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Chapter 2

An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka: From the Third Century BCE to the Sixteenth Century

1 Introduction

The fortunes of Jainism in Karnataka have always depended on the favour it enjoyed at the hands of secular rulers, be they kings or feudatories. This fact is very much in evidence when we see that Jainism reached its zenith in the twelfth century, and thereafter, declined steadily. However, royal favour or disfavour is generally not cited among the reasons which affected the status of this religion in the many different kingdoms of the region under study. While the advent of new religions and philosophical systems such as Viraśaivism and Śrīvaiṣṇavism has always been held mainly responsible for the decline of Jainism, the disinterest or the withdrawal of active patronage by the rulers has not been considered to be a major factor in this process. It is our contention that in addition to the many other factors that led to the growth and decline of Jainism in Karnataka, the bestowing and the withdrawal of political patronage should be considered among the most important. This can be established by a careful interpretation of available historical data, including inscriptional material.

2 Sources and Survey of Literature

Primary sources for reconstructing the history of Jainism in Karnataka are the published volumes of inscriptions such as *Epigraphia Carnatica*,¹ and inscriptions of individual districts. Many of these inscriptions were first published in such journals as *Indian Antiquary*² and in the annual reports on Indian Epigraphy and south Indian Epigraphy and the gazetteers of the districts of Karnataka.

1 Between 1886 and 1905 Benjamin Lewis Rice published twelve volumes on the epigraphy of Old Mysore region, followed by a revised edition by R. Narasimhachar in 1923, and a third revised edition by P.B. Gopal between 1972 and 1984.

2 The journal *The Indian Antiquary* was published between 1872 and 1933, highlighting themes of Indian archaeology, history, philosophy, religion, literature, etc.; successor journals are the *New Indian Antiquary* published from 1938 to 1947 and *Indian Antiquary* from 1964 to 1971.

The first and exhaustive history of Jainism in Karnataka is the classic *Medieval Jainism* by B.A. Saletore (1938).³ Saletore dealt with Jainism in Vijayanagar, supporting his description with extensive lithic records. P.B. Desai's *Jainism in South India and Some Jaina Epigraphs* (1957) is an equally revered study where Karnataka is the subject of an extended chapter.⁴ S.R. Sharma's *Jainism and Karnataka Culture* (1940) has a valuable "Historical Survey" which is a comprehensive description of Jainism under several major dynastic rulers of Karnataka.⁵ S.P. Chavan's *Jainism in Southern Karnataka (up to AD 1565)* (2005) stresses the role played by the major Jaina centres of Karnataka such as Shravanabelgola (Śravaṇabelgola), Mudabidri (Mūdabidri), etc., and by the *bhaṭṭārakas* of these centres in the history of Jainism in this area.⁶ Ram Bhushan Prasad Singh's *Jainism in Early Mediaeval Karnataka (c. AD 500–1200)* (1975) focuses on the monastic and ritualistic aspects of the Jaina faith.⁷

Among basic works on the dynastic rulers of Karnataka, the following must be listed: *The Kadamba Kula* (1931) of G.M. Moraes,⁸ *The Rashtrakutas and their Times* (1934) of A.S. Altekar,⁹ *The Gangas of Talakad* (1936) of M.V. Krishna Rao,¹⁰ *Karnatakada Arasumanethanagalu* (1946) of N. Lakshminarayana Rao and R.S. Panchamukhi,¹¹ and *The Chalukyas of Badami* (1978) of M.S. Nagaraja Rao.¹² Further noteworthy publications are: B.R. Gopal, *The Chalukyas of Kalyan and the Kalachuris* (1981),¹³ B.R. Gopal (ed.), *The Rashtrakutas of Malkhed* (1994),¹⁴ William Coelho, *The Hoysala Vamsa* (1950),¹⁵ B. Sheikh Ali (ed.), *The Hoysala Dynasty* (1972),¹⁶ B.A. Saletore, *Ancient Karnataka* (vol. 1),¹⁷ B. Shaikh Ali, *History of the Western Gangas* (1976),¹⁸ J. Duncan M. Derretts,

3 Bhasker Anand Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism with Special Reference to the Vijayanagar Empire* (Bombay: Karnataka Publishing House, 1938).

4 P.B. Desai, *Jainism in South India and Some Jaina Epigraphs* (Solapur: Jaina Samskruti Samrakshaka Sangha, Sholapur, 1957).

5 S.R. Sharma, *Jainism and Karnataka Culture* (Dharwar: Karnataka Printing Works, 1940).

6 Sundanda P. Chavan, *Jainism in Southern Karnataka (up to AD 1565)* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2005).

7 For a brief survey of these works, see Ram Bhushan Prasad Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka (C. A.D. 500–1200)* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975): 3–4.

8 George M. Moraes, *The Kadamba Kula* (Bombay: B.X. Furtado & Sons, 1931).

9 Anant Sadashiv Altekar, *Rashtrakutas and their Times* (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1967).

10 Krishna Rao, *The Gangas of Talakad* (Calcutta: B.G. Paul & Co., 1936).

11 Lakshminarayana Rao and R.S. Panchamukhi, *Karnatakada Arasumanethanagalu* (Dharwar: Karnataka Research Office, 1946).

12 Nagaraja Rao, *The Chalukyas of Badami* (Bangalore: Mythic Society, 1978).

13 B.R. Gopal, *The Chalukyas of Kalyan and the Kalachuris* (Dharwad: Prasārāṅga, Karnatak University, 1981).

14 B.R. Gopal, ed., *The Rashtrakutas of Malkhad. Studies in their History and Culture* (Mysore: Geetha Book House, 1994).

15 William Coelho, *The Hoysala Vamsa* (Bombay: Indian Historical Research Institute, 1950).

16 Sheik B. Ali, ed. *The Hoysala Dynasty* (Prasaranga: University of Mysore, 1972).

17 Bhasker Anand Saletore, *Ancient Karnataka*, vol. 1 (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1936).

18 Sheik B. Ali, *History of the Western Gangas* (Prasaranga: University of Mysore, 1976).

The Hoysalas (1957),¹⁹ B.A. Saletore, *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagara Empire (AD 1346–AD 1646)* (vol. 1 and 2, both 1934),²⁰ K.V. Ramesh, *A History of South Kanara* (1970),²¹ P. Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuluva History and Culture* (1975),²² Hampa Nagarajaiah, *A History of the Rastrakutas of Malkhed and Jainism* (2000)²³ and *The Later Gangas: Mandali Thousand* (1999).²⁴

Besides these, there are many books and research articles in the Kannada language, which provide valuable data, frequently drawing upon inscriptional texts and literary sources. Prominent among Kannada writers are: A.N. Upadya, K.G. Kundanagar, Mirji Anaraya, M. Govinda Pai, M. Chidananda Murthy, G.S. Gai, T.G. Kalghatagi, S. Settar, M.M. Kalburgi, Hampa Nagarajaiah, B.S. Sannaiah, Kamala Hampana, G. Brahmappa, P.N. Narasimha Murthy, Shantinath Dibbada, and S.D. Shetty.

Dibbada in his survey of writings on Jainism published in Kannada identifies three generations of researchers beginning with K.G. Kundanagar and Rice, and ending with M.G. Manjunath, S.D. Shetty and others.²⁵ The early masters include B.L. Rice, A. Shantirajashastry, D.L. Narasimhachar and K.S. Dharanendrayya. The *Epigraphia Carnatica* Volumes, especially the volume on Shravanabelgola (*Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2) of Rice are important sources of lithic records for a reconstruction of Jaina history in Karnataka.²⁶

Kundanagar edited Pampa's *Ādipurāṇa*, the classic Kannada Jaina literary text.²⁷ R.C. Hiremath, Kamala Hampana, Sheshagiri, B.S. Sannaiah, B.B. Mahishavadi, and Bhanumathi have edited various Jaina literary works. Each of these edited texts is prefaced with a valuable introduction to the poet and his times, and invariably contains a discussion on different positions regarding the date, authorship and sources of the text. Among the next generation of researchers, the following are noteworthy: T.G. Kalghatgi, S. Shettar, Hampa Nagarajaiah, M.M. Kalburgi and M. Chidananda Murthy. T.G. Kalghatgi headed the Jainology department of the University of Mysore, and inspired several of his students to take up Jaina research. Hampa Nagarajaiah is

19 J. Duncan M. Derrett, *The Hoysalas: A Medieval Indian Royal Family* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1957).

20 Bhasker Anand Saletore, *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagar Empire (AD 1346–AD 1646)*, vol. 1, 2 (Madras: B.G. Paul and Co., 1934).

21 K.V. Ramesh, *A History of South Kanara* (Dharwar: Karnataka University, 1970).

22 P. Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuluva History and Culture* (Manipal: Manipal Power Press, 1975).

23 Hampa Nagarajaiah, *A History of Rastrakuta of Malkhed and Jainism* (Bangalore: Ankita Pustaka, 2000).

24 Hampa Nagarajaiah, *The Later Gangas: Mandali Thousand* (Bangalore: Ankita Pustaka, 1999).

25 For a survey of researchers and their writings in Kannada, see Shantinatha Dibbada, *Agamika* (Gulbarga: Maruga Prakashana, 2005): 107–14.

26 Benjamin Lewis Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2, *Shravanabelgola* (Bangalore: Mysore Government Press, 1889).

27 K.G. Kundanagar and A.P. Chaugule, eds. *Adipurana by Pampa (902–941/42 A.D.) (Pampa mahaakavi virachita aadipuraaNam)* (Belagaum: A.A. Chaugule, 1953).

recognised for his research on the inscriptions of Humcha (Hombuja), Kopana (Kopana, modern Koppala) and Lokkigundi (Lokkigundi, modern Lakkundi), and for his work on Jaina icons, sculpture and *niṣidhi* stones.²⁸

Dibbada also lists several contemporary researchers in Jaina studies, including: N.S. Taranath, B.V. Shirur, M.G. Manjunath, Shivananda Gali and S.D. Shetty. N.S. Taranath's contribution to studies on the history of Karnataka literature are of importance in establishing the chronology of Jaina writers, their social and political milieu, and their royal patrons. M.G. Manjunath's studies on the Gangadhara inscription is noteworthy, because it contests the hitherto established historical priority of the Halmidi inscription. S.D. Shetty is recognised for his major work on the history of Jainism in the coastal districts of Karnataka. Several important writings in Kannada deal with the various royal households of Karnataka. These are significant for a study of Jainism, because it was under the tutelage of these rulers, many of whom were petty kings, and therefore, not adequately versed in mainstream historical research, that Jainism saw its several important resurgences. R.S. Panchamukhi and N. Lakshminarayana Rao's *Royal Households of Karnataka* (1946) is an important book in this category.²⁹

3 Karnataka: Geographical Boundaries

The present State of Karnataka in the Indian Union occupies a geographic area between 11° 30' N and 18° 45' N, and 74° 12' E and 78° 30' E. It is bounded by the State of Maharashtra in the north and northeast, by the State of Andhra Pradesh in the east, by Tamil Nadu in the south and southeast, by Kerala in the southwest, and by the Arabian Sea in the west.

The exact area occupied in ancient times by the Kannada-speaking population is not very clear, but there are indications that it spread from Aurangabad (Aurangābād) in the north (today in Maharashtra) to the Nilgiris in the south and extended up to Anantapur (Anantapuram) and Kurnool (Karnūlu) in the east in modern Andhra Pradesh.³⁰ When the country became independent in 1947, many areas of the Kannada region were parts of the Madras and Bombay Presidencies, and of the Hyderabad princely State. The present-day State of Karnataka was formed under the linguistic reorganisation of states of 1956. To the existing princely State of Mysore were now

²⁸ Chidananda Murthy's major work on a cultural study of Karnataka inscriptions is of basic importance for an understanding of all inscriptional material of Karnataka; see Chidananda Murthy, *Kannada Sasanagala Samskr̥tika Adhyayana 450 A.D.–1150 A.D.* (Bangalore: Sapna Book House, Bangalore, 2002).

²⁹ R.S. Panchamukhi and N. Lakshminarayana Rao, *Royal Households of Karnataka* (Dharwar: Karnataka Research Office, 1946).

³⁰ See Aravind Malagatti, ed., *Kannada Vishaya Vishwakosha – Karnataka* (Mysore: University of Mysore Kuvempu Institute of Kannada Studies, 2005): 455.

added the districts of Bellary, South Kanara and parts of Coimbatore from the State of Madras; Dharwar, North Kanara, Belgaum and Bijapur from the State of Bombay; Gulbarga, Raichur and Bidar from Hyderabad; and Coorg. This was then called the State of Mysore, and renamed Karnataka in 1973. Karnataka has an area of 1,191,773 square kilometres, a population of 61,095,297 according to the 2011 census, and 27 districts.³¹

Historically, just as the Kannada-speaking population was spread over areas outside present day Karnataka, kings and rulers who are generally acknowledged as the Kannada kings ruled kingdoms which spread over areas which now fall outside Karnataka, mainly in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The empire of Vijayanagara, in fact, covered the entire peninsula of South India, which includes the whole of the present-day States of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The Rāṣṭrakūṭa empire extended up to the east coast and covered the entire peninsula up to Tanjavur (Tanjore, Tañcāvūr)—thus including large portions of present-day Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. However, in this chapter, the history of Jainism as it existed in areas represented by the present-day Karnataka alone is considered.

4 Advent of Jainism into Karnataka

It is generally considered that Jainism entered Karnataka with Bhadrabāhu, the last *śrutakevali*, and his royal disciple Candragupta Maurya in the fourth century BCE.³² The primary basis of this assertion is the tradition prevalent among the Jains of Karnataka, the corroborating evidence being lithic and literary records. Bhadrabāhu, after predicting a twelve-year-long famine in the north, led a migration of the Jaina community (*saṅgha*) to the south, accompanied by his royal disciple Candragupta Maurya. When, on his orders, the *saṅgha* proceeded further, Bhadrabāhu remained in Shravanabelgola, where he died in BCE 297 (Plate 2.1). Candragupta survived Bhadrabāhu by another twelve years.³³

The most complete discussion of the major lithic records supportive of this view is contained in the “Introduction” of R. Narasimhachar to *The Inscriptions of Sravanabelagola* (1923).³⁴ In a later edition (1973) of these inscriptions, *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2, *Sravanabelagola*,³⁵ this discussion was reviewed and summarised. Here, the

³¹ See Government of India. “Karnataka Population Census 2011, Karnataka Religion, Caste Data – Census 2011,” <https://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/karnataka.html> [accessed 05.10.2023], and Malagatti, ed., *Kannada Vishaya Vishwakosha – Karnataka*: 457.

³² A *śrutakevali* is an ascetic who has completed the study of the Jaina sacred texts, the *Āgamas*.

³³ Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 3.

³⁴ R. Narasimhachar, *The Inscriptions of Sravanabelagola – Epigraphia Carnatica II* (Bangalore: Mysore Archaeological Series, 1923).

³⁵ B.R. Gopal, ed., *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Mysore: Institute of Kannada Studies University of Mysore, 1973).



Plate 2.1: Outside view of the cave on Candragiri at Shravanabelgola, in which Bhadrabāhu is believed to have reached enlightenment and died.

stand taken by Narasimhachar is upheld: Inscription No. 1 on the smaller hill at Shravanabelgola, called Cikkabeṭṭa, states that:

[...] after the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvira there lived several Jaina preceptors like Gautama Gaṇadhara of whom Bhadrabāhusvāmī, when at Ujjaini, foretold that the country would pass through a calamity for twelve years, as a consequence of which the entire *saṃgha* migrated from the north to the south and reached a country consisting of hundreds of *janapadas* and filled with people happy and wealthy with gold, grain, herds of buffaloes and cows and goats and sheep. Here, a preceptor called Prabhāchandra, perceiving that his end was nearing, with a desire to attain *sa-mādhī* left the *saṃgha* in its entirety exceptive for only one disciple and accomplished *sa-mādhī* in the vast expanse of the cold rocks of this Katavapra-giri.³⁶

Narasimhachar, after Rice, had identified Bhadrabāhu as Śrutakevali Bhadrabāhu, and Prabhacandra as Candragupta, the Mauryan emperor.³⁷ This rests on Rice's inference that Candragupta had changed his name to Prabhacandra, following the "usual

³⁶ Gopal, ed., *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2: Ixxiv.

³⁷ Gopal, ed., *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2: Ixxv. Alternatively, Prabhacandra has also been spelled Prabhācandra.

custom” of a Jaina entering on a religious life.³⁸ Moreover, the Jaina literary tradition says that the disciple who was with Bhadrabāhu was Candragupta, and later lithic records speak of Śrutakevali Bhadrabāhu and his disciple Candragupta (Plate 2.2).³⁹ Fleet contested this, suggesting that this Bhadrabāhu was Bhadrabāhu II who died in BCE 30 to 31, and Candragupta was Guptigupta, a disciple of Bhadrabāhu II.⁴⁰ Gopal however, concludes “[...] this Bhadrabāhu was the *Śrutakēvali* and this is more acceptable,” though he is of the opinion that:



Plate 2.2: South of the Antarāla Pārśvanātha Basadi on Candragiri at Shravanbelgola is the rock inscription narrating the story of Candragupta’s voyage.

It is immaterial who this Bhadrabāhu is, whether a *Śrutakēvali*, an *ashṭāṅga-śrutadhara* or an *āchārāṅga-śrutadhara*. All these arguments are based on the *paṭṭavalis* of both the Digambara and the Śvētāmbara sects that came into existence several centuries later.⁴¹

³⁸ Benjamin Lewis Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica* 1: 6–7; as quoted by Gopal, ed., *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2: Ixxiv.

³⁹ Gopal, ed., *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2: Ixxxiv–Ixxxv.

⁴⁰ Gopal, ed., *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2: Ixxiv. This has also been suggested on the basis of a textual emendation by Hiralal Jain (*Jaina Silalekha Samgraha* [Hindi], vol. 1: 63–64 as quoted in Gopal, ed., *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2: Ixxv).

⁴¹ Gopal, ed., *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2: Ixxvi.

In a discussion of the various opinions put forward on this question, S.D. Shetty has accepted the stand of M. Govinda Pai that it was Aśoka's grandson Samprati Candragupta who came to Shravanabelgola in a period which corresponds to the end of the third century BCE and the beginning of the second century BCE.⁴² Chidananda Murthy also maintains that, in the absence of strong evidence to the contrary, this opinion may be accepted.⁴³

P.B. Desai has suggested that Jainism existed in the southern parts of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu even before the advent of Bhadrabāhu. In fact, he argues that Bhadrabāhu decided to go to Shravanabelgola because he was "confident of the favourable nature of reception he was going to have in the land of his destination."⁴⁴ Further, since Jainism was prevalent in Sri Lanka as early as the fourth century BCE, it must have reached this island by a land route, which means there must have been Jainas in South India before the fourth century BCE. Desai also speaks of Mahāvīra himself establishing his religion in the Kalinga country which is present-day Orissa, stating, "Jainism had entrenched itself in the Āndhra country by the period of the 4th century B.C." He adds: "there are reasons to believe that it was not through Bhadrabāhu and his disciples alone that Jainism spread to all parts of South India."⁴⁵

Asim Kumar Chatterjee emphatically refuses to accept the Bhadrabāhu-Candragupta theory. According to Chatterjee, we have to take it for granted that Jainism was more or less firmly established in the southernmost corners of the peninsula by the fourth century BCE because two Pali texts, the *Mahāvamsā* (fifth century CE) and the *Dīpavamsā* (fourth century CE), testify to the presence of Jainas in Sri Lanka in the pre-Mauryan period. These texts indirectly show that Jainism had reached Tamil Nadu before the end of the fourth century BCE. In an emphatic assertion, Chatterjee not only discounts the Bhadrabāhu-Candragupta theory, he even suggests strongly that Jainism was popularised in Karnataka in the second century CE by Digambara Jainas from North India:

In the earliest extant literature of the Tamils we have enough indications to show that Jainism was popular in quite early times in the regions south of the Kaveri (Kāverī) river. It should here be emphasised that the Jaina monks of Bengal and Orissa were responsible for the early propagation of Jainism in Tamil Nadu and not those of Karnataka, as is usually believed. The evidence of the Sri Lankan texts and those of the Tamil Sangam poetry indicate that Jainism definitely reached the southern Dravidian areas in the pre-Mauryan period and certainly before its introduction in what is now the state of modern Karnataka. I have already observed that there is nothing to prove that the first Mauryan emperor became a Jaina *sādhu* before his death, and consequently the tradition regarding the migration of the Jainas under Bhadrabāhu and Candragupta, recorded in the Digambara works, cannot be accepted in the present state of our knowl-

42 S.D. Shetty, *Tulu Nadina Jaina Dharma: Ondu Samskr̥tika Adhyayana* (Udupi: Rastrakavi Govinda Pai Samsodhana Kendra, 2002): 29.

43 Murthy, *Kannada Sasanagala Samskr̥tika Adhyayana*: 73–79.

44 Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 2.

45 Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 3.

edge. Even if we accept the veracity of the Digambara tradition, we cannot say that the first group of the Jaina *sādhus* of Tamil Nadu and Kerala came from Karnataka. It appears exceedingly probable, that the Digambara Jains of the second century AD from north India popularised Jainism in Karnataka.⁴⁶

Chatterjee also adduces the following reasons in favour of his view: “the earliest author that refers to Candragupta’s conversion to Jainism is Yativṛṣabha, the author of the *Tiloyapaṇṇati* (early seventh century), who lived nearly 1000 years after Candragupta Maurya. Śravaṇa Beḷgoḷa, which according to the tradition was the place of Candragupta’s death, has not produced any inscription, which can be dated before AD 600.”⁴⁷

A considerably more emphatic rebuttal of the Bhadrabāhu-Candragupta theory is that of Ram Bhushan Prasad Singh. He says:

[there is] no early literary and inscriptional evidence [...] to support the Bhadrabāhu-Candragupta Jaina tradition; It appears first in a Śravaṇa-Beḷgoḷa epigraph of the 7th century. The *Bṛhatkathākośa* of Hariṣeṇa, which was composed in c. A.D. 931, is the next important source of our information regarding this Jaina tradition. Narsimhachar, who has examined this tradition in great detail in his revised edition of Śravaṇa-Beḷgoḷa epigraphs, concludes that the story of Bhadrabāhu-Candragupta migration has some basis to stand.⁴⁸

Singh states categorically that “in the absence of any contemporary and corroborative evidence, it is difficult to think of the introduction of Jainism in Mysore in the 4th century B.C.” and adds: “The disinclination among scholars to question the veracity of the above Jaina tradition seems to have sprung from their enthusiasm to push back the antiquity of Jainism in Mysore.”⁴⁹

In conclusion, we may note that wherever the Bhadrabāhu-Candragupta tradition has been accepted, as in Gopal, the reasons given have been, for the greater part, “beliefs widely current in the Jaina traditional accounts and literature,” a “belief [... which ...] had taken deep roots.”⁵⁰ B.R. Gopal, while stating that “everyone agrees that this [Shravanabelgola] epigraph confirms the traditional statement made in Jaina literature,” nonetheless records the dissenting interpretation of Fleet and Luders.⁵¹ Gopal also admits that the lithic records on which the acceptance of this tradition is based are of a considerably later period, as are the *paṭṭavaḷis* of Digambara and Śvetāmbara sects, which identify Bhadrabāhu variously as a *śrutakevali*, an *aṣṭaṅga śrutadhara*,

46 Asim Kumar Chatterjee, *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, vol. 1, (A. D. 1000–1600), 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publ, 2000): 104–5.

47 Chatterjee, *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, vol. 1: 117.

48 Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 5.

49 Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 5.

50 Gopal, ed., *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2: Ixxiv.

51 Gopal, ed., *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2: Ixxiv.

or *āchārāṅga śrutadhara*.⁵² S.R. Sharma says that the “plausibility” of the Bhadrabāhu-Candragupta tradition “may be accepted without any more ado.”⁵³ He quotes Vincent Smith, whose approval of the veracity of this tradition is couched in words such as, “the main facts as affirmed by tradition,” “the Jaina tradition holds the field, and no alternative account exists.”⁵⁴ Thus, the Bhadrabāhu-Candragupta tradition, though widely accepted, is based on beliefs, traditions, and records of significantly later origin.

5 Jaina History: The Ascent and Descent of Jainism

After this brief description of the arrival of Jainism in the area of Karnataka, the next sections will discuss the firm establishment of the religion and its burgeoning in the region. This will be followed by a description of the decline of Jainism in Karnataka.

5.1 Jainism in Karnataka up to 300 CE

It is hard to come by any evidence of the existence or practice of Jainism in Karnataka during the Mauryan period (321–185 BCE). The Mauryas ruled Kannada Nadu, the Kannada land, for a period of four centuries, from the first half of the third century BCE. Before this period, the Nandas (c. 345–322 BCE) ruled Karnataka—as attested by an inscription of the thirteenth century, which says that Kuntala, which comprised the western Deccan and northern Mysore, was a part of the Nanda and Mauryan empires.⁵⁵ The edicts of the Mauryan ruler Aśoka (BCE 273–233) found in Raichur and Chitradurga districts suggest that at least some portions of Karnataka must have been included in the Nanda domain. M.D. Vasantharaj has suggested that Candragupta (of the Bhadrabāhu-Candragupta tradition) belonged to the Nanda family and that he came to Karnataka in the fourth century BCE.⁵⁶ However, this view has been largely ignored by most of the writers who take a stand on the question. Candragupta Maurya (322–299 BCE) usurped the throne from the Nandas, thus bringing the Nanda empire, including Karnataka, under Mauryan control.⁵⁷ Mauryan rule in Karnataka is referred to in inscriptions such as the edicts of King Aśoka found in Koppala (Koppala, ancient

⁵² Gopal, ed., *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2: Ixxiv–Ixxvi.

⁵³ Sharma, *Jainism and Karnataka Culture*: 5–6.

⁵⁴ Sharma, *Jainism and Karnataka Culture*: 6.

⁵⁵ Sreenivasa H.V. Murthy and R. Ramakrishnan, *A History of Karnataka* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company, 1978): 23.

⁵⁶ M.D. Vasantharaj, *Sanmathi Srivihara* (Mysore: Jaihind Press, 1971): 182.

⁵⁷ This Candragupta Maurya is the one who is identified with the disciple of Bhadrabāhu, who, as many scholars accept, brought Jainism to Karnataka.

Kopaṇa), Maski and Gavimata (Gavimath) in the Raichur district, and in Brahmagiri (Brahmagiri) and Siddapura (Śiddhāpura) and Jatinga Rameshvara (Jaṭiṅga Rāmeśvara) in the Chitradurga district.⁵⁸ King Aśoka consolidated his power in South India with the battle of Kalinga—in reaction to the horrors of which he became a Buddhist.

Aśoka's edicts are exhortations to his subjects to be kind, courteous and truthful. Later Buddhist narratives indicate that Banavāsi and the regions around Mysore were centres of importance in the Buddhist world of the time.⁵⁹ After Aśoka, a branch of the Mauryan family related to the household of the emperors of Pataliputra (Pāṭaliputra) continued to rule a vast area in northern Karnataka until they were subdued by Cālukya Pulakeśin II. The Mauryans survived as dispersed feudatories until about the ninth century CE, but no names or other vestiges of their rule have survived.⁶⁰

After the Mauryan empire fell, the Śātavāhanas ruled over the Deccan for four and a half centuries from 230 BCE (c. 230 BCE–230 CE).⁶¹ The Śātavāhanas were zealous patrons of Vedic religion, and Śātakarṇi II even celebrated Aśvamedha and Rājasūya yāgas or yajñas.⁶² Buddhism was patronised and it reached great heights during their rule.⁶³ It has been claimed that the “rulers of this dynasty practised complete religious toleration.”⁶⁴ However, Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi's measures to prevent pollution resulting from a mixing of the castes among the followers of the Ārya Dharma, the northern Āryan people, included putting many foreigners to the sword and driving them out of the country. Some rulers of the dynasty followed Buddhism, and they made many and generous grants to Buddhist shrines.⁶⁵ However, Desai avers that “Jainism appears to have wielded considerable influence over the rulers and the territories of the Śātavāhana Dynasty,” and points out that the Śātavāhana capital, Pratishthanapura (Pratiṣṭhānapura, modern Paithan) was a Jaina centre, that some kings seem to have believed in Jaina teaching and supported that religion, and says that we know this on the basis of later traditions and Jaina legends.⁶⁶ The first Śātavāhana king, Hāla or Simuka, became a Jaina convert and built Jaina temples in Pratishthana-

58 Karnataka, here, and in contexts occurring before the events of the linguistic re-organisation of states, refers to Kannada Nadu—that is, the broad area occupied by Kannada-speaking people from the beginning of history.

59 B.A. Saletore and Desai Pandurangarao, *Kannada Nadina Caritre: Bhaga I* (Bangalore: Kannada Sahitya Parishat, 1978): 14.

60 Saletore and Pandurangarao, *Kannada Nadina Caritre: Bhaga I*: 14.

61 K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966): 92.

62 These are Vedic rituals or offerings. The Aśvamedha is the offering of a horse sacrifice and the Rājasūya yāga is a consecration ritual for a king.

63 Murthy and Ramakrishnan, *A History of Karnataka*: 25–29.

64 Murthy and Ramakrishnan, *A History of Karnataka*: 36.

65 Murthy and Ramakrishnan, *A History of Karnataka*: 36.

66 Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 101.

pura.⁶⁷ Fifty-two noble warriors in his court built Jaina temples, each named in its founder's honour. At the instance of a Sātavāhana king, the observance of the Paryūṣaṇa festival was shifted to a different day. Thus, by this point, Jainism had taken firm roots in the Sātavāhana capital and kingdom. Desai places all these events broadly in the two centuries before the common era.⁶⁸ In addition, the Jaina preceptors Kuṇḍa-kuṇḍācārya (first century BCE), Umāsvāti (first century BCE) and Samantabhadra (early second century CE) were Kannadigas, people from Karnataka, who composed Jaina religious works in Sanskrit and Prakrit.⁶⁹ This was during the Sātavāhana period.

5.2 The Period of Ascendancy up to 1336 CE

With the rise of the two contemporary dynasties in Karnataka—the Kadambas of Banavāsi and Gaṅgās of Talakāḍ—Jainism gained momentum in Karnataka. The Kadambas, though of Brahmanical origin, gave support to Jainism by adopting a policy of religious tolerance, while the Gaṅgā dynasty's origin is claimed to be Jaina by itself. The entire area of Karnataka was thus able to come under the influence of the Jaina religion and its activities. The favourable policies adopted by these two royal families were continued by the Cālukyas, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Maḷkhēḍ and the Hoysaḷas of Dvārasamudra, who in turn influenced their feudatory families to adopt similar principles during this period. In fact, we find that most of the royal family feudatories Jaina by origin.⁷⁰ Hence, the heyday of Jainism began in Karnataka.

5.2.1 The Kadambas

Through the patronage Jainas received from the non-Jaina Kadambas of Banavāsi (c. CE 350–550), Palashika (Palāśikā, modern Halsi) became a prominent Jaina centre. King Mṛgēśvarma (CE 470–488) made the earliest grant to Jainism, an entire village for the benefit of the Jaina deities and saints.⁷¹ According to the copper plate charter, which also makes a distinction between *śvetapaṭa* (those who dress in white) and *nir-grantha* or *nigaṇṭha* (Jaina ascetic) *saṅghas*, he also gave grants of land to the Yāpanīya sect, enjoining their subjects to feed them for four months during the rainy season. Ravivarmā, Bhanuvarmā (ca. CE 500) and Harivarmā (CE 538–550) also made

⁶⁷ Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 101.

⁶⁸ Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 101–2.

⁶⁹ Shetty, *Tulu Nadina Jaina Dharma*: 29.

⁷⁰ These are the feudatories of the time: Āḷupas of South Kanara, Śāntaras, Raṭṭas of Saundatti, Later Gaṅgās, Maṇḍali 1000, Koṅgāḷvas, Caḡāḷvas and Bilagi chiefs.

⁷¹ Murthy and Ramakrishnan, *A History of Karnataka*: 48.

land grants for the ablution of the Jinas—the perpetual anointing of Jaina images with ghee—during the annual eight-day festival in the *arhat* temple constructed by King Mṛgēśvarma, and for the feeding of the Jaina monks.⁷² The Kadambas, although they were Vedic *brāhmaṇs*, treated both Hindus and Jainas equally and without any discrimination. There were many Jainas working under them as ministers and commanders. As a result of their patronage, Jainism flourished throughout the Kadamba kingdom.

5.2.2 The Gaṅgās of Talakāḍ

The Gaṅgās of Talakāḍ,⁷³ who rose to power with the help of the Jaina ascetic Simhanandi at around the time that the Kadambas flourished, ruled over the southern parts of Karnataka. Śivamāra II became a Jaina and their realm of Gangavāḍi embraced Jainism.⁷⁴ Though not all the Gaṅgās were Jainas and many were Vaiṣṇavas, under them Jainism reached its golden age.⁷⁵ The teachings of Jainism appealed to the merchant classes, the Bāṇajigas, and with their support Jaina teachers managed to alleviate the economic distress of those who accepted Jainism.⁷⁶ Once the merchant class became Jainas, the Jaina teachers, or *ācāryas*, began to gain royal patronage. This was in accordance with Jaina principles, particularly that of *ahiṃsā* (non-violence). Normally, the Jainas at that time felt the profession of agriculture injurious to living beings on earth, whereas the profession of trade was not so.

Gaṅgā rulers made munificent grants in support of Jainism. Kongaṇivarmā (CE 340–400) built a *basadi* and Avinīta (CE 520–540) made a grant to a *basadi*. Durvinīta (CE 540–600) and Mokkara or Muṣkara, also known as Kantivinīta (CE 655–660), built *basadis* and Śripuruṣa (CE 726–788) made many grants to the Jainas, including one for the renovation of a *basadi*. Śivamāra I (CE 679–726) built a *basadi* at Shravanabelgola. Śivamāra II (CE 788–812) and others were men of great piety. Rācamalla built *basadis* and the Jaina cave temples and granted twelve villages for the benefit of a *basadi*. Nītimārga I (CE 853–869), a devout Jaina, died by *sallekhanā*.⁷⁷ Bhūtuga II (CE 937–960) popularised Jainism and he and his wife made grants for the construction of a *basadi*. The Kudlur inscriptions (CE 962) describe Bhūtuga as a great Jaina philosopher who defeated the Buddhists in a disputation. The same inscription mentions

72 Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 110. *Arhat* is an alternative term for Jina.

73 The sovereignty of the Early Gaṅgās of Talakāḍ (Western Gangas) lasted from about the fourth century to the sixth century CE and the Later Gaṅgās from the sixth till about the eleventh century.

74 Ali, *History of the Western Gangas*: 309.

75 Ali, *History of the Western Gangas*: 309.

76 Ali, *History of the Western Gangas*: 323–24.

77 The term *sallekhanā* refers to the Jaina religious practice of fasting to death under strict religious supervision.



Plate 2.3: Minister Cāvunḍarāya, the famous Gaṅga minister of Rācamalla IV, had the Cāvunḍarāya Basadi erected on Candragiri at Shravanabelgola.

Mārasimha II (CE 961–974) as a great supporter of Jainism, a maintainer of the Jaina doctrines and a builder of *basadis* and *mānastambhas*. He also performed *sallekhanā*. Rācamalla IV (CE 974–986), the patron of his minister Cāvunḍarāya (CE 940–989), made munificent grants to Jainism. Cāvunḍarāya erected the monolith of Gommaṭeśvara at Shravanabelgola, installed the Brahmadeva pillar on Viṇḍhyagiri and built the

Cāvuṇḍarāya Basadi at Shravanabelgola (Plate 2.3).⁷⁸ The ladies of the palace also promoted Jainism. Suggiabbarasi built *basadis* and made grants to Jaina ascetics. The Bāṇajigas and the Seṭṭis, Jaina merchants, also gave liberal donations to the Jaina cause.

During the Gaṅgā period, the neo-converts to Jainism retained their Hindu castes and rituals as a sign of social status. Animal sacrifice was gradually abandoned, and *syādvāda*'s four gifts of benevolence were practised.⁷⁹ Jainism prospered because the Gaṅgā rulers were Jains. Society had leaned towards the royal religion. The salient feature of Gaṅgā society was the mutual understanding and cooperation between the Hindus and the Jaina sections. Many of the Brahmanical scholars were educated by Jaina *gurus*. Similarly, Jains were educated by *brāhmaṇ* teachers.

5.2.3 The Cālukyas of Bādāmi

Although the Cālukyas of Bādāmi (CE 540–753) were Hindus, they extended their patronage to Jainism. They built the Jaina cave temple at Badami (Bādāmi) and the *basadi* at Aihole (Aīhoḷe). During the period of Kirtivarman II (CE 745) Kaliyamma built a *basadi* at Annigeri (Aṇṇigeri); Sendraha, a vassal of Pulakeśin II (CE 609–642), made a grant of land to a *basadi* at Puligere (modern Lakṣmeśvara). Vijayāditya (CE 696–733) made a grant of land and a village for worship at the Śāṅkha Jinālaya. Vikramāditya II (CE 733–746) also gifted land for worship at Raktapura (modern Paṭṭadakal). Jaina scholars such as Jaṭasimhanandi, Śrīvardhadēva, Kaviparameṣṭrī and Ravikīrti were based at court. Ravikīrti, who composed the inscription at Aihole and built the Meguḍi Jinālaya (Plate 2.4), was known as *sandivigrahi*.⁸⁰ The Cālukya emperors were tolerant of all religions. Just how far this tolerance went can be highlighted through the following family constellation. The emperor Vijayāditya was a *parama bhāgavatha* (a devout worshipper of Viṣṇu) whereas his sister Kuṅkumadevī was a devout worshipper of the Jinas. She had been married to the Āḷupa King Chitravāhana who was a devout worshipper of Śiva.

5.2.4 The Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa

The Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa (CE 973–1156 and CE 1183–1200) patronised Jainism along with other religions. Taila, also known as Tailapa, the founder of the Kalyāṇa dynasty, was the patron of the poet Ranna. Satyāśraya's *rājguru* (royal preceptor) Vimalacandra Paṇḍitadeva taught him the tenets of Jainism. It was during this period that Atti-

⁷⁸ Ali, *History of the Western Gangas*: 324–25.

⁷⁹ Ali, *History of the Western Gangas*: 314–15, 326–29. *Syādvāda* is the doctrine in Jain metaphysics stating that all judgments are conditional.

⁸⁰ Translated, this means foreign minister and minister for war and peace.

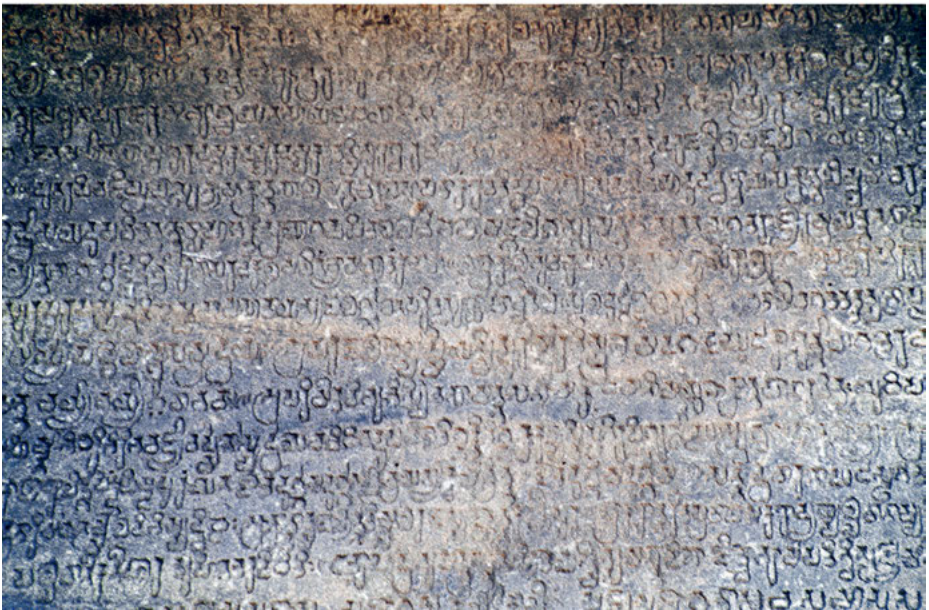


Plate 2.4: The Megudī Jinālaya at Aihole dates from 634 CE and bears a nineteen-line inscription composed by the Jaina poet Ravikīrti.

mabbe, the *dānacintāmaṇi* (jewel of benevolence) built *basadis*,⁸¹ She built *basadis*, and the king gave a golden *kalaśa* to her *basadi* at Lakkundi (Lakkuṇḍi).⁸² Śāntinātha, a minister, persuaded Lakhma to build the Mallikāmoda Basadi. Śāntivarma, a vassal of Taila II, built a *basadi* at Sugandavanta, also known as Sugandavarti (modern Saundatti or Savadatti) and made grants for its maintenance, as did his mother. The Raṭṭas, the vassals of the Cālukyas, also patronised Jainism. However, Taila II and his successors persecuted the Jainas until the later Cālukyas were re-established. As Sharma notes, the Cālukyas “of whatever branch or age, were consistently patrons of Jainism, the only exception being Taila II and his immediate successors [...]”⁸³

5.2.5 The Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Maḷkhēḍ

According to Altekar, the Jainas experienced the most flourishing period in their history under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Maḷkhēḍ (CE 735–973).⁸⁴ Both royal patronage and popular favour contributed to a secure and encouraging atmosphere for the faith.⁸⁵ Nṛpatunga Amōghavarṣa I (CE 814) was more a Jaina than a Hindu,⁸⁶ followed *syādvāda* and interested himself in Jainism. Guṇabhadra Ācārya was the preceptor of his son Kṛṣṇa II who gave donations to the Muḷgund Basadi (Plate 2.5). Indira III (CE 929) built a pedestal for the anointing ceremony of *arhat* Śānti. Their vassals and officers were Jainas. The Banavāsi governor and his son, and Śrīvijaya, a general of Indra III, were devout Jainas. Since many Rāṣṭrakūṭa emperors and their officers were Jainas or patronised Jainism, the contribution of Jainas to the field of literature was considerable and significant. Early in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa period, Akalaṅkadeva wrote the *Aṣṭaśatī*, a commentary on the *Āptamīmāṃsā* (an exposition of *syādvāda*) of Samantabhadra. A more exhaustive commentary on the *Āptamīmāṃsā Aṣṭasāhasrī* was written a little later by Vidyānanda. Māṇikyanandin, in the second half of the eighth century, composed a work on logic, the *Parikṣāmukhasūtra*, on which Prabhacandra, author of the *Nyāyakumudacandrodaya*, wrote an important commentary, the *Prameyakamalamartaṇḍa*, in the first half of the ninth century. Mallavādin wrote a commentary, the *Dharmotharaṭṭippanaka*, on the book on logic, the *Nyāyabindutīkā*, of the Buddhist Dharmottarācārya. Mallavādin was probably the founder of the Digambara monastery at Naosari (Nawsari).⁸⁷

81 Attimabbe is alternatively also spelled Attiyabbe.

82 A *kalaśa* is a narrow-mouthed waterpot-like ornament placed at the top of the superstructure of a Jaina *basadi* or other temple.

83 Sharma, *Jainism and Karnataka Culture*: 29.

84 Altekar, *Rashtrakutas and their Times*: 309, 411.

85 Altekar, *Rashtrakutas and their Times*: 301–11.

86 Altekar, *Rashtrakutas and their Times*: 311.

87 Altekar, *Rashtrakutas and their Times*: 409–10.



Plate 2.5: View onto the walled temple complex at Mulgund, to which Kṛṣṇa II made generous donations in the late ninth or early tenth century CE.

The *Kavirājamārga*, the first work in the Kannada language on poetics, was produced in Kannada.⁸⁸ The poets Pampa (*Ādipurāṇa*, *Vikramārjunavijaya*), Ponna (*Śāntipurāṇa*, *Bhuvanaika Rāmābhuyudaya*), and Ranna (*Ajitapurāṇa*, *Gadāyuddha*) are known as the three jewels (*ratnatraya*) of Kannada literature. Altekar's estimate of the number of Jaina followers during the period is roughly about a third of the total population of the Deccan.⁸⁹

5.2.6 The Hoysaḷas of Dvārasamudra

The Hoysaḷas of Dvārasamudra (Dōrasamudra; today, Halebid) (CE 985–1346) had been Jains since their dynasty was founded, at the instigation of the Jaina ascetics Sudatta and Munidra. The Hoysaḷas ruled over the southern part of Karnataka at the time the Cālukyas ruled over the north. Vinayāditya (CE 1047–1098) and his subjects made grants to Jaina edifices. Shravanabelgola and Kalastavadi (Kalastavādi) continued to be the main Jaina centres.⁹⁰ Ereyanga (CE 1098), a devout Jaina, made grants to

⁸⁸ This has often been attributed to King Amōghavarṣa I, however, it is now known that Śrīvijaya was its true author (R.S. Mugali, *Kannada Sahitya Charitre* [Mysore: Geetha Book House, 2005]: 53).

⁸⁹ Altekar, *Rashtrakutas and their Times*: 411–12.

⁹⁰ Coelho, *The Hoysala Vamsa*: 42–43.

the *basadis* at Shravanabelgola for food, rituals, vessels and other items. Jainism reached its pinnacle of influence under the rule of Biṭṭideva, also known as Viṣṇuvardhana, known as the greatest Hoysaḷa ruler. There are many stories regarding his conversion to Śrīvaiṣṇavism, which were developed after the death of saint Rāmānuja and King Viṣṇuvardhana. There was no need for King Viṣṇuvardhana to change religion. He was known as Biṭṭideva. ‘Biṭṭi’ is a variant name of Viṭṭhala, which is one of the names of the god Viṣṇu. In course of time Biṭṭi or Viṭṭhala became Viṣṇu. He was a king who tolerated all faiths. His chief Queen Śāntalā Devī, however, and most of his ministers and commanders were devout Jainas. Queen Śāntalā Devī built the Śāntiśvara Basadi and made grants to *basadis* throughout the kingdom. The Belur inscription mentions that Viṣṇuvardhana’s victory over the enemy and the birth of his heir was attributed to the Jina Pārśva whom he named Vijaya Pārśva or Vijaya Pārśvanātha and made provision for the rituals at the *basadi*. His generals and minister were devout Jainas: Gaṅgarāya, a general, made grants to the *basadi* built by his wife and mother; other generals and ministers built *basadis* or made endowments. Viṣṇuvardhana’s subordinates also patronised Jainism.⁹¹ Narasiṃha I respected Jainism, making grants to the Caturviṃśati Basadi, also known as Bhaṇḍāra Basadi, built by his minister Huḷḷa (Plate 2.6) who also restored many *basadis*. Ballāla II and his ministers

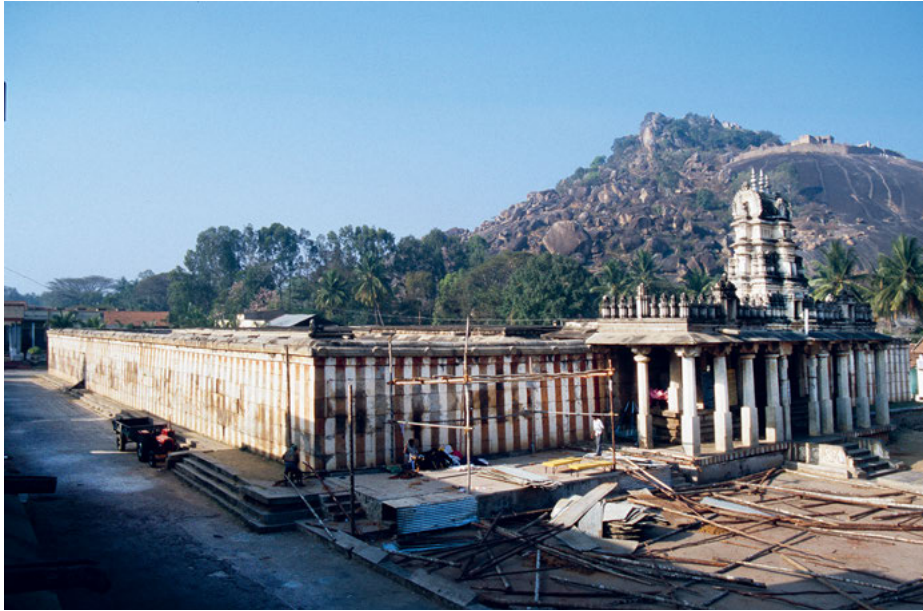


Plate 2.6: Narasiṃha I made grants to the Caturviṃśati (Bhaṇḍāra) Basadi in Shravanabelgola, built by his minister Huḷḷa.

⁹¹ Coelho, *The Hoysala Vamsa*: 109.

made grants to the *basadis*, and gave them villages whose yield would support the repairs of the Nagara Jinālaya and feed the ascetics. A *brāhmaṇ* minister's wife, Aciyakka, built the Akkaṇṇa Basadi at Shravanabelgola and Ballāḷa II granted a village for its upkeep.⁹²

Another minister, Nāgadēva, built another *basadi* at Shravanabelgola. Narasiṃha II (CE 1220) made a grant to the Vijaya Pārśvanātha Basadi in CE 1254. Sōmēśvara also made some grants. During the Hoysala period, many *basadis* were built and many grants made for their upkeep, rituals and so on, even though the later rulers were Vaiṣṇavas.

5.2.7 The Seuṇas (Yādavas) of Dēvagiri

The Seuṇas or Yādavas of Dēvagiri (CE 835–1336) had Jaina origins. Their founder Dṛḍhaphrahāra was the protégé of the Jaina ascetic Candraprabhasvāmī. Some of the Seuṇa rulers were Śaivas. Seuṇadeva II, a devout Jaina, made grants for the maintenance of the Candraprabha Basadi (CE 1142). Other kings, although they belonged to different faiths, built *basadis*, made grants and donations to them and had Jainas as *rājgurus*. Siṅghaṇa II, alternatively Siṃhana II (1210–1246), made donations to the Pārśvanātha and Ananta Tīrthaṅkara Basadis. Kṛṣṇa gave a gift to a Jaina ascetic and Rāmacandra made grants to a *basadi* and to the Jainas. The Seuṇa officers and feudatories were Jainas. Sōma was called Jaināgama-vārdhi-Sōma, the Sōma, who follows the Jaina *Āgamas* or sacred texts. Bachaseṭṭi's daughter made grants for the restoration of a *basadi*. Pāyiseṭṭi built a *basadi* at Kalkeri (Kalkēri).⁹³ Malla, Bachaseṭṭi and Pāyiseṭṭi built the Anantatīrtha Basadi.⁹⁴ Many others, including ladies, built *basadis* and made grants to them. Lakshmeshvar (Lakṣmeśvara, ancient Puligere), Munivalli (Munivalli, modern Manoli close to Bijāpur), Dambal (Ḍambal) and Kadakola (modern Dhārwar) were great Jaina centres. There are records of men and women dying of self-immolation as prescribed by the Jaina scriptures, and *niśidhi* or memorial stones were erected in their memory.⁹⁵ Thus, Jainism was seriously practised by many people.

⁹² Aciyakka is also alternatively known as Acaladevi.

⁹³ Shrinivas Ritti, *The Seuṇas: The Yādavas of Devagiri*, Karnataka History Series (Dharwar: Department of Ancient Indian History and Epigraphy, Karnataka University, 1973): 361. On Jainism under the Seuṇas see also Ritti, *The Seuṇas: The Yādavas of Devagiri*: 359–64.

⁹⁴ Ritti, *The Seuṇas: The Yādavas of Devagiri*: 362; Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 392.

⁹⁵ Ritti, *The Seuṇas: The Yādavas of Devagiri*: 364.

5.2.8 The Kaḷacuris of Kalyāṇa

The Kaḷacuris of Kalyāṇa (CE 1156–1183) ruled independently for only a short time. Under Bijjaḷa, the Kaḷacuri ruler and feudatory of the Cālukyas, who declared independence, Jainism was popular, and openly professed. The Kaḷacuris had a sitting Tīrthaṅkara in their land grants. During Bijjaḷa's time, Basava, also known as Basavaṇṇa or Basavēśvara, established Vīraśaivism, the Liṅgāyat sect, which derived from Śaivism. He even favoured this sect in a contest against the Jainas. Ironically, Bijjaḷa met a violent death at the hands of the Vīraśaivas, instigated by Basava.⁹⁶ Basava's Vīraśaivism proved very simple to understand, close to common life style and attracted the masses. This was furthered by various Śivasāraṇas, or transformed Śaiva groups. The clash between the Vīraśaivas and Jainas had something of inevitability about it: firstly, the Jainas had neglected the aspect of their religion which promoted an ideal of simple living and freethinking. Secondly, like with any other religion in the area, the occultism which had become part of Jaina religion had aroused suspicion and unwanted differences among the various classes of society—which again went against the Jaina principle.

The philosophical deference was the Jainas propagated *anekāntavāda* (many principles) whereas the Vīraśaivas believed in *ekāntavāda* (one principle) in respect of the existence of god. It was, in effect, a confrontation between atheism and theism. Finally, the theism of the Vīraśaivas won out over the atheism of the Jainas. During this period, Vīraśaivism attracted the Jaina trading and agricultural classes, hastening the decline of Jainism.⁹⁷

Thus, during this period, we find Jainism rising to greater heights in respect of political, social, economic and religious glories, as well as contributing to the growth of literature, philosophy, art and architecture of Karnataka. In fact, the history of Kannada literature begins with the Jaina literary heritage. The society had become cosmopolitan and also contributed to the harmonious blending for the society, but the religion—Jainism—had to succumb to several additions which were primarily non-Jaina. Hence, the differences between the religious beliefs and practices of Jaina, Hindu and Buddhist societies became ever smaller. The birth of Vīraśaivism during the second half of the twelfth century highlighted the various weaknesses that existed in Jainism, which cost the religion heavily and finally led to its dying out in northern Karnataka.

⁹⁶ Sharma, *Jainism and Karnataka Culture*: 35.

⁹⁷ Ritti, *The Seunas: The Yadavas of Devagiri*: 417; Sharma, *Jainism and Karnataka Culture*: 38.

6 The Endurance of Jainism Despite Continuing Assaults

Despite the menace posed to the faith in large areas of the State, Jaina communities survived and continued to thrive and build *basadis* in certain regional centres and peripheral areas of Karnataka.

6.1 Jainism During the Vijayanagar Empire

By 1336, Jainism had clearly lost its premier position, and had to be content with a secondary place in Karnataka. Lacking leaders of the status of Simhanandi, at this period, Jainism had no message of fortitude or power to offer a people who were faced with grave political and social threats.⁹⁸ In earlier times, it had been Jainism that recreated political life in Karnataka, and thus enabled Hindu *dharma* to be consolidated. Under the Vijayanagar empire (c. 1346–1646 CE), Hindu *dharma* regained its own utility, and then, “repaid the debt it owed to Jainism by coming to its succor.”⁹⁹ As Sale-tore says, “It was during such a period in its history that Vijayanagar stepped forth as the protector of Jainism, and enabled it to continue its useful existence for centuries to come.”¹⁰⁰ The Vijayanagar rulers achieved this through their policy of religious tolerance. Besides the celebrated judgment of Bukka Rāya (CE 1368),¹⁰¹ in which he decreed that the Śrīvaiṣṇavas were to consider the “loss or advancement to the Jaina *darśana* through the Bhaktas (Śrīvaiṣṇavism)” as “loss or advancement to their own (Vaiṣṇava) *darśana*,” and that the Jains were entitled to the privilege of the *pañcama-hāśabda* and the *kalaśa*.¹⁰² We should also note the lesser-known judgment (1363 CE) of a viceroy of the Vijayanagar monarch Harihara Rāya, which restored to the Jains the lands of a *basadi* which was disputed by the local temple *ācāryas* of Tadatala (Taḍatāla) in Heddūrnāḍ.¹⁰³ The tradition of tolerance thus proclaimed continued to be invoked throughout the period of the Vijayanagar empire. It is well known that queen Bhīma Devī, wife of Devarāya II, and the Jaina general Irugappa, were great patrons of Jainism. In the capital city of Hampi (Hampī) there were several Jaina *basadis*: first, the Gaṇagitti or oil woman’s temple, constructed in 1386 CE by Irugappa Daṇḍanāyaka,

98 Sale-tore, *Social and Political Life*: 1–22.

99 Sale-tore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 284.

100 Sale-tore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 284.

101 Gopal, ed., *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2: no. 475.

102 See Murthy, *Kannada Sasanagala Samskr̥tika Adhyayana*: 212 (translated by the author). *Pañca-mahāśabda* refers to honouring someone with five specific drums and cymbals. The *kalaśa* is a ceremonial urn, used for the same purpose. However, these honours were limited to a very few persons like kings, religious leaders, etc., or to special occasions.

103 Sale-tore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 288.



Plate 2.7: Rear view of the Pārśvanātha Temple, located close to the elephant stables inside the royal centre at Hampi.

a general of Bukka Rāya, in the reign of Harihara II; second, *jinālayas* within the royal centre behind the elephant stable; third, a group of three or four Jaina temples near the Sōmavārada Bagilu (Monday Gate), and forth, the Pārśvanātha Temple (Plate 2.7) just behind the palace constructed by Devarāya II to please his queen Bhīma Devī, who was a devout Jaina.¹⁰⁴

Among those who gave unstinted patronage to Jainism were several prominent generals and officials in the service of the Vijayanagar kings, such as Baica Daṇḍesa (Daṇḍanātha) the *mahāpradhāna* of King Bukka Rāya,¹⁰⁵ and his three sons Mangappa, Irugappa and Bukkaṇṇa. General Irugappa was very loyal to the State and devoted to Jainism. Other generals devoted to Jainism were Baicappa and Kūci Rāja, Mahāpradhana Gopa Camūpa, Malenāḍ Mahāprabhu Gopaṇṇa, Masanahaḷḷi Kampana Gauḍa, and Vallabharājadeva Mahā Arasu.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ S.N. Shivarudraswamy, "Jaina Temples of Karnataka under Vijayanagar Empire," in *Jainism: Art, Architecture, Literature and Philosophy*, ed. Haripriya Rangarajan et al. (Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 2001): 304.

¹⁰⁵ Jagadeesh Kivudanavar, "Jaina Generals in Vijayanagar Court," *Jain Journal* 35, no. 1 (2000): 24. A *mahāpradhāna* is the principal minister and advisor of a king.

¹⁰⁶ Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 307–10.

The Viraśaivas in Vijayanagar, also known as Hampi, persecuted the Jainas, and killed them. The Jainas sought protection from the atrocities, impositions and unsurpous claims of their rivals and redressal. In the interior of the country, many Jaina *basadis* were razed to the ground and the Jaina idols replaced or accepted as Śrīvaiṣṇava idols. Murthy suggests that some of these events were the result of the Jaina-Viraśaiva conflict.¹⁰⁷ According to Saletore, they lacked charismatic leadership in the empire, which deprived them of victory in disputations and Jainism was on the wane at Hampi.¹⁰⁸

During this period, coastal Karnataka was active in extending royal patronage to Jainism, as the Vijayanagar rulers did not interfere in the affairs of their vassals.¹⁰⁹ The Āḷupas and the other coastal rulers built Jaina monuments and made grants to them. Varanga (Varāṅga), Mudabidri, Karkal (Kārkaḷa), Barkur (Bārūr), Venur (Vēṇur) and other places became Jaina centres, as well as centres of Jaina literature, art and architecture.

6.2 Jainism Under the Chieftains of Coastal Karnataka

The fall of the ruling dynasties of Karnataka and rise of a strong and militant Viraśaivism resulted in the decline of Jainism. However, coastal Karnataka offered a safe haven for the as the coastal districts of Karnataka were free from the hostilities towards the Jainas and their persecution.

The earliest rulers of this region were the Āḷupas,¹¹⁰ who had been very important subordinate officers of the two imperial dynasties—the Kadambas of Banavāsi and the Cāḷukyas of Bādāmi—to whom they also had matrimonial ties. It is clear that the Āḷupas absorbed all the good principles of governance that characterised these two dynasties. Tolerance became the bedrock principle of Āḷupa administration, under which a number of petty Jaina royal families lived safely, working as officers, ministers and commanders. In later times, when these people became independent, they followed the rich heritage of their masters. As many feudatories of the suzerains supported Jainism, it flourished more in the coastal areas than in other parts of Karnataka. The Sāḷuvas of Gērusoppe and Hāḍuvaḷḷi, the Kellas, the Bhairavas, the Chauṭas, the Baṅgas and others followed Jainism and its traditions and encouraged local

¹⁰⁷ Murthy, *Kannada Sasanagala Samskr̥tika Adhyayana*: 235–37.

¹⁰⁸ Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 311–13.

¹⁰⁹ This has been identified as a distinct characteristic of Karnataka political history: “Large empires flourished without destroying the identity of the bigger adjoining feudatories. That is, it is a phenomenon seen everywhere in Karnataka, that individual political entities grew up without conflicting with the aspiration of the empire.” (Saletore and Pandurangarao, *Kannada Nadina Caritre: Bhaga 1*: 11–12). The quote has been translated from the Kannada by the present author.

¹¹⁰ Their rule lasted from about the second century to the fifteenth century CE.



Plate 2.8: The monumental statue of Bāhubali at Karkal, for which ablution rituals (Mahāmastakābhiṣekas) are arranged at regular intervals.

rites and rituals. The coastal rulers who enjoyed political autonomy, adopting *bhūta* (ancestral) worship and the *ālīyasantānam* (tradition of the female heir), and introducing upgraded social structures and societal management in their provinces. Except for the Nagire, Bhaira and Baṅga chiefs, the others ruled over small areas and were economically weak. Their desire for independence admittedly led to frequent wars fuelled by hatred and jealousy, but they still patronised Jainism and made it flourish.¹¹¹

The rulers gave equal importance to social and religious activities and built *basadis* and temples. Karkal, Mudabidri and Venur have eighteen *basadis* each, which would play important roles during religious celebrations. Despite the armed encounters and skirmishes along the borders, according to the poet Cadura Candrama (CE 1646) at the court of the Bhairas of Kārkaḷa, the petty rulers would still come together for social and religious activities, like the Mahāmastakābhiṣeka at Karkal (Plate 2.8).¹¹²

The Jaina traders flourished in Barkur, Basrur (Basrūr) and other places and established their trade guilds—the *Seṭṭikārs*, the Halas and the Yelames (Elames)—renovating old *basadis* and building new ones. The Jaina *maṭhas*, or monastic headquar-

¹¹¹ Shetty, *Tulu Nadina Jaina Dharma*: 55.

¹¹² Shetty, *Tulu Nadina Jaina Dharma*: 77. The Mahāmastakābhiṣeka is an important ablution ritual, performed on colossal statues of Bāhubali.



Plate 2.9: The wooden seat of the *bhāṭṭāraka*, inside the large Jain *maṭha* at Shravanabelgola, is surrounded by intricate wall paintings.

ters, played an important role in the spread of Jainism along the coast (Plate 2.9).¹¹³ Mudabidri, Karkal, Varanga and Akalanka *maṭhas* grew to prominence, also in the social and religious activities of the region. Karkal and Venur became great centres of Jainism, with¹¹⁴ Karkal becoming the seat of the Lalitakīrti Bhāṭṭārakas, while Mudabidri was established as the seat of the Charukīrti Bhāṭṭārakas. Venur was the site of one of the main Jain *basadis*; the Bāhubali monoliths here and at Karkal and the pillar at Hiriyaṅgadi (Haḷeangadi) (Plate 2.10) all showcase Jain architecture.¹¹⁵ More than one hundred and eighty *basadis* were constructed along the coast under Vijayanagar rule. The Jain *basadis* and *maṭhas* were both religious and social centres. They also became the centres of learning and religious discipline. The petty rulers of the coast and the ordinary citizens went to the *basadis* and *maṭhas* to settle disputes. They also helped the people during difficult periods. Jainism in the coastal region produced many poets and scholars and the Jain *ācāryas* encouraged and guided them. Many rulers also extended their patronage to the scholars and poets.¹¹⁶ It is no exaggeration to say that Jain literature helped to keep Jainism alive.

¹¹³ In the local dialect, *maṭhas* are also referred to as *mutts*.

¹¹⁴ Ramesh, *A History of South Kanara*: 300–301.

¹¹⁵ Bāhubali and Gommaṭeśvara are two names for the same character.

¹¹⁶ Shetty, *Tulu Nadina Jain Dharma*: 56.



Plate 2.10: The pillar, *mānastambha*, in the centre of the large temple complex at Hiriyangadi, close to Karkal, in coastal Karnataka.

The Jaina merchants, the *Seṭṭis*, were the first among the coastal Jainas to assimilate Hindu elements and folk forms of worship into Jainism, a development which popularised the religion.¹¹⁷ They invoked both the Tirthaṅkaras and deities known to local Hindus, also worshipping Sarasvatī and practising Tantric rituals. It is clear that they wielded considerable influence over other lay people. The Govardhanagiri inscription shows the attempts made by the Jainas to assign the attributes of Śiva and Viṣṇu to Nemibhaṭṭāraka.¹¹⁸ They also practiced Tantric rituals and wielded considerable influence over the people. Ratnakar Varni refers to the Garuḍa Mantra for removing poison and to the role of *yakṣīs* in occult practices among the Jainas.¹¹⁹

The coastal Jainas adopted local cultural Hindu practices such as the *bhūtārādhane* (the worship of the ancestor, the *bhūta*), the *nāgarādhane* (the worship of the serpent, the *nāga*) and the *brahmārādhane* (Brahma's worship), which could be seen as contrary to Jaina teachings. These regional and Hindu practices were so completely assimilated that the Jaina rulers had both their clan deity (*kuladevatā*) and their deity of worship (*ārādhya-devatā*), who was a Hindu god and a member of the *bhūtas*.¹²⁰ For example, at Dharmasthala, a Jaina *heggaḍe* is the religious chief,¹²¹ his *kuladevatā* is Candranātha Tirthaṅkara, his *ārādhya-devatā* is Mañjunātha or Śiva,¹²² and the *dharma-devatās* are Kalarahu, Kalarkayi, Kanyakumari (also Kanniyākumari), Annappa Panjurli and others.¹²³ The temple *moktēsaras* (managers) of several Hindu shrines were Jainas. Though this type of assimilation led to the decline of Jainism elsewhere, it made Jainism prosper in coastal Karnataka. No doubt the local environment was favourable to Jainism because the royal families were reluctant to interfere. But at the same time there was no inhibiting factor. Viraśaivism percolated into the region only through trade, and traders were interested in safety through cooperation with all. In this way, Jainism flourished in coastal Karnataka while it was on the decline elsewhere in the State, thanks to various ingenious survival gambits.

The deathknell of Jainism sounded in 1565 CE when the Vijayanagar empire fell after the battles at Rakshasi (Rakshāsi) and Tengadi near Talikota (Tāḷikōte) (sometimes

117 Bhatt, *Studies in Tuluva History and Culture*: 441.

118 "May that mighty Nēmi-bhaṭṭāraka protect us, whose glory swallows up that of three worlds so that people become Krishṇa (or black). [...] All the world is like Viṣṇu—arose in the world; whose lotus feet are adorned with the head of Achyuta (Viṣṇu) and Īśvara (Śiva)" Benjamin Lewis Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 8, *Shimoga, part II* (Bangalore: Mysore Government Central Press, 1904): 100 (55; Translations).

119 Madhava, *Religions in Coastal Karnataka*: 85–87.

120 Locally, the *kuladevatā* is also referred to as *kula daiva* and the *ārādhya-devatā* as *ārādhyā daiva*.

121 A *heggaḍe* is the religious chief of a temple town, who is also responsible for solving disputes.

122 It is fascinating that Mañjunātha is connected not only to Śiva but also to the Buddha and his *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī.

123 Shetty, *Tulu Nadina Jaina Dharma*: 35.

treated as one battle, with both names combined, as the ‘battle of Rakkasatangadi’). With the dismemberment of the empire, all its provinces became independent. One of these, Keḷadi, was ruled by the Nāyakas, who, although tolerant towards other religions, treating them with respect and offering refuge, were not liberal to the Jaina ruling families. As staunch Viraśaivas, their attitude towards Jainism was very severe. There are hardly any instances of their fostering the faith. Barring one or two instances in the early history of the rulers, the Nāyakas of Keḷadi can be held responsible for the decline of Jainism. They also forced the Jaina rulers of Sode and Bilagi (Biligi, Bilgi), to renounce Jainism and accept Viraśaivism, thus making the local population follow suit. During the reign of the Nāyakas, Viraśaiva *maṭhas* were established at various places all along coastal Karnataka.¹²⁴ During the period of the Nāyakas of Keḷadi, the Portuguese and the Muslims invaded the Jaina kingdoms giving a deathblow to the Jainas.

As a result of the collapse of Jaina rule in the Jaina centres of Gerusoppe (Gērusoppe, Gērasoppe), Bhatkal (Bhaṭkaḷ) and Haduvalli (Hāḍuhalḷi), Jainism went into decline in the coastal regions, a process accelerated when the *basadis* and *maṭhas* were razed to the ground, depriving the faith of its base. The final blow was the mass conversion of Jainas to Viraśaivism.¹²⁵ The local Jaina kings in the southern part of the coast had to experience defeats. The Baṅga ruler, who was stronger and stabler than the others, had finally lost everything because of the pressure from the Portuguese and the Keḷadi rulers. These Jaina ruling families of coastal Karnataka finally succumbed to the power of Haider Alī and his son Tipu Sultān from Mysore.¹²⁶

7 Conclusion

We can see, then, that Jainism flourished in Karnataka when it received strong royal backing and declined with the withdrawal of this support. Royal dynasties like the Kadambas, the Gaṅgās, the Western Cālukyas, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Hoysaḷas helped in the spread of Jainism, its advancement and its influence. The first major dynasty in Karnataka, the Kadambas, although *brāhmaṇas* by origin, inaugurated the tradition of grants to the Jainas in the State. It is now known that Jainism existed in Banavāsi during the third century CE. The Kadambas intermarried with the Jainas, patronised Jainism, and made generous grants of lands to the Jainas: Mṛgeśvarma (CE 475–490), for instance, granted an entire village for the benefit of the Jinas. The Gaṅgās of Talakāḍ also patronised Jainism.

¹²⁴ P.K. Narayana and Rai Kayyara Kinjanna, eds., *Thenkanadu*, Swagatha Samithi, 31st Kannada Sahitya Sammelana (Bangalore: Kannada Sahitya Sammelana, 1947): 85.

¹²⁵ Narayana and Kinjanna, eds., *Thenkanadu*: 89.

¹²⁶ Shetty, *Tulu Nadina Jaina Dharma*: 59–60.

The Gommaṭeśvara monolith at Shravanabelgola was erected by Cāvuṇḍarāya, a minister and a poet in the court of Rācamalla (ninth century). The Badami Cālukyas (CE 540–757), though Hindus, were tolerant of Jainism. During the time of Pulakeśin II, the *jinālaya* of Meguḍi at Aihole was built, and Vikramāditya made grants of villages for the maintenance of the *basadis*. The Rāṣṭrakūṭas (CE 753–973) had many Jaina royal officers and feudatories. Jainism flourished under Amōghavarṣa Nṛpatunga (CE 814–887) who had become a Jaina. The great output of religious and secular literature by Pampa, Jinasena and others further strengthened Jainism. The Hoysaḷas patronised Jainism and it was under Hoysaḷa rule (CE 985–1346) that Śrīvaiṣṇavism entered Karnataka. Viṣṇuvardhana's queen Śāntalā was a staunch Jaina and liberal towards Jainism. The Raṭṭas of Saundatti who were the feudatories of Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa (CE 1183–1200) were also patrons of Jainism. The support of the royal dynasties, the nobility, the merchants and the commoners helped in the steady growth of Jainism. Jainism began to wane with the rise of Vīraśaivism towards the end of the twelfth century.

The main cause of the decline of Jainism in Karnataka was the loss of royal patronage. Royal patronage was granted in several different ways: first, through the imperial line, second, through subordinate lines and and, lastly, through ministers, commanders and other official lines because these also happened to be petty rulers when Vīraśaivism began to spread rapidly under the leadership of Vīra Goggidēva, himself an administrator. He was Ekāntada Rāmayya, a Vīraśaiva saint who became militant in spirit for the propagation of his ideals. Jainism lost ground before these two. Their influence was very much on both the sections of the society—the ruling classes and commoners. Most of the ruling class were converted from Jainism to Vīraśaivism due to either the influence of the above mentioned Vīraśaiva saints or because of the influence of their own queens.¹²⁷ As a result of the Vīraśaivas the Jaina influence plummeted both at court and in society.

Whereas the Jaina royal households of northern Karnataka embraced Vīraśaivism and tried to suppress Jainism, other Jaina ruling households failed to see how the sudden rise of the new sect was leading to the disintegration of Jaina society. Vīraśaivism, which originated in northern Karnataka, was an aggressive and militant faith, which attracted royal patronage. It was able to appeal to ordinary people—especially the lower strata of society—as, unlike in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, there was no language barrier. In consequence, it attracted many converts and grew rapidly. The new converts from Jainism, too, had played a role in their former faith's decline. Jaina intellectuals, despite being known for their wide knowledge of religious and secular subjects, were unable to defend Jainism in intellectual debates with the Vīraśaivas. The faith was further weakened when the trading community which had helped Jainism economically

¹²⁷ Earlier, regardless of their religious disposition, kings had married women from different sections of the population.

converted to Vīraśaivism. The Jaina landlords who were used to a luxurious and easy life wanted to maintain their status in the society and followed Vīraśaivism. This led to the conversion of highclass people to Vīraśaivism.

Jaina society also played by practices and rituals, which were against Jainism. *Yakṣis* were worshipped and *mantras* were chanted. The Jaina sects of Digambara, Śvetāmbara and Yāpanīya disagreed with one another and failed to present a common front for the defence of Jainism. The good works of the Yāpanīya sect also did not project properly for the benefit of Jainism. There was rivalry among the monks for being the head of the organisations. The Jaina monks adopted Tantrism and the *śakti* cult (veneration of female deities) personifying nature and generative power for material gains which were against Jaina principles. Jaina society was divided according to the groups of different *gaṇas*, *gacchas* and *anvayas* with separate monasteries giving each group a distinct identity which was against Jaina principles. The advent of Islam also was detrimental to Jainism. The new converts to Islam caused untold harm to Jainism, their original religion

Thus, for over a thousand years Jainism made its own way to reach the effects of glory. The shock received from the disappearance of Buddhism from Karnataka at an early stage was well understood and thereafter Jainism began to climb the ladder very cautiously. It used all kinds of help to emerge as an influencing force and expand its social acquaintance with royal patronage. But it is strange to find Jainism losing its base as a result of the same royal patronage.

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