

History of Jainism in Karnataka

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UPSC has in recent times shown a lot of interest in the subjects and art and culture of Buddhism and Jainism as can be seen in the questions on sarvastivada and sthanakvasi in the past 3 years. In this light we want to cover some important manifestations of these religions in regional centers. And Jainism and its impact on Karnataka is one such important topic that needs to be covered and the current article is an endeavour to do the same.

In news: Recently Copper plate inscriptions dated to the 8th and 9th century CE have been discovered in and around Halebelagola in Chanrayapatna taluk of Hassan district.

Placing it in syllabus: Indian history – Jainism

Dimensions

1. Origin of Jainism
2. Patronage of Jainism by various dynasties
3. Jaina architecture in Karnataka
4. Jaina contribution to Kannada literature

Content:

Origin of Jainism:

- Jaina Dharma or **sramana dharma** is a small but very influential religious tradition in India.
- Called **Nirgantha** (without bonds) by ancient texts, it is one of the **oldest sramana (ascetic) traditions** still surviving in India.
- The community is most prominent in **Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan** and also has a good presence in **Delhi-Mathura, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Bundelkhand**

regions.

- The Rig Veda contains clear references to **Rishabhdeva, the first Tirthankara** and to Aristanemi, the twenty-second.
- The Yajur Veda mentions the names of three Tirthankaras: Rishabhdeva, Ajitanatha and Aristanemi.
- Rishabha has also been mentioned in the Bhagavata Purana.
- According to the tradition, it is believed that Mahavira (24th Tirthankara) visited Karnataka and initiated King Jivandhara of Hemanagada country of the Kuntala (Karnataka) region.
- This probably accounts for the early origins of Jainism in Karnataka, generally assigned to the 4th century BC by Jaina tradition.
- Tradition states that **Bhadrabahu and his royal disciple Chandragupta Maurya migrated to the South** along with many followers due to a famine in the north.
- The group settled at Shravana Belagola in the Mysore region, where Chandragupta undertook sallekhana (death by fasting) at the Chandragiri hill named after him.
- **Chandragupta Basadi at Shravana Belagola**, a latter day structure, is linked to this tradition, but there is no epigraphic or literary evidence to corroborate it.
- The first mention of this tradition is found in a ShravanaBelagola epigraph of the seventh century.
- "Brihatkoshha" of Harisena of 931 AD also mentions this tradition.

Patronage of Jainism by various dynasties:

Beginning from the time of Kadambas of Banavasi, until Vijayanagara period, Jainism received generous grants from Kannada monarchs.

Kadambas of Banavasi (345-525CE):

- The earliest grant from Kadambas comes from the time of

Mrigesavarman.

- The copper plate mentions the grant of an entire village for the benefits of Jain Gods (Bhagavat, Arhat and Mahajinendra).
- He also gave thirty-three Nivartanas of land (in modern Halsi in Belgaum) to Yapaniyas (Jainas).
- Kadambas have to their credit of inaugurating the tradition of grants to Jainas.

The Gangas of Talkad (350-1000 CE):

- Shripurusha gave Devanahalli grant to Jinalaya and Narasimharajapura grant to Jaina Caityalaya.
- **Prithvipati 1st Billur grant** records the gift of twelve villages on the banks of Lakshmana Tirtha to Satya Vakya Jinaalaya at Pannekadanga.
- There are many inscriptions showing huge grants made by Rachamalla IV, and his minister Chavundaraaya.

Chalukyas of Badami (6th century):

- In spite of being staunch Hindus, they extended patronage to Jainas.
- The existence of a Jaina cave by the Vaishnava cave at Badami, is the best example of tolerance of Chalukyas.
- During the period of Kirthivarma II, Kaliyamma built a Jinalaya at Annigeri.
- Sendraka Durgasakti donated lands to Sankha-Jinalaya at Puligere.
- Vijayaditya gave away the village Seribaluru near Lakshmeshwar.

The Rashtrakutas(8th century) and Chalukyas of Kalyana(12th century):

- Altekar characterizes the age of Rashtrakutas as the most flourishing period in the history of Jainism in Deccan.
- Amoghavarsha I was more a Jaina than a Hinds.

- Many of the officers of Rashtrakutas were Jainas.
- The Rattas of Saundatti were staunch supporters of Jainism.
- Altekar estimates that at least one third of total populations of Deccan during this period were Jainas.

Chalukyas of Kalyana:

- They patronized all religions.
- Taila, the founder of Chalukya dynasty was patron of the great poet Ranna(who was a Jaina).
- Satyashraya has a Jaina teacher as Rajguru.
- Attimabbe constructed many basadis.
- King gave golden Kalasha to one such basadi at Lokkigundi.
- Shantinatha, a minister of Someshwara II built Mallika Moda Shantinatha basadi at Baligrama.

The Hoysalas(10th-14th century):

- Hoysalas are traditionally connected with Jainism since origin.
- Sala himself, was a Jain.
- Ereyanga is said to have made many grants at Belagola.
- Vinayaditya II built a large number of Jaina shrines.
- According to Belur inscription, Vishnuvardhana received prasadam of God Vijaya Parshwa from Jinalaya and made provision for performance of ceremonies of Vijaya Parshwa and 24 Tirthankaras.
- His wife Shantaladevi is described as a jewel of Jainism (14).
- Many of his generals including Mariyane Dandanayaka, Punisa and Boppa were all Jains.
- Narasimha I though a Vaishnavite made grants to Shravanabelagola.
- Ballala II built Nagara Jinalaya at Dorasamudra.
- Patronage to Jainism continued in the days of Narasimha and Ramanatha.

Vijayanagara Period (1336-1646 CE):

- With establishment of Vijayanagara kingdom, emphasis was more on Hinduism and Jainism received great setback.
- Yet, Jainas received some grants.
- Harihara II patronized Jaina ministers.
- He also constructed Kuntha Jinalaya at Vijayanagara.
- Shravanabelagola inscription of 1442 mentions grants for Gomateshwara.

Jaina architecture in Karnataka:

- Shravana Belagola, Chandragiri, Indragiri, Moodabidiri, Karkala, Dharmasthala, Venur, Gerosoppa, Hadolli, Bilgi, Lakkundi are some of the important centers of Jaina monuments in Karnataka.
- The earliest references to Jaina monuments are found in **Halasi and Devagiri inscriptions** of the Kadamba period.
- According to the **Gudnapur inscription**, the Kadamba King Ravivarma built a temple, Kamajinalaya for Manmatha.
- The **monolith 60-feet high Gommateshwara statue at ShravanaBelagola** is testimony to Jaina's contribution to architecture and sculpture.
- It was built by the Ganga minister and commander Chavundaraya in honor of Lord Bahubali, the second son of the Tirthankara Rishabdeva, also known as Adinatha.
- The Badami Chalukyas built a cave temple dedicated to Adinatha.
- Another Jaina cave is at Aihole.
- The structural temples built by them include **Meguti Jinalaya at Aihole** and the Jinalaya built by Kumkuma Mahadevi at Lakshmeshwar.
- Jaina monuments of the Rashtrakuta period are found at Pattadakal, Malkhed, Lakshmeshwar, Koppal and Bankura of North Karnataka.
- The **Neminatha basadi at Malkhed**, capital of the Rashtrakutas, belongs to the ninth century AD.
- The **Jaina temple at Naregal is the biggest Rashtrakuta**

temple in Karnataka.

- It was built during the period of Krishna III by Padmabbarasi, queen of Ganga Permadi Bhutayya in 950 AD.
- Many Jinalayas were built by Kalyani Chalukyas, including **Brahma Jinalaya at Lakkundi and Sankha Jinalaya at Lakshmeshwar.**
- Chaturmukha basadi, Neminatha basadi, Vardhamana basadi and two Parsvanatha basadis at Gerusoppa are important Jaina monuments built during the Vijayanagara era.

Jaina contribution to Kannada literature:

- Jainas dominated Kannada literature till the 12th century.
- The earliest existing prose piece in old Kannada is a **Jain text Vaddaradhane** (“Worship of Elders”) of the 9th century by **Shivakotiacharya.**
- Pampa’s other notable work was Vikramarjuna Vijaya, is a Jain version of the Hindu epic, Mahabharata, with Arjuna as the hero.
- Pampa’s contemporary was Sri Ponna, the court poet of Rashtrakuta king Krishna III.
- He became famous for his Santipurana written around 950, narrating the life history of the 16th tirthankar Santinatha.
- Other classics by Sri Ponna are Jinaksharamale, a poem in praise of Jainas.
- Ranna was the court poet of Western Chalukya kings Tailapa II and Satyashraya.
- **Adikavi Pampa, Sri Ponna and Ranna,** are collectively called the **“three gems of Kannada literature”.**
- In 1105, **Nagachandra,** a poet and builder in the court of Hoysala Veera Ballala I, wrote the Jain version of Ramayana called **Ramachandra-charita purana.**
- **Janna** who was given the title Kavichakravarthi (poet laureate) in the court of Hoysala Veera Ballala II wrote **Yasodhara charita and Ananthanatha Purana** are considered

to be enduring classics.

Mould your thought:

1. Explain the contributions of Jainism to Karnataka literature and architecture.

Approach to the answer:

- Brief introduction about Jainism
- Write contributions to literature
- Write contributions to architecture
- Conclusion