Chapter I: i

Discovery of the Jainas: Colonial and Oriental Perceptions

Col. Mackenzie who came to India in 1782 as a cadet of Engineers on the Madras Establishment of the East India Company had collected a large number of manuscripts, coins, inscriptions, compiled maps, and so on. He had collected a valuable amount of information until his death in 1821 after which his collections were sold to the East India Company.

Nicholas Dirks, writes, "Mackenzie’s collection also represents colonial Britain’s most extensive engagement with Indian history, a monument to this day of a kind of historical energy and interest that disappeared almost as soon as the concerns of colonial conquest gave way to the preoccupations of colonial rule."¹

Oriental Scholarship in the Context of Tamil Jainism

Mackenzie had met a brahmin named Cavally Venkata Boriah in 1796 in Mysore, who then enlisted for him the assistance of nine Telugu pandits for the job of collecting manuscripts across the Madras Presidency. He had subsequently collected 274 Tamil manuscripts as Surveyor General in Madras by 1815. C. P Brown copied them in Local Records volumes. W. Taylor’s Catalogue of Mackenzie Mss (in 3 volumes) came out in 1862, in Madras. ²

¹ Nicholas B Dirks, Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India, Permanent Black, 2004 reprint edn, p. 82
² S. Sundarapandian, Aspects of Mackenzie Manuscripts, Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Chennai (date not mentioned in the library copy. Acc no. E 6711
A letter addressed by Col. Mackenzie to Sir Alexander Johnston in 1817, conveys an authentic view of the motives which led him to form the Collection. In this he notes, “It is also proper to notice that in the course of these investigations... the first lights were thrown on the history of the country below the Ghats, which have been since enlarged by materials constantly increasing... Among various interesting subjects may be mentioned The discovery of the Jain religion and philosophy and its distinction from that of the Boudh...”

“Of these, the papers relating to the Jains were the most novel...”

We know that Mackenzie took the assistance of Telugu (Brahmin) pandits in collecting these manuscripts. What they were recording was certainly coloured from their perspectives. Certain local histories got left out in the process of collecting, as most of his assistants were brahmins. Yet in Mackenzie’s manuscripts, one can still find some of the local Tamil Jaina stories; the records acknowledge the presence of a local Jaina community in Tamilnadu, not viewing them merely in terms of a pan-Indian category.

In the eyes of the Tamil Jainas, the names of Ellis and the Italian missionary Beschi figure prominently. The former, in his capacity as an officer in the administration, translated the *Kural* into English. The Tamils hailed Beschi as

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4 Ibid, p.8
5 Ellis and the *Kural* are discussed in greater detail in Chapter II, on the Tamil Jaina community.
Vīramāmunivar, and acknowledged with reverence his contribution to the Tamil language and literature.

There is yet another aspect to it, which is the role of the colonial state and massive centralisation of records. Thus, palm leaf manuscripts that were collected left homes to reach the offices of the state. The individual, and family historical records - especially in communities like the Tamil Jainas where there was a generational aspect to it, who safely preserved these ōlaiccuvati for generations - were now part of the state, with 'ownership rights' as well, and entered a whole system of British bureaucracy that essentially meant the 'de-link' of community from their familial historical records.

Let us take the example of the Tamil Jaina community; and the story of the 'Cakkiḷi' rājā which has been recorded by Mackenzie (or his assistants); and also recorded by Thurston. And also narrated to me in each of the Tamil Jaina villages I visited. Had it not been 'recorded' ('written') would this story lose its meaning and significance? That the colonial powers recorded this story (or someone saying, it has 'also been mentioned by Thurston, or Mackenzie also writes about this story') seems to give this narrative a certain sanction, as a piece of history. We only know from these records - Mackenzie and Thurston - that the king in question in the Jaina stories was Venkatapathy (Kistnappa / Dupala / Tubakki Krishnappa) Nāyaka. Only Thurston mentions his caste as 'kavarai'. There is no other record available to corroborate if this indeed was the ruler that the Cakkili rājā stories refer to. It is the Nawab of Arcot in some cases, or just a petty ruler of Cenji in some others, or 'cakkiḷi rājā' in some others. The name varies in relation to the memory of 'good times' for the Tamil Jainas.
There is no way of resolving this puzzle in this moment, but what was being committed to ‘official records’ of the ‘empire’ would become, for a long time, the history of the country and its communities, including Tamil Jainas.

The important point for us is the “Discovery of the Jainas”^6 as he mentions in his letter. And that it happened ‘south of the Ghats’ in a sense. That there exists a sect of the Jainas, which is distinct, perhaps came to light from what are today the Karnataka (in his official duties in the wars with Tipu) and Tamilnadu regions.

Before the time that Mackenzie collected the records from the Tamil country, F. W. Ellis was already familiar with the Jaina Tamil literature and well versed in Tamil. Caldwell too had made a point about Tamil’s independent origins from Sanskrit. Both of them were aware of a Jaina community and its association with Tamil. Mackenzie’s realisation of the ‘Sect of Jainas’ came in this context. The site of his “discovery” of the Jainas then, was here – in the Tamil region, largely.

The Gazette of South Arcot speaks of the Jainas settled there^7 - “The south Arcot Jains all belong to the Digambara sect and the images in their temples of the 24 tīrthankaras are accordingly without clothing. These temples (the chief of them are those at Tirunarunkonṟai and Sittamur) are not markedly different in external appearance from Hindu

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^6 Though interestingly, the title for this chapter ‘happened’ even before one came across this letter of Mackenzie. It was more in sense of what the colonialists and Oriental scholars were looking for, when they wrote of the Jainas, based on a few writings one had read by then. Hence one wouldn’t give credit to Mackenzie for the title of this chapter.

^7 Gazette of South Arcot, 1906
shrines, but within them are images of some of the tirthankaras made of stone or of painted clay....The Jain rites of worship much resemble those of the Brahmans: there is the same bathing of the god with sacred oblations... playing of music and reciting of sacred verses. These ceremonies are performed by the members of the archakas or priest class...The daily private worship in the houses is done by the laymen themselves before a small image of one of the tirthankaras and daily ceremonies resembling those of the brahmans - such as those of pronouncing of the sacred mantram at day break and the recital of forms of prayer thrice daily - are observed.”

Here is an instance of the colonial state looking for the 'brahminical' in each community that it is seeing. The brähmins, become the 'yardstick' in a sense for them to evaluate other sects, communities with.

In the Mackenzie's collection' in one of his papers Mackenzie mentions Gummidiipundi and Ponneri Parsvanatha temple (Tirupalaivanam). Published as the “Accounts of the Jains” in volume IX of the journal, Asiatic Researches in 1807, these form some of the earliest reports on the Jaina community, and Jainism; and this included some of his diary notes of 1797 on the same when he was serving as Lt. Colonel. F. Buchanan⁹ added to this biography with his account of the Jainas in the southern part of the subcontinent.

Among works of epigraphy, mention may be made to Luders' 'List of Brahmi Inscriptions from the Earliest Times till

⁹Gazette... p.78-9
⁹'A journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar', London, 1807; second edition, Madras 1817
about 400 AD, which contains inscriptive allusions to grants of Jain laity to the monks.

While some scholars believe that most European scholars writing in the late 18th and 19th century were making use of a single, monolithic or let's say, 'universal' textual (canonical) tradition to compile facts about the Jainas and were not familiar about the regional traditions of the Jainas, it would be a question as to where to place the records of Mackenzie, Ellis, Caldwell, or even missionaries such as Pope in the south.

Speaking of western scholarship on the Jaina community, Prof. Padmanabh Jaini notes, "With few notable exceptions, such as Jacobi and Stevenson, most western scholars of Jainism have had no contact with the Jaina community in India. As for their contact with the indigenous Jaina scholarship, it has been restricted to what was available to them, in the English writings of a few notable Jainologists, like Jagmanderlal Jaini, Hiralal Jain and the late Prof. A. N. Upadhye...."  

There is a question as to whether the same could be said about Tamil Jainas vis-à-vis the Western scholars or others with an express interest in things Jaina. For, the Tamil Jainas as a community, seem to have great regard for the works of people such as Beschi who was given the title Viramamunivar by the Tamils; Ellis (about whose interest in the author of the Kural, Tiruvalluvar one discusses later  

10 Epigraphia Indica 10, App. L.C.1912
12 See Chapter II
and so on. According to the Tamil Jainas the image cast on gold of the Kural author in the 19th century is of a Jaina monk. Closest to what they perceive the author of the Kural to be. And Ellis' perception of the author of the Kural was as much based on his own research and work on it, as it was on interaction with the Tamil Jainas of his time.

However, Jaini does make note of the fact that there was lack of attention to the Digambara sect and almost complete focus on the Svetambara as also to lack of attention to the study of Jaina community as such. “...The sociology of Jainism, which in comparison with even the most minor of the Indian religions and cults, has not been studied to any sufficient extent” 13 which he attributes to Jacobi, who, he believes to be “largely responsible for the western acceptance of Svetambara claims to authenticity and for the consequent neglect of the Digambaras...” 14 “Western scholarship has been essentially Svetambara scholarship...In contrast, the Digambara authors like Kundakunda, Sāmantabhadra, Pūjyapāda, Jinasaṇā, Akālaṇka, Vidyaṇandi, Somadeva, and Śrīdhara, to mention only the most eminent, have been totally ignored. Virtually none of the works of these ācāryas have been translated in the West, and the few notices one gets of Kundakunda in the works of Frauwallner or Schubring cannot be considered adequate...In Europe (and in India, too, I fear) little is known of the ancient Digambaras.” 15

But there were translations of the Kural by Rev. Pope, Rev. Lazarus and Francis Ellis in late 19th century. 16

13 Ibid, p. 26-7
14 Ibid, p. 26-7
15 Ibid, pp.28-29
16 See chapter (II) on the Tamil Jaina community.
Here, one needs to point out to essential problem of general ignorance of the Jainas of Tamilnadu, about whom the colonialists were keeping records, compiling records, and also attributing to the Jainas close link to the language Tamil, in opposition to Sanskrit. Ellis was one of the early Company officials who identified the distinctness of Tamil as a Dravidian language as against Sanskrit. And his proximity to the Tamil Jains also meant there was some interest in Tamil literature and the Jainas. Thus, this statement of Jaini may be true for rest of India, but not so for the Tamil country. But of course, it is a matter of concern no substantial work on Tamil Jaina community ever evolved – looking at the community in historical context - even among Indian scholars who had worked on Jainism in Tamilnadu.

As noted elsewhere, it came as a surprise to the colonial administrators that Jainism existed as a separate sect, quite different from the Buddhism. And in this realisation the Tamil Jains (or Jainas settled in the southern parts of the country) played their part. And for most part their interest in it stemmed from seeing “Tamul” as they referred to it, as being different from Sanskrit and with its own evolution graph, as a “Dravira” language.

Mackenzie did recognise a Jaina local-ised tradition as evidenced from his collection with assistance from local people. He was aware of the community in Tamilnadu and did not view them within the larger Indian Jaina category, or from within the Śvetāmbara tradition. Similarly Ellis seemed to have supported the Jain claims to authorship of the Kūṟaḻ (and this happened much before the Dravidian movement picked up the already prevalent contentious issue.
Recovering Self through the Orientalists

Interesting though in the Tamil Jaina context was not the “discovery” of the Jainas by these ‘others’ as much as the ‘recovery of self’ (in a sense) of Tamil Jainas in the colonial times and thereafter, looking at themselves through works of Beschi, Caldwell, Ellis, and others.

Tamil Jaina scholars such as A. Chakravarti in the 1930s were engaging with these records with a keen sense of how their community or religion was being written about. And in their views which they expressed, one can see in what way the Jainas perceived the works of Oriental scholarship; or the colonial ‘recordists’, as it were. And what sources they were using to present a certain picture of the Jainas. For instance, A. Chakravarti writes, “the term Ajivika was originally meant to stigmatise Maskari Putra and his followers as professionals. Dr. Hoernle, in his article on “Ajivikas”, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, mainly relies upon Bhagavatisutra, a Svetambara Jaina work for his information about Ajivikas...(Hoernle) wants to make out that the Ajivikas were practically the Digambara Jains....”17

He also refers to a reading of an inscription by Dr. Hultzch, of inscriptions found at the Perumal temple at Poygai near Virinchipuram (SII, Vol I, 88, 89, 92, and 108) referring to (according to the reading) “tax on Ajivikas”. 18 Chakravarti writes, of this, “It is evident that the Editor Dr. Hultzch makes an unfortunate mistake in translating acuvakkatamai as the tax on Ajivikas. A priori it is absurd to suggest that any finance minister would propose levying tax on wandering mendicants who have to beg for their daily food...For our purpose to state that it does not and cannot mean tax on

17 A. Chakravarti, Neelakesi, Jaipur, 1994, pp.244 - 46. Emphasis, wherever, mine.
18 Ibid, p.251
Ājīvikas and the rendering given by Dr. Hultzch is evidently wrong....He cannot claim as evidence for his conclusion anything more than the Śvetāmbara work which he takes as his authority...”¹⁹

Significantly these arguments reflect the assertion of a distinct Digambara Jaina identity as against the Śvetāmbara, as it also reveals the sources that these scholars were referring to.

Finally, the way the Jainas were perceived and written about by Oriental scholars and the way the community was recorded in the manuscripts must be analysed against the historical, political contexts of that time. But the community (or communities) that they were writing on (not necessarily engaging with) also had perceptions and responses to what was being written about them. At least so was the case with the Jainas. In the chapter on the Community and its identity questions one has discussed the problems Jainas had with the colonial Law Courts in the early 20th century which refused to treat them as distinct from the Hindus.

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1: ii

Jaina Entry into the South and Tamilakam²⁰

Early Jaina vestiges in the Tamil country comprise of about 26 rock cut caves/ or natural caverns, 140 stone beds at the following places, Anaimalai, Alagarmalai, Arittapatti, Muttipatti, Tirupparankunram, (Madurai district) as also in

²⁰ This section may be seen as part of the earlier only in one sense, namely much of this history came from reading of the epigraphical records that one has mentioned. But this section places in context the forthcoming one on the Tamil Jaina community and is meant as a general introduction. Epigraphs are dealt with in detail in Chapter IV.
Vikkiramangalam, Karungalakkuti, Kilavalavu, Kongarpuliyangulam, Tiruvatavur and Varichchiyur.

One finds in these places, Brāhmi records mentioning names of monks who resided there as well as of the laity, the donors and these records have been dated between 2nd and 1st century B.C. 30 natural caverns with stone beds – but no Brāhmi inscriptions - have been discovered at Pudukottai, Sittanavasal (of the famous fresco paintings on Jaina themes), and in other places – south and North Arcot districts. However, in the last two mentioned, were found later inscriptions and sculptures – of 8th – 9th centuries AD.

Jambai, Parayanpattu and Tirunatharkunru in South Arcot district have caves supposed to have been occupied by Jaina monks / nuns. Two early Jaina centers with cave beds and Brahmi records have also been found at Kurṟālam, Marugaltalai in Tirunelveli district. This being so, the famous Jaina institution, the paḷḷi21 was also scattered across the districts Tiruchirapalli (named after the famous paḷḷi there) with 3 pallis in Pugalur, Sivayam and Trichy rock fort; Pudukottai, North Arcot, Pasumpon and Periyar districts having one palli each and lithic records.

Quoting from the Digambara Darśana, a Jaina religious text, M.S. Ramaswamy Ayyangar22 says in 526 Vikrama Śaka (AD 470) a Drāvidasaṅgha was formed at southern Madurai by Vajranandi (in inscriptions noted as Vaccananti), a disciple of Pūjyapāda. Also that the sangha was an association of the Digambara Jinas who migrated south with a view to spread

21 The term take coming to mean school, in Tamil, considering that the Jaina doctrine was being expounded upon and taught here.
Jainism. Ayyangar believes this to have occurred by the end of the 5th century AD. Further, he says that the Cañkam works indicate that Jainism has not entered the extreme south of India during the days of Tołkäppiyar (350 BC) and they must have colonised and permanently settled in these parts during and before 1st century AD. Scholars also take the evidence from Mahāvamsa, the Buddhist chronicle (which treats of Buddhism in Ceylon at the time of its introduction) which speaks of Tissa — Devanampiya Tissa - 2nd son of Mutisiva, and the two chief priests, Mahinda and Aritta who expressed desire to spread the tenets of Buddhism in other countries for which they were granted permission. It is assumed that the Pāṇḍya country should have been one of those they visited. The Pāṇḍya country and Srilanka are believed to have had close relations, considering another mention in the Mahāvamsa whereby Vijaya, the son of Sihabāhu, ruler of Lata in Gujarat, is supposed to have wedded the daughter of a Pāṇḍyan king. The caverns in Marugāltalai (Tirunelveli districts) with Brāhmi inscriptions and similar ones at Madurai (dated 3rd century BC) — at Anaimalai, Alagarmalai, Kongar — puliyangulam, are believed to suggest their occupation by Buddhist monks in an earlier period and later by Jainas after being abandoned by the former. 23

A. Ekambaranathan 24 says that Jainism in Tamilnadu must date prior to 2nd century BC. The Patīruppatu (Cañkam work eulogising chieftains of the line of Cēra kings) 2:42-56 mentioning Irumporai kings (a collateral branch) — also

23 K.V.S. Subramanya Ayyar, “Origin and Decline of Buddhism and Jainism in Southern India”, Indian Antiquary, August, 1911
mentioned in Brahmi records—talk of Jaina monks. 25 Two Brahmi records from Pugalur (Tiruchirapalli district) give the genealogical list of these kings. Among these are Ilamkadunko at whose anointment to the throne, an abode was built for the Jaina monk Seṅkāyappar of Yāṟṟūr (AR 342 of 1927-28)26. Kuruntokai 39, (the shorter poems of Caṅkam anthology) and Puranānūru 91 (the 400 purām “exterior” poems) mention Atiyamāṇ Netumāṇaṇji (as a devotee of Śiva) - a minor chieftain of northern Koṅgūnāḍu with Tagadūr (Dharmapuri) as capital. This chieftain is said to have dedicated a ‘pallī’ to śrāmaṇas (Jainas) at Jambai (S. Arcot). Though no explicit mention of Jainism or Buddhism is found in the anthologies, it is believed that they must have entered Tamilnadu during the time of these anthologies since the Tamil Brahmi inscriptions are said to antedate the anthologies by 2 or 3 centuries, and these inscriptions mentioned monks and nuns of these two orders.27 Indra—the important deity of the Jainas as well as Buddhists. Is also frequently mentioned in the Caṅkam anthologies.28

In the early Brahmi inscriptions, Kadalaivaluti, officer of the Pāṇḍyana Neduṇjeḷiyān, dedicated a monastery at Māṅkulam to reputed ascetic Kaṇiṇaṇṭa29, and for the same monk, Neduṇjeḷiyān’s brother-in-law, Chaṭikāṇ and nephew Ilān Chaṭikaṇ, caused to be made stone beds. 30

26 Ibid, p.31
27 I.V.Mahadevan ‘Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions of Caṅkam Age’, Proceedings of Second International Conference Seminar on Tamil Studies, I, 1971. For more details on early Jaina Tamil Brahmi records, see Ch. IV: Jainas in Epigraphs...
29 I.V.Mahadevan, Corpus of Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions Mangulam, No. 1
30 Ibid, No. 2.
Brāhmi inscription found at Mamandur (at North Arcot) mentions Kaṇiṁāṇ, a local chieftain holding sway over the region around Mamandur (3rd – 4th centuries AD) dedicating a cave to Jaina monks and at his instance the stone mason Chalavan cut the drip-ledge on the upper part of the cave.  

"Puranaṇūru 240 mentions Kopperuṇcoḷaṇ who is about to commit suicide by actually starving himself to death" ('vaṭakirṛuttal", meaning literally, 'sitting facing the north'), which according to Hart, speaks of Jaina influence; the same verse talks of "dying with a body free of evil", etc. However, Vaṭakirṛuttal, according to Hart, may not be seen as a religious influence of Jainas, and rather as an "indigenous institution".

In the early 19th century, the Jainas, as a distinct community, became ‘visible’ to the Orientalist - partly due to their seeming similarity to the Buddhists, and also due to the interest in a community that so religiously preserved its history and documented its manuscripts. So far, it was believed (and would be continued to believe, for quite some years till early 20th century) that Indians did not have a sense of history. 19th century, then, saw documentation and recording of numerous manuscripts, the canonical, as well as lay literature, and the Jainas were now entering into the world of archives, to be used for the future.

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31 T.V.Mahalingam, South Indian Palaeography, pp 288-89.
32 Hart, op.cit, p.90
Above and below, respectively: At the Visakhacarya Taponilayam, Nirgrantha muni Subhadrarasagar; Siva Adinatha, few Jaina laymen and the muni in an intense discussion over the concept of *arivu* (jnana / perception / knowledge), atman, Jaina siddhanta, moksa and so forth.
Past, and the preset: Mathatipati, Jinakanci matham, at Tirunatharkunru Parai

‘Chintamanai Navalar’ Santhakumar Jani, the living exponent of Clvanakacintamani, at Mottur
Above and below, respectively: The Melcittamur Jaina Matham, the Tamil Jaina community at the matham, checking out details of eligible bachelors
Chintamani Navalar, Santhakumar Jain of Mottur with his spouse

Outside a home at Perumpukai
Getting ready for a traditional game of dice – on the pyol, at a home in Vilukkam
Above and below: The Tamil Jaina community (Dharanendiran, Parsuvianthan, Vrsabha Das, Arah Das, Jeevakumari, Gandharvai, others) at Vilukkam- where I first heard the story of the ‘cakkili raja’
At Tirumalai: Identity construction over generations

Playing the traditional dayatu kaṭṭai: Viḷukkam
M. Karunanidhi felicitating Jivabandhu Sripal – old photograph at the reading room at Tirupparambur, the village Sripal hailed from

T.S. Sripal – photograph – same place
Aband

Praying

the

Nitapi - students at the

mAhm
The family of Mr. Samudravijayan and Rani (at that point, panchayat President):
below-daughter Priya and mother Gandharvai
Above and below, respectively: The Melcittamur Jaina Matham, the Tamil Jaina community at the matham, checking out details of eligible bachelors
Women at a Jaina temple, getting ready for worship