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JAIN MANUSCRIPTS : A CRITICAL STUDY

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The history of writing is not as old as the verbal tradition. In India from the time immemorial the wisdom through intellectual exercise has been flowing with the verbal tradition. Naturally the sacred literature was kept alive in verbal tradition. People in ancient India had tremendous capacity in memorizing the scripture. It was considered to be sin to reduce the scripture to writing. So education in ancient India was imparted verbally from generation to generation. It was in practice of both the *Brāhmaṇic* and *Śramaṇic* (Jain and Buddhist) tradition. The other name of the Veda is Śruti. It means the oral tradition. In the beginning, the Vedic literature was not in written form. Appropriate tools and mechanism were evolved to enhance the memory power. Right pronunciation, accent, punctuation were taught as primary requisite of memorizing the sacred texts. And these had been enlivened through *Guru-śiṣya-paramparā*.

According to Jain Canonical texts and *Jaina Purāṇas* the religious doctrines and sermons, beginning from the time of Lord Ṛiṣabha, the first Tīrthaṅkara up to Lord Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth Tīrthaṅkara were preached only orally. The literary document whatever available today was compiled as written from the fifth century A.D. As time goes on the sermons preached by Lord Mahāvīra get voluminous. A group of eleven *Gaṇadhara*s was the first messenger of the teaching of Mahāvīra. Later on Ācāryas have taken the great responsibility to spread that message. By the time, due to intellectual exercises the original canons were explained with *bhāṣya*, *niryukti*, *ṭīkā*, *cūrṇi* etc. and realized to be mutilated with secondary thoughts. And it was found necessary to compile the canons in its own form.

The Digambara does not believe the restoration of the canons in such a way that the Śvetāmbara does. The fourteen *Pūrvas*, the foundation of Jain ethics in particular and the philosophy in general have been claimed to be lost by both the sects. According to the Śvetāmbara, a meager portion that have been preserved in the canons in scattered manner, where as the Digambara believes that these are preserved in the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama*, *Kaṣāyaprābhṛta* and *Mahābandha* etc. in the same way.

After the *nirvāṇa* of Lord Mahāvīra, 527 B.C., famine occurred in India very frequently. At the time of Maurya Candragupta famine lasted for twelve years. So the continuous process of natural calamity was the cause for the declination of retentive power of sacred texts, as people were starving. Owing to these series of devastating famines many Jain monks also died. And that was the cause, Ācārya Bhadrabāhu, who was known as the knower of the complete sacred texts, migrated to the south with a large group of monk disciples. Even quite a substantial number of monks of this group also died. The sacred text was found to be lost with the death of Bhadrabāhu.

As Bhadrabāhu migrated to south India, Sthūlabhadra was representing as the head of the community in the north with a large group of monks and stayed in Magadha region. There was fear that the knowledge of the sacred texts might lapse into oblivion. And for that reason a council was convened at Pāṭaliputra (Patna) for the restoration of the sacred texts. The monks, who were in north India, compiled the 11 Aṅgas and the remnants of the 14 Pūrvas in the 12th *Aṅga*, *Dṛṣṭivāda* in that convention.

This was the first ever attempt to reduce the sacred texts to writing. By that time the disciples and adherents of Bhadrabāhu returned to the north and saw a big change in doctrine propounded by Mahāvīra was compiled in the 12 *Aṅga*s. They even saw a big change in the life-style of the sādhus. That was the period when Jain monks were clearly idenfied with two sects – Digambara and Śvetāmbara. The Digambara monks refused to acknowledge the canons compiled by Sthūlabhadra and his disciples. They were of opinion that the *Pūrva*s and *Aṅga*s, taught by Lord Mahāvīra were lost to a large extent.

After the Pāṭaliputra conventions several conventions were held in subsequent times in different parts of northern India. Two of these conventions, one of the Digambaras and the other of the Śvetāmbaras were famous. Dharasenācārya, the last Ācārya, being the representative of the Digambara tried to restore the original and is believed that he could retain a meagre amount of scriptural knowledge that is the *Pūrva*s and *Aṅga*s. The remaining scriptural knowledge is considered to be lost. He taught a few portion of the fifth *Aṅga* - *Viyāhapaṇṇatti*, and *Diṭṭhivāya*, the twelfth *Aṅga* to his disciples, Puṣpadanta and Bhūtavalī. These two texts afterwards were reduced to writing by these two disciples. Both of them have written the scriptures in first or second century B.C. Puṣpadanta composed *Satprarūpaṇā* in 177 *gāthā*s where as rest of the knowldge has been composed by Bhūtavalī by the name *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama*.

According to the Śvetāmbara, the last conference was held at Vallabhī, Gujarat in 4th/5th century A.D. (*Vīr saṃvat* 980) in the leadership of Devardhigaṇi Kṣamāśramaṇa where it was the first time that the scriptures were attempted to reduce into writing. It was alarge gathering of learned Jain monks who compiled the *Aṅga*s and *Upāṅga*s. *Dṛṣṭivāda*, the 12th *Aṅga*, however, here also considered to be lost.

As the earliest ever script is believed to be the inscriptions of Aśoka of 3rd century B.C., it is to be understood that the Jain scriptures as composed by Puṣpadanta and Bhūtavalī in 1st/2nd century B.C. were the source of compilation of Śvetāmbara canons. So the compilation of the scriptures held at Vallabhī was partly based on the scriptures written earlier and partly by the verbal knowledge. The art of writing was amply developed even in 1st or 2nd century B.C. and onwards the Jain *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Paümacariyaṃ* was composed by Vimalasūri in 1st century B.C. The dramatic Prakrit of Bhāsa and Aśvaghoṣa's compositions were also available in early Christian era. Even the commentary literaure of Jain canons came into existence before the compilation of the canons. So the tradition of writing of the scriptures was in vogue before the Vallabhī conference. On the basis of the compilation of Śvetāmbara canons, the history of Jain manuscripts believed to be started. As the tradition of writing sacred literatures came into practice, efforts from every corner of religious sects were made to register all religious documents into writing. Within a short span of time the practice of writing became so popular, the religious heads and Ācāryas started preserving those manuscripts in the temples that all these scriptures would be easily accessible to the scholars. Mainly the temples were the store-houses of manuscripts which were called as *Granthabhāṇḍār* or *Śāstrabhāṇḍār*.

Beginning from Bhadrabāhu, 2nd century B.C. and onwards up to 16th / 17th century A.D. there were number of learned monks and Ācāryas in Jain community who have great contribution to the literary works. They not only preserved the old canonical texts, enormous number of sacred literatures was composed throughout the ages. Monks used to travel in and across the country on foot and propagate the scriptural knowledge among the masses. Some of the prominent names are – Ācārya Kundakunda,

Ūmāsvāti, Siddhasena Divākar, Samantabhadra, Devanandī, Devardhigaṇi, Haribhadrasūri, Jinasena, Guṇabhadra and Hemacandra etc. They not only taught the scripture but inspired the followers to preserve manuscripts. It was a noble duty to copy the sacred literature and propagate more and more to the masses. It was said that doing so one can earn merit (*puṇya*). The Ācāryas preached how to preserve manuscripts. They also taught the art of writing and copying of old manuscripts. They took initiatives to establish Śāstrabhāṇḍāras. The *praśasti*s which are written at the end of the manuscripts clearly indicate that most of the manuscripts have been copied out due to the teachings of the monks. People who were in the mission in distributing manuscripts to others for the sake of spreading knowledge were considered highly respectable and noble. In most of the cases, at the end of the manuscripts it is written – 'one who writes or makes individuals to write, one who hears or one who makes others to hear, one who gives or make others to distribute, is noble one and sharer of *puṇya*. He will certainly attain *nirvāṇa* some day. Jain teachers always emphasized on regular reading of manuscripts and recorded reading scriptures or self-study (*svādhyāya*) is one of the six essential duties of layman.

Jainism, although, has been originated in the eastern part of India (Bihar) as the birth place of Lord Mahāvīra, it has been spreaded over the other parts, central, western and southern parts of India. *Śāstrabhāṇḍāra*s or *Granthabhāṇḍāra*s were established basically in the temples. Jain manuscripts are highly adorable to the Jain people. As these are the sermons of the *Tīrthaṅkaras* recorded in the written form Jain people consider these of great esteem. Jain used to visit the *Śāstrabhāṇḍāra*s at the time of visiting temples. They pay obeisance to these sacred scriptures. Usually these manuscripts are kept in the custody of scholarly hands that had knowledge and authority on the subject matter as well as the script. But they were directly guided by the learned monks. Later on, in the 13th century and onwards the noble duty of preservation of manuscripts were laid upon the *Bhaṭṭāraka*s, *Yati*s and their disciples called *Maṇḍalācārya*s, *Pāṇḍyā*s and *Brahmacārī*s. They were identified as *Caityavāsī*s – the temple dwellers. The *Bhaṭṭāraka*s along with their other duties and responsibilities to the Jain community have shouldered upon the establishment of Śāstrabhāṇḍāras. Maintaining asceticism in life they also used to travel throughout the country and where ever they stay in the rainy season, they establish manuscript libraries. They kept vigilance over the condition of the manuscripts. They used to take a number of manuscripts with them at the time of their travelling. They used to take care of every leaf of the manuscripts and replace it, the cover and even the wooden plates from time to time. They often sold the extra copies to the *Śrāvaka*s for its preservation in other Śāstrabhāṇḍāras. Gradually it comes again under the control of the house-holders. There were number of house-holders throughout the ages who became very good scholars. The *Śāstrabhāṇḍāra*s have come under their control. Substantial development in increasing manuscripts had been found. The other side of the picture was that in some places in some periods the management of preservation of manuscripts had come under the control of so called illiterate persons and on the name of preservation they used to keep those manuscripts under lock and key and not make available to the keen readers, that results the manuscripts to be reduced to ashes.

Modern system of preservation in and issuing books from the library is the developed system of those of the traditional ÏÁstrabhaÆ±Áras. Even in earlier times manuscripts were preserved with cataloguing systems and were issued after maintaining register. Generally part of the manuscripts was issued, mainly for two reasons – other part might be issued to other and if it is lost, other part might be

restored. In most of the cases there are clear instructions written at the end of the manuscripts that it was written with great difficulty so it should be preserved with great care.

भग्नदृष्टि कटिग्रीवा वक्रदृष्टिरधोमुखम्
कष्टेन लिखितं शास्त्रं यत्नेन परिपालयेत्।

वद्धमुष्टि कटिग्रीवा मन्ददृष्टिरधोमुखम्
कष्टेन लिखितं शास्त्रं यत्नेन परिपालयेत्॥

Not everybody was allowed to copy out the manuscripts. The writer should have good hand-writing with ample knowledge of alphabets and the language. He should be genius, good in talking and having control over senses.

सर्वदेशाक्षराभिज्ञः सर्वभाषाविशारदः।
लेखकः कथितो राज्ञः सर्वाधिकारणेषु व॥
मेधावी वाक्पटुर्धीरो लघुहस्तो जितेन्द्रियः।
परशास्त्रपरिज्ञाता एष लेखक उच्यते॥

The writer should follow the strict principle in writing. The art of writing was developed that a writer should be very attentive and careful that how long the letters should be, and of which size, the place where the letter to be curved and where they should be written in plain way. It is **Sais** thus –

अक्षराणि समशीर्षाणि वर्तुलानि घनानि च।
परस्परमलग्नानि यो लिखेत् स हि लेखकः॥
समानि समशीर्षाणि वर्तुलानि घनानि च।
मात्रासु प्रतिवद्धानि यो जानाति स हि लेखकः॥

There are also the prescribed instruments by which the manuscript should be written. Different types of inks are also found to be described in many manuscripts, such as –

मष्यर्धे क्षिप सद्गुन्दं गुन्दार्धे बोलोमेव च।
लाक्षा बियारससेनोचैर्मर्दयेत् ताम्रभाजने॥
बोलास्यो द्विगुणो गुन्दो गुन्दास्य द्विगुणा मषी।
मर्दयेद् याम युग्मं तु मषी वज्रसमा भवेत्॥

Five kinds of books are mentioned in the *Bṛhad Kalpasūtra*. Those are *gaṇḍī*, *kacchapī*, *muṣṭi*, *sampuṭaphalaka,* and *chedapāṭī*. All these five kinds of books are written mainly on palm leaves. Although the palm leaves were one of the oldest material on which manuscripts were written, later on manuscripts were written on *bhoja patra*, cloth, paper and on copper plates. Before 13th century A.D. the manuscripts were mostly written on palm leaves. The oldest ever Jain manuscript we have is in the Jaisalmer *bhāṇḍār*. The manuscript of the Śvetāmbara commentary literature is *Ogha niryukti Vṛtti* of *saṃvat* 1117, that is, 1060 A.D. It is written on palm leaves. Palm leaf manuscripts are presently available in many manuscript libraries in south India and the libraries in north India, such as, Paṭṭan, Karṇāvatī, Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Nagaur, Jodhpur etc. Different types of inks are used in these manuscripts. Some of the palm leaf manuscripts are written in golden ink also.

Cloth was also used by the Jain monks as the material of manuscripts. These types of materials were used mainly for illustrations, drawing and paintings etc. The earliest manuscript on cloth is found

in the *bhāṇḍār* at Paṭṭan. It was written in 1361 A.D. Some other contemporary cloth manuscripts are also found in the same *bhāṇḍār*. *Saṃgrahaṇī Ṭīppaṇakam* was written in 1396 A.D. In the cloth manuscripts mainly the life sketch of the *Tīrthaṅkara*s are illustrated in a beautiful manner. Geography as mentioned in the scriptures and contemporary social and political issues has also been illustrated in the Jain manuscripts.

As it is mentioned that we don't have any evidence of availability of paper manuscript before 13th century A.D., a good number of paper manuscript came out right from the use of paper in that period. Rajasthan and Gujarat has always been the best repository of Jain manuscripts. Rajputana was one of the paper manufacturing industries and with the growing atmosphere of paper manufacturing; the availability of paper gave enough space to the manuscript writers. Manuscripts written on paper are several size and also of various kinds. Pagination marks are in one side. These leaves are in many cases decorated in red and blue colors. Some of the manuscripts are found written in golden and silver ink. The Śvetāmbara canon *Kalpasūtra* is written in golden ink with beautiful illustrations. Some of the manuscripts are written in wooden and copper plates. Jain yantras are mostly illustrated either on the copper plates or bronze plates with the illustrations made of golden and silver ink, are preserved in the temples.

There is scarcely any province of Indian literature to which the Jain have not contributed. Along with the religious aspects Jain scholars have contributed a lot to the narrative literature, epics, didactic and scientific literatures. There are number of manuscripts on novels, prayer and short stories. Language used in these manuscripts are Prakrit, Sanskrit, old Rajasthani, old Hindi and some local dialects in northern India where as in south India along with Prakrit and Sanskrit there are number of manuscripts are written in Kannada, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam languages. Manuscripts on logic and philosophy are also in good number. In different repository of Jain manuscripts, the works of Samantabhadra, Vidyānandī, Akalaṅka, Haribhadrasūri and Hemacandra are preserved. Apart from all these there are number of general literatures on which the Jain Ācāryas and monks have great contributions.

All the Śvetāmbara canons are written in Prakrit, especially known as Ardhamāgadhī. These are divided into *Aṅga*, *Upāṅga*, *Chedasūtra*, *Mūlasūtra*, *Āvaśyaka*, *Prakīrṇaka* etc. Some of the names are – *Āyāro, Sūyagaḍo, Ṭhāṇaṃ, Samavāo, Bhagavaī, Nāyādhammakahāo, Uvāsagadasāo, Aṃtagaḍadasāo, Aṇuttarovavāio, Paṇhavāgaraṇāiṃ, Vivāgasuyaṃ, Jambuddīvapaṇṇattī, Caṃdapaṇṇattī, Sūrapaṇṇattī, Uvavāia, Paṇṇavaṇā, Uttarajjhayaṇa, Dasaveyāliya, Nandī, Āvāsayaṃ* etc. Apart from Canonical literatures of the Śvetāmbaras and other canonical and philosophical literatures of the Digambaras, there are number of *Purāṇic* literatures written by the Jain Ācāryas, although the aim of writing of this kind of literature was not the same as that of Hindu scholars. Jaina *Purāṇa* covers the lives of the sixty-three great personalities. So the name of the Purāṇas are based on the names of the *Tīrthaṅkara*s or named as *Padma Purāṇa, Harivaṃśa Purāṇa , Pāṇḍva Purāṇa* etc. In these *Purāṇa*s, along with the lives of the *Tīrthaṅkara*s, *Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Pāṇḍava*s and so on are also given. Ācārya Raviṣeṇa wrote the *Padma Purāṇa* in 678 A.D. Ācārya Jinasena II composed *Harivaṃśa Purāṇa* in 8th/9th century A.D. In this work the life sketch of Neminātha the 22nd *Tīrthaṅkara* has been given. Naturally the characters like Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma have come. It is a Jain *Mahābhārata* dealt with Jainistic view where as the *Padma Purāṇa* is a Jain *Rāmāyaṇa* where Rāma is identified with sixty-three great personalities. In the 12th century, Hemacandra wrote *Triṣaṣṭi śalākā puruṣa caritra* in the pattern

of *Mahāpurāṇa*. *Purāṇa*s are not only written in Sanskrit and Prakrit, these are also written in Apabhraṃśa and in old Hindi.

Besides the *Purāṇa*s, there are enormous number of literatures on *Kāvya*, *Carita* literature, *Rāsa* literature, *Adhyātma* literature, Philosophical literature, *Kathā* literature, Didactic literature, such as, *subhāṣita*, *nīti*, *pūjā*, *stotra* etc., Scientific literatures, such as, J*yotiṣa*, *Mathematics*, *Astrology*, *Astronomy*, *Āyurveda* etc., Grammar, Drama, Lexicography, Prosody and Meter, sexology, Literature on songs and dances all have been dealt with a great extent by the Jain scholars.

Some important repositories of Jain manuscripts are in Delhi, Agra, Sonipat, Indore, Karanja, Ahemdabad (Gujarat), Patan, Arrah, Surat, Mumbai, Khamvat. In south India there are number of places in Andhra, Karnataka, Chennai and Kerala known as the Jain *Śāstrabhāṇḍāra*s, some of them are, Mudabidri, Karakal and Aliyoor etc. In the state of Rajasthan there are many repositories of Jain manuscripts, some of these centers are in Jaipur, Ajmer, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Nagaur, Sikar, Jobner, Godha temple, Alwar, Fatehpur (Shekhawati), Jain Vishva Bharati (Ladnun), Dausa, Jhunjhunu, Rajmahal, Mozamabad, Malpura, Bharatpur and in many places and Jain temples. Jain Ācāryas have enriched the Indian culture through their literary excellence. Thousands of manuscripts are still unpublished. It is difficult to imagine about its hidden treasure.

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