commodities for the purpose of enlarging the Jalna basadi at Kanakagiri-tirtha in Tippeyur. Another Ganga king Marasimha constructed a Jaina basadi and gave donations to religious persons and temples at Kudlur. He gave a village named Bageyur and gifted twelve Khandagas of grain to a great Jaina teacher. Vadighanghala or Munjarya. He also made a grant to a Jaina priest named Jayadeva. It is mentioned in the Lakshmesvara inscription dated 968 A.D. The Ganga king Rajamalla was a great patron of Jaina Dharma. His minister Chavundaraya, was responsible for the installation of the colossus statue of Gommatas at Sravanabelgola. He constructed the Chavundaraya basadi at same place. He was also the author of Chavundaraya Purana. The Chalukyas of Badami, though they belonged to Hinduism did not lag behind in supporting Jainism. Ravikirti the Jaina poet, the author of the famous Aihole prasasti received the highest favour from Pulakesi II the great Chalukyan emperor. He constructed a Jaina temple, now known as the Meguti temple. King Vinayaditya made a donation of fifty mattars of land to a Jaina priest who belonged to the Mulasangha and Devagana. The Lakshmesvar inscription of Vijayaditya states that the king donated the village of Kardam, south of Pulageri to his father's priest Udayadeva Pandita who was the resident pupil of Sri Pujyapada. The Shiggaon plates of Vijayaditya dated 707 A.D. state that the king made a grant at the request of Chitravahana to the Jaina monastery, which was caused to be built by Kumkumamahadevi at Puligere. Under the Rastrakutas Jainism reached its zenith, especially under Amoghavarsha, Dantidurga, Khadgavaloka, Vairamegha, honoured Akalankadeva, one of the greatest figures in Jaina history. Jinasena, the author of Adipurana claims that he was the chief preceptor of Amoghavarsha. He described the Rashtrakuta king as a follower of Syadvada according to the precepts of the religion. Amoghavarsha wrote the Prasnotaramalika which included the Jaina philosophy. Another inscription from Naregal dated 950 A.D. mentions the gift of a tank made to the dana-sala attached to the basadi constructed thereby Padmabbarasi, a queen of btayya. Another records states that food and medicines were provided for the Jaina mathas where Jaina scriptures were taught. The Gokak plates of Dejj Maharaja register a gift of land in the Jalara village for the worship of the divine Arhat and for the maintenance of the learned ascetics devoted to teaching. The Chalukyas of Kalyana while the largely supported saivism and constructed Saiva temples, they also made grants to the Jaina basadis. An inscription dated 1047 A.D. refers to Akkadevi, the sister of Jayasimha II, who was a patron of the Jaina faith, permitted her name to be associated with a Jaina temple in place, called Gunada-Bedangi Jinalaya. She made a gift of lands for the maintenance of the Jaina monks and nuns attached to the religious establishment there. A record from Honwada in the Bijapur district, dated 1045 A.D. tells us that Ketaladevi, the

queen of Somesvara I, was in charge of the administration of the Honwada agrahara. At the request of Ketaladevi, the king granted lands, and house sites for the Tribhuvan-tilaka Chaityalaya where monks and nuns stayed. Lakshmi or Lakkale the wife of general Gangaraja, constructed a new Jinalaya at Sravanabelgola and bestowed on it gifts of food, shelter, medicine for those who teaching and learning there. Another Inscription from Kalholi In Belgaum district dated 1127 A.D. informs us that at the Instance of Kartavirya , a Ratta king, certain grants were made to a Jaina temple that had Just been built at Sindana-kalpole . The purpose of this grant was to provide food, medicines and Instruction in the sacred scriptures, for the holy men living there, as well as for repairs of the temple. Another record from Teradala in Bijapur district, dated 1124 A.D. states that Gonka constructed a Jaina temple dedicated to Neminatha and made a grant of land for the maintenance of its establishment and for the feeding of the Jaina monks. An inscription dated 1129 A.D. records that Hariyabbarasi, a lady disciple of Gandavimukta Siddhantadeva, having built in Hantiyur of Malevadi in Kodangi nadu, a lofty chaityalaya with gopuras, made a grant to it for the daily worship, distribution of food to rishis and old women and providing shelter during winter. Attimabbe, the daughter-in-law of Dhulla and wife of Nagadeva is a celebrated name in the annals of Jainism. She was known for making liberal grants and after she was called Danachintamani. She constructed basadis including a very large one at Lokkigundi. She had 1,000 copies of Ponna's Santipurana made at her own expenses and distributed them among the public.

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