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## Antiquity of Jainism in Karnataka

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Jainism is very ancient in Karnataka. According to many scholars, the Jains originated from North India. But the evidence makes it clear that they settled in South India from North India. AD In the 3rd century, Chandragupta Maurya and twelve thousand Jain monks came and settled in Sravanabelagola, South India. As a complement to this, several inscriptions, art, architecture, Basadis are instance. The inscriptions describe the History of Karnataka that would also be the antiquity of Jainism. For example:

“Jinadharmā Vasamadattamalavinayadagaramadattu Padma  
Sananirpa Padmamadattativishada Yashogadhamamadattu Vidya  
Dhana Janmasthanamadattasama Tarala Gambhira Sasohamada  
Ttenisalkintulla Nana Mahimeolesegum Charu Karnata Desham”<sup>1</sup>

This verse of inscription of the 15th century is an important document to know the influence and inspiration of Jainism in Karnataka. Jainism has maintained its existence till the time of Hoysalas, Rashtrakutas, Chalukyas, Kalachuris and Vijayanagara kings. Thus, not only Karnataka but also its own contribution to the cultural history of ancient India.

Jainism is believed to have existed in Karnataka even before Christ. This province was an important abode for the Jains of the Digambara tradition. There are many evidences that Lord Mahavira Tirthankar's Samavasarana vihara took place in Karnataka as well. At that time,

a king named Vasupata was ruling in Kanchipuram. It is said in 'Aradhana Katha Kosha' that he was a devotee of Mahavira. On reaching the country of Hemanga (Mysore), Mahavira was welcomed by Jivandhara, the son of King Satyandhara. Also, Gunabhadracharya has explained in his 'Uttara Purana' that he took initiation and joined the Veer Sangha. Going further back to the antiquity of Jainism in Karnataka, it is believed that Lord Neminatha Tirthankara left Dwarka when there was an internal strife among the Yadavas and came to Karnataka for some time and did penance. Some scholars have speculated that Vrishabhadeva, the Adi Tirthankara, also roamed the hills of Dakshina Kannada district. The poet Srivijaya, who was under the patronage of Rashtrakuta Emperor Amoghavarsha Nripatunga I, in his Kavirajamarga-

“Kaveriyindama Godavari Vara Mirda Nadada Kannadadol  
Bhavisida Janapadam Vasudhavalaya Vilina Vishada Vishaya Vishesham”<sup>2</sup>

He mentioned about Karnataka and described it beautifully.

The above references to the antiquity of Jainism in Karnataka make it difficult to be certain about the period. A major shortcoming is that no history is clear about this. Thus dual statements are recorded about the period of Jainism. For example Chandragiri in Sravanabelagola or An inscription on the southern rock to the abode of Parswanath Swami on a small hill, Jainism in Karnataka dates back to BC. It is known to have existed in the third century.

“Mahapurusha Santati Samavadyotitanvaya Bhadrabahu Swamiyu”

“Ashtanga Maha Nimitta Tatvajyena Trai Kalyadarshina Nimittena”

Having told in Ujjain that there will be a great drought for twelve years, he came to 'Katavapra' with Acharya Prabhachandra along with Sarva Sangha from north to south. Chandragupta Maurya, a disciple of Bhadrabahuswami, also followed his guru. The disciples are estimated to be twelve thousand. A reference to the tradition that Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta came to Sravanabelagola is Harishena's 'Brhatkatha Kosha' (918 AD). Chidananda Kavi's 'Muni Vamshabhyudaya' Ratnanandi's 'Bhadrabahu Charite' Devachandra's 'Rajavali Kathe' and hundreds of inscriptions in and around Sravanabelagola. Keeping all these grounds in mind, Dr. Vincent Smith, Dr. Fleet, B.L. Rice, R. Narasimhachar Historians like

have also analyzed that it is a traditional and historical fact. The main basis given by all the above scholars is a story from the Kannada Vaddaradhane Granth. Dwadshanga Chaturdasa predecessors Bhadrabahu Bhatara arrived in Ujjain with a group of sages and when entering a house for alms, a little child in the cradle of that house, Bolaha! It is called Bolaha Bhatara (Go Bolaha).

When asked the period, it says twelve years. Bhadrabahu Munis would tell his disciples to go to Dakshinapatha as famine would come after twelve years of drought. This group of sages joins the province of Kallapu (Chandragiri). Another part of it goes to the Dravidian country. Apart from this evidence, we do not find any archeological evidence of Jainism here earlier than that.

There are indications in Bhadrabahu Bhattaraka's story that when Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta came here, there were no Jains in the surroundings of Shravanabelagola. It contains a description of Chandragupta being fed by forest deities. Chandragupta was initiated by sages returning from the Dravidian country.

Therefore, Dr. Chandragupta said that there is a need to find more grounds to conclude that there was Jainism in Karnataka beyond the story of Chandragupta Bhadrabahu. M. Chidananda Murthy opines.

BC There is evidence of Jainism in Sinhala [Sri Lanka] in the 4th century. Many scholars have assumed that it must have gone through the southern country, but some scholars say that it should not have gone that way. In the Hathigumpha inscription, the Gangaras of Gangavadi ruled the Kannada land with glory for three hundred years. He established one of his branches in Kalinga state and another branch in Nepal and brought glory to Kannada nadu and Jainism. Jainacharya also received many donations from Chalukya kings. The Jain caves of Badami and Aihole and the statues of Tirthankaras there are known to be of the same period. It can be known from ancient sources that many kings of this family gave charity to Jain temples and Jain Sangha institutions.

Chavundaraya established the world famous single stone idol of Sri Bahubali at Sravanabelagola. Around this time, Attimabbe, who donated Shastra, made a thousand copies of Ponna's Shantipurana, and became a devout Jain woman. There is a reference to Amoghavarsha, a Rashtrakuta king, receiving initiation and finally receiving sallekhana at Sravanabelagola. The Hoysala dynasty was also founded by Jain sages. Sudattacharya, a Jain guru, was the Rajaguru

and Vidyaguru for the Hoysalas. Shantala Devi, the queen of this royal family, was a devotee of Jainism. Prabhachandra Siddhanta was a disciple of Dev. She built 'Savati Gandhavarana Basti' in Sravanabelagola and established the idol of Shanti Jina. These above factors are a mirror of the antiquity of Jainism in Karnataka's contributions to literature, art and architecture.

Most of the famous Jainacharyas who came to light in South India are from Karnataka. The famous pilgrimage sites like Sravanabelagola, Kopan, Lakshmeshwar, Punnata, Nuggehalli, Huncha, Kubatur, Maleyur, Avadi, Hosapatna, Bankapur etc. were centers of Jain education. 'Gangavadi is ninety Sasiram Kopan Jain Maths and Basadis were centers of education. The students studying there were called Brahmacharis and Guddas. Subjects like Jainagama, Grammar, Economics, Proposition, Literature etc. were practiced. For this, huge volumes of scriptures were there. It was called Saraswati Bhandara and Shruta Bhandara. Acharyas and Bhattaraks who lived there used to give education to their disciples. Thus, the encyclopedia of Jainism expanded through study, teaching, and creation of scriptures. These made great contributions to the Jain society. Worked for the betterment of the entire mankind. Values like truth, non-violence, sacrifice, kindness and celibacy were tried to be permanently established in life. Thus B.C. Jainism, which arrived in Karnataka in the past, played a significant role in enriching the society of Karnataka by pouring all its rich contents into it. Jainism as a whole has grown out of its own great elements from its inception through many unique achievements. Scholarly statements about the antiquity of Jainism are not unanimous.

Inscriptions, poetic works, art and architecture, basadis present the cultural splendor of Jainism. Many royal families have striven for the continuity of Jainism. Jainism works are seen to have been inspired by poets in their courts. These royal families have contributed immensely to art and architecture. The practices and philosophies of Jainism seek the welfare of all living beings. It leads to the fulfillment of human life. Such religious practices have been celebrated by the Jains from ancient times till today. Many scholars have researched and discussed the antiquity of Jainism as a whole and when it came and settled in Karnataka. Jainism is believed to have existed before Christ. But it is very important that we look at the background of the basics. So for us mainly the inscriptions, the antiquity of Jainism form the basis for depicting the cultural relations of Karnataka. According to inscriptions, Chandragupta Maurya came from North India in AD. In the 3rd century itself, inscriptions mention that he migrated with 12,000

Jain monks to Sravanabelagola in South India. After this, Jainism became religiously and culturally associated with the Kannada land. Such proofs of the enrichment of Jainism in this country are inscriptions, literary works, royal palaces, art-architecture sculptures, and the religious practices of Jainism are seen to be going on in the Jain community of this country even today. It can be clearly seen that all these are closely related to Karnataka and Jainism.

Jainism has taken a lot of effort to develop aspects such as Kannada land, language, culture, literature, art and architecture. Jainism has a very ancient and inextricable connection with the soil of this land, which has made such unforgettable contributions.

### Reference:

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