Chapter II
The Tamil Jaina Community: Questions of Identity
(Or, Negotiating Spaces)

In this chapter one is trying to locate a community and its identity, and the changes through a 'long' historical time. The basic idea is to critique the prevalent tendency among scholars to 'freeze' a living community within set periods and trace and entire 'movement' from 'entry', through 'dominance' (?) and 'decline', based on records of political / state patronage.

'Persecution' and conflict are also seen in different terms, over different periods (not confined only to the period of the bhakti bards). Importance is given primarily to community's own narratives that reflect a situation whereby Tamil Jainas are constantly asserting their identity. Conflict is seen as the 'constant' here, and one is trying to look at the way a community consistently negotiates and works out ways of survival - moving from marginal to mainstream and marginal over and over again.

The community constantly constructs itself vis-à-vis the other - the Śaivites at one point, a Cakkīḷi (low caste) Rājā at another. Even as late as 20th century there is the case of the HMV record being ordered to be banned by the colonial administration for having hurt sentiments of the Jainas.

Speaking of a community that has to locate itself within - or is born into - a 'larger' identity in terms of the religious doctrine it follows, and a parallel, 'smaller' (?) but very crucial identity in terms of the linguistic tradition and cultural idioms is not an easy task. One cannot make any conclusive, deterministic statement on such a community,
which is marginal in terms of both numbers and by virtue of being 'hidden' by an overwhelming mainstream religious idiom. In this chapter one locates — relocates — these apparently parallel identities of the Tamil Jainas who today inhabit pockets of northern Tamilnadu in small numbers in cluster settlements in the villages and in pockets in the smaller and bigger towns.

What is the identity that they now relate to, built as it is, over centuries is a question one will focus mostly on. One will also focus on the caste question which is something hitherto untouched in previous scholarship on Tamil Jainism. Do the Tamil Jainas accept, or follow caste? Are they outside of it, in an idyllic sense, or are there subtle ways of showing adherence to caste system which dominated most history of Tamilakam, as it did, elsewhere in India. One also looks at the way prominent Tamil Jainas located themselves within the Dravidian and anti Brāhmaṇ movement as much as with the movement for Tamil language and culture as against Sanskritism. There are conversations, snippets from recent history, and more. One is looking backwards from today, as it were, as one believes that is the way to construct, reconstruct the lived history of a living community, especially a marginal community.

The community also asserts its identity constantly by way of claims to a past and figures of the past that have been 'appropriated' by the dominant communities. The case of the author of the Tamil classic, Tirukkuṟaḷ, Tiruvaḷḷuvar, is discussed in detail. The Tamil Jainas have continued to claim the author of this text as a Digambara muni.
And most important of all, the Tamil Jaina community that one is writing about here is a peasant society, an agrarian community. And this is significant, considering the fact that most people (scholars including) associate the Jainas (as a universal category) with only trade. In the Tamil context, the Tamil Jainas have been for generations involved in agriculture and need to be considered as a peasant society. Trade was not their only occupation; in fact many of the Tamil Jaina settlements are agrarian. Most Tamil Jainas one met speak of agriculture as one of the occupational categories devised by their first tīrthāṅkara Rṣabha. Most Tamil Jainas also happen to be vellalas. And this peasant society context is mostly negated or relatively an unknown aspect of Jainism in Tamilnadu. Both this chapter and the chapter dealing with epigraphs will address this issue and substantiate this fact of the agrarian society of Tamil Jainas. One of the substantiations is right below.

_Setting the Context: History, Issues, Perspectives_

"We are Tamil speaking Jainas. We number around 30,000 in Tamilnadu. Most of us are agriculturists. Some are self employed, a few employed in small positions in shops and some other vocations. Some are in government jobs. Inscriptions from the 5th century onwards that have come to light in Tamilnadu, are mostly those associated with the samanam (Jainas). Our forefathers have given more than their share to Tamil literary and textual tradition.

While the population of Tamilnadu is around 6 crores, we count as the minority of minorities in terms of numbers. Yet, we have not been accorded minority status. We can literally count on our fingers the number of people from our community who have managed government employment."
Thiru V.K. Appandairajan in the IAS, Thiru. S. Sripall in IPS, Thiru T. Vardhamanan in Banking sector... Hence we request the government to include us, Tamil speaking Śamaṇar (Jainas), citizens of Tamilnadu, in the Minorities List.

Thanking you, A.P. Aravazhi.”

According to the 1981 census, the total population of the Jainas in Tamilnadu was 49,564 (26,011 Male and 23,553 Female). The growth rate during the decade of 1971 – 1981 was a mere 20.60 per cent. Interestingly, the growth rate of Buddhists shows a declining Minus 35.98 per cent. “Madras City, Chengleput, North and South Arcot account for 90 per cent of the Jains in Tamilnadu, with the rural population amounting to 11,829, and urban 37,735.”

In the course of history human societies have encountered change, rupture, death and decay as also survivals, negotiations, and compromise. Social and other sciences have continued to work around / on each of these aspects and tried to make sense of these. They have for them the ‘tool’ of time and ‘distance’ – the luxury if we may say so, of time and a ‘panoramic vision, to be able to look at what happened before and what may happen in future.

It is, one feels, important to write of a living subject from the perspective of time, and history. To look at a subject through historical time and yet talk of the current.

A requisition made to Tamilnadu Government as printed in the journal Mukkudai, issue 29, November 2002, p.22. The letter is signed by the President of the Samanar Pervoli Iyakkam (check exact term). In year 2003, the population figures were 32,700, as per census of the Jaina Youth Forum, as per information of Mr. Aravazhi

I would like to make a note of my gratitude to my mother with whom I had several sessions of reading the Tamil books that I mention in the course of the chapter. That she taught me Tamil, though fairly late in the day, helped me with following the rest of the Tamil texts I could not manage to read with her.
Especially if such an exercise has significance in understanding the larger issues of community, culture, collective memory and shared (and unshared, but forced to be shared) histories.

In this context, one talks of a minority community in Tamilnadu, the Tamil Jainas. Today numbering around 30,000 this community has witnessed and lived through change – at times violent. A community that gave to Tamil a very large part of its grammar and poetry, besides a 'universal' icon such as Tiruvalluvar (of the Tirukkural) is today waging a quiet battle to be granted minority status on account of its socio-economic and demographic profile. An issue that merits historical, sociological and 'long-durée' (long duration/term) interest, if one may say so.

Largely an agricultural community, the Tamil Jainas are a living example of how a community manages to survive amidst universalised, dominant cultural paradigms, at times negotiating spaces, cultural and social, and at others, resisting these changes, while asserting its identity. They are a living example of how identities are constructed and reinforced and asserted; and also that of non-change, which leads to a community’s gradual deterioration (not ‘death’). At another level, in the process of negotiating, the community silently accepts the dominant cultural idioms with its own set of explanations for doing so.

And unfortunately such a community as this has been fossilised into pages of history – of ‘rise’ and ‘fall’, even as one speaks of dynasties. The fossilised Jain-ism of the bound texts and stonewalls in temples sadly overshadows the living community of Tamil Jainas (many of them still practising agriculturists) and there is as yet no account of
this community and its amazing journey through intense communal persecution. It is important to bring to light the 'today' of this community from the perspective of what was.

And to give it the space it deserves as one of the contributors to a larger Tamil history and cultural ethos. And to see how a community that bases itself on the principles that denounce both caste and a god-concept, gradually accepts these concepts within its fold, forced by the dominant / mainstream reality. And thus manages to survive.

In its survival to this day and its identity as a Tamil community practising Jainism and its intimate relationship with Tamil language and literature, the community makes a fine case for being re-presented in its present form and content. The Tamil Jains are adherents of Digambara Jaina tradition and settled predominantly in northern Tamilnadu – largely north and south Arcot districts, Kanchipuram. Tamil Jaina villages exist also in Tanjavur district, and a few other scattered settlements in other parts of Tamilnadu. In the early stages of history the Jains had a large hold over the region in and around Madurai but with the onslaught (or propagation, depending on the way we perceive it) of the 'bhakti' Saiva and Vaisnava traditions in the region, many of them moved to other districts. The historical vestiges of Jaina religion can still be seen in and Madurai. But no Jaina villages.

One of the prominent Tamil Jaina scholar-activists of the 20th century, 'Jeevabandhu' T. S. Sripal writes, "Research on the Jaina community must begin from Tamilnadu" (with the Pudukkottai Sittanavasal inscriptions dating to 3rd century BC. And many of the oldest Brahmi inscriptions of
the Tamil country (associated with the Jaina faith)....”² And “Ādi Agattiyar, Toţkăppiyar, Avināyaţar, Tirukkuṟal author (Kundakundācārya) Sāmanta Bhadrācārya, Jinasenācārya, Akaţaṅkatevar, Koţkuvelar....Vajranandi, Pavanandi.....were all Tamil Jaina scholars and ācāryas; of Tamil country.”³

Early Jainas

Who were the early Jainas? Who were the earliest adherents of Jainism? Which community /caste did they belong to? The chapter dealing with inscriptions gives more details regarding the historical antiquity of the Jainas in Tamilakam. Here one may briefly mention some significant points about their early history, which has also been referred to as ‘entry’ of Jainism into the Tamil country. At this point, one would allude to a traditional Jaina account (common to both Digambara and Śvetāmbara traditions) about the movement of the Jainas to the south of the Vindhyas. It is said that the preceptor Bhadrabāhu acclaimed as the author of Kalpaśūtra (the sacred Jaina text), foreseeing a twelve year famine period in Magadha, moved, along with Chandragupta and twelve thousand monks and nuns (this migration is dated generally around 4th century BC²⁰ ) to Karnataka where he starved himself to death (‘Sallekhana’); he sent Viśākhācārya to the Tamil country to propagate the Jaina doctrine there (around 3rd century BC²¹) While this is the most well known and commonly held view of Jaina movement to the south (and many scholars do opine that Jainism came to Tamilakam from Karnataka, through the Koţgu region – Salem and Coimbatore), it is interesting to note that the earliest

² Jeevabandhu T.S. Sripal, Samagar Malaj (Tamil), Vardhamana Patippakam, Chennai, 1996; p. 18
³ Ibid, p.10
epigraphical record of this event comes not earlier than 600 AD in the Sravanabelagola inscription no. 1 (Karnataka). It would be one's aim to see why it was important to have a written record of this inscription at this time and reiterate an already popular community - perception of a traditional account? More interestingly, this tradition is recorded in Jaina Literature of the 11th – 12th century AD. It may have been necessary, at this period of time (between 7th and 12th centuries AD) to the Jainas to record and reinstate the antiquity of their entry south, necessitated only by the premonition of a famine in the northern (and their original) region of Magadha. This was also, incidentally, the period of contestation for royal patronage among the various sects, the Jainas, Śaivas, Vaiśṇavas, while the Buddhists had already settled down in Sri Lanka and others moved north into certain areas of Andhradesa.

According to A.K. Chatterjee, "Jaina monks of Bengal and Orissa where responsible for the early propagation of Jainism in Tamilnadu and not those of Karnataka, "and within a few decades of the demise of Mahāvira, “nirgrantha monks carried the Jina doctrine to the south". Thus, "the Jaina religion portrayed in the Caṇḍikam poetry was the undivided nirgrantha religion (of) Pārśva and Mahāvīra." P.B. Desai believes Jainism came into Tamiḻakam from Andhra (and to southern part of the subcontinent around 4th century BC or earlier) through north Arcot (adjacent to the Telugu country) where Jaina caves and inscriptions have been found. Moving further down, they cross over sea to Sri

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5 Ibid., p. 190
6 Ibid., p.190.
Lanka (5th – 6th century AD); and another stream of Jaina teachers flowed in through Karnataka in the 3rd century BC. These were the monks of Bhadrabāhu’s congregation under the leadership of Viśakhačārya – moving into Tinnevelly, Madurai regions and “accelerated (the) pace of proselytising.” Hence we find more Jaina monuments and inscriptions here. Quoting evidence from Mahāvaṁsa (which he dates in 5th century AD), chapter 10 – “Paṇḍukābhaya (4th century BC), in his capital town of Anuradhapura, built a house for Nigantha Jotiya to the east of cemetery, Niganthagiri where ascetics of many heretical sects lived.” The Nigantha is, obviously, seen as a Jaina ascetic.

While it has been generally established that either through Nigantha (Nirgrantha), Sramaṇas, or Jainas, the Jaina doctrine moved into Tamilakam most certainly by 2nd century or 3rd century BC – which ever route it took. The original settlement then, perhaps, of the Jaina monks or nuns, was in the nature of ‘exiled’, or rather, secluded inhabitation of natural caverns and rock abodes amidst a society seeing them as no more than revered teachers/saints/ascetics, engaged in pedagogy, expounding a new faith of Jina Mahāvīra – of his many-isms or many-ness, Anekantavada; or pluralism? Or, simultaneity? Gradually, steadily with times (and through pedagogy, and story telling), they moved within the parameters of the working, everyday rhythms of the laity, living in their midst with the institutional structure of Pāḷis and exclusive rights over what are called ‘Pāḷicacandam’ lands. They now battle with the hegemony of the Brāhmaṇas.

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8 Ibid. p. 32
9 Ibid. p.32
10 Ibid. p.32
11 Ibid. p.25
in the ways they think most appropriate - though discourse on philosophy; through religion and literature, having already gained a stronghold over some royal dynasties, and also the populace. As the attacks (between the seventh and ninth centuries AD mainly) from the ‘bhakti’ bards grew more direct and abusive, we begin to perceive in the Tamil Jaina literature too a more pronounced proclamation of the superiority of the Jina doctrine over other systems of thought, including the Buddhist.

**Perspectives on Jainism in Tamilakam: Some Issues**

The focus of early research on Jainas and Jainism was more or less concerned about a pan-Indian (Universal) category of Jainas and the focus on single textual traditions, research in Jainism has, over the centuries, become more focused on regions, on the different traditions that the Jainas had adopted centuries ago – which the Oriental scholars ignored, or were unable to record due to their limitations. Thereby, a lot of scholarship has emerged around Jainism in the different regions within the subcontinent, which were under its influence. However it must be mentioned that the missionaries if the previous century, settled in various provinces, were indeed (albeit to a limited extent) getting familiar with these linguistic traditions within a larger Jaina tradition.

Most of the scholars concerned with Jainism in Tamilakam (and south India, in general) have more or less made extensive use if the numerous inscriptions (with allusions to Jaina monks, or laity in connection with donations), and textual traditions (many Tamil literary texts have been produced by Jaina teachers/monks), apart from a study of the iconographic evolution of monumental structures of Jainas to give detailed descriptive accounts of the period
which saw the Jainas entering the southern lands and enjoying a pride of place among the major dynasties ruling there over centuries, and earning popular support. A point of convergence of all these treatises on Jainas, is the ‘rise’ and ‘fall’ (or origin and ‘decline’) – as we had earlier noted – of the Jainas in Tamilakam, as though royal patronage were the only criterion for writing the history of a community.

As we had earlier also noted this kind of history then confines itself to the history of only the preachers the ‘elite’, the monks who got themselves large donations, the teachers who rose to eminence, vis-à-vis the state and the other elite – the brāhmaṇas. The other major component of Jaina social order, the śrāvaka, the lay householders remain largely neglected. It is only of late that scholars have begun to address this component and the local contexts of Jainism are being studied in terms if the Jaina ideas of history, sense of belonging to a community, and their points of difference – despite visible similarities in worship, ritual, etc – from other religious sects. This comes out in a striking manner especially when scholars talk of the ‘persecution’ of the Jainas by the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava ‘bhakti’ bards.

It is intriguing to note, the absence of popular tales, folklore, an oral tradition about this period. Is it possible that the persecution symbolically commemorated in stone (at the Mīnākṣī temple at Madurai) and enacted ritually at festivals, should have no popular remembrances/memory among the ‘persecuted’? Or is there a silence that confirms our earlier contention about uneasy compromises and absorption?
It's been mentioned, briefly, that about the entry of Jainas into south, and Tamilakam and in general scholars believe that the migration happened from Magadha to Karnataka and thence to Tamil Nadu, though few believe they came from Andhra, or even Bengal or Orissa. The only difference of opinion that exists regard the date of earliest Jaina occupation and some scholars opine that it's possible that 'nigantha' (nirgrantha' as the Jainas were termed, before the schism happened) Jaina monks might have come here even before the legendary śrutakevalin of Magadha, Bhadrabāhu, moved in a mass exodus to the Karnataka region. It may be mentioned that it is this traditional account (recorded in inscriptions of 600 AD and not earlier, of Sravanabelagola, Karnataka) which gained currency among the people in Tamilakam, as is seen from the reference to this even in the Periya Purāṇam (of Cēkkilār, the Śaiva bard) to a host of 'Karnataka Jaina' "pouring into Madurai like a cloud burst, uprooting the ruling dynasty...".

The historiography of Tamil Jainism has largely been history of the numerous epigraphical evidences available (most if them published), the iconography of the Jaina monuments, literary traditions of the Jainas in Tamil, each subject being largely a distinct one, disjointed, almost but most of it being used as evidence for the formula of 'glory', 'decline', 'revival', etc. And, despite the abundance of material available as to the area occupied by Jainas, donations of land, the 'Paḷliccandam' lands, monastic institutions, etc, there has as yet been no effort on tracing the historical geography of Jainas/Jainism; or movement of the Jaina monks and nuns in Tamilakam. One's idea of the 'marginal' and 'mainstream' is set against this concept of

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historical geography - settlement of newer areas, villages, agricultural land and of the Jaina community' as the chapter on inscriptions would bring to focus.

Again, while a wealth of information and analysis exists for the sudden increase in brahmadeya grants and settlement of agrahāras by the state, there is as yet a very sketchy descriptive account of the pallikandam lands. It must be noted that these grants were being made around the same time as the brahmadeyas and devadānas with similar exemptions on similar kinds of taxes and exclusive ownership rights. However, most historians have concentrated on the brahmadeyas as the main/only focus of discussion on ideology and polity, or, as B.D. Chattopadhyaya would put it, about brahmadeyas and devadānas being a "socio-religious necessity for the temporal power", in a brilliant hypotheses on the need to review the "feudal" state structure in view of the evidence from land grants given by the state not necessarily meaning a breakdown of the centralized state structure. Thus, the expansion of brāhmaṇa settlements - with donations from the state only gave legitimacy to the state, as the brahmadeyas, in the larger context of ascendancy of the 'bhakti' ideology, meant an integration of cults, sacred centers, and a universal Purāṇic idiom.

However, it may have been enlightening to place the 'pallikandam' concept within this larger scheme to look at the popularity the Jina doctrine now commanded. Particularly, what were the relations between the pallikandam, (and the members in charge of these) and the

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13 B.D. Chattopadhyaya, 'Political Processes and Structures of Polity early Medieval India: Problems of Perspective', Presidential Address, Indian Historical Congress, 1983, Burdwan
14 Ibid, p.8
brahmadeyas - where are the pa\lliccandam lands located?
The spatial distribution of pa\lliccandam lands has not been so far studied despite a wealth of evidence. Instead, though contested, Kennedy\textsuperscript{15} talks at length of the ideal of Br\=\textit{\text{\text{ähmi}}\text{\text{n}}} as “renouncer”, to whom the king “refers” to for “legitimacy”, and the Tamil concept of kingship, for him, becomes the concept of ritual submission to the idea of the Br\=\textit{\text{\text{ähmi}}\text{\text{n}}} as supreme renouncer. The only mention of Jainas and the Buddhists is limited to the reference to their famous epics, the Cilappatik\=\textit{\text{\text{ār}}ama and Ma\text{\text{nimekalai}}, which refer to Jaina merchant families. The whole period of Jaina influence over the ruling dynasties is ignored and it may be anybody’s question as to what was the ideal of kingship being referred to in this period? Moreover, the Jaina monks were themselves seen as renouncers in a stricter sense than the br\=\textit{\text{\text{ähma}}\text{\text{n}}as. At this juncture, where one is only beginning to consider the necessity of understanding pa\lliccandam and brahmadeya in a larger context of contestation one might refer back to Dirks when he says that “political systems in south India played a strong role in providing opportunities and structures for cooperative alliances among discrete social groups.”\textsuperscript{16} While of course he is talking of the alliances of the Pallavas with warring groups of chieftains, one might here borrow the idea of structures of integration in our case brahmadeyas, pa\lliccandam being two such.

It is interesting to note that pa\lliccandam seems to be the closest replicate of the brahmadeya, and the Jainas, not the Buddhists, managed to evince such a concession from the royalty. One of the reasons for this may be seen in the

\textsuperscript{15} Richard Kennedy, “The king in Early South India as Chieftain and Emperor”, Indian Historical Review, III, No. 1, 1977 (pp.1-15); p.1.

\textsuperscript{16} Nicholas Dirks, ‘Political Authority and Structural Change in Early South Indian History’, Indian Economic and Social History Review, 13, no. 2, p.131. Emphasis added
changes affected in Jainism, in its interaction with the Tamil cultural idiom, the tribes, the milieu, and perhaps, as Champakalakshmi believes, "Jainism became as much part of Purānic religion and temple cult as the brāhmanical Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism were."  At a popular level, simultaneously, "it induced messianic expectations among the lower order... through the ideal of salvation." However, despite seeming similarity in terms of rituals, worship of minor deities, etc. there was as yet a debate among Jainas themselves regarding the practices some of them considered alien and polluting to the cause of the Jina's religion.

The Jainas, who were in Tamilakam during what is termed the age of the anthologies, or 'Caṅkam' period, were gradually affecting a change in the ideals of the society, or certainly the ideals expressed in the anthologies. Much has been said about the two most 'visible' ideals symbolised (eulogised) in the poems - the 'love' and 'war' aspects. The age of heroism has been much talked of. At the same time, towards the latter half of this age, the influence of Jainism as well as Buddhism was felt in the Caṅkam corpus - "... gnomic and didactic literature was produced by the essentially philosophical (emphasis mine) poets of the day...the earliest works were interpreted from a moral standpoint and the bards were 'canonised' as the wise and noble men ... ('cāṅgor ceyyul' - or 'poetry of the noble men')... There was a shift from heroes of poems to their authors." 19

Talking of the general neglect of the Jaina 'schemata' in reconstructing the history of Tamilakam) one would digress

17 R Champakalakshmi, 'Urbanisation in South India: Role of Ideology and Polity' 47th Presidential Address at the IHC, Srinagar, 1986, p.34
18 Ibid,p.34
to mention a point about the Jaina Purānic tradition, which differs from the brāhmaṇical in giving importance to the authorial aspect. The genesis of the text (its creation, reasons for its creation, contexts, et al) is of prime consideration in Jaina tradition. One is reminded of a particular exegesis – which is reflective of the generalisation which much scholarship suffers from, in terminology, categories, etc. - of course in a totally different context. This was a paper on the construction of the Krishna figure in one of Bankim Chandra’s works, Krishna Caritra. The generalisation occurs in the category ‘Indian’ tradition, Kaviraj, at one point, says in the ‘Indian’ tradition, the text not only hides the individual, it erases him....; the author is not the text’s creator, but its instrument ...”

Further, he talks of the “mistrust” which is the phenomenon peculiar to this “Indian tradition”. Though the above mentioned paper speaks of a different subject, for a different period, the general understanding of an ‘Indian’ over and above the numerous local traditions or concepts can be compared with even the brilliant monographs produced on agrarian history, land grants, on brāhmaṇical rise (and overpowering) over other belief systems; the concern with brahminisation has somewhere managed to produce limited understanding of the processes of interaction between the so-termed ‘heretical’ sects and people. Though enormous scholarship has emerged around the Jainas in Tamil Nadu, it has by far concentrated on detailed documentation of epigraphs, literature and monuments and missed out on an analytical understanding of community through centuries.

In recent years, there have emerged monographs bordering on this very aspect. However, community history of the Jainas in Gujarat, Rajasthan, etc. has had a greater scholarly contribution and attention. In this context, one hopes that this, one’s thesis - might introduce this much neglected aspect of the Tamil Jaina community and its history in the context of broader historical changes in Tamilakam. Again, one may reiterate that by Tamil Jaina, one is insisting on their identity as Tamil (which they state with pride) and as Jaina; and in this sense, differentiating them from Jainas settled in Tamilnadu - mostly the Śvetāmbara ("Marwari", "seṭh" as the Tamil Jainas refer to them) Jainas who are basically traders migrated in later periods into Tamilnadu. The linguistic identity, one will see, is very important to the Tamil Jainas' own construction of a community identity; and it goes on to establish a regional tradition within a pan-Indian, pan-Jaina community construct.

The Missing Tamil Jainas: Some Perspectives on the Jaina Community history

Paul Dundas\(^1\) gives a detailed descriptive account of the Śvetāmbara and Digambara Jainas based on their respective textual traditions. However, this is not an analytical monograph on the Jainas meant for the specialist but it certainly gives the ‘outsider’ (to the realm of Jainism) an overall picture of the Jaina philosophy, organisation, and the essential difference between the Śvetāmbara and Digambara Jainas in one composite text.

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Talking of the Jaina perceptions of history (itihāsa), J.P. Jain\textsuperscript{22} gives the views of the Jaina teacher; Jinasenā (9\textsuperscript{th} century AD) defines history as an account of past happenings, which must be truthful, righteous, authoritative. He then gives an account of the early Oriental scholars on Jaina studies and contests (as we have said earlier) their idea that Jainism has a single unified textual tradition, and stresses on the importance of local interpretations. He refers to a wealth of literature (traditional) on Jaina modes of worship and rites of veneration.

According to Burton Stein\textsuperscript{23} one of the main ideas behind royal patronage to Jainism lay in its ‘non-peasant’ warrior power, for legitimacy, and gave an ‘Āryan respectability’ to the benevolence of the ruler.\textsuperscript{24} Stein further posits the Jaina kingship as a moral (model of) kingship as against the ‘heroic’ kingship of early Tamils. However, it is difficult to come to this conclusion unless one studies in depth the kingship and ideology over the period when Jainism was in an important position vis-à-vis the state. Moreover, one could really talk of Jaina kingship (or symbols of kingship/power) as to have hegemony over other systems.

In the context of the Jaina Purāṇas, John Cort\textsuperscript{25} The universal history comprises the biography on the 23 tīrthankaras, the Baladevas, Vāsudevas, Pratīvāsudevas (9 each) and the Śaṅkāpuruṣas, while the local history comprises of the lineage texts (paṭṭāvalis) or lists of Jaina

\textsuperscript{22} J.P. Jain, The Jaina Sources of the History of Ancient India (100 BC to AD 900), Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1964, p.1
\textsuperscript{23} Burton Stein, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, OUP, Delhi, 1985
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, p. 79 – 80
\textsuperscript{25} John E. Cort, ‘Genres of Jain History’, Journal of Indian Philosophy, 23, No. 1, 1986
monks or teachers, and believes that writing a history of the Jaina community must involve a separate study of each of these histories, in their contexts. Elsewhere, Cort distinguishes between the ‘Hindu’ purāṇas – which are “preoccupied with activities of gods and goddesses on an often transcendental level”, while the Jaina Purāṇas deal with lives of “specific” people who “lived at specific times in Jaina history”. However, here it does not distinguish between the ‘universal’ or ‘local’ Jaina history; and it is well known that what is termed ‘universal’ history also talks of people (the Baladevas, Vāsudevas, etc.) not necessarily of “this world”, so to say; and the Jaina time (for the tirthankaras before Pārśva and Mahāvīra) is also an exaggerated time measured in units of ‘oceans’. Though pilgrimage is important to both Jaina and Brāhmaṇical traditions, Cort believed that the Jaina Purāṇas are “less inclusive” than their brāhmaṇical counterparts and did not absorb ritual cultic and sectarian texts as did Hindu Purāṇas.

Talking of ‘inclusion’ of the ‘popular’ at a different level, Padmanabh S. Jaini argues that the Jaina even like the Theravada Buddhists “were unable to prevent their laity from falling prey to these (popular / non-Jaina) customs.” And in fact “a 10th century text of Somadeva, the Upāsakādhīyāyana (epilogue to a larger work, a religious, novel Yaśastilakacampu prescribed practices for Digambbara Jaina laity) included almost all the rituals of the

27 Ibid, p.187
28 Ibid, p. 187
Hindus.” However, a number of Jaina monks and acaryas, at the same time, were questioning this development and also making efforts to stem this tide. Thus, Jaini refers to Jinasena’s (8th century AD) Ādipurāṇa (containing a list of, among other aspects of the ‘universal’ history, householder rites) wherein he talks of removing the images of ‘false gods’ or mithyā devata from their residence. Thereby, Jaini avers that the time of Jinasena saw a “movement to reconvert” the Jainas who “were prone to worship non-Jaina gods.” But despite efforts, even like Theravada Buddhism, Jainism also allowed a parallel, popular aspect to develop. “Both succumbed to strong popular demands for the worship of demigods, and had to finally legitimize some form of a cult of ‘guardian deities’ (the Yaksha/Yakṣi).”

While western scholarship in the recent past has given a lot of focus to the community aspect of Jainism, the community referred has been the Śvetāmbara Jainas of the north. Jainas of Gujarat and Rajasthan have been worked on intensively and extensively by these scholars, almost to the exclusion of Jain communities in the south, particularly the community of Tamil Jainas in Tamilnadu. In many cases there is general ignorance of the existence of such a community as the Tamil Jainas in the first place. For instance, speaking generally about the Jaina community in a work that treats of the Jaina ritual culture, Lawrence Babb talks of a universal category of Jainas without situating them in the regional context, at least when talking of the Jaina ritual culture in his Ascetics and Kings in a Jaina Ritual Culture (1998).

31 Ibid, p.194.
32 Ibid, p.194
33 Ibid, p.198
The Tamil Jainas: Community, Identity: the Issues

a. The Caste Question

There appears to be a status quo in terms of caste equations so far as the Jainas vis-a-vis other castes are concerned. Although there is no place for caste in the 'pristine' Jaina religion, the story of the birth of occupational divisions as conceptualised in the story of Rṣabha, the first tirthankara, seems to be of later origin, basically addressing the inevitability of the caste factor in Indian society as a whole.

There seems an acceptance of caste, outside, if not within the Jaina system, in terms of general social relations.

Very little or nothing has been spoken about the concept of caste vis-a-vis the Tamil Jainas. It is believed since Jainism per se did not believe in caste and hierarchy, it may not be necessary to look at caste. Plus, the Tamil Jaina community as an intrinsically agrarian community, in Tamilakam within a larger agrarian and hierarchised context is seen to have been in some way or the other been very important in this larger context. The people who took to the Jaina faith were mostly the vellālas. Though Sangave speaks of a sect of "Jain brāhmaṇas" it is not to be taken to mean literally the brāhmanas who were earlier converts to Jainism; he means the priestly caste. Plus, there is an attempt by him, and some

34 This started off initially as a curiosity based question, which was posed to the community during my discussions with them. One had initially thought that the Jainas would be more "liberal" on the question of caste. But one did, with time, notice the taboos practised in terms of entry to the temples restricted, and other taboos that they talked of regarding lower castes. I acknowledge the contribution to this question - essentially by consistent probing to my first expression of surprise at seeing caste 'at play' in the field - of P. Sainath, (fellow) journalist, friend.

35 Mentioned elsewhere, the story of four occupational divisions devised by Rṣabha, which were meant to be simply occupational divisions without corresponding hierarchical arithmetic which made it different from the Hindu understanding of caste and descent-based work. The Jaina castes did not have anything to with heredity and birth in a caste. Thus, there is nothing in the story that says an agriculturist's son cannot be anything else, or a trader's son cannot be anything but a trader, for instance. But the essence of divisions and occupational divisions in society has some resonance to the Hindu claims of caste being occupational divisions.
others who tended to follow that argument that it means brāhmaṇas. He takes the idea of ‘brāhmaṇa’ as being closely connected to the temple and ritualistic process and transposes it to the Jaina community, without differentiating. For, if anything, unlike the brāhmaṇas, the so-called Jaina brāhmaṇas”, who are actually the aracakas in his case, are not considered the highest category among the Tamil Jainas. They depend to a large extent on the donations of the community to their religious establishments, the matha, the latter taking care of their needs, in most cases.

The veḷḷāḷas who took to Jainism did not leave their own caste identity behind. Caste then, was a firmly established social truth that remained, while the religious doctrine they adopted was far away from the regular caste hierarchy born from the Vedic religion. The Jainas have their own explanations and instances to this. Where they believe it is occupational – and Vṛṣabha first categorised occupational categories. And is not caste as “in the brāhmaṇ sense of caste’. Yet, it is there. The lower castes are not allowed in their temples. But the explanations are different. Not only lower castes, but anyone consuming meat, is considered polluting and not allowed into the Jain temples.

In discussions on caste in Tamilnadu, perhaps there is need to bring under closer scrutiny even the so called ‘heretical’ or ‘heterodox’ sects and understand how caste as a basic layer of their identity function in these communities. The Tamil Jainas retained – many of them – their caste / jāti identity such as Mutaliyar, Chettiar, and so forth. Such a closer scrutiny is missed for these non-brāhmaṇical religious communities and in a sense almost written off as non-existent. One is trying to address this question in a
preliminary manner, for lack of adequate discussion on the subject so far as Tamil Jaina community is concerned.

Caste, as Rajan Gurukkal remarks, was “the most potent discursive instrument that stabilised the relations of production... accommodating in its fold a variety of economically stratified functionaries of hereditary trades. As agrarian expansion advanced, human settlements (ūr) originally bound by kinship got integrated as agrarian localities (nādu) which subsequently acquired great political significance in the monarchical system.”

This being so, when it comes to the study of processes of change that affected the Jaina community, caste never seems to occur as a matter justifying any attention. So far as the Tamil Jaina agricultural community is concerned, in the present context, for those who could afford, lower castes generally work on their farms. Those who cannot afford costs of the agricultural labourers, of course do their own tilling. Lower castes are certainly not allowed into Jaina temples. While this may be one aspect of their caste relations, there are other aspects to it as well.

While one of the aspects that needs to be noted is the way the Jainas perceived themselves vis-à-vis the other castes (the lower castes) and the other aspect is the way they retained specific clan / jāti 'markers' with their Jaina identity. Both these aspects are reflected in the following points that Thurston notes about the Jainas in Tamilnadu.

36 Rajan Gurukkal, “Towards a New Discourse: Discursive Processes in Early South India”, in R.Champakalakshmi and S. Gopal, eds, Tradition, Dissent and Ideology: Essays in Honour of Romila Thapar, OUP, Delhi, 1994 (pp.313 – 334); p.331
In this context Thurston's remarks on this aspect may be noted here – “The usual caste affix is Nainar, but a few, generally strangers from other districts, are called Rao, Chetti, Das or Mudaliyar.”37 Again, “The men use the title of Nainar or Udaiyar, but their relations in Kumbakonam and elsewhere in that direction sometimes call themselves Chetti or Mudaliyar. The men...in general appearance resemble the Vellalas...The women dress like Vellalas and wear the same kind of tali...and other jewellery...” 38 However, these ‘markers’ were not all too visible in the census conducted in that time. Of the Madras Census Report, 1891, Thurston says, “Out of a total of 25, 716 Jains, as many as 22, 273 have returned both caste and sub division as Jaina. The remainder have returned 22 sub divisions of which some such as Digambara and Svetambara are sectarian rather than caste divisions, but others like Marvadi, Osval, Vellalas etc are distinct castes....Some Jains have returned well known castes such as their main castes, for we have Jain Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Goudas, Vellalas, too...

At the Madras Census 1901, 27, 431 Jains were returned. Though they are found in nearly every district of Madras Presidency, they occur in the largest number in the following – South Canara – 9, 582; North Arcot – 8, 128; South Arcot – 5, 896.”39

As to why they returned their surnames as “Jains” may be a question that needs to be posed to the manner in which the census officials posed that question to the community in the first place.

38 Ibid, p.431
39 Ibid, p. 419-20
But in a sense it does reflect the community's need to identify themselves as "Jaina" first and foremost, as being distinct from the "Hindu" category of the British, considering that in this period there were also a number of cases coming up in legal matters wherein the Jainas were trying to get their status changed from 'Hindu' to 'Jain'.

Thurston also remarks on the Jainas' social taboos. "The Jainas are careful to avoid pollution from contact with outcastes, who have to get out of their way in the road, as I have noticed myself." "(There are) more than half of them in Wandiwash taluk and the rest in Arcot and Polur...They have most of the brahman ceremonies and wear the sacred thread, but look down upon brahmans as degenerate followers of an originally pure faith. For this reason they object generally to accepting ghee or jaggery etc from any but of their own caste. They are defiled by entering a Pariah village, and have to purify themselves by bathing and assuming a new thread..." And he gives his opinion on the Jainas - "The Jain community now holds a high position in Tindivanam taluk and includes wealthy traders and some of quite the most intelligent agriculturists there." Some of the perspectives of the Tamil Jaina community on these matters will be discussed later in this chapter.

In a land where 'lower' castes and the marginalised tribal population - hill tribes; in the context of animal sacrifices the caste (in this particular context, caste as a segregating ideology) question did matter. For Jainism to gain a strong

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40 This question is taken up later. Incidentally, the Supreme Court in 2005 declined minority status to Jains. And a 2006 SC judgment opined that the Jain religion is not part of the Hindu religion (Committee of Management Kanya Junior High Bal Vindya Mandir, Etah, U.P. v. Sachiv, U.P. Basic Shiksha Parishad, Allahabad, U.P. and Ors. Indian Supreme Court Case- http://www.judis.nic.in/supremecourt/)

41 Thurston, op.cit, p. 426
42 Ibid, p. 427
43 Ibid, p. 431
foothold — state patronage did help. On the other hand, brahminism and Sanskritic Hinduism seemed, at least on the face of it, more 'accepting' (?) of the local tribal / folk rituals and practices, despite the larger ideology of separation on the basis of concepts of purity and pollution and descent.

None of the works on Jainism in Tamilakam reflect on the caste question. Most work on an assumption, most often, that Jainism in Tamilnadu is above, and beyond caste. Were the Jainas really immune to segregation, caste inequalities? Did they remain aloof? Considering the long period of the survival of Tamil Jainas among a largely agricultural community, in the North, South Arcot, Tanjavur districts and parts of Ramanathapuram, Tamil Jainas, as a community, must surely have had to negotiate their space within the larger social parameters, caste being one such crucial and to a large extent an overwhelming dimension. The stories of persecution that the Tamil Jainas narrate touch upon their understanding of the other castes and communities. Many a times, they do not seem to recount very favourable, and many happy sequences in their history within the Tamil country, which implies a consistent conflict of identities and existences.

A socio-cultural, anthropological account of the Tamil Jainas is necessary to tackle these questions, issues, as also to raise them from the perspective of a historian trying to reconstruct the history of a living community with an ancient past, rather than focus on state patronage via epigraphy alone, which tells only half the story.

So far as the Jainas were concerned, so far as some communities accepted the Jaina faith, it seemed fine, but
what was their response to those who stayed outside of it? In this sense, it seemed to be like any other ‘elite’ religious system, though, like Buddhism, initially it had started off as counter to the Vedic, brāhmiṇical rigidity. However, it may be noted that the Jainas themselves affirm to a very different understanding of this ‘exclusion’. The fact that anybody from any community, not strictly adhering to the tenets of Jainism about non killing (kollāmai) most specifically, becomes ‘impure’ and polluting. They are known to have problems with brāhmiṇs – Thurston mentions this. “The Jainas are careful to avoid pollution from contact with outcastes, who have to get out of their way in the road, as I noticed myself.... They have most of the brahman ceremonies and wear the sacred thread, but look down upon Brahmans as degenerate followers of an originally pure faith. For this reason they object generally to accepting ghee or jaggery, etc from any but those of their own caste. They are defiled by entering a Pariah village, and have to purify themselves by bathing and assuming a new sacred thread. The usual caste affix is Nainar, but a few, generally strangers from other districts, are called Rao, Chetti, Das, or Mudaliyar...”\

The Tamil Jainas also aver that the reason for their not allowing people from certain (lower) castes into their temples is qualitatively different from the reason adopted by the brāhmiṇs (according to them). It is not a question of treating them differently on the basis of birth, since their religious belief itself is based on karma and transforming of the individual self through observation of certain principles. They believe that their tīrthankara Rṣabha introduced occupation based categories strictly in terms of occupations,

not based on descent or hierarchy; and hence there is no question of exclusion, the kind practised within brāhminism.

(The) “Credit for accommodating the Hindu caste system as a worldly institution goes to the ingenuity and literary skill of the acaryā Jinasenā (c.800). Jinasenā’s efforts to “jina-ise” certain pan Indian social norms were by no means confined to the issue of caste.”45 Interestingly, it has been noted that Jinasena was a brahmin convert to Jainism who along with his teacher Viṇasenā is credited with converting Amoghavarṣa the Rāshṭrakuṭa king to Jainism.46

But the Tamil Jainas would like to perceive of caste differently, and not as the way the Dharmaśāstras talk of it. For instance, T. S. Sripal, a Tamil Jaina scholar who wrote extensively on Jaina religion in Tamilnadu and on persecution of the Jainas, and was in the forefront of fall discussion on Tamil Jaina community identity and history (a Congress worker during the freedom struggle) says, “In Jaina tradition there are four occupational groups – arasar (ruler), antaṇar (learning), vaṇikar (merchant), velḷālar (agriculturists)…”47

Padmanabh Jaini points out, “The caste of the kṣatriyas came to be established when Rṣabha assumed the powers of a king and held weapons in his arms. The vaiṣya and the sudra castes arose subsequently as he invented different means of

47 T. S. Sripal, Ilaṅgavatikal Samayam Yātu? (Tamil), Parry Nilayam (Boradway), Madras, 1957(p.39)
livelihood and people were trained in diverse arts and crafts."  

V.A. Sangave (who wrote on the Jaina social order) writes, "It has been very emphatically stated by Jain research scholars that the castes found in Jaina community at present appear to have come into existence after the 10th century AD because Jaina books prior to 10th century AD do not refer to castes."  

But, "It is not definitely known how the various castes, sub castes have originated."  

But then, certainly that the people who accepted the Jaina faith brought in their caste identities with them as they came – thus vellālars – keep mutaliyār, kounder, etc, caste identity with Jaina identity.  

On the caste question, Mallinatha Sastri says, "Brāhmiṇs, kṣatriyas and vaiśyas adopted Jainism. People of lower castes neither adopted this religion nor was it easy for them to do so, since Jainism was strict about the question of eating meat, adhering to ahimsa....Only the higher castes could adopt it....Lower caste people are used to drinking, eating meat, which was allowed in other religions. ....Jaina religion, thus, was only able to remain (secure) in the hands of a few...."  

It is difficult to agree with his point on the brāhmiṇs (not necessarily the kṣatriyas and vaiśyas) accepting the Jaina faith (or converting as it may). Difficult considering the fact that in that period, which favoured them – in social,  

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50 Ibid, p.322  
51 Mallinatha Sastri, Tāmilnadu Kā Jain Itiḥās (Hindi), Kundakunda Bharati, New Delhi, 1994, p.133
economic and political terms – why would they have the need to adopt a ‘heretical’ faith, especially one (besides Buddhism) which had come out in the strongest terms against Vedic, brahminical ritualism. Moreover, in the Tamilnadu context, brahmins have been nearly always most vociferous in denouncing all other faiths. With Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava bhakti concept becoming more popular and accepted among the brahmins, there was open denouncing and persecution of the Jaina and Buddhists. Moreover, the Jaina tradition has always had an uncomfortable relationship with the brahmins or so it would seem in many of their textual traditions speaking of the brahmins in very low light.

In one of his essays Padmanabh Jaini refers to one of the Jaina textual traditions and its perception of the origin of brahmins as a social group. He is talking in the context of the Jaina ācārya Jinasena’s response to brahminical (Vedic) hegemony – “exploiting fully the rich potentialities in the legend of Rśabha, the first sarvajna (omniscient one) Jinasena sought, as it were, to write new history of the world, presided over by a Jain Brahmā, who pronounced a set of Jain Vedas, instituted a Jain division of the castes and duties, and proclaimed a series of Jain samskāras, complete with Jain rites and litany……..”\(^{52}\)

At the same time, he points out that Jinasena believed, “there is only one jati called the manuṣya jāti or the human caste, but divisions arise on account of their different professions.”\(^{53}\)

Thus – “\textit{manuṣya jātir ekaiva jātinamōdayōdbhava}”

\(^{52}\) Padmanabh Jaini (2000), cf. cit, pp. 339-40

\(^{53}\) Ibid, pp.339-40
And “Jinasena claims that the Vedas are not what the Brāhmaṇas chant at the slaughter of the sacrificial animals, but the Dvādaśāṅgapravacana or the scripture of the Jains, pronounced by the Ādideva....” 55 Through his Ādipurāṇa, thus, “Jinasena not only criticised the Brāhmaṇical doctrine of the creator and his creation (Tāvarakarttvavāda) but openly challenged the authority of the Vedic scriptures, rejected the divinity of the Vedic gods, repudiated the efficacy of the Brāhmaṇical rites and rituals, and above all ridiculed the claim of the Brāhmaṇs to a superior social rank....” 56

Coming to the story of the origin of the terminology (or by extension, the group) ‘brāhmaṇas’ Jaini writes – “The Jain accounts unanimously declare that the caste of the Brāhmaṇs was not instituted by Rāṣabha but by his son Bharata, the first cakravartin... Jinasena ignores the word brāhmaṇa and concentrates on the term dvija which afford him a chance to describe in great detail the corpus of 98 saṃskāras (sanctifying ceremonies which, called the upanīti (initiation) conferred upon an ordinary man the status of a ‘twice-born’” 57 “The Prakrit commentaries on the Āvaśyaka (Āvaskyaka-cūrṇi and Āvaśyaka-Maladhāri-vṛtti quoted in Devendra’s Rāṣabhadeva; also in Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpurusācarita I) take recourse to a folk etymology to explain the origin of the word mahana (Sanskrit brāhmaṇa). It is said that Bharata on his return from his from his world conquest wished to share his wealth with his brothers who had already become...

54 Ibid, p.348: note.47 from Adipurana, XXXVIII, 45
55 Ibid, pp.339-40
56 Ibid, pp.339-40
57 Ibid, p.341-2
ascetics in the monastic order of Rṣabha. Bharata approached them with a cart load of food and other gifts, but was grieved to hear that Jain ascetics could not partake of food specially prepared for them (uddiṣṭa-āharatyaṅga). Since it is wrong for householders to receive alms thus freely given Indra the king of gods suggested to Bharata that the food might be offered to the virtuous initiates who had taken the aṅuvratas of a householder. Bharata gratefully fed them and invited them to have their meals for ever at his place. Henceforth they were to forsake other means of livelihood which involved himśa (tilling, etc) and engage themselves in activities like the study and teaching of the scriptures, worship of the Jina, etc. They kept vigil on the king’s conduct by reminding him ‘you are conquered (by the passions); fear increases, therefore do not kill, do not kill (mā hana). They thus came to be called the māhāna or the Brāhmaṇs.”58 “In recognition of their new status (varṇalābha) he conferred upon them the title of dvija and confirmed it by investing them with sacred threads (yajñopavita) which indicated the number of pratimās they had assumed. ..”59

In fact, the blatant conflict between these systems has been recorded and often mentioned in works of many scholars. This being so, the Jaina community’s response to this conflict has not been adequately addressed. In subtle ways, Mayilai Sini Venkataswamy in his book Śaṅgamum Tamilum60 does not mince words in expressing his opinion that the sole cause of the decline in the popularity of Jainism in Tamilakam was the rise of ‘Hinduism’ through the

58 Ibid, p.341
59 Ibid, p.342
60 Mayilai Sini Venkataswamy, Śaṅgamum Tamilum (in Tamil), South India Saiva Siddhanta Publications, Tinnevelly, 1954. I thank my mother for having spent time in writing, and later reading this text with me; and Theodore Bhaskaran for sparing his old copy of the book when it could not be found elsewhere.
‘bhakti’ movement. He also notes that – as per the Jaina tradition – the Jaina teacher Akalaṅkaka defeated a Buddhist bhikku in the Kancipuram temple (now the Kamakṣī temple, though claimed by both Buddhists and Jainas as theirs formerly) the Buddhist lost and moved to Sri Lanka. And he also reasons that Vedic religion incorporated the pre-existing Dravidian gods and goddesses of the Tamil people such as Murukan, Korravai, Tirumāl, Śiva, into its fold. So while Vedic religion, Jainism and Buddhism all entered the Dravidian land and culture and society, and were not endemic to that context, Vedic religion incorporated the Dravidian ritual context, including that of animal sacrifice, etc, while the other two did not. Dravidian gods and goddesses thus became bound to Vedic gods and goddesses through relationships constructed between the two – as daughters, sons, consorts, and so forth.

Elsewhere Venkataswamy also mentions that, at the same time, festivals such as Dīpāvali, Śivarātri, etc were essentially Jaina festivals which were incorporated in the Hindu religion. This last point was also something the Tamil Jainas one met invariably spoke of. One will revert back to this last point while talking about the way the Tamil Jaina community speaks of its identity.

b. The Persecution Question

Memories of persecution are still strong: a casual walk with an elderly Tamil Jaina from a bus stop to a home at Triupparambur, barely a kilometer long walk and the first

61 Ibid, p.57
62 Ibid, p.57
63 Ibid, p.58
64 Ibid, p.59
65 Ibid, p.79ff; for the Tamil Jainas, Dīpāvali symbolises the enlightenment of Mahāvīra, while Śivarātri that of Rābha.
thing he says after initial introductions, is the story of Sundara Pāṇḍya. The king was a Jaina initially. He had a headache and his sister a Śaiva. The Jaina guru could not cure the king. But Appar, who was brought in by his sister, cured him. The king converted to Śaivism. This story gets retold in many versions in many of the villages one visits. Many others narrate accounts of the persecution—impaling of the Jain munis, kaluvettatu and the vilā (festival) celebrating the same at Madurai even now.

The story that seems to be uppermost on the minds of the Tamil Jainas regarding persecution is that of the “cakkilī rājā”. Now the term cakkilī refers to the caste of leather workers/tanners. Interestingly in all the accounts of the story the term used by the community for the king (we shall go to that story shortly) is ‘cakkilī’ but that is not the term mentioned in any of the written records of the story. ‘Cakkilī’ in that sense, may be used more as a generic category for a person of the lower caste. Not necessarily to a person of the cakkilī caste. In some cases some members of the community used the term ‘oru Cenji rājā’; or ‘cirrarasan’ (a small king of Cenji), and so on.

The Jaina community has a larger contact with a pan Indian Jaina community today only in terms of donations for āśramas, establishments and so on. But at the same time the Tamil identity is also important. The language is important to their construction of a Jaina identity as well. A very literate society, largely. In terms of how they perceive themselves the immediate response is—non killing (kollāmai ati pitikiratu) to hold strongly to the ideal of non killing, ahimsai, kollāmai, non violence.
It is important to trace changes and development, ruptures and breaks within the processes that helped evolve a Tamil Jaina community within the socio-political and economic changes in Tamilakam. There can not be a linear account.

Around 15-20 years ago a monk from the north, Árjivasāgar took strong exception to Tamil Jainas worshipping yaksis as mother goddesses and condemned this aspect throughout his tour of Tamilnadu. Quite a section of the populace was influenced and inspired by his speeches and till date there are few Tamil Jainas who agree with his view point. But most do still invoke the yakṣa and yakṣi — or śāsana deivatai. Women especially seem to share an intimate relationship with the yakṣi images in the temples. Tīrthaṅkaras, being omniscient beings and with no direct contact with the 'this-worldly' aspects of laypersons, they are not to be propitiated for granting boons, and so forth. Though ostensibly even the sasana devatas are not propitiated for boons, many women say they can relate better to these guardian deities who have the capacity to intervene in the everyday lives by extending help to the lay devotee in times of need. In this one can see the sensual bhakti element operating at some levels. Women perform pūjai — offer worship — to the yakṣi images in shrines on certain days of the month or on specific days. Litanies are available to them in Tamil with such concepts as 'lakṣārcanai', 'aṣṭottiram', 'tōttira mañcari', and so forth, almost similar to the brāhmiṇical devi worship. Many of the yakṣis, incidentally, share names with the mother goddess in the Dēvi Māhātmyam or with Śaṅkara's Soundarya Lahari, for instance. Though the Jainas would have one believe the brāhmiṇical goddesses (or local goddesses incorporated in the overarching temple religious complex of the brāhmiṇs) was inspired by the Jaina yakṣis. Padmāvati, Dharumadevi / Kūśmāṇḍini are among the
most popular yakṣis. Some elements of Śākta worship are also visible in some cases. In this case, perhaps one must look at the Tamil Jaina ritualistic evolution within the larger Tamil socio-cultural context. Operating with specific Tamil idioms. Where the worship of mother goddesses predates the evolution of the temple – brāhmaṇical ritual complex. Goddesses such as Korravai are known in the early Caṅkam period; so also other local village, forest dwelling mother goddesses. In that sense, both the Purānic and Jaina and Buddhist religions incorporated an earlier existing idiom of goddess worship, which may have been a sensual form of worship. There were of course the ‘moving’ god – concept related to divination rituals where the goddess or god possessed the person that worshipped, evoked her / him. Bhakti it self took from this basic Tamil layer to later become quite a different concept from the one it originally started off as (idealising a ‘personal’ god-head)

c. The Identity Question

The Dravidian movement (Self respect) and Tamil identity also helped the Tamil Jainas in that period to assert their identity as a community and claim its due place in the Tamil literary and cultural realm. The question of Tamilness was being raised – language becoming the central focus – also protesting against Brāhmaṇas and Sanskrit at the same time. People such as Tiru. Vi. Kalyanasundaram Mudaliyar (1883-1953), also called Tiru. Vi. Ka, E. V. Ramaswamy Periyar empathised with the Jainas on questions of their contribution to Tamil literature and their identity as a distinct community in Tamil Nadu with a rich history. In earlier periods, the scholar U.Ve. Swaminatha Aiyer made his own contribution to bringing to light several manuscripts relating to Jaina textual tradition, besides others.
If the vellālars (originally) accepted the Jaina faith it might be interesting to relocate Stein’s hypothesis on the brāhmaṇ-\textit{vellāla} alliance in the context of the segmentary state in south India. Especially considering the Śaiva (and brāhmaṇ) vellāla conflict in the stories on many Jaina vellālars converting to the Śaiva tradition post bhakti and later.

Even in the context of agrarian expansion there is seen a general silence on the question of the Jaina peasantry / agriculturists in Tamilakam. If one were to contextualise the ‘\textit{nīr-pūci vellālar}’ story that the Jainas narrate within the agrarian expansion context, one would say that the context of bhakti and extension of land to the brāhmaṇs had its own role to play in the conversion which may not necessarily have been religious. It was the need of the hour for some of the vellālars to convert to also align with the bhakti and Śaiva tradition in order to receive royal patronage which was surely tilted against Jainas and Buddhists of the time, if not totally, at least to a large extent. The areas settled by the Śaiva vellālars (which is the term they refer to themselves with, while the Jainas call them \textit{nīr pūci nainār}) till date have a small number of Jaina families settled there, or these villages have been Jaina settlements in the past as is evident form the inscriptive records and existence of old Jaina temples or vestiges of Jaina tradition in the past. It may also be mentioned that in these villages, people refer to the visit of Appar in his proselytising mission (while the Śaiva vellālars express it to highlight the importance of the visits as something ‘divine’, the Jainas refer to it as their nemesis).

Stein remarks that “The Chōla period is the necessary starting place for any longitudinal interest in the agrarian
The Tamil Jainas writing their own history

Among the Tamil Jainas writing their own history or the history of Jainism in Tamilnadu — like A. Chakravarti, "Jeevabandhu" T.S. Sripal, among others — they write primarily of their literature, with references to inscriptional records highlighting a past that was glorious for the Jainas in Tamilnadu; as well as of the persecution at different points in time when things changed. It is important to see the close association they feel to their literature, which is Tamil literature (or Jaina Tamil literature). The need to

66 Burton Stein, Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India, OUP, Delhi, 1985 (paperback edition); p.4

67 Ibid, p.4
reaffirm the contribution of Jainas to Tamil language and literature is perceptible in most of these efforts which shows a close link between the language – Tamil – and the identity of the Jainas as partakers of a great Tamil heritage. Especially a heritage constructed of the written word. They are found mostly asserting claims, or ‘re-claiming’ from the votaries of other faiths (most essentially the Śaiva) the vast corpus of Tamil literature. Tamil language, need to reclaim the intrinsic relationship of the Jainas with Tamil, is a very important ‘identity marker’ for the Tamil Jainas in asserting their place in Tamil history, and contemporary Tamil cultural complex. These claims (to Tamil language and literature, being an essential part of the reclaiming) signify what may be called ‘sites’ of identity thus constructed – hardly the sacred centers of the Jainas, in the north (tīrthaṅkaras attained nirvāṇa, nearly all in the ‘vātanāṭu’, north).

On the notions / construct of the ‘north’ and ‘south’ India, S. Raju problematises the construct in historiography. He says, “‘South’ – south of the Vindhyas – as a historiographical unit was born in the limelight of the general histories of India…”

Referring to Nilakanta Sastri’s statement that the south figures in a very small way in the general history of India, he says, “in the statement the presence of an already historicised India directly influences the formulation of the South as a unity for historiography (and thereby, seen as getting ‘secondary place’ as it were)...The distancing of south India from ‘north’ of the Vindhyas involves the application of the model of relationship between ‘part’

68 S. Raju, “We and You in Devising India and South India”, in Lateral Studies, No. 1, School of Social Sciences, M.G. University, Kottayam, year not mentioned; p.25
(self) and the 'rest of it' (other) in the total..." But he is talking of contemporary history writing. Whereas the Jainas — in both contemporary terms and in the historical past — seem to always have the reference point of a 'north', perhaps nowhere as startlingly evoked as in what they consider auspicious, the 'vaṭakkiṟuttal', the term used for sallēkhana, death by starvation. The association of looking northwards to attain salvation has to do with their historical and mythological tīrthankaras attaining salvation (nirvāṇa) in the country above the Vindhyas. But what Raju talks about in historiographical terms may be extended to the understanding among general history writing in terms of the distance between 'perceived totality' (of Jainas / Jain-ism in Tamilnadu being just an extension of the studies in Jainism elsewhere in India) versus Tamil Jainas, the agricultural community one is talking about which is seeking affirmative status as a "minority", "backward" class. However, strangely enough, the north is not a perpetual invocation when it comes to establishing their identity. Especially so in the case of the Tamil Jainas who always mention the fact of their relationship with Tamil and Tamil literature. In this sense, there is the local, regional Jaina (Tamil) history that they see themselves as part of — and which also becomes their site of contestation and struggle to establish and maintain their identity — rather than a larger pan-Jaina, pan-Indian Jaina history. The latter is limited to the idea of taking part in the 'larger' Jaina pilgrimage realm, the common Jaina, or Digambara Jaina sacred tradition. So, these sacred centers, places where the tīrthankaras are believed to have attained their respective nirvāṇas, are parts of a ritual pilgrimage complex they are obliged to participate in. It is important to note here that the Tamil

69 Ibid, p.25
Jainas relate to, and associate with, pilgrimages in multiple layers / at multiple levels - within the larger pan-Indian / pan-Jaina sacred geography of the Digambara tradition, or the larger Jaina tradition; and a local sacred geography in Tamilnadu, where local acaryas of this world have paid visits, whose footprint impressions are paid obeisance to.

The location of the Tamil Jaina ‘secular’ or temporal history is in the villages, and hilly terrains in rock-cut caves and natural caverns across Tamilakam, as much as it is in their act of claiming (usually historically valid, justifiably so) authorship of Tamil texts and language.

In connection with the Tamil language, it must be noted that the Tamil Jainas have an interesting metaphorical association for the Brāhmi script. According to them Brāhmi was the daughter of Rṣabha, the first tīrthaṅkara, also called Ādinātha. This tradition credits the Jainas with the origin of education and the written word or literacy. Incidentally in Tamilnadu, there are more temples to Ādi-tīrthaṅkara (as he is also referred to) and Pārśvanātha than to others (following Nēminātha and Mahāvīra, the latter being credited with the fewest temples).

In terms of writing of history in Tamilnadu, while the relationship between the brāhmiṣṭ / later brāhmiṇism and the ruling dynasties/ classes has been sufficiently, extensively theorised by numerous scholars and excellently so, one does not find a corresponding volume or intensity of research (in terms of variety of theoretical perspectives, rather than numbers of books on ‘history of Jainism in Tamilnadu’ to put it simply) on the Jaina community and the ruling elite.
This, despite the large volume of records available in terms of grants, pālliccantam grants, land grants, and evolution of an obviously landed Tamil Jaina vellalar class in the rural areas. While it is not also one's own aim to look at these records with theoretical examination of such a relationship (since one starts with a critique of writing history of a surviving historical community, now marginalised, through measures of dynastic patronage, though the chapter on inscriptions does touch on some of these aspects differently) it would nevertheless be an interesting exercise to know as to what was the role the Jainas played (if they did) through acaryas or leaders in the Tamil political ideology.

In Karnataka, is it is known that Simhanandi the Digambara Ācārya of the Nandi gaṇa, was instrumental in setting up the Gaṅga king Mādhava Koṅguvarman in 265 AD, and thereby a dynasty that ruled Karnataka over centuries and also patronised the Jaina religion. It is a different matter however, that in later periods the Jainas fell in the eyes of the royalty and suffered persecution at the hands of the Vīraśaivas, who by then had established their close links with royalty.

As a landed class, what kind of a status did the Jainas build for themselves which might have been perceived as (if it was) qualitatively different from the brahmins and non Jaina landed vellālas? These aspects of the Jaina community on the context of social relations have never been focussed and the story of 'rise' and 'decline' – via favours of the ruling elite becomes the only story of the 'perceived totality' (as one mentioned before) of the Jaina community in Tamilakam.

In the case of the Tamil Jainas the community, as well as its history, had to contend with Vedic Hinduism as a 'larger'
entity, at the pan-Jaina level; and brāhmiṇism and Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava (more often the former) religions within Tamilakam. There was a need to ‘start’ from a new, alternative ground to break hegemonies, not only for the Tamil Jainas (or Jainas in Tamilakam) but also for oneself to reconstruct, or try to reconstruct the past, recognising the historical ‘truth’ that through linking up of ideology and power, brāhmiṇism tried to uproot plurality, in the name of ‘incorporating’ the local; and reached a stage where it became the overwhelming, or dominant location of power. It is important to seek histories of a community thus victimised (with records of persecution available to the historian) through its own perceptions of and perspectives on the past – its own past, and a general past in which it locates itself. As it is important, at the same time, to “re-examine the interiority of historical texts and theoretical dynamics of the taken-for-granted unities with which we go on to understand past and visualise future.”

Speaking of the community’s perspectives on its past, one will take up for detailed discussion the Kūṟaḷ — Tirukkūṟaḷ — and the contestation for symbols of a universal didactic Tamil text (in the sense of it being a text of universal human, secular aspirations) and appropriations thereof which has been written about by the Tamil Jainas themselves and a few scholars. In the 19th and early 20th century, the Kūṟaḷ becomes an important subject of debate and of claims on its authorship. Until very recently, debates have centered

70 S. Raju, cf. cit, p. 34. One reads the term to mean subjectivity, in its broadest sense, for one’s purposes.
61 Ibid, p. 34; emphasis mine.
72 I owe the Tamil Jainas of each village I visited this, my understanding of the Kūṟaḷ; in fact every where I went, the authorship of Kūṟaḷ came up for discussion, giving me a whole direction to the way the Tamil Jaina community perceives itself, and Kūṟaḷ, one realised, or the debate and discourse on Kūṟaḷ -and Vāḻuvar / Elīrīṟṟa / Kuntakuntacārya - with further reading, is a very important source to understanding this perception.
on the author's 'low-caste' origins. Stuart Blackburn, in a paper 73 He begins by saying "Clearly for Tamils the Kuṟal was a contentious classic – it has received more commentaries (ten) than any other Tamil text – but it also became important for European missionaries and British civil servants as well, who were comforted by its non-idolatrous teachings and translated it many times. It was also the first book printed from the College of Fort St. George and it was later prescribed for primary, secondary and higher education..." 74

It is a question of perspective, however, that for his analysis on Kuṟal's authorship Blackburn uses the version of Valluvamālai edited by the Śaivite Arumuka Naṟalar, and no other editions. The reading, thus, is bound to be problematic. He does not seem too interested in the Jaina-Śaiva debates that had been happening (and quite openly, and with proponents claiming Jaina authorship for Kuṟal such as Mayilaisini Venkataswami, Maraimalai Adigal, Tiru.Vi.Kā (Tiru V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar), who were non Jainas. This was apart from the high and low caste discourse, there were other discourses on the authorship of Kuṟal, which were equally important, especially in a context of centrality of Tamil language and literature in it. And there was also the context of the Dravidian movement. F.W. Ellis is just mentioned in passing, it seems, though Ellis is known to have studied Kuṟal and believed to have been close to Jainas in his time, and inscribed a commemorative coin with an image of Eliṟcārya a Jaina mendicant, without the beard and rudrākṣa, as he was later depicted; and continues

74 Ibid, p.452
to be depicted thus in the Tamilnadu state run public transport and in school text books.

For the Tamil Jaina community reclaiming Valluvar (the author), as Elācārya / Kuntakunta became as significant as reminding the people of Tamilnadu of their place as Jainas in the history of Tamil literature as it were, this time, in a modern context.

The Jaina community has always been affirming its identity vis-à-vis the 'other' – be it the Buddhists; the brāhmiṇḍs, or the Śaiva proponents of bhakti. In the 18th century too, the 'other' is very much in the picture, but the focus shifts to one Rājā of Cenji, and later on, the Muslim nawabs of Arcot (or more broadly, the Muslims). The basic self awareness of having been victims of persecution by these varied 'others' remains a constant referral point through centuries. And it is this aspect – a continuous sequence starting from the time of the 'original' (if one may) persecution of the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries AD. And for most part, these are located in the historical, and not in realm of myth-making or mythology. Interestingly, the Śaiva bhakti inspired persecution of the Jainas, besides outright verbal abuse (and physical attacks) does resort to myth-making, as we shall see, with stories that have been recorded by Mackenzie in his compilation of palm leaf manuscripts in Tamil. Interestingly, too, this 'us' and 'them', exists also in the case of the Tamil Jainas differentiating themselves from the 'seth' (Marvadi, or 'northern' Śvetāmbara) Jainas.

The Kural and its authorship claims, then, could be seen also in terms of a Jaina –lower caste interface, when one considers the debate of the Dravidian movement – a kind of convergence. The convergence – if one may read it thus –
happened by virtue of the new understanding, stemming from a liberal, enlightened, politically consciousness of the time. Somewhere the Jainas were also part of this consciousness on the grounds that they had suffered victimisation and persecution by the brāhmiṇs and the Śaivites at various points in history.

In the Dravidian movement, the language, Tamil, and this perception of being victims and marginal (though not in the caste bracket) saw some of their more vociferous, educated sections joining hands with the movement, T. S. Sripal being one of them. Tamil literature brought about the convergence.

Interestingly, despite the fact that the present polity of the state of Tamilnadu has arisen from these very movements which fought hegemony of a particular caste and social group and its culture, we still have the universalised 'Hindu' image of Tiruvalluvar promoted by government establishments.75

With involvement of Tamil writers there was a movement in the colonial period and following that – to paint all literature in Tamil – classical Tamil literature – as Śaiva. Early 20th century there was a movement among Tamil Jainas to retrieve the literature, literary traditions, that were theirs, authored by Jainas. The Tamil Jaina identity question comes to the fore in this effort / movement. Retrieving Tirukkūṟal (or Kūṟal), Ḥaṅko Aṭikāl, etc. Political contexts, movements, started as anti-brāhmaṇ (or non brāhmaṇ) also

75 Ironically, a new Jaina edition of Tirukkūṟal – with translations by Jaina scholars – which one will refer to later on – has this very same image on its book cover; despite having been published after many writings and volumes on Kūṟal author being a Jaina mendicant. This just reflects the way in which images – mainstream, overpowering, arising from hegemonies – get imbibed in the community's consciousness over a period. The State, the overpowering universalising cultural idioms have a major role to play in these 'acceptances'. Globalisation, too, and images thereof, is built and re-affirmed in the same manner in today's context, as brāhmaṇism had been in a certain past.
somewhere incorporated Tamil Jainas (DMK, later periods, with Karunanidhi speaking of, writing on Tamil Jainas, literature etc)

The Story of ‘Origins’ – Author of the Kural

"akara mutal eluttellām āti bagavaṅ mutarē uṇaku"

This verse for the Tamil Jainas confirms that Kural author was a Jaina. Because it talks of all writing from the first letter 'a' in Tamil begins with Ādi bagavaṅ. Ādi tīrthāṅkara; and with this, also happens to begin a whole debate on the community identity of the author of Kural, Tiruvalluvar as he later came to be known, or Elācārya, or Kundakundācārya).

But, one of the legends associated with the author of the Kural / Tirukkural (Valļuvar, and not Elācārya of the Jainas) is that he was born to a brāhmaṇ named Pakavaṅ (Bhagavaṅ) and a low caste (‘pariah’) named Āti (Ādi). The way this was inferred by whosoever came out with this story of origin was the first verse in the Kural. Incidentally, we can see similar kinds of claims being made of Kabir have ‘some element’ of the brāhmaṇ in him - either a brāhmaṇ mother or a brāhmaṇ father and a lower caste (‘untouchable’) other half. ‘Jeevabandhu’ Sripal says, in a general remark, "20th century (found) scholars debating about the authorship of Kural. The author of Kural was a Jaina. Others say he was not. But his work has universal ideals so the authorship there cannot be fixed to a religious association. The work has secular ideals. Many communities claim him as theirs." 76

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76 Jeevabandhu T. S. Sripal, Tamilakattil Jainam (Tamil), Svasti Sri Lakshmi Sena Pattaraka Pattacaryavarya Jaina Matham, Kollapur, Parry Nilayam, Chennai, 1975; p.11
Speaking of the appropriation of Jaina texts by other communities, Sripal says, "...people of other communities, converting Jaina texts into their own." 77 And, "Fundamentalists (of other religions) are destroying Jaina literature by their entering into it in many ways. Maṇṭala Puruṭar, the author of Cūtāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu was a Jaina according to many scholars." 78 "Maṇṭala Puruṭar has written about Tamil history, religions, vocations, etc in the 12th nikaṇṭu. He has also written about Nyāya, Vaiśesika, Mīmāṁśa...etc in palm leaf manuscripts.... Yālpaṇam Arumukam Navalar (in later periods) in order to induce Śaiva thoughts into this text printed his own edition of Cūtāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu where he removed the parts (of the original text) and scripted his own two songs in this printed version." 79

He substantiates this with an instance from the Jaina text Cūtāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu was altered with additions by Arumuka Navalar (19th century writer from Jaffna, an ardent Śaiva Siddhanta conformist and revivalist who was writing and publishing on ancient Tamil works with no hidden agenda of giving them the Śaiva tinge) to make the work seem non Jaina. Thus, Sripal quotes the two versions of the nikaṇṭu – the Jaina (original) and the one published by Arumuka Navalar.

In the original Maṇṭala Puruṭar version of Cūtāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu – speaking about the different philosophical systems prevalent in Tamilakam, it says

"arusamayankālepā vāna naiyāyikato
turaiyum vaiceṭikam mellula lokā"

77 Ibid, p.23
78 Ibid, p.37
79 Ibid, p.38-39
The version of Arumuka Navalar reads thus—
“ariyavut camayamāre yavaṇa caivan tūymai
peruku pācupattoṭu pirānku mavisamarrum
kurutiya vitupēru kattu kāla mukantān
maruliyavava mikka vairavam en naḷakum”

And
“arupurat camayantāne yaraiyumlo kayatampin
uraikaru pelattameyo rutamimaca mōtu
kuriperu mayavatan kūriya paṅcarātram
neriperu mivaiye yenña niṅṭṭuvarṇūḷ valḷore.”

Sripal goes on to say, “He (Navalar) tried to destroy the original Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu but his efforts did not help the cause he was supporting. The sects Pāṣupata, Kālamukham, Malirātam (Kāpālīkam)…vanished without a trace.”

It was important spend a little ink on Navalar here, since strangely the version that Stuart Blackburn uses to discuss the authorship claims to Kūṟaḷ, is the 11th edited version (of 1924 / 25) of Tiruvaḷḷuvamālai by the same Arumuka Navalar. This “undated Tiruvaḷḷuvamālai…contains the earliest textual reference to the ‘Legend of Tiruvaḷḷuvar’…The ‘garland’ consists of 53 short verses attributed to as many poets, mostly of the Čaṅkam period, but also a disembodied voice (acarir) of the goddess of speech (namakal) and Śiva in the form of a poet…” He adds, “the commentary to this verse, written at the beginning

80 Ibid, p.39
81 Ibid, p.39
82 Ibid, pp.39-40
83 Stuart Blackburn, cf.cit, p.456
of 19th century (by Navalar) then goes on to explain that the author of the Kural was named ‘vaḷḷuvar’ because he was generous (vaṇmai) in ‘presenting the esoteric wisdom of the Vedas to the world’. “84

Comparing both Sripal’s comment on Arumuka Navalar, Navalar’s Śaiva (Siddhānta) revivalist posture and the above statement, surely the legend of Vaḷḷuvar’s birth is tinged with the religious perspective that he brought with it. The legend, as it were, is also part of a certain revivalist enterprise that came to fore and there were a large number of scholars (some with the Dravidian movement) who took sides of the Jainas saying the author of Kural was a Jaina. Tiru. Vi. Kalyanasundaram Mudaliyar (Tiru.Vi.Ka), R. K. Shanmugan Chettiar, S. Vaiyapuri Pillar, Mayilai Seeni Venkataswamy, R. K. Parantamanar, Madurai Kaviraja Panditar, etc were of the opinion that Tirukkural author was a Jaina.

Sripal says, “The commentator of Cīvakacintāmaṇi and Tolkāppiyam, Naccinārkiniyar refers to the Tirukkuṟa! He uses the term tēvar and not vaḷḷuvar.”85 Again, “In ancient Tamilakam the author of Kuṟa! was referred to variously as tēvar, nāyanār, mutarpāvalar, teivappūlavar, tīruvaḷḷuvanāyānār, etc. The 1st tīrthankara Rṣabha is referred to as tēvar, while the rest are referred to as nāṭhar. Rṣabha is seen as the originator of the writing / learning. It is this tīrthankara who is evoked in Kuṟa!’s first couplet.”86 M. S. Ramaswami Ayyangar points out that the author of Kuṟa! was a Jaina – because of the term used – “malarmicai

84 Ibid, p.456
85 T. S. Sripal, ed, Tiruvalluvar Vāḻtum Ādibagavan (Tamil), Tamil Samanar Sangham, Ellis Nagar, reprinted, Madurai, 1998; p.5-6
86 Ibid, p.7
yekinān” – ‘he who walks on lotus’ – used for a tīrthankara. The commentator of Nīlakēci who was a Jaina calls Kural “emmoṭṭu”; Elācārya, the Jaina sage is believed to be the author of Kural; also called Kundakunda, belonged to the 1st century AD. ⁸⁷

“Tamil literary tradition attributes the authorship of Kural to Valluvar; but there are strong reasons for believing that the author was a Jain.... Certain references in Kural to ‘malarmisai-yekinān’ and ‘yeṅkunāthaṅ’ (are) sufficient to prove that the author was a Jain. The expression malarmicai-yekinān, ‘he who walks on lotus’ is a very common epithet applied to Lord Arhat....” ⁸⁸ Quoting the reference to Kural in Nīlakēci, Ayyangar adds, “this shows that the Jains believed Valluvar to be one of them. The tradition is that one Elācārya, a Jain sage, was the author of Kural. This Elācārya, some say, was no other than Sri Kundakunda, a great Jain muni, well versed in Sanskrit and Prakrit propagating Jainism in the Tamil land, in or about the 1st century AD....” ⁸⁹

A. Chakravarti says, “The book contains three great topics – āryam (dharma); porul (artha; iṅbam; (kāma). The Jaina commentator of the Tamil work Nīlakēci freely quotes from the Kural and whenever he quotes he introduces the quotation with the words “as is mentioned in our scripture” (the expression emm-oṭṭu). From this it is clear that the commentator considered this work as an important Jaina

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⁸⁷ M.S. Ramaswami Ayyangar, Studies in South Indian Jainism, Part I, Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1982; originally published in 1922; pp.41-43

⁸⁸ Ibid, p.41

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.42-3
A. Marx, in a paper in the Jaina Tamil monthly, says, 'while many scholars and literary figures have pointed out the Jaina inclination of the Tirukkural, many of those steeped in Saivism who have written the history of Tamil literature, and who ruled for centuries (were close to the powers), managed to overshadow the Jaina incline of the Tirukkural. These people have brought forth (editions with) theories on Vedic thoughts in the Kural and Saivite inclination...'. He goes on to prove that the author of Kural was Kunta Kuntar, also known as Elācacārya, Padmanandi, and so forth, who also authored Prakrit texts such as Pañcāstikāya, Samayasāra, and so on.

The contestation between an undivided category called "Dravidian" or of the Kural as a Tamil text vis-à-vis Sanskrit was not the only major one so far as Kural was concerned. Though Stuart Blackburn does mention that various identities were proposed for the author of Kural such as Jaina, Buddhist, crypto-Christian, Brāhmaṇ, half-Brāhmaṇ and so on, he does little to dwell on the most long-term debate of all that started in the 19th century and continues till date, namely, that of the Kural being Jaina or non Jaina.

This debate would be also important to understanding the social context of the Dravidian movement – the communities that participated in the discourse on Tamil, per se and attempts at its appropriation by higher castes, the brāhmaṇs, or the brāhmaṇised, with active support also coming in from

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90 A.Chakravarti, Jaina Literature in Tamil, Bharatiya Jnanpith Publications, New Delhi, 1974 (originally published in 1941 by Jaina Siddhanta Bhavan, Arrah; p.37. He dates the Kural to the 1st century AD.

91 A. Marx, "Tirukkural Elutiyatu Āccāriyar Kunta Kuntar", Śruta Kēvali, vol. 7, V.N Year 2529, July 2003, No. 9 (pp.37-39); p.37

92 Ibid, p.37

93 Blackburn, op.cit, p.452
some of the Śaivite veḷḷālas. Blackburn locates the entire discourse on Kurāḷ as "a discourse between Europeans and Tamils" which resulted "in a consensus, a mutually convenient congruence between Tamil concerns about cultural difference and European notions of moral history that produced a narrative of Tamil literary history which continues to exert its influence today."\(^{94}\) It thus disregards, or negates, or chooses to ignore the entire movement within the Tamil context where the debate arose, so as to say that the debate itself arose from the European interest in the Kurāḷ and with their efforts to publish the same. While this may not be entirely off mark, there was yet another little known aspect to this debate where the colonialists, through their interactions with the people learnt of the existence of the Kurāḷ as a Jaina work.

We shall return to this argument shortly. But it may also be worthwhile to look at the social context of the participation in the larger discourse, which was essentially centered around Tamil language and a certain 'pristine' Dravidian culture, in which the Tamil Jainas found answers to their own issues with persecution and marginalisation at different periods in Tamil history, considering the enormous volume of work in Tamil that the Jainas authored through all these centuries. That the Europeans 'discovered' the Kurāḷ, may have, in one sense, been catalytic to bring to the fore these many claims to 'owning' the author of the Kurāḷ by many communities, but that would be just a continuum of earlier periods of appropriation / 'incorporation' of texts, symbols, idioms that happened in the Tamil history. As Sripal points out – with regard to appropriation of Tamil texts authored by Jainas – "...In 10\(^{th}\) century many Jaina texts were destroyed.

\(^{94}\) Ibid, p.452-3
Many were converted into Śaiva texts. Some parts of Patiņeṅkilkaṇaṅkku, Nelīlakkaṃ (mathematics texts) were converted (to show them as non Jaina, mostly, Śaivite works)....” 95 Thus, it is difficult to accept Blackburn’s proposition – with respect to Kuraḷ here, which his only one part of the spectrum – that “In Vaḷḷuvar’s low birth, the Europeans discovered a hero of their own making; in his...teaching, the European’s pursuit of an acceptable Indian religion coalesced with a Tamil desire to imagine a past independent of Brāhmaṇical control, rituals and texts.” 96

In later periods too, we find that political ideologues (such as E.Ve. Ramasamy Periyar, as also Kamaraj, and others following them) were expressing themselves about Jaina contribution to Tamil language and literature quite openly. One of the contemporary political figures who arose from the context of the anti caste movements in Tamilnadu, for instance, Mu.Karunanidhi, himself a litterateur, says in a foreword published in a book authored by Sripal, Tamilakattil Samanam (published in December 1942), “....Well before the time of Toṭkāppiyam, Jainism was firmly entrenched in Tamilnadu. If you remove the Jaina (literary) works....the realm of Tamil literature will seem empty....” 97

Even a general perusal of the debates of the time should have directed his attention to the points of views expressed by several scholars assigning Jaina authorship to Kuraḷ. Blackburn does mention Ayotidas Panditar, founder of the Dravida Mahajana Sabha, in 1881 and the Chakya Buddhist

95 Jeevabandhu T. S. Sripal, Tamilakattil Jainam (Tamil), Svasti Sri Lakshmi Sena Pattaraka Pattacaryavarya Jaina Matham, Kollapur, Chennai, 1975; p.41

96 Blackburn, op.cit, p.478

97 T. S. Sripal, ed, Tiruvalluvar Valittum Adibagavan (Tamil), Tamil Samanar Sangham, Ellis Nagar, reprinted, Madurai, 1998; p.15
Image of the author of Tirukkural (Tiruvalluvar) inscribed on the gold coin issued by Ellis
Sangam of Madras later, who had “argued that the Tirukkural’s original title was ‘Tiri-kural’ modeling its 3 sections on the tripartite division of Theravāda Buddhist scriptures...” ⁹⁸ and his pointing to the “brāhminical manipulation” ⁹⁹ (of Kural) in various editions published in the late 1830s by a “pair of Brāhmin brothers...” ¹⁰⁰

Missing in his proposition, though, is the question as to what were the editions / versions of the Kural that the Europeans he mentions (Caldwell, Kindersley, Ellis, Mackenzie manuscripts, et.al) reading? He does mention that F.W. Ellis, Collector of Madras and linguist, “produced a partial translation of the Kural with extensive notes, probably in 1819, but curiously makes no mention of Valluvar’s birth or legend.” ¹⁰¹ Besides finding it ‘curious’ he does not dwell on the ‘why’ of it. In this context one wishes to bring to notice one facet of this — as to why Ellis does not mention the birth legend. Simply because he approached the Kural, right from the beginning, as a Jaina text. An interesting example of Ellis’ ‘dialogue’ with the Kural as a text and his own understanding of the author of the Kural as a Jaina monk; and this keen interest was instrumental in the issuing of four commemorative gold coins by the East India Company with the image of the author of the Kural inscribed on one side of the coin. “The East India Company released a gold coin on Tiruvalluvar (at National Museum in Kolkata catalogue — mentions this coin). This coin was released pre-1819 as a commemoration coin and not circulated...” ¹⁰² “In a reference to this coin (in the

Kolkata National Museum Catalogue), the image therein is wrongly referred to as Viṣṇu by.... P. N. Mukherjee. The front side of the coin, he said, could be that of a sage or a god-head. ... It shows a sage on a pīṭha (padmāsana position) on its back side... The date of the above mentioned gold coin must have been somewhere between 1807 and 1817.” 103 Mahadevan writes “Francis White Ellis was Collector of Chennai. He learnt Tamil and other languages. He was fluent in Tamil – could read from palm leaf manuscripts. He was the first to bring to light in the western world that Sanskrit and Tamil and Dravidian languages were different. He showed keen interest in Tirukkūṟaḷ and Tiruvaḷḷuvar. He translated Kūṟaḷ into English with a commentary. This was the first translation of the Tirukkūṟaḷ. Before this could be brought out in print, he died during an inspection at Ramanathapuram. This was printed by R.P.Sethupillai. Ellis had also tried to do a linguistic evaluation of the Valayāpati (from palm leaf manuscripts).” 104

In one of the wells he had dug during water scarcity in Chennai, at Royapettah Periyapalayathamman Koil, he inscribed lines from the Tirukkūṟaḷ:

“irupuṇalum vāynta malaivyum varupuṇalum
vallarānum nāṭṭirku uruppū” 105

“The constituents of a kingdom are the two waters (from above and below), well situated hills and an indestructible fort.” 106

104 Ibid, p.96
105 Ibid, p. 97
Ellis was in charge of treasury and in charge of the mint. His grave stone in Dindigul shows his interest in Tiruvalluvar, Kuṭṭal and Tamil. The coin, which is in the British Museum in London has the image of Tiruvalluvar as a Jaina muni, unlike the bearded sage made popular later around 15th century. Thus Ellis’ connection was with a Jaina Kuṭṭal and hence the image on the coin is unlike the present day image.

The claims on authorship of Kuṭṭal are as yet not totally resolved among quite a few people. The debate on the authorship was on even in the 20th century, as it may be in some circles today. For instance, in a foreword to the Tirukkural brought out by the Saiva Siddhanta publishers in 1958, Justice V. Subramanyam (of the then Madras High Court) writes, “Dr Pope was particularly struck by the similarity of some of the ideas expressed in the Kural with the teaching of Jesus and liked to “picture Tiruvalluvar pacing along the seashore with the Christian teachers and imbibing Christian ideas….and day by day working them into his wonderful ‘Kural’ Few of the couplets, (according to Subramanyam find) “their echoes...in the Sermon on the Mount. But so does Tiruvalluvar’s declaration that all men are equal (pirappokum ellā uyirkkum) find its echo in the American Declaration of Independence. Both these sets of statements form in the Kural parts of a coherent statement of doctrine which includes couplets ....which are of the essence

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107 Iravatham Mahadevan, op.cit, p.98
108 Ibid, p.100-01
of Saiva Siddhanta Ethics...” 111 Nowhere does the Justice Subramnayam mention Jaina connection whatsoever.

As for Rev. G.U. Pope, there was an extended meaning for studying the Tirukkuṟaḷ and bringing out editions with translations. As he had said in his Preface (to the first edition) written in 1886, Sep 1, “That this publication may be useful in promoting the real study of Tamil, and so help those who go to South India as officers of government, or as missionaries, better to understand the mind of the people among whom they live and work, is my desire in sending it forth.”112

But the Tamil Jainas have continued to bring forth volumes ascertaining - or reclaiming - Jaina authorship for Kurāḷ. In a recent volume of Tirukkuṟaḷ the following statement in the introduction gives their viewpoint all over again. “From internal evidence it is clear that the author of the Tirukkuṟaḷ could not have been a follower of the Vedic faith or of Buddhism. He openly repudiates the doctrines accepted by the Vedic school and Buddhism. Hence, we have to infer from the internal evidence that the author must have been a staunch believer in the ahimsa faith as accepted by Jainism. Besides the internal evidence from the book itself we have also important circumstantial evidences. Nachinārkiṇiṇiyar, a famous commentator of the Cīvacakacintāmaṇi, quotes from Tirukkuṟaḷ in several places of his commentary. On all such occasions, he introduces the quotation with the words ‘so says Thevar’. It is a well known fact to the Tamil scholars that the term Thevar always refers to Jaina saint. The author of Cīvakacintāmaṇi is known as Tiruttakattēvar and the author of the Tamil work, Chūdāmaṇi, is known as

111 Ibid, p xii
112 Ibid, p.xv
ThoHimozi Thēvar. The author of the Tirukaḻambakam is known as Udichi Tēvar... (Thus) the term tevar, according to recognised convention, was always used to denote a Jaina saint. It is obvious that Nachinārkiṇiyar used the term in that sense. He must have believed that the author of Tirukkuṟaḷ was a great Jaina saint”

Meanwhile, claims to the authorship of Tirukkuṟaḷ were followed or preceded by claims to the image / icon of Valluvar / Elācārya as well. Or perhaps there was a simultaneous movement to do so. Sripal, speaks of the temple in Mayilapur as an example. He writes, “The Mayilāpur Tiruvalļuvar temple today was known as nayinār koil around 20 years ago... The term nayinār was used for tirthankara and Jaina munis. In Madurai kantam in Cilappatikāram, Ilanko refers to the arhat temple as “nayinār koil”. The Kalugumalai inscription refers to Jaina munis as nayinārs...”

“The offering of worship to the footprints by Jainas gradually stopped ... (and) some 100 to 120 years ago a sculpted figure of Tirukkural Valluvar with a beard was set

113 A. Chakravarti, Ramshankar Mishra, N. Sundaram, Tirukkuṟaḷ (An Explanatory Translation), Prakrit Bharati Academy, Jaipur, 1999; p.86
114 T. S. Sripal, ed, Tiruvalluvar Vēltum Adibagavan (Tamil), Tamil Samanar Sangham, Ellis Nagar, reprinted, Madurai, 1998 (pp.80ff)
115 Ibid, pp.80-81
116 Ibid, pp.82-83
117 Ibid, p.84
up as mūlavār behind the footprints. In time, the footprints were stowed away. But people had altercations with the then arcakas and they took out the footprints and placed them in the outer maṇṭapa.... Even these were removed in time, and buried within the temple walls; again after some protest from Jainas and few from other communities around, they were brought out into the open...." 118 "The name Tiruvulla nayiṅār was transformed into Tiruvaḷḷuvar around the same time period, according to residents staying in that area..." 119

"On February 16th 1947, Tiru. Vi. Ka and many others attended the anniversary celebrations held at the Mylapore, Kuyapettai Viraperumal street, of the Mayilai Tiruvaḷḷuvar Kaḷakam. Many were antagonised when Sripal spoke of this history (of conversion)" 120 "T. P. Minakshisundaram, Rev. Arul Thangayya, K. Anbazhagan and others visited the temple and saw the footprints, and spoke to an old woman who called it nayiṅār koil, spontaneously...." 121

Meanwhile, Tirukkural was not the only Tamil text that was being presented as a work of a non Jaina (half brāhmiṅ, or fully brahmin) 122 Thus, in a foreword in English, written in 1943 (September) to a book by T.S. Sripal published in 1957, titled 'Ilaṅkōvaṭikaḷ Samayam Yātu?' 123 'Rao Bahadur' A. Chakravarti (the Tamil Jaina philosopher, academic who translated Nīlakeci and whom we have mentioned before) notes, "The booklet... has two objects in view, one to

118 Ibid, p.85-6
119 Ibid, p.87
120 Ibid, p.88
121 Ibid, p.89
122 Incidentally, even if there were efforts, as cited in the case of Ayotidas Panditar, to make the text seem Buddhist, the Jainas have been more responsive and sensitive to the claims made for Tirukkural from brāhmaṇs and those of Śaivite religious orientation. Tamil Jainas writing in that period as part of the debate, do not mention, or take issue with, Buddhist "re-writing" of Kūṟaḷ, and so on.
123 T. S. Sripal, Ilāṅkōvaṭikaḷ Samayam Yātu? (Tamil) Parry Nilayam (Boradway) Chennai, 1957
establish the fact that the author of Silappadīkāram is a Jaina by faith and second to condemn the present day insidious movement by literary plagiarism backed up by influential people. (The author) pointed out from the text itself that not only the author Iḷangovatīgal is a Jaina by faith, but even his brother, the ruling king of Cēra kingdom, was also a Jaina by faith...”¹²⁴ And he adds, “It is rather painful to learn that there is an organisation, ostensibly working in the name of revival of Tamil culture but intended to tamper with important Jaina classics in Tamil so that they might appear as works by non Jaina authors. It is also painful to note that rich and influential people are backing up this movement. The same thing occurred in South India during the period of revivalism and unfortunate Jaina ascetics were barbarously murdered in the name of religion for the simple reason that they were condemning the Vedic sacrifice in uncompromising terms, since it was conflicting with their own principle of ahimsā...That the same spirit should be prevalent in serious form even in the 20th century is extremely deplorable ...the same religious hatred is at the back of this movement which pretends to be working for the revival of Tamil culture but indulges in the base form of literary plagiarism complained by Mr. T. S. Sripal...”¹²⁵ He then makes a plea, “And let us hope... that there will be a real and true revival of ancient Tamil culture which is the pride of South India.”¹²⁶

Note that he is talking of a revival of ‘Tamil culture’, as a universal concept. And in this universal Tamil-ness it is important to establish the (Tamil) Jaina identity. Thus, simultaneously with the Dravidian movement – a movement

¹²⁴ Ibid, p.vi
¹²⁵ Ibid, pp.vii-viii; emphasis, wherever, mine.
¹²⁶ Ibid, p ix, emphasis mine.
where caste consciousness was discussed openly—a movement of identity consciousness of the Jainas was also happening. Protest against brāhmin (or 'Hindu') dominance—by this time the term 'Hindu' is used in some of the Tamil texts written to counter these claims of authorship by Jainas and those supporting their point of view127 was also part of the 'Tamil' Jaina identity consciousness which was also building up in a new way.

Most scholars writing in English on the history of Jainism in Tamilnadu have not made a mention of these debates that continued to happen until the independence movement and years thereafter. It seems to end at the bhakti period and persecution in that context. There is, incidentally, no work that discusses the issues of identity of communities such as the Buddhists and Jainas from these perspectives, especially, when it came to the one of the most important modern sociocultural-political movements of Tamilnadu, the one centered on caste and dissent-based dominance. Both during the independence movement and thereafter. Perhaps one of the reasons lies in limiting the Jaina side of the history of Tamilnadu to an 'ancient' or 'early medieval' past and not being concerned of movements thereafter? 128

Affirming identity through Textual Tradition

The Tamil Jaina identity is closely linked to the Tamil language and literature, literary traditions. In this sense, the Tamil Jainas not only kept close watch on the 'trends' of

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127 Mayilai Sini Venkataswamy, who wrote extensively on the Tamil Jaina literature and history of Jainism in Tamilkam uses the term "(h)indu matam" extensively (sometimes interchangeably for Śaiva Vaiṣṇava bhakti movement) in his reference to the Śaiva—Vaiṣṇava and Jaina religious conflict.

128 However, few scholars, such as Iravatham Mahadevan—with a dynamic relationship with the Tamil Jaina community on account of the volume of research he has done on Brahmi inscriptions and the Jaina connections thereof—have at intervals discussed issues that go beyond the 'ancient'. The subject of the Gold coin, and Ellis, for instance, albeit in terms of bringing into the open an important historical fact.
efforts in affecting their right to the literary traditions in any way. That included fighting for, establishing, re-asserting claims of authorship of Tirukkuṟaḷ, Cilappatikāram, among others, but more importantly these texts, which at various points, were taken up for Śaivising' renditions or to negate the Jaina association with these texts by other communities. It is interesting to note that in different periods in time, one of the responses of the Jaina community to persecution, and conflict with dominating (or contesting) ideologies was to produce written material, be it in Prakrit, at times Sanskrit, or in local languages of the regions they occupied, Kannada, Tamil and so forth. And in these written texts they tried to present the 'case', as it were, of their identity, perspectives on developments of the time. This aspect may be seen as part of the pan Jaina history. With its regional variations, corresponding to the socio-cultural and political contexts of the times. Thus, in the Tamil country, A. Chakravarti writes, "We have testimony to the fact that Vajranandi a Jain grammarian and scholar and the pupil of Devanandi Pujiyapada, an accomplished Jaina Sanskrit grammarian in the Kannada country of the 6th century AD, and author of a grammatical treatise, Jainendra, one of the 8 principal authorities on Sanskrit grammar, went over to Madurai with the object of founding a sangam there. Of course, that Sangam could not have been anything else than a college of Jain ascetics and scholars engaged in religious propaganda of their own. This movement must have first brought in the idea of a Sangam to the Tamil country. It is more likely that following closely the persecution of the Jains ruthlessly carried out in the 7th century AD, the orthodox Hindu party must have tried to put their own house in order and to the creation of Sangams with divinity too playing a part therein, for the purpose of adding to the authority and dignity of their literature. It was the
sacerdotal Sangam of the early Jains that most probably supplied the orthodox party with a clue for the story a literary Sangam of their own on that model. The very name Sangam, unknown to the early Tamils, proclaims its late origins and to attempt to foisting the idea it signified on the so called Sangam literature as its inspiring cause is little short of perpetrating a glaring and absurd anachronism." 129

Mayilai Sini Venkataswamy, too says, “Vajranandi (vikrama 526, AD 470) established Dravida sangha in Madurai, and this is mentioned in Devasena’s Darśana Sāram.” 130 “This was not a literary sangam as understood but a sangha of monks.” 131

“We know from reading medieval Jain philosophy texts and literary works that one way in which Jains met the challenge of both linguistic and religious plurality was to become versatile scholars and polyglots ……” writes Granoff132. Of course, she is talking of the ‘chīṇḍika’ stories, stories that the Jains wrote to counter Buddhist influence on their laity (Buddhism, she says, being most attractive counter-system to the Jaina laity of the time); ‘chīṇḍika’ stories were stories of temporary ‘lapses’ of the laity, who ‘return’ to the path of true Jaina life, after ‘straying’ from that path either by circumstance, or consciously. These stories, she points out, reflect the Jaina acceptance at some level of Buddhism to attract its laity. “Jains met the Buddhist challenge head on;
they studied Buddhist epistemology and ontology. They observed Buddhist rituals and read Buddhist monastic rules and challenged them openly in their Sravakacara texts. And they wrote stories in which they acknowledged the attractiveness of Buddhism, even allowed monks and lay devotees to lapse into Buddhism, and accepted them back as proof of the true supremacy of Jainism."

"Jain scholars not only read assiduously and wrote prodigiously in every branch of learning. They also undertook massive projects of copying texts and they carefully preserved their manuscripts in extensive libraries.... Many Jain philosophical texts are also debates, and give evidence of the fact that the Jains did not withdraw into the seclusion of their own community but actively sought to engage other groups on intellectual issues that concerned them." "The term paññikūtam for schools in Tamil comes from the Jain term paññi. Rich Jainas reproduced and made copies of texts to people at times of weddings, death rituals as palm leaf manuscripts. In 10th century AD, the Kannada Attimabe gave dana of 1000 copies of Śāntipurāṇa as dāna. The Jainas propagated Tamil language – the language of the region – in textual tradition, unlike the brahmīns..."

The Jainas, thus, continued to participate in public debate through different periods through their textual tradition, creating new ones, or their own versions of the established traditions; affirming and re asserting their identity as Jaina through these activities. For instance, "soon after the time when the secular epic, the Rāmāyaṇa had been converted into

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133 Ibid, p.261
134 Ibid, p.242
135 Mayilai Sini Venkataswamy, op.cit, pp.43-44
sacred Vaiṣṇava literature by the Bhargava brāhmiṇḍs and the hero, Rāma had been recorded as an avatara of Viṣṇu, a Jaina poet, Vimalasūri, in the early centuries AD, wrote his version of the Rāmāyaṇa in Prakrit, the Pauma Cariyu. Vimalasūri states specifically that his is the true version as against that of the brāhmaṇ’s, which is a collection of falsehoods....(wherein) Rāvana is an ardent Jaina and a protector of Jaina shrines....has the ability of fly and is therefore called ākāśamārgī....”

Or then there were other ways of establishing a ‘true’ Jaina identity – to counter the hegemony of the time. Thus, “Jinasena’s Ādipurāṇa discharged the function of a law book containing recommendations and prohibitions addressed to the followers of a Jina. Prior to his time, the Jaina books of discipline concerned themselves with the conduct of monks and nuns alone. There were guide books (Śrāvakācāras) to instruct the laity in keeping with the vows prescribed and set forth the procedures for their observation. But the Jainas lacked the type of law book comparable to the Manusmrti, for example, in the Brāhmaṇic tradition. Jinasena’s Ādipurāṇa fills this need and carries with it the kind of authority one associates with the dharmaśāstra literature pertaining to the duties of the castes, rites of passage, and so forth. In writing the Ādipurāṇa, Jinasena thus introduced a new function or the Jaina Purāṇas, namely, educating the Jaina community to preserve its identity as separate from that of the Brāhmaṇs, a task that they perceived was necessary in the face of the Brāhmaṇic attempts to absorb them.”

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136 Romila Thapar, Cultural Transaction and Early India: Tradition and Patronage, OUP, Delhi, 1987; p. 14
137 Padmanabh S. Jaini, Collected Papers on Jaina Studies, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2000; p. 411
The text then, to the Jaina, meant an important component of their self identity; and it may be reinstated here that the question of identity and constructing an identity, or history for themselves did not come with the Europeans or with liberal, enlightenment ideologies. Asserting their identity was something that started off for them, as for the Buddhists, with the original refuting of the authority, primordiality, supremacy of the Vedas and the social group that possessed the knowledge, and power from possessing knowledge, the brāhmaṇas. In that sense the Jainas could be said to have made it important to share their textual heritage rather than let a group maintain control over these. In the Tamil context, one can still find several instances of families having palm leaf manuscripts and temples with manuscripts that are available to the lay reader or anyone interested in reading them. They are not controlled by a group or an establishment – though the maṭha today has some of these manuscripts for the sake of preserving the same for posterity. But no one refuses to share the manuscripts they may happen to possess. It was thus necessary for the Jainas to affirm their identity through concepts such as ‘śāstradāna’ (giving, sharing knowledge, learning, texts) among other kinds of dāna; in that sense, very different from the Vedic knowledge being the preserve of the brāhmaṇas.

One would like to draw attention here to an interesting ‘aside’, so to speak. An advertisement that appears in a book published in 1925\(^{138}\), which is as follows: -

"The Devendra Printing and Publishing Company limited (Amman Koil Street, G.T.Madras, Rampaul Press, 23, Davidson Street), Madras “formed for the purpose of

\(^{138}\) Harisatty Bhattacharya, Divinity in Jainism, The Devendra Printing and Publishing Company, Madras, 1925. I thank the staff and Theodore Bhaskaran for giving me access to this book, and perhaps the only copy of it, in the Roja Muthaih Research Library at Chennai."
printing and publishing the sacred Jaina literature in English and in the important vernaculars".... "Please help the cause of propagating Truth by taking shares in the Company" (500 shares of Rs. 10 each)."

Inside the flap of the same (above) book –
The Jaina Gazette ((annual subscription Rs. 3!)) - the monthly organ of the All India Jaina Association

"This is the only journal in the Jaina community which is conducted in English and therefore circulated not only all over India but throughout the world. It treats about all topics regarding the Jainas and Jainism. Besides devoting special attention to the problems calculated to ameliorate the social and political status of the Jains and the propagation of Jainism, the Jaina Gazette contains original articles and reviews of whatever is of public interest in contemporary life and opinion."

The Swarajya observes –
"The Jaina Gazette contains very interesting and valuable articles on important topics in Eastern and Western philosophy, Indian history, literature, law and science based on up-to-date research."

The Managing Director of this printing press, incidentally, was one C. S. Mallinath (also Editor of Jaina Gazette) who was one of the members of the deputation of Tamil Jaina community that was nominated by their Chief pontiff (of Melcittamur) to the Ministers to impress upon the Government to Government to reserve at least 2 seats for the
Jains in the council and the local boards and that the Government include Jains in the list of backward classes.  

Another authorship debate

A similar case of contestation over authorship (and by extension, Tamil language) may be seen in the legend of Agastya, the sage, being the teacher of Tolkāppiyar. Jainas believe and assert that Tolkāppiyam is a Jaina work — by virtue of the very nature of discussion in it over the concept of senses — ‘arivu’. “Tolkāppiyar divides the vegetable kingdom into two categories, the exogenous and endogenous plants. Plants which possess exterior hardness are called ‘pul’ (grass family) and others whose core is of close grain go by the name ‘maṟam’ (tree). Similarly, he also classifies living organisms under six heads — oraṟivuyiru, having the sense of touch alone, iraṟivuyiru, having the senses of touch and taste, mūvarivuyiru, having the senses of touch, taste, smell and sight, aiyarivuyiru, senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing, and finally, aṟaṟivuyiru, having senses of touch, smell, sight, hearing and power of discrimination added to these.”  

“In the section marabiyal, Tolkāppiyam speaks of jīvas with one sense — grass and trees; with 2 senses — snails; with three senses — ants; four senses — higher animals and jīvas with 5 senses — human beings. This is (based on) a philosophical doctrine of the Jainas. Mṛumandarapurāṇam and Nīlakesi contain description of jīvas (as well).”

Coming back to the question of authorship of Tolkāppiyam it shows that most of the Jaina literary tradition was at some

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139 One shall revisit this point subsequently while talking of identity and conflict.
140 Tolkāppiyam 1526, referred in V.T. Manickam, Marutam: An Aspect of Love in Tamil Literature, Karaikkudi, 1982, p.33
141 A. Chakravarti, Jaina Literature in Tamil, Bharatiya Jnanapitha Publications, New Delhi, 1974 (revised edition, originally published in 1941 by Jaina Siddhanta Bhavan, Arrah); p. 22
point being appropriated (or efforts were made to do so) and re-‘presented’ using brahminical motifs, metaphors. This kind of contestation – over authorship, however, is not perceptible between Jaina and Buddhist traditions, though at a point the proponents of these two faiths were equally at ‘war’ with each other, with numerous debates being written about in their texts. Especially on the question of whose ‘ahimsā’ concept was the truer.

"Tradition says that Agastya was the only grammarian who wrote complete treatises on the grammar of all the three classes of Tamil, but none of them are now extant..." 142 One sees an interesting subversion of the Sanskritised ‘northern’ Agastya induction into Tamil sacred lore in the myths associated with the Tamil god, Murukan. While Murukan’s association with the Tamil language – as the originator of the language – is by itself a significant metaphor.

With Murukan transforming from an originally hill - forest dwelling deity of the hunter gatherers and forest dwelling tribes in Tamilakam to a universalised Subrahmaṇya, son of Śiva, a mythic corpus evolved around him. But it was difficult to completely appropriate the local deity. The power of the local tradition dominated in some places and one of them was to give Murukan the role of the teacher of Śiva. He teaches Śiva the praṇava (Om) mantra in one of the myths. Along with this, since he was the Tamil god par excellence, having his own sway well before he Purānic pantheon entered the scenario, he also became the origin of the Tamil language. 143

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143 One engaged with Murukan and the sacred lore Tirumuruṟṟuppaṭai in some depth in one’s MPhil dissertation, titled, ‘Images of Murukan: Perceptions of a Popular Deity and the Arupaṭaṉīṭu in the
This entire process becomes all the more interesting when one looks at the evolution of Murukan into Subrahmaṇya, against agrarian expansion and rise of the Śaivite bhakti ethos. Not entirely co-incidentally, the Arupāṭaiśu concept of Murukan’s sacred geography – the six sacred centres of Murukan – Subrahmaṇya developed in places associated with Jaina sacred centres of the past. Most of these centres had rock cut caves or natural caverns in and around that place commemorating Jaina monks and nuns. This Purāṇic attempt to associate Tamil as a language to Murukan (at the time of composing talapurāṇams / sthalapurāṇas, he is already the son of Śiva who learns from his son) signifies a very obvious contestation for Tamil between the Śaiva movement and Jainism. Murukan, incidentally, in the early Caṅkam works is devoid of the language metaphor / motif. And one must assume that the idea of linking Murukan with Tamil language was a way to counter the Jaina authorship of a large collection of Tamil works. And this must have happened after Murukan – Subrahmaṇya was firmly established as a deity in the centres which had links with the Jaina acāryas and laity (visiting them) prior to this.

At the same time, it needs to be mentioned that many of the myths associated with Murukan are themselves to be seen as signifiers of a more basic conflict and uneasy, unsettling juxtapositions taking place before a final (?) codified all-encompassing Purāṇic mythic corpus is established in Tamilakam within which Murukan, Korava, Māl, and each of the local gods and goddesses of villages, hills and forests are linked together, and have a role each (or more) to play. Kamil Zvelebil, speaking of the Murukan-Tamil link,
believes Murukān’s association with Tamil to be ‘deeper’ than the Agastya legend, which was incorporated later. 144

Stuart Blackburn does acknowledge these older (pre-European interest in Tamil country) continuums of struggle in Tamil history over Tamil language and literature when he says, “In the south Indian context at least, the colonial impact was filtered through a pre-existing, though never static, debate about the origins of Tamil and its position vis-à-vis Sanskrit” 145 And he does acknowledge also, “the Tirukkural, written after the Sangam poems but before the bhakti movement, was a contentious text in Tamil literary history long before Europeans came to India...” 146 Yet, he somewhere fails to locate the discourse on Kural beyond the Tamil-Sanskrit dichotomy, when he writes, “In Valluvar’s triumph at Madurai, the outsiders’ need to view (south) India as an ancient and fallen, yet redeemable culture matched the need felt by many Tamil intellectuals for a literary history that rescued a pure Tamil from a decadent Sanskrit.” 147 And this was not the only divide that symbolised the contest over Kural. But that the Jainas, who participated in the contest in a more sustained manner than most, do not figure in Blackburn’s hypothesis is the question.

And what role does caste play in these contestations is in itself an interesting exercise. R. Champakalakshmi points out that during the 7th – 8th centuries AD, “The Saiva sect’s core constituency was provided by the Velālas and non brāhmaṇa agricultural community and in the fact that although the Saiva hymns and Saiva Siddhanta canon were composed and compiled by Velālas and brāhmaṇas, the heads

144 Kamil Zvelebil, Tamil Traditions on Subrahmanya-Murugan, Madras, 1991
145 Stuart Blackburn, op.cit, p.478
146 Ibid, p.478
147 Ibid, p.478
of the sectarian Saiva mathas were invariably Velālas.” 148

She adds, “Even the language of Saiva scriptures, i.e. Tamil and of Vaiṣṇava scriptures, i.e., Tamil and Sanskrit and Maṇipravālam, are said to closely relate to the differences that developed in the cultural milieu and caste orientation after the period of the bhakti saints, the Saivas becoming predominantly Velāla and the Vaiṣṇavas predominantly brāhmaṇas.” 149

T. S. Sripal writes, “In AD 7th and 8th centuries, the vaṇikar and vellālar communities converted from Jainas to Saivas.” 150 Further, “They smeared sacred ash on their foreheads (tirunīṇr – nīr pūciya). These communities are vegetarian till date.” 151 “In villages the Jaina and Saivas (thus converted) peasants are called vellāyar; nīr pūci vellāyar.” 152

Appar is one of the Saiva bards who was instrumental in zealous proselytisation and conversion of many vellālas into Saiva faith. Perhaps he was the original of the ‘nīr-pūci nayīnārs’ (the Saiva vellālas ‘who smeared sacred ash’, perhaps metaphorically, if not otherwise) that the Tamil Jainas refer to. A subject / story we shall return to later.

According to the Tamil Jainas – in all my interactions with them in each village – Appar was a Jaina who took to the Saiva faith and got close to the ruling elite; and like so

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148 R. Champakalakshmi, “From Devotion to Dissent to Dominance: the Bhakti of the Tamil Ālvārs and Nīyānārs” in R. Champakalakshmi, S. Gopal, eds, Tradition, Dissent and Ideology: Essays in Honour of Romila Thapar, OUP, Delhi, 1996 (pp. 135-163), p. 152-3

149 Ibid, pp.152-153

150 T. S. Sripal, Ilangoṭāṭikal Samayam Yātu? (Tamil), Parry Nilayam (Boradway), Madras, 1957; p.31

151 Ibid, p.32. It must also be mentioned that this community too, completes its dinner before dark, much like the Jainas do, as one has seen it in practice in villages such as Arpakkam and Magaral – where the Jainas converted into Saiva vellālas thanks to Appar and Sambandar’s religious crusade. Their homes too, have symbols that are very similar to the ones seen in Tamil Jaina households, especially the ‘kumbam’ (urn) on their entrance walls.

152 Ibid, p.32
many new converts, went on a mission to exterminate Jainas from Tamilakam. In their view two of the Śaiva bards, Appar and Gñānasampantar were most vociferous opponents of the Jaina faith. As Champakalakshmi puts it, “Appar ... laments his past association with the Jains and expresses his gratitude to Śiva for having rendered him from the sin of such association (102, Tiruvārūr) Campantar was a crusader, and his denunciation of the Jainas and Buddhists was instrumental in bringing about their decline at the royal court of the Pāṇḍyas. ... Every tenth verse of his patikam systematically abuses the Jains and Buddhists...”

Stories abound as to why Appar chose to become Saiva. “Appar (was a) contemporary of the Pallava king Mahendra I (AD 600 – 630) whose capital was Kāñci. Appar was born about 600 AD in a rich veḷḷa family at the village in the South Arcot district. He got in touch with the Jaina scholars and became a zealous convert to their faith. To get rid of an acute colic pain he went, at the instance of his devout sister, to a Śiva temple and broke forth into a song of prayer... (Śiva) relieved (him) of pain and in a voice from heaven gave him the title Tirunāvukkarasu (the blessed king of speech, Sanskrit equivalent of Vāgīśa; the saint is known as Vāgīśa also). An ardent devotee of Śiva (he) initiated Pallava king into the Śaiva faith. The boy saint Sambandar affectionately called him ‘Appar’ (father) (and) since then (he has) this appellation. He is said to have composed 49,000 decades of hymns, of which 311 are extant.”

Similar phantasmagoric tale of other ‘saints’ prevail (to this day) - “Sambanda is said to have been born about AD 639 to

153 R. Champakalakshmi, op.cit, p. 149
154 Satchidananda Pillai, “Śaiva Saints of South India” in H. Bhattacharya, Cultural Heritage of India, IV, Part II, 1956; 1959 reprint; p. 341
a brāhmaṇ couple of Shiylia. Śiva and Pārvatī are said to have appeared before him and fed him in a golden cup, the milk of spiritual potency. Abiding wisdom and power entered into him (and he thus became) Gñānasambandar....He condemned what he disliked in the life and teachings of Jainas and Buddhists of his time. After re-establishing Śaivism in the Pāṇḍyan kingdom (he) returned to the Chola land; from where he started on a northern tour...He is said to have sung in all 16,000 decades of hymns, of which only 384 are extant...”

About Appar and Sambandar, K. R. Venkatarama Ayyar writes, “In the seventh century, Mahendra Varman I of Kanchi (600 - 630) and Arikesari Parāṅkusa Nedumāran (670 -710) of Madurai were both Jains, before they were converted to the Saiva faith, the former by Appar and the latter by Sambandar. Under royal support Kanchi with the surrounding villages and Madurai with the surrounding hills teemed with a considerable Jain population, and the present day site of Jinakanchi bears sufficient testimony to this. Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar among the Śaiva Nāyaṇārs, and the Vaishṇava Āḻvārs had to tour the land and vanquish in controversy their Jain opponents before they could make them accept their faith. The immediate result was that Pāṭaliputra, now Tiruppapuliyur (Cuddalore), Arpakkam, MagaraI, Madurai and other places were lost by the Jains.”

Sripal notes that Appar was the ‘Appan muṇivar’, a popular name from Dharmasena, a Jaina ascetic at Tirunaruṉgoṇḍai.

155 Ibid, p.342
156 K.R. Venkatarama Ayyar, “South Indian Jainism”, Reprinted from the Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India, 1957-58; I thank Prof. Champakalakshmi for making this paper accessible to me.
He preached from there, treated illnesses and so on. People called him ‘Appar’ out of love and respect. In Śaiva accounts Appar converted to Śaivism when he couldn’t be cured of a stomach ache, at his sister’s behest. Thus, that he was a Jaina who converted to Śaivism is a common story. Appar became the ‘true’ new convert in denouncing all Jaina monks and the community. Not only this, he managed to convert many others to Śaivism (especially the vellālas) in the course of his visit to many villages which had Jaina (or Buddhist) associations.  

One has shown in the chapter that dwells on Nīlakeci, that the ‘pēy’ Nīli’s stories in the Śaivite renditions of it, always shows great emphasis on the motif of the “elupatīnmar” the 70 vellālas who jumped into the pyre to keep their word. Their keeping their word is made a lot of in the Śaivite versions. The vellāla connection of the Śaivite bards was in no small way responsible for this reading.

The subject of caste in the Tamil Jaina and Śaivite conflict is a complex and interesting one to focus on, considering that most of the Tamil Jainas are from the vellāla social group themselves. It may be well worth considering the processes that led to a small section of them becoming staunch Śaivite in their inclination, entering the bhakti paradigm, and abusing members of their own clan. Or, reasons for the popularity of the Jaina religion among the vellalas at one point, transforming to popular acceptance of an order most contrary to their faith. One of the reasons, of course, as Champakalakshmi put it, would be that “Bhakti would seem to have emanated and spread in a context of

157 Jeevabandhu T. S. Sripal, Tamilakattil Jainam (Tamil), Svasti Sri Lakshmi Sena Pattarakka Pattacaryavarya Jaina Matham, Kollapur, Parry Nilayam, Chennai, 1975; p.112
158 Ibid, p.112
rivalry for social dominance and royal patronage as seen in Kanchipuram and Madurai which were the centers of such conflict and change.”  

The process whereby this happened, the story of the 70 velḷālas who jumped into the pyre, the regional context of Jaina settlements in south Arcot, the ‘nīṟ-pūcī nayinār’ account, are all seemingly disparate motifs that perhaps point to the underlying processes of these caste dynamics which Tamil Jainas engaged with, countered, negotiated spaces with, or simply succumbed.

One has referred to Rajan Gurukkal on the discursive processes, the agrarian order and caste in social relations earlier. He notes, “The formation of agrarian localities was an ongoing process, and everywhere it accomplished a uniform structure of social relations irrespective of whether they were brāhmaṇa settlements (brahmadeṇyas) or velḷān-vakai settlements (ūr). The social structure was a hierarchy with landholders (brahmadeṇyas – kīḷavaṇ in the case of brahmadeṇya and ūrār / nāṭṭār in the case of velḷān-vakai settlements) at the apex and the large number of leaseholders (kāṟalar) who were mostly artisans and craftsmen, in the middle, placed over the primary production (aṭiyāḷar) who were at the bottom.”

The Jainas (velḷāḷa agriculturists) somewhere do not figure in this process / understanding.

159 R. Champakalakshmi, op.cit, p.157
160 When one started off, looking for ‘Tamil Jainas’ the caste question had not occurred. There were many stories, narratives that had to be recorded, documented, to be made sense of. The present study does not do complete justice to the caste question in its limited purview. At some point, this question needs to be dealt with in greater depth – for this aspect too has a continuum through different periods in the history of Tamilīkām. For some reason when it came to writing the history of Jainism in Tamilnadu, this question of the caste dynamics, the processes, taking from the numerous narratives of the community, has not been given adequate attention.
161 Rajan Gurukkal, “Towards a New Discourse: Discursive Processes in Early South India”, in R. Champakalakshmi and S. Gopal, eds, Tradition, Dissent and Ideology: Essays in Honour of Romila Thapar, OUP, Delhi, 1994 (pp.313 – 334); p.332
Again, “The brāhmaṇa being a non cultivating group by themselves, had to depend upon the familial labour of neighbouring clans for the cultivation of their land. This meant making some permanent arrangement for the supply of labour in the brāhmaṇa households obviously a system transcending kinship. The brāhmaṇa land with this household thus emerged as an independent unit of production with working clansmen families attached to it. The centre of brahmana households is referred to in poems as ‘pārpaṇa-c-cēri’ ....an alternative system of agrarian relations counterposed to what was dominant....” 162 Herein it may be noted that same was case of Jaina agricultural land; and to this day the term ‘nayinār-teru’ is used to refer to Tamil Jaina hamlets, cluster of settlements in a village.

Gurukkal adds that “With the manifestation of the bhakti discourse as a temple based movement in the 7th – 8th centuries the formation of the dominant ideology of the agrarian society was complete.” 163 While there seems now a general consensus on the understanding of this side of the ‘discursive’ process in Tamilnadu, there is still a question as to where the Tamil Jaina ‘veḷḷāḷa’ agriculturists – facing persecution from the nāyanmārs and Āḻvārs – figure in this entire discursive process. Is it time to look at the persecution from outside the purview of a religious (‘communal’) conflict alone and try to re visit the nature of this agrarian expansion, to look at this very interesting intra-veḷḷāḷar conflict between the Śaiva and Jaina veḷḷāḷars?

By the post bhakti period the Jainas seem to have a relatively greater hold over south Arcot and surrounding areas rather than Madurai and Kancipuram of the early periods. Where they forced to migrate to the former region

162 Ibid, p.324
163 Ibid, p.333
at some point? It has been mentioned elsewhere that the Jaina maṭha of Jinakāṇci was shifted to Cittāmūr (towards the 14th-15th century AD). And it is a different matter that by this time, again there is a ‘fresh round’ of persecution stories involving the Tamil Jainas and the rulers of the time. And again the ‘nīr-pūci’ vellāḷars concept figures in this. Thus the history of the Tamil Jaina community does not remain a static one that can be explained against the dominance of the bhakti, agrarian expansion of that period, royal patronage and decline within a period of 7th to 9th centuries AD. It continues through other periods, beyond the bhakti paradigm, constantly seeking to refresh the identity question. But most certainly the bhakti period persecution sets the ‘base’ for marginalisation of the community which never quite manages to get back to a status it aimed for, in the early centuries BC, and AD.

By and large, however, there seems to be a negation of the agrarian aspect / qualification of the Tamil Jaina community in almost all the works on early medieval Tamilakam. And agrarian expansion by extension is invariably associated with brahminical systems. Jainas are mentioned in most works as traders and artisans. Surely, there should be a meaning to the number of land grants and palliccantam and sarvamānyam (rendering tax-free) grants made to the Jainas recorded in Copper plate charters, temple inscriptions across south Arcot, North Arcot, Kancipuram districts and other places? Rajan Gurukkal says, “Though there is no reason to believe that the Jainas and Buddhists were concerned about the values of agrarian society, their interest in social peace has always been in favour of the communities engaged in exchange, whose operations required peace and order as an esoteric prerequisite. This circumvents the discursive needs of agriculturists and social groups engaged in exchange of
goods..." There seems an almost altruistic association of the Jainas and Buddhists with 'peace and order'. This in a sense denies the severe debates that ensued between these two sects for gaining both state and popular patronage. Moreover, when Jaina textual tradition speaks of the origins of four occupations — agriculture being the foremost in order of importance — as devised by the 1st tīrthaṅkara Rṣabha, surely at some point in history there was a full-fledged practising agricultural group among the Jainas that called for this construction of the divinely ordained (via the tīrthaṅkara Rṣabha) occupational segregation?

In a different context, and a different nature of study altogether, Karashima shows that there existed private ownership of land in medieval Tamilnadu. He uses inscriptive evidence to show that there were increasing numbers of non brahmāṇa lands in that period. "...Towards the end of the Chola rule, prominent non brāhmaṇa individuals held extensive plots of land, often covering more than one village (which is a) clear indication of a stratified society." "There was a striking increase in number of individuals who held land in non brāhmaṇa (non brahmāṇa) villages in the second half (of Chola rule, 1070 – 1279 AD)." These individuals holding land may well have been, among others, the Jaina vellālas. In the chapter using inscriptive records one will also point out, in tandem with this hypothesis of Karashima's that this rings true in the

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164 Gurukkal, op.cit, pp.324-25
165 Of course, the Jaina tradition is clear that these are not hereditary groups, as in the brahminical system, nor are they strictly hierarchical, unlike the varṇāśrama dharma. As Jaini puts it - "As for the castes they had no divine origin at all" according to the Digambara Jaina tradition as mentioned in Jinasena's Adipurāṇa. (Jaini, Padmanabh S. Jaini, Collected Papers on Jaina Studies (Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2000), pp. 339-40

166 Noboru Karashima, "Whispering of Inscriptions", in Kenneth R. Hall, ed, Structure and Society in Early South India: Essays in Honour of Noboru Karashima, OUP, Delhi, 2001 (pp.45-58)
167 Ibid, p.46
168 Ibid, p.45
case of the Tamil Jainas; and increasingly inscriptions mention donations by common people rather than kings and rulers (though they mention the names of ruling kings, giving us the regnal years and so on) to Jaina temples and paliis by people owning land, or by rich individuals. But of course, there is no mention of the Jainas in the land-owning context even in Karashima’s work.

Karashima points out, “The Chola Naṭṭārs were representatives of vellāla landholders who lived in the ērs (common villages classified as vellānvagai) included in a nādu. As local leaders they controlled production in the nadu. Naṭṭārs in the early Chola period seem to have held their land in common in villages. Though in the later Chola period many Naṭṭārs began to hold their land individually and privately, their communal character and organisation as vellāla representatives, and also their solidarity as prestigious local leaders did not change. However, some non vellāla Naṭṭārs or Naṭṭavars, seem to have appeared during the 13th and 14th centuries, which resulted in the weakening of the previous communal ties and solidarity, Naṭṭar prestige and power was also challenged by other upwardly mobile social communities including those of the artisans and merchants, whose wealth greatly increased during these centuries. Thus the dissolution of the old agricultural community became inevitable. The development of commerce and industry from the 13th century onwards is prominent in the Tamil inscriptions .... Development took place mainly in the north and south Arcot districts, which were formerly underdeveloped drylands, In contrast, Tanjavur district, which was previously the most advanced wet agricultural core seems to have been left out of this development since
there are a few inscriptions that document the growth of commerce in this area. ..." 169

It must be pointed out here that the Jaina matha at Melcittamur (Ci ttamur in older references) near Cenji – the most important institution of Tamil Jainas that came up in the medieval times (around 15th century) was the largest land owning establishment; and today, too, manages a good enough proportion of land under cultivation. The tillers of the land, of course, were lower caste peasantry in the past, until increasing price of labour and the Jainas' own economic situation forced many of them to do their own ploughing, tilling and so on, as the community informs one. Also, quite a few migrated to cities and towns, especially the educated sections. And have given up agriculture altogether. Others have leased out their land – small and medium sized – to other cultivators, usually from other castes.

Returning to Gurukkal, where then, are these aspects of the Tamil agrarian context, in the discursive processes, apart from existing on the fringes, as merchants and artisans? Are they non-agents in a non-problematic way? Or so it would seem in the following statement – "What is perceptive about the discursive processes across the two social formations in early south India are: the breakdown of the heroic discourse along with the redistribute social relationships enchained by it; the dissemination of the Vedic, Purānic and Śāstric prescriptions as the dissonant impulses; enlargement of the dissonant impulses into the ethical postulates of didactic texts; reifications and discourse production within the hegemonic framework in response to the expanding agrarian

169 Ibid, pp.49-50
relations of domination; emergence of bhakti as the mitigating force within the social contradictions of subjection and exploitation; and their convergence into a new discourse."  

While a more or less general consensus exists on this process, which is the dominant process, need to look at the hidden, and subtle processes within this larger picture. What it does to discourses that are not within the brāhmaṇical paradigm, without the bhakti concept. What would the agrarian society be outside of this ‘complete’ picture? Does this make a ‘complete picture’? And why so? Are communities such as the Jainas and Buddhists mute witness to the construction of this hegemonic discourse? Did they not counter these through literary traditions and in other ways of negotiating their inclusiveness? The concept of “nīr-pūciya nayinārs” may be seen as one such construct / concept symbolising this negotiation; but in that case, the community lost its distinct identity as Jaina to the larger dominant, Śaivite milieu. The –nīr-pūciya nayinārs’ retained certain habits, like eating before dark, vegetarianism (as against other non Jaina vellāla community), and some donated to Jaina establishments too (as is clear from the titles mentioned in some of the records, and to this day, there are Śaiva vellālas who do visit Jaina temples, and donate). Even their houses bear symbols that the Jaina households have, with a difference – the swastika of the Jaina community is replaced by a Śaiva mark, of three parallel horizontal lines the way the Śaivas wear the sacred ash on their foreheads. Despite these ‘visible’ signs, even if the nīr-pūci nayinār story is considered a mythical construct, it still remains a very important construct in the narratives of the Tamil

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170 Gurukkal, op.cit, p.334
Jainas as a mark of the persecution of the past. And a very important story of negotiations and of succumbing to the hegemonic.

But, at another level, there are certain ‘non-negotiables’, too, vis-à-vis other communities. Given the kind of strictures in their faith, the Jainas participated in only a certain kind of agriculture – not growing certain kinds of crops (tubers, etc). By its very nature, Jaina religion could not be very ‘inclusive’; brāhmiṇical ritual practices asked for incorporating a variety of ingredients – most of which came to the temples through a complex web of redistributive mechanism. The redistributive network with the establishment of temples and endowments for brāhmiṇs as part of it, was not something the Jainas readily incorporated in their ways, despite their own temple, sangha and matha structures. Communities, and thereby practices that became part of the Purāṇic religion still remained outside the Jaina schema. 171

Minimalistic (relatively) ritual paraphernalia – compare to the rich diversity of offerings allowed / expected from brāhmiṇical temples – also meant involving resource mobilisation from various places and also helped spread the brāhmiṇical ideology and establish the superiority of Sanskritic ritualism (as ‘the way of doing things’ 172 ) in

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171 Returning to Murukan worship – the way this hill-forest deity was made part of the Purāṇic family of gods – to this day the ritual of ‘Kāvadi’, a very folk idiom associated with certain tribes in the Palani hills, easily got incorporated into the overall Murukan worship pattern. The temple at Palani till date has most of its devout hailing from the tribal communities nearby, and communities such as these also practise sacrificial rites as part of their vows. Something the Jaina religion would obviously not be part of. A recent Chennai (the former government of Ms. Jayalalitha) judgment against animal sacrifices led to a wide debate on the question of caste and exclusion; with those speaking for the lower castes arguing against insensitivity of the judgment to practices of the lower castes / tribes. The vedic idea / metaphor of sacrifice did not figure in these debates.

172 It is a strange phenomenon that to this day the ritual of breaking coconuts, and going through the brāhmiṇical rituals happens without questioning, even by political leaders who emerged from the discourse against caste and brāhmiṇism in Tamilnadu. This is the way in which the ‘dominant’
tandem with local cultic practices. The Jaina temples with their own strictures may have appeared distancing at times and distant. Incidentally, lower castes were not allowed inside Jaina temples as well, though the religion essentially did not believe in caste. The Jainas inform that accepting the 'prasādam' (offerings made to the deity) is strictly prohibited in their temples. There is no concept of 'abhiśekam' (ritual bathing of the deity) with honey; milk is allowed on certain occasions. Camphor is avoided, so are flowers (to decorate the deity; since here the central figure – mūlavāra – is the tīrthaṅkara, the one who has left all worldly possessions behind) These taboos would also mean a curb on transaction of resources of a certain kind between certain communities who were coerced / persuaded / inclined to be part of the brāhmiṇical temple culture.

Related to this aspect one may return to the sacred centres of Murukan worship which the text Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai covered and helped build a sacred geography around the deity Murukan-Subrahmaṇya. The six sacred shrines of Murukan covering the traditional units of Tondaimāṇṭalam (Chingleput, north and south Arcot districts); Pāntiyamaṇṭalam (most of Madurai and Tīnnevelly); and Chōlamaṇṭalam (mainly Tanjavur) is a pointer to the fact that almost all the centres mentioned are located in and around the areas where there was concentration of agriculture, or conscious effort towards irrigated agriculture. Irrigated agriculture can be said to have received impetus right from the period of the Pallavas – c.550 to c. 850 / 900 AD when huge irrigation tanks and

\[\text{becomes entrenched in everyday acts / events (subtly and imperceptibly at times), and what is everyday, re-instases the dominant.}\]

\[\text{173 The following discussion from R. Uma Maheshwari, "Images of Murukan: Perceptions of a Popular Deity and the Anupajātiṅitu in the Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai" MPhil dissertation (completed and submitted to JNU, New Delhi, under the guidance of Prof. Champakalakshmi), pp.70-71}\]
other structures were set up “to store rainwater and runoff water for the paddy fields.” On the other hand, each of these centres is also located at points of convergence of different resources. The temple, as an institution, can be taken as one of the major ‘convergence’ points where resources from forests, and hills, as well as agricultural produce were mobilised. Thus Palani, Tiruttani, Tirupparankunram, where Subrahmanya-Murukan temples are located, would attract endowments of agricultural produce; sheep, milk etc from the pastoral tracts, honey, sandalwood, etc from the hills, to provide for the worship of the main deity or subsidiary deities...

It should be noted here that almost all the sacred centres that Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai writes about, were once associated with the Jainas, a fact proven by a number of epigraphical records coming from these places of early Jainism.

In the period between the 6th to 9th centuries AD, we see numerous rock-cut cave temples coming up coinciding with the height of the power of the Cāḷukyas of Vātāpi (Deccan), and Vengi (eastern coastal Andhra), the Pallavas of Kaṇṭhi and the Pāṇḍyas at Madurai. In the Tamil country, however, the caves and natural caverns usually by on the hills, were associated with Jaina monks and nuns as early as 2nd century BC and the temples that were modelled here, date from 8th century AD. It is interesting to note that many of these hills that were formerly Jaina, with their cave shrines, became associated with Subrahmanya later. For instance, Kalugumalai, Kudumiyamalai, Kunnakkudi and Sittanavasal, where we have temples of Subrahmanya-Murukan. Kalugumalai which has a Śiva temple, was a Jaina cave-

175 Mphil dissertation cited above, p.71
resort, as the inscriptions discovered there (more than ninety of which are donative records) "refer to sculptures of Jaina figures – as tirumeni or Paṭimam." ¹⁷⁶

Most of the Tamil Jaina villages – barring a few of them in Tanjavur region (where a small section of Tamil Jainas are still resident) – were in the dry-land areas of the arid and (a few in the semi-arid) regions. The delta lands in the past (as records have shown) had almost entirely been reserved for brahmadeyas and agrahāras – the brāhmaṇ settlements. With the exception of Melcittamur (with the maṭha, established in the medieval period) maṭha having a substantial area of cultivable land; and perhaps in the earlier periods pre-bhakti, Jinakāṭāncipuram, near the present day Kancipuram, most Jaina villages comprise smaller landholdings. Most of them, almost all, non tank-fed, rainfall dependent areas of cultivation. The kinds of land grants that the inscriptional evidence reveals for Tamil Jainas (mostly, for Jaina temples) seem qualitatively different from brahmadeya or agrahara grants / charters. Few of them for instance, mention grant of naṅcāi (wet land) and ‘puṅcāi’ (dryland) together as part of the grant for offerings for the temple (most inscriptions also happen to be made by assemblies, or individuals, and not the royalty, per se) – that is, produce from both these kinds of lands to go to the temple as was the case in brāhmaṇ endowments.

So, in a larger context, domination is built around not merely rituals, but also a social stratification based on an entire system of land, control of land, resources, labour, land tenure, proximity to power, and all of it. Where the entire ritual complex – the dominant cultural idiom – is built

around a certain kind of agrarian practice. For instance, paddy becomes the most important crop regime in this context. A certain agrarian rhythm evolves around this crop regime as well coinciding with festivals at times of harvest, and ‘relief’ from work on the lands. The agricultural cycle moves around ritual cycles – both sustaining each other, to the exclusion of other kinds of cropping patterns, practices, and beliefs and ritual patterns. For instance in the early Cāṇkam poetry, the crops associated with Murukan worship – usually the velam veriyātal (a divination ritual) – was red millet, largely, besides other coarse grain. An entire redistributive network / structure thus established, by its very nature, marginalises other systems, related as it is with control over land, water, labour and religious dominance. 177

In this context, mention may be made also to the fact that the physiographic zones (the eco-types), the ‘ain-tina’ (five tinais) concept known to early Tamils and the poetic (and geographic) basis for the Tamil Cāṇkam ‘akam’ poems of love also disappears with the consolidation of this hegemonic system. Literature – Tamil literature in general in this period – does not any more use these metaphors and motifs set against the eco types in later periods, post bhakti. Although this point does need further analysis, a casual perusal of the literary changes suggests this trend. It may be interesting to note this difference between early and medieval Tamil literature and the concept of eco zones as being the essentially Tamil spatial-regional context. It is thus important to look at these aspects of building up of

177 One acknowledges gaining many insights on these ‘other kinds’ of dominance – namely, universal imposition of agricultural systems from one’s own interactions with present day groups, organisations, and politics that is engaging with similar universal dominant understandings of nature of agriculture, imposition of newer kinds of agricultural regime across regions, negating regional environmental, cultural variations. While the realisation of a universal ‘agrarian rhythm’ happened during one’s engagement with evolution of Cāṇkām into Subrahmanya, son of Siva, thanks to engaging discussions with Prof. Champakalakshmi, she REALISES that some patterns in history do keep recurring. This is one such.
hegemony and the conflict created thereby / therein, when one looks at / re constructs the history of the Tamil Jainas and to locate 'persecution' and responses thereof / thereby within these processes rather than focus on them being mere religious conflicts. The ‘location’ of persecution and dominance – marginalisation is, thus, these larger historical processes of different kinds happening at different levels.

**The maṭham: its Significance**

It is believed that the maṭham (one will use this Tamil term as used by the community) - maṭha – as an institution within the Jaina religion in south India came as a response to the almost militant propagation of Ādi Śaṅkara’s times and his establishing maṭhas at different places across the country. However, there are differences of opinion on the time of its origin. “The Melcittamur matha was established in the 15th century (in the aftermath of the Vekatapathy Nayaka Jaina ‘genocide’).” 178 “Some believe that the Jaina maṭha here came as a response the mathas established by Ādi Śaṅkara in his time period. Around 8th – 9th century AD… One of the Jaina monks, in a proselytising mission set a senā maṭh at Delhi, Kolhapur, Jinakanci and Penugonda. In Tamilnadu it was known as the Lakṣmisēnā maṭha. There are five maṭhas in Karnataka – in Mudbidri, Śravaṇabelgola, Hombuj, Karkāl, and Bastimaṭha (Narasimharājpur). Their maṭhaṭipatis are identified by the following titles – Chārukīrti (Śravaṇabelgola and Mudbidri), Devēndrākīrti (Hombuj), Lalitakīrti (Karkāl), and Lakshmīsenā (Bastimaṭha – Narasimharājpur) and so on.” 179

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178 Mallinatha Sastry, Tamilnadu kā Jain Itihās (Hindi), Kundakunda Bharati, Delhi, 1995; p.125-1f
179 Ibid, p.125-6
Padmanabha Jaini places the evolution of the class of 'clerics', the bhaṭṭārakas, within the evolution of 'popular' Jainism and the cult of yakṣa (and yakṣi) worship. He says, "(The) legitimisation of yakṣa worship within the Jaina faith may have helped to prevent the influence of Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva bhakti movements on the Jaina laity. All doctrinal compromises have their price, and Jaina laypeople, who previously had only worshipped the Jinas, were increasingly attracted to the worldly benefits available from the yakṣas, while the mendicants busied themselves with the task of devising new rites, litanies, tantric practices to placate the yakṣas...." 180 And this, "resulted in a new class of clerics, called the Yatis and Bhaṭṭārakas, hitherto unknown to Jaina society, who claimed for themselves a special status similar to that of the 'mahants' of Hindu religious establishments. Several centres, called Maṭhas, of such administrative clerics, came into existence all over Western India, and from these the clerics conducted an extraordinary number of business transactions, such as building temples and erecting images, both of the Jinas and of yakṣas. They also instituted various new rites and rituals to be employed in their worship and managed large endowments offered by devout laymen for the perpetuation of their cults..." 181

Sangave writes, "(The) Institution of bhaṭṭāraka (was) started by Digambara Jainas as a measure against their continuous religious and social disintegration during the medieval period....system of bhaṭṭāraka was constituted mainly for religious divisions of society like sangha, gaṇa, gaccha." 182 And about the maṭham at Melcittāmūr - "A high

180 Padmanabh S. Jaini, "Is there Popular Jainism"(pp.2267 -279); p.275
181 Ibid, p.275-6
priest at Sittamur in S. Arcot district elected by representatives from the chief Jaina villages. The high priest has supreme authority over all Jainas south of Madras but not those of Mysore or south Kanara with whom the former have no relations....(he) settles caste disputes, and fines and excommunicates the erring...(and his) control over the people (is) very real.”

“The Jinakāñāci maṭha at Cittāmūr was established by Vīrasena-cārya who was also its first maṭẖātipati....Mackenzie visited the Cittāmūr maṭha in the year 1816 in the time of (the chief pontiff) Munibhadradevācārya who was also known as trividya-cakravarti....The role of the maṭẖātipati is to supervise the Jaina community and religion, by overseeing the protection of the temples, manuscripts, and so forth.”

“The maṭẖātipati is the representative of the religion. Meant to protect the āgamas. He is the mediator between people and the acāryas. This maṭha was originally at Tiruparuttikunṟam. In order to save our āgamas the maṭha was shifted to Cittāmūr.”

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183 Ibid, p.101
184 Krishnamurthy, Čēllipp Pakutivil Čamanam (Tamil), Sekar Patippakam, 1994; pp.102-103
185 Svasti Sri Lakṣmi Sena Paṭṭāraka Pattācārya Mahāsvāmi, Jinakāñāci Maṭham, Melcittāmūr (Cenji), personal communication.
Maṭẖātipatis at Cittāmūr maṭham from 1925 onwards - Chakravarti Svamigal (Agalur); Samudravijayan Svamigal (Agalur); Chandānakirti Svamigal (Erumbur); Sripalavarni Svamigal (Tachur); Chakravarti Svamigal (Tanjavur); Veerakumar (very short term, Uppuvelur); Somakirti Svamigal (Erumbur); Adichakravarti Svamigal (Ponnur); Bharatan (short term, Agalur); Appandairajan (Maliayanur) – Source: Sukumara Panditar, teacher, Melcittāmūr, October 18th 2003, personal communication. Incidentally, the mathatipati wears saffron robes, not originally the colour associated with Jainism.
The maṭhātipati is recognisable by his saffron robes, head gear, the kamaṇḍalām and peacock feathers (cāmara) that he carries along. The maṭhātipati — at the maṭham at Cittāmur which was in the past known as Siṅgapuri / Siṅgapurināṭu, and was part of Tontaǐmaṇṭalām and later Cholamaṇṭalām — bears the honorific ‘Svasti śrī Lakṣmī Senā Paṭṭāraka Pattācārya Mahāsvāmi’ of the Jīnakaṇḍi, Penugonda, Ėaṭursiddha Simhāsaṇa. He is held as the ‘simhāśanātīśvāra’ of these four maṭhas, according to the community. He is the ritual head of the Tamil Jaina community and responsible for the maintenance, upkeep of the Jaina temples, manuscripts (the Cittāmur maṭham has a collection of palm leaf manuscripts, which Mackenzie is said to have referred to when he came here, in 1816) across the state of Tamilnadu, and initiate new entrants into Jainism. But the difference between the acaryas of the ‘pīṭhas’ (set up by Śaṅkara) and the Jaina maṭhātipati is that he is elected by responsible people from Tamil Jaina villages. The maṭhātipati at the Cittāmur maṭham is elected by representatives of the villages of Tayanur, Viranamur, Cittamur, Vilukkam, Peramandur, Alagramam and Velur (all in Tindivanam taluk), and all from south Arcot district alone. Perhaps one of the reasons as to why other Jaina villages are not involved in this whole process has to do with the fact that this was the region that found it important in medieval periods to counter the medieval trend of persecution that the community refers to? The question needs to be probed further and nothing conclusive may be said about the reasons in the present study. Also, one needs to question as to why it took so long for the maṭham to be shifted out from Jīnakāṇḍipuram — that is, between the period of the bhakti and following Śaṅkara’s missionary zeal and the 15th century — to Cittāmur.
Meanwhile, the Tamil Jaina community, on the whole, shows respect and veneration for those among them who live the life of a 'true' Jaina — in each village there are few who observe the strictures of their faith with utmost dedication while there are others who do tend to relax a little, especially those employed, travelling long distances or those in situations that need some 'adjustments' on their part. But in terms of eating, and drinking boiled, filtered water, they all observe strict discipline.

Speaking of 'adjustments' / 'negotiations', the Jainas found a way within their doctrine, in their śrāvakācāras, to address these. For instance, their qualification of 'violence' itself.

"From a householder's context violence has been divided into four categories, viz.: -

Saṅkalpa himsā (intentional violence) — injury committed intentionally by mind, speech and body known as violence of head, heart and hand. It is totally prohibited; and meant to protect all living beings.

Udyoga himsā (professional violence) — injury happening unavoidably in the permissible professions and business.

Ārambha himsā (household violence) — injury which happens unavoidably in the performance of various worldly duties and rituals.

Virodhi himsā (protective or retaliate violence) — injury happening unavoidably in meeting the aggression in defence of one's person and property and in protection of others.
To be absolutely non-violent is difficult..." 186

These qualifications come immediately as a response (from the community) to questions on their current practice of agriculture using pesticides and so on. Incidentally, the mahātipati at Cittamur has recently initiated a process to go back to organic farming and non-chemical agriculture, and trying to sensitise other agriculturists in the area about possibilities of minimising violence. Few of the Tamil Jaina agriculturists feel absolved of the guilt of using chemical based farming, on the ground that they do not till their own lands and have others do it for them. But for most of them, it is what they call “udyoga himsā” and is unavoidable. 187

And with those that follow the rules most religiously, the community raises them to a pedestal. At Tirupparambur, for instance, the community remembers the three householders who undertook the sallekhana vratam (death by starvation) referring to their birth as the ‘avatarittār’ (they were not simply ‘born’, pirāntavar’; but avatāras). These three form part of this ‘immediate history’ and the three elders have been commemorated in footprints incised on stone in a mantapam built in the village. This bit of the recent past is as important for the Tamil Jainas of the village as their ancient past linked to the beautiful temple at Karandai which was part of Tirupparambur and is now a separate village, very close by. While the former is the history of the laity and a very ‘Jaina’ history (reminiscent of the ācāryas of the past who took sallekhana, in the Tamil land, besides a few śrāvakas) the latter is the history associated with state

187 However there are those that are known to have been so strict about rules - like an old woman in Cittamur who refused to take allopathic medicines when she was severely ill. People give tremendous respect to those like her.
patronage and a history of the Jainas in Tamilakam in a larger context of political and social history. It also points to the people's own narratives of their community's history— one is to do with the larger Jaina mythology and another more with specific associations with Tamilakam, their homeland and home-village.

Changes in Practices

With Sanskritism becoming overwhelming, we find, gradually, by medieval times, Jaina rituals too start adapting to this change. There was evidently an effort to retain the community identity against the Vedic, Puranic (Saiva and Śākta) influences which necessitated this change. Significantly, there is a shift from Prakrit to Sanskrit at some stage, perhaps closely following brāhminical ritualism.

At the temple at Karandai one found the following śloka to Saraswati in a booklet given as sastradanam by a devotee. It read— "śrī candrarka kōḍītōjvala divyamūrtē śrī candrakākalītānirnmae suprahavāsē kāmārtadēse kālāhamsa samādirūḍē vāgīśvarī pratidinam mama rāksadēvi..."

At another place, the invocation to yakṣa Brahmadeva follows the format of Gaṇesa astōtra. It reads— "ōṁ hrīm jaya siddha prasiddhayē namah
ōṁ hrīm jagadēka vīrēye namah
asurakula santapāya namah
anta nāyakāya namah
riddhi vīnāyakāya namah
airāvata priyāya namah..."

The yakṣī Jvalāmalini too has her stotra (Jvalāmalini Sadāṣṭaka stotram) which again starts with "ōṁ hrīm am
krōm, hrōm srtm, anēkānanda mūrtayai namah, Ïm hrōm....kāmavidhvamsinyai namah...kārvagyai namah....jagadāṃbikāyai namah....mahādurgyai namah...”

There are places where Jaina epithets are used such as “jinaraṇja padāmbōja ...paṅcakalyānaka nāyakāyai namah...” and so forth.

An overarching Sanskrit ritual tradition is consolidated in these developments engulfing even anti ritualistic (initially) doctrines such as Jainism and Buddhism. Devi stuti is used in worship of the yakṣī in Jaina temples. At the same time there is an introduction of the worship of navagrahās (the nine planets). Debate still persists among the Jainas as to the validity of the same. Some of these issues will be touched upon in the section on narratives of the community. Interestingly, many of the Tamil Jaina śrāvakās (illaṟattār) believe Sanskrit to be a language of their canon rather than Prakrit and quite a few lament the loss of the knowledge of Samskrutam. In this context – “the Digambara Jainas of Karnataka region used Sanskrit in their writings probably form the time of the earliest penetration of Jainism into the area in the early centuries of the Common Era. For parts of Karnataka, Jainism was the vehicle by which the North Indian Brāhmaṇīc Sanskrit tradition was introduced...The 7th through 10th centuries C.E saw the flourishing of a Jaina Sanskrit literature, and Jaina Purāṇas were some of the more important works composed. The Ṛdi Purāṇa was also popular among the medieval Digambaras of North India and Western India...”

188 Śākana Deva Deviyar Pūjā Vilānam (Tamil) compiled by Mallinaatha Jain Sastri, Chennai
189 John E. Cort, “And Overview of the Jaina Purāṇas” in Wendy Doniger, ed, Purāṇa Perennis: Reciprocity and Transformation in Hindu and Jaina Texts, SUNY, Albany, 1993 (pp.185 – 206); Endnote: 26
However, the ācāryas of Tamilnadu seem to have used Tamil more than, or as much as, Sanskrit (and Prakrit) as textual instruments of propagation. Perhaps a longer and more consistent tradition of Tamil existed in Tamilakam which may be cited as a reason for the Jainas today feeling 'left-out', or 'ignorant of' the Sanskrit tradition. This perhaps also explains the ultimate relation of Tamil Jaina identity with Tamil literature, language—a feature that distinguishes them in great measure from the Jainas in Karnataka, or elsewhere.

On Sanskrit operating as a language in the Karnataka Jaina context, Jaini avers, "The Digambara Jainas of the Karnataka region used Sanskrit in their writings probably from the time of the earliest penetrations of Jainism into the area in the early centuries of the Common Era. For parts of Karnataka, Jainism was the vehicle by which the North Indian Brāhmaṇic Sanskrit tradition was introduced. Jaina mendicants and laity were influential in the courts of the Gaṅga, Rāṣṭrakūṭa, and Hoysala dynasties. Many of these royalty were strong patrons of the Jainas, and occasionally Jaina themselves. For several centuries Jainism and culture were nearly synonymous. The seventh through tenth centuries CE saw the flourishing of a Jaina Sanskrit literature, and Jaina Purāṇas were some of the more important works composed. The Ādi Purāṇa was also popular among the medieval Digambaras of North India and western India." 190

Perhaps in the case of Tamilakam the Jainas' extensive use of Tamil (and a little later, Prakrit) in secular and sacred

textual tradition predated that of Sanskrit. And in some ways, the former developed to a greater extent than the latter; and with the popularisation of Jinasena's Ādipurāṇa Sanskrit too got introduced at some levels into the Tamil Jaina sacred literature context. And perhaps came with its own typical association of being a language of the learned. And which may explain to a certain extent the Tamil Jainas lamenting the loss of Sanskrit in what had changed for them in so many years as a community. However, this is a conjecture and not a conclusive statement on the use of Sanskrit in Tamil Jaina context; and needs further study.

Jagdishchandra Jain writes, “Jinasena II (different from Jinasena I, author of Harivamsapurāṇa) the pupil of Vīrasena, the author of the Dhavaḷa-ṭīkā, on the Śatkhanda-gāma, began composing the Ādipurāṇa during the reign of king Amoghavarṣa, but died without completing it in 848 AD. In his Ādipurāṇa he has laid down six-fold sets of practices for a layman: worship (ijya), an acceptable profession (vārtta), charity (dāna), study of scriptures (svādhyāya), restrain (samyama) and austerities (tapa).... Somadeva, contemporary of Jinasena II, a Digambara Jain, in his Upāsaka-dhyāyana (which forms the last three chapters of the Yaśastilaka-campu) deals with conduct of Jaina laymen.... largely influenced by brāhmaṇic rituals.... Somadeva, in his 34th chapter, prescribed ācamana (sipping water from the palm of the hand), hōma (oblation to gods casting clarified butter into fire), bhūta bali (offerings to all created beings), actually not commanded by the Jains. ...The 35th chapter ...lays down that 8 evil planets such as sūrya, ūkra, etc, should be propitiated.... There are details of 6 types of pūjā.... These ...are not compatible with other Jain authors (on pūjā).... (Between) the 9th and 12th centuries AD, (there are) numerous compendiums prescribing
the code of conduct for laymen (in Sanskrit) by Amṛtacandra (Puruṣārtha-siddhyupaya)....Padmanandi (Pañcavimśaṭīkā), Vīranandi (Acaṭasāra). 191

Further, “Jinasena II composed Jina sahasra nāma stotra, 1000 names of the Jina, calling him Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Buddha, Bṛhaspati, Indra, and so on. Rṣabha is called the Creator of the Universe (jagatam srṣṭa), Vāmadeva (Śiva) of tawny colour (pikāṅga) [Adipurāṇa, 14, 26, 27, 37, 44, 47, 51; ch.40] Jinasena also accepted the importance of sāmskāra (sacred ceremony which purifies from the taint of sin contracted in the womb and leading to regeneration) beginning from conception to death. He believes in sacrificial rites (yajña)...and refers to thread ceremony to be adopted by Jains (yajñopavīta).” 192

Padmanabh Jaini believes that, “The waves of the bhakti movement that had swept over the whole range of Indian life finally overtook the atheist Jains and forced them to deify, as it were, their human tīrthaṅkaras or face the peril of extinction. Probably the move brought to the surface the emotional hunger of the Jain laity for an object of worship more gracious and glamorous than merely the austere figure of an exalted human teacher. Jinasena very skillfully provided the Jain laity with a new identity of a specially honoured caste of ‘neo-Brāhmaṇs’, a new book of codes in the guise of his Purāṇa, and a new image of the Jina endowed with a grandeur and majesty that could easily compete with the Hindu trinity. To be sure, the tīrthaṅkaras, like the Buddha of the Pāli canon, had always been

191 Jagdishchandra Jain, Studies in Early Jainism (selected research articles): “Jain Worship: a Critical view” (pp.172-180), Navrang, New Delhi, 1992; (p.175-6)

192 Ibid, (pp/177-8)
surrounded by heavenly attendants like Indra and Kubera who made special appearances on the five great occasions like the kalyāṇakas....” 193

Elsewhere he gives the reasons for these developments - One became a Jaina by taking refuge in a Jina (spiritual victor), a mendicant who had completely overcome all forms of attachment (rāga), aversion (dveśa), and delusion (moha), and was therefore worthy of worship. But the Jainas were surrounded by a vast majority of people whose deities, although armed with weapons and surrounded by spouses, nevertheless promised their devotees both salvation as well as daily bread and butter (yogakṣeṣam vahāmyaham, as Krṣṇa says in the Gītā). Combating the influence of the Vedic and Purāṇic deities became an urgent preoccupation with the Jaina mendicant of medieval times. .... (But) despite the tremendous social and emotional pressures that the medieval bhakti movements must have exerted, no cult of Śiva or Viṣṇu ever developed within Jainism. Nevertheless, Jaina teachers rejected only Śiva’s ability to lead people to salvation; they accepted his existence as a minor god, and according to one account even used him to promote their own religion. Ācārya Hēmacandra is reported by his Jaina biographers to have converted the Śaivite king Kumārapāla (1143-72) by showing him a vision of Lord Śiva and obtaining from the latter a declaration that the religion of the Jina was superior to all. The king is said to have assumed at that very moment a life-long vow of vegetarianism, the hallmark of Jainism. ....” 194

193 Padmanabh S. Jaini, “Jina Rṣabha as an Aṅgāra of Viṣṇu”, Collected Papers on Jaina Studies, (pp.325 – 349), Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2000; p.344

194 Jaini, “Is there Popular Jainism” (pp.267 -279), Ibid, (p.269-70)
On the question of Yakṣas and Yakṣis, Jaini says, “The ancient Jaina texts are silent on the status of the yakṣas within their religious fraternity.... In contrast by the post Gupta period we begin to find images of the Jains flanked by figures of guardian deities. ... It appears quite certain that the Jain teachers of the early medieval period undertook the task of purging these non Jaina admixtures from the lives of the Jaina laymen..... Jinasena, who is credited with formulating a large number of Jaina householder rites, stipulates that a person upholding the true Jaina faith should remove images of the ‘false gods’ (mithyā devata) from his residence. Such a statement would indicate that the laity of Jinasena’s time were prone to worship non Jaina gods, and that a movement to reconvert these Jainas gained strength under the leadership of the Jaina monks..... It was during this time that Jaina teachers decided to institute a cult of guardian deities closely associated with that of the Jinas.”

(And) “Once the worship of such exalted householders had been legitimised, the establishment of a popular cult of guardian deities opened the way for further assimilation of non Jaina elements. Thus, certain well known Hindu gods and goddesses, who were already associated with sacred places adjacent to the sites of Jaina temples, could be incorporated into the Jaina fold.”

This did not seem to have happened, however, in the case of the cult of Murukan, or any of his attributes, or associate deities (Iśumban, for instance), considering that most of his worship centres had Jaina associations at some point.

195 Ibid, p.272-3
196 Ibid, p.275
197 Interestingly, some of the Tamil Jainas told me the Pañjani – anti (as Murukan is also referred to) may have been a Jaina śrīhaṅkara icon later converted, and given a spear and other associations. This one has no corroboration however in the process of development of the cult of Murukan. But one needs to place the perspective of the community that has seen other temples and shrines converted.
Talking of the incorporation of Ambicā as Neminātha tīrthaṅkara's guardian deity, Jaini points out, "The Girnar Hills in Saurashtra, famous for the inscriptions of Asoka and Rudradāman, are sacred to Jainas and non Jainas alike. The highest peak of this mount is dedicated to a Hindu mother-goddess named Ambikā, and a nearby peak is sacred to the Jainas who believe it was the site at which Nemi, the 22nd Jina, attained nirvāṇa. Although there is no story connecting Ambikā, (also called Kūśmāṇḍini) into Nemi's guardian deity. Similarly other yaksas especially Kāli, Jvalāmālinī, Mahākāli and Gauri, whose names definitely suggest connections with the Śaivite deity Durgā, may have been brought into the Jaina pantheon as guardian deities of the Jinas - Suvidhi, Śītala, Śreyāmsa and Vāsupūjya (9 to 12 tīrthaṅkaras) respectively. Jaina laymen could then worship them as their own deities without abandoning the Jaina faith."¹⁹⁸

However, one has discussed one of the stories about Ambicā and her becoming the guardian deity of Nemi, in the study on Nīlakesci the Jaina Tamil text.

Tamil Jainas have also adopted practices that seem brahminical in their marriage rites. But there are also other popular elements in these. For instance, "The Jainas match horoscopes of the bride and groom before marriage. The girl's approval and interest in the man she is about to marry is given the top priority. After tying of the tāli the bride is supposed to offer worship the eight nāgas (snakes) - ananta, vāsuki, tatca, janaka, kuṇikā, tuvassa, karkōṭaka and caṅka

¹⁹⁸Jaini, op.cit, p.275
(the eight snakes that the Jainas worship) — in order to protect her from any pain/injury from snakes. Then the bride and groom put nava dhānyam into water...”

Paul Dundas writes, “According to Ādipurāṇa Jainism possesses all the significant components of Hinduism: the Veda, the purāṇas, the law books, correct social behaviour, ritual, mantras, deities, ascetic accoutrements (linga) and rules about proper types of food, but the main difference is that Rṣabha has promulgated all these elements in accordance with the principle of non violence.”

Regional Identity: Problematising the Concept

Speaking of identity of the Tamil Jainas, the distinctness of the regional (Tamil) tradition marking regional (and at times, intra-regional, local) identities have often been negated or disregarded at different times in history. In a sense, back in the early centuries of Christian era, brāhminical religious ideology and discourse sought to build linkages between regional and a universal monolithic system through myths that tied up local cults to figures of a larger family of gods/goddesses; the gotras too helped brāhmins in different regions to feel considerably linked to a common hoary past of the great sages; even as they constructed myths of civilising, settling, or building new areas. The Agastya myth is one such example for the Tamil country.

The Jaina origin stories hardly take recourse to such ‘civilising’ and ‘universalising’ mission their religion. Their

199 Krishnamurthy, Cēṣipp Pakutiyil Camanām (Tamil), Sekar Patippakam, 1994, p. 29

Trthandakaras would never be seen as those who alighted on some land outside of their own accorded / recorded spheres of activity – between their birth, omniscience and nirvāṇa. Thus one would never find a place made sacred in the Tamil country on account of some such visitation of a divinity. But, yes, ācāryas, monks and nuns from the land do give a place its importance in the regional Jaina history. For instance, the place where Mṛumaraparāṇam was composed or the site where Kundakundācārya sat in meditation, or where monks attained mokṣam after sallekhana at a certain rock shelter. Thus there is no obvious inherent compulsive nor any visible conscious effort perceptible among Tamil Jainas to relate necessarily to the universal pan-Jaina identity in ways other than by following the ‘mummanyika’ (tri-ratna – nallaram, nololukkam, nanñānam) and other precepts expounded in Jainism, such as non killing (kollāmai), vegetarianism (ūπ uṇnāmai), and do forth. There seems no apparent history of settling / civilising lands and peoples through recourse to mythology to prove a universal larger ‘connection’ so to speak, to Jainas living elsewhere; or o the śālākāpuruṣas (the 63 of the Jaina cosmogony). Perhaps due to this we do not see the rise of local cult figures within the pre-given pan-Jaina (universal) schema; and one of the reasons may also be the emphasis on the concept of karma and individual effort towards salvation.

As Jainī argues, “Despite social and emotional pressures that the medieval bhakti movements must have exerted, no cult of Śiva or Viṣṇu ever developed within Jainism... (whereas) nevertheless, Jaina teachers rejected only Śiva’s ability to lead people to salvation; they accepted his existence as a
minor god..." Yet, this could only be said for the universal Jaina doctrine. Not for the way each region devised its own local identity within this history. And in our own case, it is in Tamil that a regional Jaina identity can be said to have been forged.

The development and consolidation of a regional identity itself is an interesting phenomenon that has only recently become an important theoretical exercise engaging the academic community. Speaking of the 'regional', Kunal Chakravarti points out, in his very intense monograph on the Bengal Purāṇas, “An important criterion for the formation of regional identity is the development of the literary language of a region. Adherence to a particular language by a group of people is unmistakably a cultural statement, and it is in language that 'perceived cultural space and instituted political space coincide'....The evolution of a literary language and a corpus of literature particular to a region must have contributed to a heightened awareness of cultural homogeneity among the people of (a) region.” Further, in the case of the Bengal Purāṇas, “Regional identity is only one among many such overlapping identities, and even within it the linguistic or the cultural factor may receive priority depending on which one offers access to opportunities or is perceived as threatened at a particular point of time. ...Consciousness of distinction among the participants of a common religious culture is an important constituent in the formation of the identity of a region, and in Bengal this consciousness contributed as much to the crystallization of its regional identity as the consciousness

of a common language which began to take over as the prime index of regional identity from the medieval world." 203

Speaking of development / use of the language of the region with which the Jaina teachers engaged, Jaini comments, "Kannada was the most important of the vernacular languages for Jaina Purāṇic composition, and in turn Jaina authors were instrumental in the development of Kannada as a literary language. The "Three Gems" of Kannada literature, Pampa, Poṇṇa and Raṇṇa were all Jainas who wrote less than a century after the great Karnataka Sanskrit author Jinasena. But whereas Jinasena and his disciple Guṇabhadra were both mendicants, the Kannada authors were householders. The development of Jaina literature in the vernacular seems to have been a process similar to the development of Hindu literature in vernaculars such as Bengal, Hindi, Oriya, and Telugu. In both cases, educated laity wrote in a language accessible to the broader populace, in reaction to the elite, non mother languages used by the religious professionals." 204

There can be other ways of looking at 'region' as a concept as well. For instance, "Geographers commonly recognise that, in terms of the basis for their recognition, all regions may be classified as instituted, denoted, or naively given. Instituted regions are "instituted by human agency as distinctive and discrete units limiting the areal extent of operation of certain functions." (Hartshorne 1965: 619), and are generally administrative in nature. Denoted regions are created primarily for the purpose of organising and analysing information, while the naively given region is "recognised as a meaningful territorial entity by the people

203 Ibid, p.313
204 Padmanabh S.Jaini, "A Purāṇic Counter Tradition" in Wendy Doniger, op.cit, note. 22; p. 281
who live there and/or by other people to whom it is of some concern.” (Schwartzberg 1967:89-90).....naively given regions ... have their origins in people’s perceptions, in their mental ordering of the world around them... (and) may be considered subjective.”

In the Tamil Jaina case, being in Tamilakam is a given, a priori, while their perception of themselves as a community could be conceptually understood within the framework of a “naively given region.” This would give one the scope of comprehending the live dynamics of a community’s relationship with the environment it lives in, engages with; rather than study just one aspect of the community, namely, Jainism (as the only marker, in the universal Jain-ism sense) in Tamilnadu, this modern notion of the state, then being the “instituted” idea. In the latter case, there is no concern with what happens within the community, but only concern with what others (royalty, bhakti bards, etc) did to the community.

However, there might be a third angle to it whereby the community perceives of itself in both the “instituted” when it came to their village and its place in Tamil Jaina history. For the purposes of a historian looking at these concepts (“instituted”, “denoted”, “naively given” regions) inscriptional records, for instance, in this case, would not point to these dynamics and live interactions. But stories, narratives, changes within those, might. In this context one is reminded of a point made by Gananath Obeyesekere 206 in his brilliant monograph on the cult of Goddess Pattini. He

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205 Deryck O. Lodrick, “Rajasthan as a Region: Myth or Reality?” in Karine Schomer, Joan L. Erdman, Deryck O. Lodrick, Lloyd I. Rudolph, eds, The Idea of Rajasthan: Explorations in Regional Identity, Vol I, ‘Constructions’, Manohar, American Institute of Indian Studies, Delhi, 1994 (pp. 1-44); p.3. I thank Prof. Kunal Chakravarti for introducing me to this reference, and thereby, aspect, of the ‘region’.

says, "Historiography that relies exclusively on well-documented and incontrovertible historical evidence such as from inscriptions must surely be wrong since it assumes that the recorded data must be the significant data shaping history, transforming institutions of people." But of course, like Lodrick later points out, "Conceptualisation of regions and the emergence of regional identities reflect processes involving complex historical, cultural and social forces working in a particular geographic setting over lengthy periods of time...."

However, distinctions between Jainas being a far-cry, for a long time, and in many circumstances, the Jainas were clubbed under the category "Hindu" as has been noted. Speaking of how this category is applied in legal matters, Duncan Derrett points out, "For the purposes of the application of the codified parts of the personal law, a Hindu is one who is not a Muslim, Parsi, Christian or Jew! The earlier case law held a person to be a 'Hindu' for the purpose of application of Hindu Law even if he renounced all religion, renounced idols, renounced the Brahminical trinity of gods... Sikhs and Jainas, whatever they themselves think of their relationship to Hindus, are 'Hindus' for legal purposes..." Further, "Section 2 (C) of the Hindu Marriage Act applies to (besides other categories) any person who is a convert or reconvert to the Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina or Sikh religion." The Jainas have been contending with this legal history that affects their sense of identity as a community distinct from the 'Hindu' since many years now.

207 Ibid, p. 605
208 Lodrick, op. cit, p. 34
209 J. Duncan M. Derrett, Religion, Law and State in India, OUP, Delhi, 1999 (originally published by Faber & Faber in 1968)
210 Ibid, p. 52
211 Ibid, p. 52
"As Jains came to the law courts, commissions were issued from time to time all over the country to take evidence and ascertain Jain law and usage as it existed in Jain Sastras and was prevalent in practice. The first such attempt was in 1833 when Maharaja v. Govindnath Ray Gulabchand and others (5 select representatives, SDA Calcutta 276) Mr. Walpole of the Presidency Saddar Court directed the Murshidabad judge to obtain an exposition of the Jain shastras on certain points from some important Yatis (priests). This decision of the Presidency Court recognised the broad distinction between the tenets and usages of the members of the Jain sect and the rest of the Hindu community and the right of the former to an adjudication of matters in dispute regarding questions of inheritance by their own shastas." 212 "But they found a real difficulty in discovering Jain Law and laboured under an incorrect notion that the Jains were Hindu dissenters that in the absence of special customs being proved to the contrary the principles of Hindu Law applied to them. ... The courts had to fall back on the return of commissions, and the method of commissions was necessarily imperfect and inadequate commissions were issued as cases came to court." 213

"In 1899, in the Harnath Prasad vs Mandil Prasad (27 Cal 379) the homogeneity of the Jains was recognised as evidence of existence of the same custom among Jinas of

212 M.C. Jain, "Jaina Law and Law Courts", Jaina Gazette, Vol XXVIII, Nos. 5, 6, 7, 1930/31 (pp. 163-165); p.163. One discovered the above journal at the Prakrit Bhavan, at Dhavalateertha, near Sravanabelgola. Which also houses the National Institute of Prakrit Studies and Research. I thank the staff for helping with accessing the books, and treating one to special cups of tea once in a while! One is using most of what is mentioned here, to bring to notice an aspect of the Jaina community's history which has recurred in different points, namely, the onus on the community to explain their independent status. In terms of colonial history, interestingly, while the colonial rulers were sending census officials and others to record the existence of different communities and while they were aware of the existence of Buddhists and Jains as distinct religious sects in India, this 'awareness' did not inform the colonial legal system.

213 Ibid, p.164
other places, and that there was no material difference in the customs of Agarwala, Chorewal, Khandelwal and Oswal sect of Jains. But Jain Law did not make much headway with the courts of law in India, till in an able and courageous judgment in 1915, Mr. Jagmander Lal of the Indore High Court (original Suit No. 3 of 1914) emphasised the independent origin of the Jaina community and discussed the value of a few old Jain Law books. This judgment did not go unnoticed in British India.”

M.C. Jain further makes a note of a statement made in the wake of a case at the Madras High Court which had apparent empathy for the issue that Jainas are indeed different from the Hindus. 'Kumaraswamy Shastri, officiating Chief Justice in a recent Madras case, Galeppa vs Eramma (AIR 1927 Madras 228) (noted) “I would be inclined to hold that modern researchers have shown that Jains are not Hindu dissenters but that Jainism had an origin and history long anterior to the smritis and commentaries which are recognised authorities on Hindu Law and usage…. In fact Jainism rejects the authority of Vedas which form the bedrock of Hinduism and denies the efficacy of the various ceremonies which Hindus consider essential…. No doubt by long association with the Hindus who form the bulk of the population, Jainism has assimilated several of the customs and ceremonial practices of the Hindus but this is no ground for applying Hindu Law as developed by Vignaneswara and other commentators, several centuries after Jainism was a distinct and separate religion with its own religious ceremonial and legal systems, en bloc to Jains and throwing on them the onus of showing that they are not bound by the law as laid down by Jain law givers…” This then is the

214 Ibid, p.164
position of Jain Law in British India at present. And there
the matter rests. It now rests with Their Lordships, of the
Privy Council to give effect to the feelings expressed by
Hon'ble Mr. Justice Kumaraswami Shastri of the Madras
High Court.”

One may now move over to a different side of the
distinctness and identity as a community looking at itself
over a period of time in history; and what it makes of its
identity in relation to the larger social context. I refer here
to an interesting piece of information found, again, in the
journal Jaina Gazette of the same period (1931). It is as
follows —

"During the pratishtha mahotsav at Venbakkam near
Conjeevaram a big meeting of Jains was held on 30-6-1931
under the distinguished presidency of His Holiness Sri
Lakshmisena Bhattaraka Bhattacharaya Svamiji. Messrs
Brahmasuri Sastri of Sravanabelgola, C. Vasupala Nainor of
Arni and Bhadrabahu Sastri of Nahal delivered learned
lectures on Jainism. The following resolutions were proposed
by Sikhamani Sastri of Tirumalai and unanimously passed.

1. To Pray to the Government to reserve at least 2 seats
   for the Jains in the council and the local boards
2. To request the Government to include Jains in the list
   of backward classes
3. To request the persons nominated by His Holiness to
   form a deputation to wait on the Ministers
4. To organise a Fund under the control of His Holiness
   for the amelioration of the Jains. H.H was pleased to
   nominate messrs. C.S. Mallinath ji of Madras T.A.

215 Ibid, p.165
Incidentally, this Mallinath ji mentioned above was the Editor of the journal, Jaina Gazette

It is interesting that the note mentioned right at the beginning of this chapter, written in the year 2002, seems to make a similar appeal so far as including the ‘Samanar’ (Tamil Jainas) in the Minorities List (if not in the backward classes list). This goes to say that over so many years, the subject of identity as a distinct social group seeking affirmative interference of the State remains very important for the Tamil Jainas and somewhere un-addressed. Un-addressed mainly on account of perceptions of the community as being part of a larger “instituted region” kind of sense - a pre-given – and that is reinstated by historical writings that do not address the question of identity and construction of identity while writing of the history of Jainism in Tamilakam.217

Texts and Identity

Speaking of Tamil Jainas and their textual tradition, texts such as Tolkāppiyam, Kural, Cilappatikāram,

216 “A Jaina meeting at Venbakkam”, (a Notice, no author mentioned), Jain Gazette Vol. XXVII, Nos. 7 and 8, July and August, Madras (1931); p.172. Emphasis, wherever, mine.

217 And this happens perhaps because of the insistence on using “strong evidence” – read as inscriptive records, grants, temples, etc – if one were to address Jainism as an “ancient” historian; or on the other side, if one were talking of the community, there are examples of dissertations (I found one, in Madras University) which speak of what the Jainas eat, drink, how they marry, and so on – information ‘collected’ in the traditional purely archaic anthropological manner. There must be a way of bridging this gap between traditional history writing and so called anthropological writing to look across historical time at sources that reveal so much about community identities that no royal charter, nor traditional anthropological exercise can. The sources one has found, and used, one hopes, would be understood to be ‘historical’ sources especially while engaging with a living (minority) community such as the Tamil Jainas, with a long historical presence in Tamilakam.
Cīvakacintāmaṇi, Valayāpati, Cūlāmaṇi, Nālaṭiyār, Palamolīnānūru, Ėḷāti, Aranericcūram, Yaśodara Kaṇvyam, are among the various works authored by Jainas. In most of his writings T.S. Sripal mentions that the northern term 'sramaṇa' and the Tamil term 'turavor' (one who has given up all possessions) are conceptually similar. He also talks of a 'Tamil' tradition as against a 'northern' (vaṭa moli - northern language). The Tamil Jainas, incidentally, hold Sripal in high esteem, as he was a champion for opposing animal sacrifices in temples in Tamilnadu and inspired legislation to this effect in the Madras Legislative Assembly. One will get back to discussion on Sripal in a little while, essentially since he was deeply involved in highlighting, through his many writings, and lectures, the Tamil Jaina literature and textual tradition and Tamil Jaina (or Jaina Tamil) identity in the period between the 1920s till well up to the 70s.

A new consciousness is visible in reviving the antiquity of Tamil Jaina; and Jaina connection with Tamilnadu since 2nd, 3rd century BC. Directly addressing the past in historical times – an attempt being made in the modern period. The Tamil Jainas are known to visit the sites of antiquity (rock-cut caves and natural caverns around Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Pudukkottai, etc) individually.

In this context, it is significant that the Tamil Jaina sacred geography exists and operates at three levels –
a. in the north (places such as Pavapuri, Sammetasikhara, Urjayantagiri, and so forth) where tirthankaras attained nirvana or Sravanabelgola, site of the Gommateswara monolith;
b. the hills and caverns across Tamilnadu where inscriptions have also been found and;
c. temples, hills and sacred centres within a certain distance from / or in, villages inhabited by them. In the last case, people from certain villages visit certain sacred centres close to their villages, or centres they have had a habit of visiting since generations. But during certain festivals few sites find the entire Tamil Jaina community congregating – the ‘tēr’ (the ritual chariot) at Melcittamur; the ‘narkāṭci’ at Tirunarungondai (Tirnarun_kun_ram); or the ‘tēr’ at Tiruparuttikunram, etc.

The universal sacred geography concerns the Jaina cosmogony largely, and the rest are sites that have a historical association with historical visits paid by monks, and nuns; or places they have composed literature, or are believed to have composed literature. Their tirtha / pilgrimage is thus to be seen at these three levels of operation. Each year, many of them also go to the sacred centres of the ‘larger’, pan-Jaina cosmogony in groups. But strangely enough, they do not make such trips – in such a massive planned manner – to rock-cut caves and natural caverns spread across Tamilnadu. When asked they say, they go there from individual interest in a historical site.

Returning to the subject of reviving the identity issue, Jeevabandhu Sripal, and A. Chakravarti218 are two important figures in the Tamil Jaina (contemporary) history. The

218 Although my first introduction to Chakravarti was from finding his book Neelakesi at the Sahitya Academy library in Delhi – which also introduced me to Nīli-Nīlakēci – every village of Tamil Jainas I have been to, referred me to Chakravarti’s books. It meant a lot for them if I had read the book Nīlakēci; but it meant a lot more for me to read his other works, which someone or the other in one or the other village / town / city referred, or commanded me to ‘must-read’. An ardent fan of Chakravarti nainar, Anantharaj ‘Jain’, has installed a stone bust of Chakravarti’s outside the Cittamur matham. Similar is the case with Jeevabandhu Sripal. Every place one visited gave me new information about him, urging me to read his writings. I owe this understanding (however limited) of the Tamil Jainas and a renewed building of Tamil Jaina consciousness to all the Tamil Jainas I have had the fortune to meet. Including the grandson of Chakravarti nainar, Sri. Jaya Vijayan at Chennai and their extended family in Chennai and Tindivanam.

In a sense, my own engagement with the question of Tamil Jaina identity got substantiation in my introduction to Sripal and his works. In a sense, it all felt like a story asking to be written.
former, a social activist with a reformist, and nationalist zeal; and the latter, an educationist, philosopher. But both of them greatly into writing and publishing. Both represent a generation that worked tirelessly and consistently to trace, monitor, and highlight the history of Jainism in Tamilnadu, and the Tamil Jaina literature. Both were inspired by the national movement, and one of them even participated in it actively while also earning respect and support from the Tamil socio-political movements, such as E.Ve Ramaswamy Periyar, Tiru. Vi. Kalayanasudaram Mudaliyar, Kamaraj, Karunanidhi, etc at different points in time.

The Jainas, writes John Cort, at the “broadest level...situate themselves within their distinctive universal history, defined in terms of their current location on the ever-revolving wheel of time, and their being in the immediate shadow of the 24 tīrthānkaras or Jainas of this time period and this continent.”\(^{219}\) And then, they “also situate themselves within detailed histories at a more localised level, what I call localised histories....The localised histories usually involve important foundational individuals, more often monks but also frequently laymen...”\(^{220}\) It is then, in this localised history of the Tamil Jainas that one places Sripal and his consistent efforts at monitoring the historical status of Jainas and Jainism in Tamilnadu. One of the criticisms that Jaini made about western scholarship (through time) on Jainism (which one may also extend to Indian scholarship to a large extent, at least in the present case) was “the lack of attention to...the sect of Digambaras, who have been neglected almost completely in favour of the Śvetāmbaras...and the sociology of Jainism, which, in

\(^{219}\) John E. Cort, “Genres of Jain History”, in *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 23, No. 4, December 1995 (pp.469-503); p.473

\(^{220}\) Ibid, p.473
comparison with even the most minor of the Indian religions and cults, has not been studied to any sufficient extent."

In one's own way, one is trying to address these criticisms through the present study on Tamil Jainas as a community.

T. S. Sripal in fact organised numerous public debates and discourses in Chennai and across Tamilnadu (also included recitation of Cīvakacintamāni) spreading the notion of community pride and consciousness among any contemporary Tamil Jainas. He appears to have encouraged many young orators and scholars in Tamil Jaina literature, something quite a few educated Tamil Jainas today vouch for. One of the people he encouraged was 'Cintāmaṇi Nāvalar' Santhakumar Jain of Mottur, who made a name for himself as the best orator of Cīvakacintāmaṇi (and perhaps today the only living exponent of this recitation).

It is not incidental that among the group of Tamil Jainas who are struggling today to put in place a Jaina resource centre near Vandavāsi – including the head of the Tamil Samaṇa Peroli at Vandavasi, Aravali, and many others – are those inspired by (and who almost swear by) the work of T.S. Sripal.

Sripal was born on 5th July 1900 at Tirupparambur (10 miles from Kancipuram). He used to run a free library at the village, called Darumasagara Svamigal Free Reading Room at the Karandai temple there. The library had both secular and sacred literature, including copies of the paper Swadesamitram. He was a Congress worker during the

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221 Padmanabh Jaini, "The Jainas and the Western Scholar" in Jaini, ed. Collected Papers on Jaina Studies, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2000, p.27

222 Santhakumar Jain shared this information with me personally. He had met Sripal when he was a young man (now he is in his late seventies) and was impressed by a speech that Sripal gave on Cīvakacintāmaṇi which inspired him to read the text and devote his life to reciting it.
freedom struggle. A Gandhian, he studied at Kancipuram. From 1919 onwards he stayed and worked at his village. Apparently, he brought eminent people to his village for Congress propaganda during the independence movement in those days. An interesting anecdote from his life involves his work during imprisonment of Gandhi at some point. Sripal used to take out procession with Gandhi's photographs through the villages. He was questioned and ordered not to take out procession at the time of Gandhi's imprisonment. "Sripal took out the procession with a mridangam and his associates — 10 friends — with a harmonium. When the Sub Inspector objected, the group squatted right there and continued playing the mridangam and harmonium."  

Between 1925 and 1927 he worked as a school teacher in the Panchayat Board High School in Nalli. He started the recitation of texts such as Cīvakacintāmaṇi, Merumantarapurāṇam, with references and allusions to Nālaṭiyār, Kamba Rāmāyaṇam and so on. 

Around 1927, Sripal joined the South Indian Humanitarian League, a group initiated as the South Indian Jeeva Rakshaka Prachara Sabha, by All India Congress Committee President Srinivasa Iyengar in 1926 at Sowcarpet in Chennai in the presence of a Jaina monk. As part of the South Indian Humanitarian League (SIHL, henceforth) Sripal conducted sustained campaign against animal sacrifices in temples through lectures, pamphlets, posters, and so forth. At the same time he associated himself with E. V. Ramaswamy.

223 Ka. Ci Tanakkoti Mohan Sundiran, Jeevabandhu T. S. Sripal Avarkalin Vēlkaiyum Vēlpodum (Tamil), Vardhamana Patippakam, Chennai, 1959. In fact I saw interesting books on / by Karl Marx, Lenin, Subramanya Bharati, among others, there when I went to the reading room in Karandai. I was told no one reads these; some are preserved in good shape by the elders there. But they inform that want of an organised fund of is a severe limitation.

224 Ibid, p.47-8
225 Ibid, p.49
Periyar and his Cuya Mariyatai Iyakkam (Self Respect Movement) around 1920s and also contributed essays to Periyar’s newsletter Kūṭi Aṟasu. Around the same time he had set up the Dharumasagar Reading Room in Karandai. From late 1920s he conducted campaigns across Tamilnadu against animal sacrifice. He even sat on a fast at Tiruvottiyur temple. He was given the title Jeevabandhu on Mahavira Jayanti in April 1943.

Interestingly, a report in English daily The Hindu dated 28\textsuperscript{th} July 1937 under the heading - “Buffalo sacrifice given up at Palaymcotta temple festival” (Tinnevelly) mentions the mails sent to Sripal by Gandhi and Nehru.

“As a sequel to the agitation carried on by T.S. Sripal, the buffalo sacrifice in connection with the tenth day festival of the Ayirattamman temple at Palayamcottah was given up today. As has been already reported in these columns there has been for sometime past a campaign against this sacrifice. Gandhiji sent a message stating that “sacrifice of animals in the name of religion is remnant of barbarism”. And Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote, “I am grieved to learn that it is proposed to offer animal sacrifice in temples. I think that such sacrifices are barbarous and they degrade the name of religion. I trust that the authorities of the temple will pay heed to the sentiments of cultured people in this matter and refrain from such sacrifices.”\textsuperscript{226}

To other newspaper reports may also be mentioned here in this connection - in The Hindu, and Times of India. As follows -

\textsuperscript{226} Ibid, pp.91-92
The Hindu (14th August 1939)
"Under the auspices of the Young Men’s Progressive League, Mr. Sripal of the South India Humanitarian League spoke yesterday on “Animal Sacrifice”. Mr. B.S. Murthy, Parliamentary Secretary to Government, presided. ... The Chairman in his concluding remarks assured the gathering that the government would do everything it could, to further their interests and advised them to continue to carry on propaganda against cruelty to animals. A resolution was then passed condemning animal sacrifice and requesting the Government to adopt legislative measures to put an end to it." 227

Sunday Times April 26th, 1942
Animal Sacrifices in Temples stopped at many places
“The fifteenth annual report of the South Indian Humanitarian League Madras makes impressive reading. Started fifteen years ago, the League aims to completely eradicating animal sacrifice from our country. It fights for complete prohibition and strives to ameliorate the condition of the depressed class. Last year, the League succeeded in stopping animal sacrifices at various temples. This they did by lectures and distribution of leaflets. The League is to be congratulated for this good work, they are doing and it deserves the encouragement and help from all who regard animal sacrifice and drink as evils.” 228

In 1947 November, Chennai Upper House introduced the Animal Sacrifice Abolition Bill and on 21st January 1949 it was made a Law. Sripal’s efforts in this, along with support from leaders in the Congress and others, were instrumental in the intervention of the state in the issue.

227 Ibid, pp.99-100
228 Ibid, p.190
**The Animal Sacrifice Issue and Interpretations**

Interesting to note in this connection, is a debate that ensued over the Former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa instructing fine and severe penalty over those that violated the ban on animal sacrifices in temples in the year 2003. The debate saw opinions of various kinds from intellectuals, dalit activists, and it was a time one was interacting with the Tamil Jainas. It was interesting to capture their opinion on this renewed state effort to ban an activity that they saw as the fruits of T. S. Sripal’s labour in the first place. The Tamil Jaina involvement in the initial state action against sacrifices was the most important issue for them. In this context one wishes to cite an article by M.S. S. Pandian written in that time, addressing the issue from a time that we are talking about just now - a time when Sripal joined the Humanitarian League. In this article there are points that one will locate the Tamil Jaina identity in, something that is missed entirely again, in Pandian’s paper. Because, again, it looks at the ‘dominant’, to critique the dominant viewpoint.

In 2003 August Jayalalithaa, the then Chief Minister of Tamilnadu, had commanded strict enforcement of the ban on animal sacrifices on being informed of a sacrificial ritual involving killing of 500 buffaloes in a village temple. While some praised her for bringing into force the long forgotten law, and others praised her without quite knowing the law had been put in place in 1949, many among the academic

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circles in Tamilnadu wrote interesting opinions on the issue. The debate ranged from linking her new-found zeal to negation of dalits' identity and ritual context to saying it signified the Hindu Right's attempt to grant state sanction to 'brahminical Hinduism'. Sadly, though, it had been forgotten in the whole debate that Vedic ritualism on which brahminism is based had itself been central to the idea of animal sacrifice in rituals. And in course of time, influenced by religions such as Buddhism and Jainism, besides other socio-cultural changes over time, brahminism and vegetarianism somewhere began to be seen as linked. Or so it seemed from most of the opinions generated by the move of the state government.

In this context Pandian (besides other interesting articles in newspapers) gave a different kind of historical perspective to the whole debate in the article mentioned here. He saw in this move a past that we are here concerned with. And which will bring us to some very crucial points about Tamil Jaina community, the nir puci nayinar stories, the Saiva vel[vā]lers and the whole movement of addressing the animal sacrifice ritual in temples. Pandian writes, “Following the formation of the South Indian Jeevarakshina Sabha, a Jain organisation, in Madras in 1926, there were active campaigns to stop animal sacrifices in temples in the Tamil-speaking areas. The Jains were actively supported by the Saivites. For instance, Thiru Vi Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, a Saivite and an ardent nationalist, used his journal Navasakthi to oppose animal sacrifice. There were joint meetings organised by the Jains, Saivites and the rationalists to campaign against animal sacrifice. These joint campaigns by rationalists and
religionists produced a vast corpus of literature on why animal sacrifice had to be stopped...”

Pandian’s engagement with this legislation starts from the Śaivite veḷḷālar as some of who were prominent in the debate. The Jainas – who were missing even in the assembly debates on the Bill, as one shall note – are missing even in his analysis. Apart from mention of Sripal, in context of who were talking on the issue in the late 30s, there is little else. It may have been interesting to locate even communities such as the Jainas in the discourse to see differences within the discourse. But since even scholars working on ‘Jainism in Tamilnadu’ have never addressed the Jainas as part of these modern movements and discourses, one cannot expect this perspective from Pandian, locating as he does, the discourse in a totally different paradigm. That of emerging modern Tamil consciousness and the way it perceived ritual practices, and thereby, communities, in Tamilnadu.

Thus, he believes, “In order to understand how animal sacrifice was represented in the Śaivite public discourse, Maraimalai Adigal (1876-1950), a versatile scholar of Tamil and Śaivism and an important public figure in colonial Tamil Nadu. Here I shall primarily focus on one of his key texts, Veḷḷālar Nāgarīgam (Veḷḷālar civilisation), which was first published in 1923. (One will come back to Maraimalai Adigal’s teleology later) ...Characterising hunting and nomadic material cultures, he noted, “Before knowing [the techniques of] cultivation and the ways of using them, people lived in great difficulty without enough food and

230 M.S.S. Pandian, op.cit, page number not mentioned (web edition). It may be noted here that the association Pandian refers to here, according to Tanakkoti Mohan Sundiran (cf.cit) was started by a Congress-man – as mentioned earlier – in the presence of a Jaina monk, and was not originally, a “Jain organisation” as Pandian refers to it. But yes, people such as Tiru.Vi.Ka, actively supported the same. Tiru.Vi.Ka, we have noted, also supported the Jainas in their claim to authorship of certain Tamil textual traditions.
proper clothing... One can directly observe even today the
difficult state in which the hill people and the forest
dwellers lead an uncivilised life of hunting."\(^{15}\) However,
such an uncivilised regime full of scarcity, economic
hardships and other debilitating qualities of life, drew to a
close as the Vellālars (upper caste, non-brāhmaṇ Śaivites)
discovered modes of settled agriculture:... This was indeed a
critically important move for Maraimalai Adigal. The
recently schematised Śaiva Siddhānta (philosophy of
Śaivism), which to him was the highest achievement of the
Tamil mind,\(^{18}\) had as one of its central tenets non-killing
(read vegetarianism),\(^{19}\) and hence the claim to compassion
and munificence. Thus, Adigal's sequencing of Tamil history
developed an identity between the Vellālars, their traditional
occupation of settled agriculture and Śaivism as the
civilisational apotheosis of history.... Within his sequencing
of history, the Āryan brāhmaṇs had remained in a state of
barbarism in the past while the Vellālars were building a
civilisation based on settled agriculture... In keeping with
their uncivilised status, the religious-moral universe of the
Āryan brāhmaṇs had also remained unrefined. They
worshipped 'minor' deities such as Varuṇa and Indira,
offered them inebriating drinks, and persisted in "the
performance of bloody sacrifices so much so that as time
went on, their conduct became more and more revolting to
the delicate feelings of the humanitarian Vellālars."...The
Tamil Jains who campaigned for the ban on animal sacrifices
in temples, also shared such an understanding about the
deities of popular Hinduism. He, however, insisted, "It is
essential that those who follow the Śaivite moral of non-
meat-eating should mix only with others who also follow the
same moral. If they have to mix with meat-eaters...they
should do so only after converting them to Śaivism..." In
September 1950, the Madras legislative assembly debated a
bills to abolish the sacrifice of animals and birds in Hindu temples. The bill was a result of a long-standing and sustained campaign against animal sacrifice in temples by the Tamil Jains led by T S Sripal and had the open support of the then chief minister of the Madras state O P Ramaswami Reddiyar, a follower of Vadalur Ramalinga Adigal who preached non-killing as part of his Śaivism. Whatever be the sources of their definitions of Hinduism, a section of the legislators was categorical that animal and bird sacrifices could not have been or be part of true Hinduism...”

Thus, non-killing or vegetarianism, which was essentially a Jaina tenet—which is why the Jains were involved in the whole campaign—seems to have been missed out as a Jaina tenet, and is called a universal ‘Hinduism’. This is an interesting aspect of the debate, excerpts of which may be noted here, as referred to by Pandian. Either that the debate in the Assembly had nothing to do with Jaina part of the campaign against animal sacrifices (it has become a Śaiva Velḷālar campaign) or is it that it does not come to notice of Pandian while referring to the debate, since he too, is seeing this through the Śaiva Velḷāla discourse?

“For example, V I Muniswami Pillay claimed, “I do not think that according to the Hindu religion there can exist such kinds of offerings for the worship which involves cruelty to animals and birds... I think it is high time that these small blemishes that are a blot on Hindu religion should be removed... The second ground on which arguments for the ban of animal sacrifice was advanced, was secular. K Brahmanandam Reddy, for example, claimed, “...this usage or custom in the country is a remnant of barbarism and it is

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231 Pandian, aforementioned. No page numbers mentioned
a heinous sin too, but this country is ignorant and superstitious, and as such perhaps be not a religious thing but a superstitious matter" ... Several of the legislators, independent of the ground on which they justified the ban, assumed a pastoral role towards those lesser beings who sacrificed animals and birds. Assuming a civilising role, they discounted penal action but sought education and propaganda as the means to make the law effective.... The Madras Animals and Birds Sacrifice Prohibition Act 1950, despite its penal provisions and the euphoric response from the legislators, failed to stop the practice of sacrifice in temples of popular Hinduism. ...”

Then Pandian moves on to other ways of perceiving religion and engaging with religion. Though this part of his engagement is not linked to the present scope of my study, I may just quote a point or two that he makes. Which brings us to the point as to where Jaina religion failed to make that connection with certain castes (precisely on this ground) and where Purānic religion ‘adjusted’ itself to allow for these practices, even if on the fringes as it were. But the significant point is, if Vedic religion inhered the practice of animal sacrifice (that is, towards seeking benefits of whatever kind) and Buddhism and Jainism essentially were born as a counter to these practices, the same practices in contemporary context, have come to signify the cultural expressions of the marginalised (dalits, tribal communities), sanitised, as it were, of the Vedic antecedents, as it were. Where, in this process, do religions such as Buddhism and Jainism figure? That is, if we talk of addressing this process towards theoretical understanding alone. It remains within the parameters of a ‘universal Hinduism’ (read brāhminīṣm, read thence, vegetarianism) that critiques too, are

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232 Ibid.
formulated. And this is where one has to locate the question of community and identities in the contemporary context.

So, Pandian, writes, “Significantly, animal sacrifice has an important role in forging community links. Though dalits are not allowed to enter a number of caste Hindu-controlled temples in southern Tamil Nadu, they are allowed to offer sacrifices. The Sudalai temple at Seevalaperi belongs to the yadhava community but the dalits are allowed to make sacrifices during temple festivals. The head of every goat sacrificed goes to the thevar community. This practice is also prevalent in Sudalai Maadasamy temple at Arumugamangalam, Saastha Malai temple at Marukaalthalai, Oththappanai Sudalai Andavar temples at Vijayanarayananam and Sirumalanji, Kallaththiyyaan and Saasta temples at Naduvakurichi. Though the Sirumalanji Oththappanai Sudalai Andavar temple is controlled by the nadars, the first sacrificial goat is to be offered by a dalit and all animals are later sacrificed by a barber. My point, however, is that animal sacrifice as a mode of worship is saturated with a network of significations ranging from remedying worldly afflictions, to mark life-cycle transitions, to reproducing community links and hierarchies. And the language of reform anchored in notions of culture, is, for most part, so reductive that it is incapable of comprehending and engaging with these web of sacral significations which are important for communities, families and individuals. The narrative of culture as progress cannot but be impatient with such significations....”

There is perhaps need to ‘seek’ the ‘secular’ and the ‘religious’ outside of the “Hindu” discourse altogether. Religion, in this sense, seems to be equated with “Hindu”

Ibid
and hence the problem; hence one of the ways is to counter the dominant paradigm looking at these issues from discourse that became marginal – the Jaina discourse on non violence, for instance. Jainism is only one example. There was also the materialist school or the ajivika sect, with its own perceptions on cultural form and processes. If those histories are also retrieved, in a contemporary debate of the above kind, it could give refreshing insights. Nevertheless, in that moment of the former CM. Jayalalalithaa’s sudden interest in the Act, Pandian’s reflected few of the most comprehensive, analytical and truly historicised arguments of the discourse on animal sacrifice.

Maraimalai Atikal has been critiqued at various points by Sripal (in his miscellaneous writings especially on Maraimalai Atikal’s hypothesis on vellālas in Vellālar Nagarigam referred to by Pandian. For the Tamil Jainas he represents the ‘nīr-pūci vellālar’ of their story of the converted Jainas. Sripal writes in one of his books that in the 7th - 8th centuries AD the vaṇikar and vellālar communities converted to Saiva faith but these were earlier Jainas. They smeared sacred ash on their foreheads and are till date vegetarian.

Identity / Markers

The suffix ‘Jain’ was not used by the Tamil Jaina community (we have mentioned the caste names they retained) until recent times. Non Jainas in the village identify them as ‘naiyinār’ (in almost all cases in the village context, no one responds to the term Jainas, if one were to ask for directions to the Jaina settlements; the term used is naiyinār) . The suffix ‘Jain’ which few of them have begun to use in official

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234 T. S. Sripal, Ilankovatikal Samayam Yātu, Parry Nilayam, Chennai, 1957, p.31
documents, one figures, comes from an increasing need to associate with the pan-Indian, pan-Jaina identity, since they are in a minority and are realising it. At the same time, they hold fast to their Tamil identity. There were few among them who used both suffixes, 'Nayiṅār Jain' after their names. But within the Jain fold, they are quick to distinguish themselves as Tamil, with certain customs that they consciously practise in the knowledge that these are not part of the 'north' (vaṭaku / vaṭanaṭu) Indian Jaina culture. The need to use the suffix Jain, perhaps, also signifies a community's response to the domination (culturally, symbolically, socially) of the purānic, brāhmiṇical Hinduisim, which continues, even in contemporary times, to subsume (or, in a 'softer' term, or claims to 'incorporate') all kinds of local hitherto marginal cults and practices in its fold. There is also the inherent need to distinguish themselves from the category 'Hindu'.

Persecution as a Concept: the Issues, History

The 'persecution' that most scholarship on Jainism in Tamilnadu has mentioned, is not to be seen merely in the blatantly violent suppression (the oft-mentioned example of impaling of 8,000 Jaina munis on stakes, celebrated in the ritual at Madurai Mīnākṣi temple) but also in its subtler sustained sense, wherein a minority persecuted community begins to adopt certain practices of the dominant religion / culture, thereby 'giving in' to the social pressures in order to survive. Forced to introduce what, in essence, was never

235 Though not related to this point in particular, and though this point needs further study and substantiation, while Jainas in the north (especially Rajasthan, Gujarat) have tended to show allegiance to the Hindu Right in politics, the Tamil Jainas (based on one's interaction with them) almost totally reject the Hindu Right when it came to voting. And this comes from their consciousness of the Hindu Right representing (rightfully) the Vedic brāhminism, and by extension the Śaiva, Vaiśṣava persecution they were subjected to, and their past links with the Dravidian movement precisely to state their opposition to brahmin ascendency; and Śaivite appropriation of their textual tradition and Tamil language, broadly. This point, however, needs further working on; and is based on conversations one has had with them in the course of field visits; and reading some of their works on literary appropriation, etc.
part of their cultural ethos. This kind of understanding of persecution lays stress on what the ideology and power of hegemony and violence of a more subtle/hidden nature can do; and also looks at community’s own internal response to external circumstances rather than just begin and end at a more ‘visible’ single-instance of a wave of violent fundamentalist attack on a section of population.

It also means that the forces that bring about such responses (from within the community) do not always come in ‘hoards’ in a single visible combat; and also looks at the way hegemony is constructed and sustained through a power structure that protects the interests of the dominant. It also shows the successful means by which a singular system (here the purānic, ‘syncretic’, led by the brāhmiṇ – bhakti group alliance) has the power to convince people of its ‘efficacy’ and need in their everyday lives. 236

Adoption of certain practices of a system that becomes dominant (and by extension, unfortunately, ‘normative’) may also be seen in another sense. As the non dominant cultural system becoming victims of a hegemonic tradition and changing their basic essence. In this latter sense, one would perceive the inclusion of Sanskritic slokas for the yakṣis (in

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236 Thinking on these lines began to form from the moment we were students witnessing the Babri Masjid-Ram mandir controversy and all that has followed since. Need to look at these processes was strengthened when one researched Murukāṇ and his evolution into Subrahmapya and looking at Jaina centres gradually transformed into Śaivite (whether forcibly, or by ‘force of conviction’ and the promise of a better system, one does not wish to go into – but certainly something that became dominant); or at records of Buddhist temples changed into Vaiṣṇava or Śaiva shrines. Such attempts continue in contemporary times and one may not overlook these in writing histories of pasts that somewhere do ‘link up’. In certain adivasi villages in Andhra Pradesh, one can now find several small shrines of Hanuman, Rāma and Siṅgā, a very recent addition to their cultural landscape. The RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh of the Hindutva Right ‘brigade’) activists spent some years convincing the adivasis of their role in the Ramayana and the fight to win Siṅgā back. Would this (if the RSS angle were to be removed) at some point be seen as the incorporation of the local into a larger overarching ‘Hindu’ cultural complex, or a process of building hegemony or consensual hegemony? There seems a tendency to perceive ‘incorporation’ of local cults, practices as building a syncretic, pluralistic Hindu culture. What were the origins? And were they always non problematic is the question.
the format of the Devi stuti), or rituals such as ‘kumkuma arcanai’ or navagraha worship in some Jaina temples.

There are two ways of looking at this – one, that there was a ‘willing acceptance’ of certain traditions that gained popularity (by whatever means). This would also be a more convenient way of perceiving these changes. On the other hand, it can be analysed as a problematic. For, what becomes ‘popular’ over a period of time is itself rooted in a context where multiple forces operate – power, ideology, dominance and tradition. The state, brahminism as a dominant paradigm, Sanskritism, may be seen to comprise this multi-pronged complex of forces. Through dalliance with power temple religion construct, helped by bhakti (which initially seemed to include those elements that were excluded in Vedic brähmiṇism) was able to intrude into the ‘popular’ (in the true sense) spaces and establish the ‘superior’ way of doing things – conducting rituals, offering worship, communing with the god, and so on. Thus, ‘bhakti’ too, was established as the only true medium of this communion and folk deities found themselves a place in this ‘superior’ scheme through slokas composed with their names, but essentially invoking the all powerful god / goddess of the Purānic construct.

So also, Murukan reaches across Tamilnadu as Subrahmaṇya, son of Śiva – Pārvati, brother of Gaṇeṣa and has elaborate rituals performed by brähmiṇ priests to a rooted shrine in contrast to the minimalist (Caṇkam period) moving god-concept where the diviner invited god into her / him by performing the velan-atal in a space specially prepared for that coming of the god (perhaps goddess too). The frenzied shamanistic dance may still find a place in Murukan worship,

\[237\] In fact ‘popular’ itself cannot be used as a ‘redeeming’ concept; and may not always be representative of the marginal, the ‘folk’ layers – somethings can also be ‘made popular’ through means that may hardly be inclusive, democratic.
but has to live on the fringes, outside the temple precincts (if one observed carefully) of a god who, until then, was capable of entering their 'low-caste' bodies. It is this non-physical, but equally powerful, violence of dominance and hegemony that one would urge to bring to attention. And this is what must be seen as persecution - the fact that today the Tamil Jainas are around thirty thousand or thereabouts in numbers; that there is a layer of stories of impaling of Jaina monks, a sacralised Tevāram tradition (still sung) that abuses the Jainas; a ritual or two that symbolically abuse the Jainas (still conducted); the nīr pūci (Śaiva) veḷḷālar story (even if it is taken as a metaphor), the persecution at the hands of the Nāyaka ruler (again ardent Vīra Śaiva follower) - all these prove some kind of suppression of a community which was violent if violence may not always be seen as physical.

Thus, "Many Jainas ... observe Hindu festivals... In the south the Jaina bhaṭṭārakas seem to play the same role of caste gurus played by similar figures in Hinduism. Hindu terms, forms of thought, and indeed, ideas of caste and varna seem to have permeated much of Jaina literature... In the south there is a caste of temple priests which has been designated, perhaps justly, as 'Jain Brāhmaṇs'; 238 while in the north Brāhmaṇs proper sometimes act as priests to local Jain societies." 239 "... On all these grounds... it can be adequately explained by ideas of Hinduism and caste already available to us (that) Jainas are not a separate community." 240 And may be in these blurred lines exists the fact of negotiations.

238 Based on interactions with the community of Tamil Jainas, though, the term used for temple priests is 'arca' and not 'brāhma'; the arcakas are considered of lower rank in social hierarchy; they do not marry into non-arca family, but do marry people from the 'seth' (non Tamil Jaina) families as informed by one of the arcakas. There are no special privileges though the majāham looks after their monetary needs.


240 Ibid, p.9
While the Jainas may have well adopted certain practices over a period of time as a result of mutual transactions with other communities, too at the same time, one must remember that these transactions seem to have favoured, in the long run, only certain sections and certain communities. So much so that casteism and 'majority fundamentalism' \(^\text{241}\) are concepts of this dominant culture that refuse to be resolved till date. These are facts that manage to silence many alternative systems and practices. Hence, if the Jainas accept a status quo position over caste – in that their outlook towards lower castes remains more or less similar to that of the brāhmīṇs in many senses – it shows the level of penetration of the dominant ideology in 'alternative' systems, such as Jainism and Buddhism. Hence while one may speak of specificities for the Jaina social context and maintaining distinctness wherever possible, it is still a question as to how and why certain practices do become part of their everyday.

In this connection, as Carrithers and Humphrey put it, "it is true, for example, that some Jainas have adopted the sacred thread, but their use of it is quite contrary to its use among Hindus. Jainas, like Hindus, take vows and fast, but their way of doing so is unmistakably Jain." \(^\text{242}\) But at the same time, these may be perceived as the ultimate survival of the dominant patterns which formed the basis of these 'variants' and interpretations – though culture and community-specific. They remain, at the end of it all, 'interpretations' and not the essence of the 'original' tradition that came out in opposition of these practices.

\(^{241}\) To use a 'modern' terminology with the understanding that the concept may not be 'modern' and has been in existence over a long period of time.

\(^{242}\) M. Carrithers, Humphrey, op.cit, p.9. For the Tamil Jainas the punul, sacred thread represents adherence to the ratna-trayam, mummanikal, the three gems of Jaina ethic - right faith, conduct and knowledge.
To resolve these tricky questions is not one's aim here. But resolutions seem to be readily available in the community's own narratives and discourses. The Jainas believe that many of these concepts – the yaksi worship for instance – were appropriated by brähmanical religion from Jainism. Though there is debate among them regarding the validity of it. Another instance is the mythology around Rsabha, the first tirthankara and similarities they find in the Śiva concept. Rsabha also attained nirvāṇa at Kailāśa mountain and the destruction of the three worlds in his case is interpreted as vanquishing kāma (desire), veguḷī (anger) and mayakkam (delusion). The arhat conquered these three inner traits to attain nirvāṇa. And according to the Jainas these three qualitative concepts were changed into violent concept of Śiva destroying the three worlds (tri-loka). Mayilai Sini Venkataswamy says Śivarātri is a concept borrowed from the Jainas. He writes, “Ādi bagavaṇ, Ṛṣbha deva attained nirvāṇa on this day, i.e, mācī māsam chaturdāsi tithi. (February). It is a common practice for Śaivas and Jainas to use the term ‘śivagati’ for demise / mokṣa. Terms such as śivapuri, śivagatināyakan are found in Jaina textual tradition. The Kailāśa mountain is sacred to both Jainas and Śaivas. For Jainas it is Ādinātha’s abode. Ādinātha is referred to in the Jaina tradition thus – “ālāneṭunilalamantarai kālam mūnrum kaṭāntañai tāl saḍai muṭiccenni kāturu ponniyir kaṭavul” (as one with locks – saḍaya muḍi), conqueror of the three worlds, etc) In Pāṇḍyan times you have the image of Ādināth with locks.” 243 He also points out that, “Triṣaṭṭisālākāpuruṣacaritam in its Ādiśvara Caritam refers to Ādinātha as one with locks.” 244 And further, “Gōmukha yaksan is considered Ādinātha’s family

243 Mayilaisini Venkataswamy, Samagamum Tamilum (Tamil), South India Saiva Siddhanta Publication, Tirunelveli, 1954; pp.81-82

244 Ibid, p.84
deity. Nandi with a bull face as Śiva’s mount was (later) incorporated into Śaivism. In Jainism, there is the Nandigaṇa. Ajjanandi, Pavanandi, Kaṇakanandi belong to this gāna.”

To draw this set of argument to a close (rather uneasily) one wishes to point out that ‘incorporation’ seems like a double-edged sword; it is not merely about incorporation of local cults by purāṇic religion (which helped brahmiṇipīśa) in Tamilnadu (or elsewhere) but should also be about establishing the superiority (or claims to superiority) of a certain system. But when it comes to other communities’ response here, in the context of the Tamil Jainas (already losing hold over the region and the people from considerations of numbers and royal patronage) ‘incorporation’ of elaborate worship of yakṣis (not the tīrthaṅkaras as much) should be seen as an effort to ‘retain’ lost ground, as it were. The other rituals included were the kumbābhiśekam of temples which the Jainas prefer to call Paṇcakalyāṇa Pratiṣṭhā Mahotsavam; the pūṇul (sacred thread) is worn on the same tithi as the brahmiṇs do, on āvaṇī avittam (month of August-September, on avittam nakṣatra) represents wearing the three gems of Jain faith; and so forth. Sandal paste on their foreheads, then, remains the only visible marker that distinguishes them (in a physical sense that is) from brahmiṇs.

Bhakt, Ritualism in Jaina Religion

Jagdishchandra Jain says, “In the 10th century (AD) yakṣas and yakṣis came into prominence due to the bhakti cult of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism in the south.... Each tīrthaṅkara is said to be attended by a yakṣa and yakṣini...Padmāvati (yakṣi

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245 Ibid, pp.86-87
of Pārśvanātha) is popular in Karnataka...resides on a lokki tree and is also known as Lokkiyabbe, a tantric deity with occult powers...Ambicā is known as Kūśmāṇḍi or Kūśmāṇḍini (is) an obstacle remover.....” 246

“Akaḷaṅka, a celebrated 10th century logician, sums up the Jain search for a true god in his famous stotra to a Jina247. (Akaḷaṅkastotra)

“They call him Brahmā, Yet his mind was filled With passion for Urvaśi the nymph. Behold him move with a bowl for food, And a gourd for water! Himself a disciple, What can he teach an ascetic like me?......

They call him Śiva and say He has burnt to ashes the three worlds.... What is he to me? Śaṅkara for me is the one Who has extinguished all fear, lust, delusion, sorrow and anger, The all-knower, the bringer of peace to all...”248

Jaini adds, “(The) legitimisation of yakṣa worship within the Jaina faith may have helped to prevent the influence of Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva bhakti movements on the Jaina laity. All doctrinal compromises have their price, and Jaina laypeople,

246 Jagdishchandra Jain, Studies in Early Jainism (selected research articles): “Jain Worship: a Critical view” (pp.172-180), Navrang, New Delhi, 1992.; p.175-6

247 Padmanabh S. Jaini, Collected Papers on Jaina Studies, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2000; “Jina Rṣabha as an Avatarā of Viśṇu” (pp.325 – 349); p.344

248 Ibid, p.345
who previously had only worshipped the Jinas, were increasingly attracted to the worldly benefits available from the yakṣas, while the mendicants busied themselves with the task of devising new rites, litanies, tantric practices to placate the yakṣas..." 249

The pañcamantram; or pañcanamaskāra is recited by every Jaina. In today's time, every Jaina household has a cassette playing this every morning, and evening, after they light the lamps –

"Om namō arahantiṇam
Om namō siddhāṇam
Om namō āyiryāṇam
Om namō uvajjhayāṇam
Om namō lōye savva sāhuṇam"

Navarātri – Women keep kolu in their homes – like their brāhmaṇical counterparts, dedicating each day of the nine days to a yakṣī. On the 10th day the Śrīpurāṇam is read out (like the pañcamākṣam – calendar is in non Jaina contexts – on Ugādi, which is when they celebrate the Tamil Jaina new year).

Śivarātri is celebrated as Jinaratri commemorating the first tīrthaṅkara Ādinātha's mokṣa. On this day, the temple at Tirunarungondai (Tirunarunṅkram) is agog with activity as Tamil Jainas from across the state congregate for the 'narkāṭci'. This is a recent addition – not part of the Jaina textual tradition. One was told that this was mainly begun around 35 years ago to stem the rising influence of the Ayyappā cult among the Tamil Jaina laity. The method

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249 Ibid, p.275
followed is same as the vow taken to reach Sabarimala. That is, the laity takes the 40 day vow, similar to the one taken by Ayyappā devotees and reach Tirunarugondai at the end of the period. The major difference here is that women are very much part of the process. They can take shorter periods of vows (keeping in mind the menstrual cycle) instead of the 40 that men take. The deity at Tirunarungondai (Ādinātha) is hailed by local people as Appāndai.

In months of March - April in Citamur the annual rathōtsavam is held for ten days. The mūlavār (deity of the inner sanctum of the Pārśvanātha temple) Pārśvanāthar’s utsavār (procession deity) is taken on a tēr (chariot) each day a different mount – jñānavēhana, kudirai vēhana, devendra vēhana, sūrya vēhana, nāgavēhana, aṇṇa vēhana, pallaki, simha vēhana and so forth.

Ve.Vedachalam points out that “Bhakti (concept) both corresponded with and somewhat complemented yakṣī worship in Tamilnadu. But post 5th century AD Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava nāyaṇmārs and Āḻvars through propaganda converted Jaina idols. While the former used Kāḷavai, Mahiśāsuramardini, Kāli, Durgā, Saptamātrikas, the Jaines used their counterparts Ambicā, Padmāvatī, Siddhāyikā, Cakrēśvāri, Jvālamālinī, etc to propagate their faith. Cīvacakintāmaṇi also mentions the yakṣī as the benevolent goddess.”

Post 5th century AD the tīrthaṅkaras were flanked by yakṣis and yakṣa; after 7th century AD yakṣis had separate identity and space, form and shrines for them. In Kuṭottuṅga III period, (1204 AD) we have the Peramandur yakṣī temple in Tindivanam taluk. Similar ones came up in

250 Ve.Vedachalam, Iyakki Valipadu (Tamil), Agaram Printers (Sivagangai), Madurai, 1989, pp. 45-46.
I thank amma for reading this text with me.
Ramanathapuram, Devakottai taluk, Sembattur in Pudukkottai district, Senganikuppam in South Arcot district, Chitral in Kanyakumari district."\textsuperscript{251}

The yakṣis, according to Vedachalam, were initially "village goddesses (and folk deities) later incorporated by major religions as guardian deities or protection deities....in order to attract communities to their religion through their nature of worship. Lakṣmi's form and worship emanates from a former yakṣi worship (of the Mauryan period)."\textsuperscript{252}

He points out that Pāvai (who is said to have shed tears whenever a government acted dishonestly or judges pronounced wrong judgments) worship is mentioned in Čaṅkam literature. She was propitiated since ancient times. Her form was made out of earth, metal, gold of the koṇa grass (akam 276) - either made as a toy or drawn on the koṇa grass. In later times the festival dedicated to her was celebrated as pāvainōmbu, which changed to Tiruppāvai and Tirvembāvai. These later brāhmiṇical traditions had roots in these early forms of folk worship.\textsuperscript{253}

Sangave refers to the sacred thread. "As a rule Jainas in south India wear a sacred thread.....In the south Arcot district in Tamilnadu though Jain girls never wear a sacred thread they are taught the thread wearing mantram amid all the ceremonies usual in the case of boys, when they are about eight years old....According to Pandit Nathuram Premi (a Jaina scholar) this practice is not referred to at all in the old Jaina literature and is prescribed by later Jain works with a view to stem the tide of widespread persecution of

\textsuperscript{251} Ibid, p.53
\textsuperscript{252} Ibid, p.15
\textsuperscript{253} Ibid, p.19-20
Jainas buy the Šaivas especially in Karnataka and southern India.” 254

**Identity in Printing Texts**

The printed editions of Tamil texts – ancient and otherwise – by Tamil Jainas in the modern period need to be seen in a critical context. So far as the Tamil Jainas are concerned, ‘persecution’ (in the nature of socio-political, cultural, bias and appropriation of Tamil) continued beyond the period of the ‘bhakti’ movement in the very idea of living within a larger brāhmīnical system. Even within the context of scholarship on Tamil literature, perhaps they had to contend with debates on whether Ilañko Atikañ (author of Cilappatikāram, brother of the Cēra king) was a Jaina; or was Tiruvalļuvar a Jaina, and could Kural be called a Jaina work. It is also a time when Šaiva Siddhanta publications society brings out numerous editions of texts, of Tamil literature, including the verses of the Šaiva, Vaiṣṇava bards. Almost in every century of their existence in Tamilnadu, there seems to be at least one event that shows bias against the community in some form or the other, even if there is, simultaneously, support from various quarters. Marginalisation of a community and its traditions happened over a period, gradually, at subtle and obvious levels. The Tamil Jainas express strongly this sense of being marginalised. 255


255 In this sense, it was difficult to look at ‘ancient’, ‘medieval’, ‘modern’ periods of history as neat compartments within which to reconstruct the Tamil Jaina community history. Nor was it easy to capture the question within a limited time-frame of ‘early Tamilakam’, though the title of the dissertation suggests it. What seemed larger crucial historical questions in terms of history of marginalising, itself, as a concept, refuse to be confined to one period and one time. Incidentally, one has consciously avoided recording here those sections within the Tevāram hymns that abuse the Jainas (Appar, Gñanasampantar’s). It is a well recorded historical fact, and need not be reiterated. One accepts
The process of putting to print palm leaf manuscripts need to be looked into. Among the pioneers who devoted their time and energy to retrieving, compiling, editing manuscripts by the thousands, travelling to remote villages and meeting families, was the redoubtable ‘Tamil savant’, ‘Tamil taatha’ (as he is also variously referred to) U.Ve. Swaminatha Iyer (U.Ve.Ca). His was a 19th century liberal approach to documenting manuscripts for posterity. He collected manuscripts from almost every corner on almost every subject he could get hands on. He edited the Civakacintāmaṇi, Cilappatikāram, among other Tamil Jaina works that he collected. Sripal mentions an anecdote in connection with U.Ve.Ca and a Tamil Jaina manuscript. “U.Ve Swaminatha Iyer in his En Caritram (p.858) mentions Valayāpati. He saw a palm leaf manuscript of Valayāpati in the Tiruvadturai matham. He had not thought of studying it then. But when he went back again to read it, he could not find that palm leaf manuscript in the same place.”256 Sripal says it could have been a deliberate act by the matha (non Jaina), that the manuscript could not be found again.

Apparently one Ramaswamy Mudaliyar of Salem257 had first given a handwritten manuscript of Civakacintāmaṇi to U.Ve.Ca when the latter joined the Government College at Kumbakonam as head of the Tamil department. “Mudaliyar was responsible for persuading Iyer to edit and publish the ancient Tamil classics. Iyer had till then confined his enjoyment of Tamil literature to medieval works. Mudaliar also gave a handwritten copy of Jeevaka Chintamani for

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256 Jeevabandhu T. S. Sripal, Tamilakattil Jainam (Tamil), Svasti Sri Lakshmi Sena Pattaraka Pattacaryavarya Jaina Matham, Kollapur, Chennai, 1975; p.45-6
257 A Tamil Jaina, as the Jainas aver. Incidentally, A. Chakravarti too, worked (later) at the Government College, Kumbakonam. Kumbakonam, incidentally, still has a few Tamil Jaina families who have resided there for generations.
publication. As Chintamani was a Jain classic, Iyer went to the homes of Jains in Kumbakonam to get some doubts cleared. He also read the Jain epics and collated several manuscript versions and arrived at a correct conclusion. It was due to his efforts that the Jeevaka Chintamani was published in 1887.”

Memories, Metaphors and Motifs of Persecution

The names that figure most in people’s memories of the victimisation and persecution of Jainas in Tamilnadu are those of Appar and Gñānasampantar, the two Śaivite bards of the bhakti revivalism. Also figuring in this connection is the name of a certain ‘cakkili raja’ who was responsible for beheading of the Jainas. In writings of people such as Sripal, Chakravarti, Mayilai Sini and others, the Śaiva-Jaina conflict is addressed more in terms of its immediate association with the Jaina community identity rather than in a larger political, social context of Tamilakam.

Cakkili Rājā Story

The first time I heard the ‘cakkili rājā’ story was at Vilukkam, at a Tamil Jaina settlement. In fact in this place this was the first story that was narrated to me the moment one asked them if they remembered any account of being persecuted. It was not the Appar or Gñānasampantar account that they came up with immediately. As one had expected. The story goes like this – a certain rājā of Cēñji desired...

258 S. Thangavelu, “U.V.Swaminatha Iyer (1855 – 1942)” (originally published in The Hindu, February 26th, 1996; sourced from Tamilnation.org)

259 At Vilukkam the people simply said, ‘oru Cēñji rājā’; whereas in other villages, it was ‘cakkili rājā’. In some cases it was ‘cakkili rājā pon keṭa katai’ (the story of the cakkili rājā asking for a girl, in marriage). Some places they would not be sure – ‘was it Desingu raja?’ they would wonder. However, Desingu Raja was by far remembered fondly. And at some places they told me his wife was a Jaina –
to marry a woman from a higher caste than his. He asked the brahmîns for a bride from their community. They refused, but cleverly said to him, the Jainas (samaņar) are a caste higher than the brahmîns. If the Jainas agree, they will readily give a woman from their community to the king in marriage. The king duly approached the Jainas. Horrified at the prospect, the Jainas asked him to reach their village on a said date for the marriage. The king arrived, only to see at the marriage space, a female dog tied to the post. The Jainas had tied the dog, and all of them vacated their village. They left a note around its collar that said if he could straighten that dog’s tail they would give him a daughter from their community in marriage. In some versions they say it was black dog tied to the post, with a note that if that black dog could be made a white one, the Jainas would give their girl to the king in marriage. The enraged ruler ordered beheading of Jainas, whosoever should be seen in the streets. This continued, and many Jainas were killed, until one day the king, who had been married in due course, became father to a son. In that moment of joy, he ordered to stop the killings.

The ‘sumanta telai pattu’ story

Closely linked to the above story is this one. The king did not stop at ordering beheading of the Jainas. He commanded that the person who beheads ten Jainas should carry the head of every tenth Jaina killed. That is how the term ‘sumanta (carried) telai (head) pattu (ten) came about. Another version of this term goes like this – “They beheaded one, and placed ten heads over one, and thus went on killing something I have not been able to confirm. The story, however, was common in all the Tamil Jaina villages in terms of the sequencing, motifs. I narrate the common story told several times by the Tamil Jainas mostly of Cenji and surrounding villages.
Jainas. This is referred to as suman tān talaipattu (carried ten heads).

To save their lives while these ruthless killings were going on, many Jainas in fear smeared sacred ash on their foreheads and threw away their sacred threads. These are the nīr-pūci nayī nārs (the Śaiva veṭṭālers) – they became Śaivas – and they reside in the places which were previously Jaina settlements, and some of them stay close to the Jaina settlements too. They eat before dark, they are vegetarian till date and many of them visit our Jaina shrines as well.

Thurston notes, “In 1478 AD, the ruler of Gingee was one Venkatampittar, Venkatapati (local oral tradition gives his name as Dupala Kistnappa Nayak) who belonged to the comparatively low caste of the Kavarais. He asked the local brahmans (for a girl from their caste to marry, they directed him to the Jainas; they called him to a particular spot; left a dog tied to a post at the marriage place...) Furious...he issued orders to behead all Jainas....” Meanwhile, another Jain of the Gingee country, Gangayya Udayiar of Taiyanur, had fled to the protection of the zamindar of Udayarpalayam in Trichinopoly, who befriended him and gave him some land...(he fetched back Virasenacarya, made tour of Gingee...got some people to return to their faith). These people had mostly become Saivites, taken off their sacred threads and put holy ash on their foreheads, and the name Nirpuci Vellalas....is still retained. The descendants of Gangayya Udayiar still live in Tayanur, and in memory of the services of their ancestors to the Jain cause, they are given the 1st betel and leaf on festive occasions, and have a

260 Mallinatha Sastry, Tamilnadu ka Jain Itihās (Hindi), Kundakunda Bharati, Delhi, 1995; p.46
leading voice in the election of the high priest at Sittamur in the Tindivanam taluk. This high priest, who is called Mahadhipati, is elected by representatives from the chief Jain villages. These are, in Tindivanam taluk, Sittamur itself, Viranamur, Vilukkam, Peramandur, Alagramam and the Velur and Tayanur already mentioned." 262

The above story is also recorded in the Mackenzie manuscripts (D 3796, Vol I, Madras, 1837) 263

"Many Jainas, who were used to wearing sacred threads, threw them for fear of being killed. Many became Saivas, wearing ash on the forehead and these are referred to as nir puci nayinar (the Jainas who wore sacred ash). At the same time, Virasenacarya who was sitting in meditation at Vellore was forcibly taken to the king. Te king set him free as he was happy at the birth of a male child just then. Virasenacarya left for Sravanabelgola. Around this time a person named Gangeya Udaiyar at Tayanur, near Cenji, went to Udaiyarpalayam raja for protection and the king gave him land. After the precaution and killing, Gangeya Udaiyar fetched Virasenacarya from Sravanabelgola and reconverted those who had changed their faiths, back to Jainism. With yajnopavitam (punul) and ratnatrayam. He could not reconvert all the people who had become Saivas. Till date the Udaiyar clan has special place in hearts of Jainas of Tamilnadu. In weddings and so on they are given the mutual mariyatai. Some converted to Saivas others became Muslims. Around Kerala some Muslims named Jaina Allauddin or

262 Ibid, p. 430
263 Section 2: "Account of the Raja of Gingee who persecuted the Jainas". Available at the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Chennai. I thank the staff and Dr. Sundara Pandian, for allowing me access to this collection.
Nainar Mohammad. These were Jains at one point. Masjids in Tamilnadu are still called pallivasal.”

“Around 500 years ago – in 1478 – Cenji (ruler Venkatapathy Naicker, also called Tumal Krishnappa Naikan – a Telugu ruler) wanted to marry a woman from each high caste. He called the brāhmaṇs (they did not want to marry into a lower caste); they directed him to the Jainas as the latter were of a higher caste, and if they agreed to give their daughter the brāhmaṇs would agree too. The ruler did so. Jainas together decided to call ruler to a place on the said occasion. He came there, only to find a dog tied up there. They migrated. The ruler ordered killing of Jainas “Sumantāntalaipattu” – the Jainas of Cenji killed. Term used for this incident. Many ran away and some put sacred ash and converted to Saiva faith – nir pūci nayiṅgar (these are the Śaiva velḷāḷar). In this time Viśrasoncārya in Vellore was taken to the king. Gāṅgeya Udaiyār of Udaiyarpalayam, who had been to Sravaṇabelgola, came along with Viśrasoncārya to Cenji; initiated the converted Jainas back to their faith (from Śaivism to Jainism), giving them sacred thread. Gāṅgeya Udaiyār’s descendants are still in Tāyāṅgār. They are given the mutal mariyātai till date during weddings in Cenji in honour of Gāṅgeya Udaiyār’s contribution to saving the Jaina faith.”

The Manjaputhur chettiar and Jaina Connection (linking the cakkiḷi rāja story) –

264 Mallinatha Sastry, op.cit, pp46-47. But the term palli, started by the Jainas for educating, perhaps became a common generic term used of any place of congregation to learn something, and one may take this explanation with some trepidation.

265 Mayilaisini Venkataswamy, Samanamum Tamilum (Tamil), South India Saiva Siddhanta Publication, Tirunelveli, 1954; p73
In the course of his campaigns Sripal recounts an interesting incident. At Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Paramakudi and Ilayamkuti resides this community of Manjaputhur chetti. They are small merchants / pawn brokers....This community has their family deity at Tiruppuvanam near Manamadurai, called Gorakkanāthar. They visit this place and offer sacrifice of goats (not less than 8 each time). When Sripal learnt of this practice he went to that place. There he saw a statue of Mahāvīra at the temple entrance, and seemed to be in worship. He was struck and asked an old man there about it. The old man (from that community) referred to the deity as Ammanasvāmi, their original family deity – kuladevatāi. He narrated the story of their clan and their organs. Their ancestors came form South Arcot, Manjakuppam (near Cuddalore). A king asked for the hand of a girl from their community in marriage. They were not interested. At the clan leader’s house, they tied a dog to a post and left a note for the ruler on a palm leaf and left that village that very night. And settled near Madurai. Sripal was struck at the similarity with a story in the Jaina tradition. 266

Thurston also mentions this account in his Castes and Tribes of South India (vol 2) Sripal thought perhaps these chettis were Jainas at one point of time now converted. He succeeded in convincing them against animal sacrifice, invoking their Jaina past. 267

Mayilaisini Venkataswamy also refers to this community “In Ramanathapuram is a sect called the Manjaputhur Chettiar. They are Saivas. Inside the Ilakāyaṅkudi Śiva temple they propitiate Ammaṇa Svāmi (a Jaina image, ‘amaṇām’ –

266 Ka. Ci Tanakkoti Mohan Sundiran, Jeevabanhdhu T. S. Sripal Avarkalţin Valkaiyum Tondum, Vardhamana Patippakam, Chennai, 1959, p.103
267 Ibid, p.104
One will revert to the ‘mutal mariyatai’ motif in due course. But here one may mention that Vilukkam, Peramandur, Tayanur, each seem to have the concept of ‘mutal mariyātai’ (the honour of the first betel on important occasions). While Thurston’s and other versions have mentioned Gangeya Udaiyar and Tayanur getting the ‘mutal mariyātai’ in Cenji on weddings and so on, people of Vilukkam have their own story about helping re-establish the Jaina families and the matham at Cittamur (in the course of the same story) and hence the mutal mariyātai and milk from their village going ‘first’ for any of the auspicious occasions, the ter, for instance. This may be seen as seeking sanction as the village that helped the Tamil Jaina faith to survive in the face of the persecution and through this seeking a niche in the popular Tamil Jaina history. Which is a significant point in construction of the Tamil Jaina identity.

About these episodes in Tamil history Sripal says, “Impalement, exodus of Jainas, killing, land grabbing from Jainas are episodes that reflect a ‘veri’ (mania) not conflict. This resulted in Jainas being marginalised and many converted to Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava religions.”

A word or two about this Nayaka king mentioned in the story. “Gingee found its most vigorous ruler in the person of Tubikki (Duppala) Krishnappa Nayakar (Tuppaki Kirusnappa in Mackenzie manuscript)...Tubikki (1509-21) ruled over a

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268 Mayilai Sini Venkataswamy, Samanamum Tamilum (Tamil), South India Saiva Siddhanta Publication, Tirunelveli, 1954; p.76

269 Jeevabandhu T. S. Sripal, Tamilakattil Jainam (Tamil), 1975; p.50
realm that extended from the town of Nellore in the north to the Coleroon river in the south."

Further, "The stories of Tubakki Krishnappa recall his reign as a sort of Nayak golden age; a period of peace and ordered harmony under the most celebrated of the Vijayanagar emperors, Krishnadevaraya, a time when the three southern Nayaks of Gingee, Thanjavur, and Madurai are supposed to have accepted the imperial definition of their domains and harboured no thoughts of independence or rebellion."  

There have been no studies one has come across on this story that the Jainas relate of the Nayaka (why they call him 'cakkili' 272 rājā is also curious – perhaps it signifies a generic name for a lower caste). One would allude to studies on Cenji and also on the other famous ruler, one that even the Jainas admired, Desingu Rājā. If only to make a point as to where are the Jainas and this story in all these studies, though they also use the Mackenzie Manuscripts as one of their sources, besides others. If this story is so strongly remembered regarding their community, did it historically take place? Apart from mentioning it as a story the Mackenzie manuscripts do not say much else. Even at the metaphorical level, it is intriguing that this story does not have any mention in the works on Jainism in Tamilnadu, even as a 'wandering tale' that the Jainas remember, recount (and in that sense, re-live). One is trying to locate the story within the question of the Tamil Jaina identity under threat, and their perception of the other community closest to them in attitudes and perceptions on certain everyday habits, the 'nīr-pūci' Śaiva vellālars. Or perhaps this story has more to

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272 Cakkili is a term used for leather workers, cobbler in Tamil.
it than the persecution of Jainas? In that sense it needs to be located within the Nāyaka rule and changes in that period.

Karashima\textsuperscript{273}, for instance, mentions that “Conditions in the fifteenth century proved to be no less harsh and exploitative (the other being AD 1250 to 1400 which ‘brought considerable hardship to people’)\textsuperscript{274}, as is evidenced by the heavy burden of taxes imposed on the people by the invading warriors and the arbitrariness of their taxation system. We have plenty of inscriptions which record the ‘running away’ of cultivators and artisans during this period.....There was yet another factor, more important and basic to the society, which imposed additional burdens on the population during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. We allude here to the class struggle which assumed a new dimension in the thirteenth century. More specifically, during their period the confrontation was between two agrarian classes, landholders, on the one hand, and tenants or landless cultivators, on the other. The prevalence of landlord villages became conspicuous after AD 1250 and created new relations among the classes within the agrarian order. The poorer peasants, along with artisans and merchants, suffered under the oppression of the well-to-do peasants who became landlords. This confrontation was made even more acute by the extortionate demands of the Vijayanagar invaders during the fifteenth century. This is well attested to by the open revolt of the Vaḷaṅgai / Iḍaṅgai people against the landlords (kaṇiyāḷar) and the Vijayanagar officers (irājagarattār) during the first half of the fifteenth century in the region South Arcot, Tiruchirapalli and Thanjavur districts. It seems however that the growth of the nāyakas in the latter half of

\textsuperscript{273} Noboru Karashima, \textit{A Concordance of Nāyakas: The Vijayanagar Inscriptions in South India}, OUP, Delhi, 2002

\textsuperscript{274} Ibid, p.31
the fifteenth century had a stabilising effect on the society, as we shall see later... 275

‘Running away’, meanwhile, is something even the Tamil Jainas refer to in their ‘cakkili rājā’ (Krishnappa Nāyaka) story; that many had to flee to other villages in that time. If seen in the context that Karashima mentions, perhaps the ‘running away’ is due to economic and political reasons, being perceived by the Tamil Jainas as running away from persecution as well, which is their most instant response and reaction to hardships faced at a community level – having a real history behind the whole understanding? So they see everything through a mirror of being victimised, persecuted? Or, it may also be seen as something that these political, economic conditions added to the social attitude towards to the Jainas by the nāyaka ruler who was closer to the (vīra) Śaiva tradition. There have been times in history where economic, political excesses do combine with social prejudices and bias against a section, caste, community too. The conflict within the agrarian order is also an economic context one wishes to place the Tamil Jain agriculturists in. Surely it is not merely in terms of the Jaina religion that the Tamil Jainas related to the broader society. There are economic and other considerations like for any other community. One’s contention is that it is these aspects that are missing from Jaina studies – not to see them contesting for economic, political, other benefits.

Persecution must be seen as a phenomenon layered against all these (non-religious / extra religious, if one may put it that way) levels of dissatisfaction, discontent as a community towards the larger, more overwhelming view of

275 Ibid, pp.32-33. All of these had Tamil Jaina agrarian settlements incidentally, most concentrated in South Arcot, and to a medium extent in Thanjavur. Emphasis, wherever, mine.
the state, society which is hardly ‘Jaina’ in any sense of the term. While the Buddhists chose the better conditions prevalent in Sri Lanka (where they moved to, escaping from the bhakti persecution), but not without compromising on some of their original doctrine – as one notes in the chapter Nīlakeci, talking of the cult of Pattini as one example of Buddhist – popular interface, learning to live with these contradictions, negotiating their status in the Sri Lankan society.

The Jainas remained in Tamilnadu. And continue till date to affirm their identity as an independent community. This also shows in their own perspectives on persecution – failing to place it within socio-economic changes that swept the state in these periods whenever they were attacked as a social group. Referring back to Karashima’s above mentioned study, most Nāyaka inscriptions he mentions record donations to non Jaina temples, in areas where substantial Jaina settlements existed (and many exist till date). For instance – Arni, Polur, Cheyyar, Cenji, Kunrattur, Villupuram. Many of these records show concessions, grants of land to brahmin. 276 Interestingly one of the inscriptions (SII XXII, 127, AD 1532) at Jambai, Tirukkoilur taluk records exemption of taxes for the devadana of the Jambai temple. Jambai (South Arcot), incidentally has a few Tamil Jaina families still settled there today. And was known to be a Jaina settlement since the early centuries AD. There is a Tamil Brāhmi inscription dated to 1st century AD on a rock inside a cavern of the Atiyamān dynasty of the Koṅgu country, who caused to be made this abode to a Jaina ascetic. 277 Perhaps a fresh wave of sanction to brāhmiṇism, and temples happened in the period of the Nāyakas. Karashima does not make mention of

276 Ibid, pp.36-44
the Jaina associations in these places. There is just one more point to be made here before moving into the motifs of the cakkili raja story. That Cenji region and South Arcot seem to have numerous stories — there is the Muttāl Rāvuttan story, the Desingu rājā story, Draupadi stories, and our own cakkili rājā story, and yes, of course, the Nīlī stories that one addresses in another chapter. Cenji — south Arcot seems to abound in story telling traditions. Some of these are kingly tales while others tales of a person, or a cult figure. But all these stories have their own perspective on the region. Each of these stories is seemingly disparate; but perhaps there is need to look at the links. Those relying purely on inscriptional evidence, fail to take note of these sources while reconstructing the history of the region. But there are also those that take the stories to their most magnificent conclusions, to give a conclusive picture of one aspect of the region. There seems no ‘middle path’ as yet, for those engaging with these sources. Or, a path that blends the two traditions of historiography (in terms of identifying sources to write a history, many histories). There may yet be a way to look at the blurring of lines between these two traditions of historiography. Wherein ‘so called ‘hard’ evidence takes from so — called ‘loose / soft evidence’. In case of South Arcot alone, or the Tamil Jaina community, a region rooted in its stories, even a comparative analysis of the stories may lead to new information on the region that may be missed if inscriptional records are taken at their face value, as the ‘truth’ merely because they are committed to writing, as it were.

In terms of looking at economic and other factors symbolising marginalisation of the community, it may help to mention a few stories that Mayilai Sini Venkataswamy refers to. “A story in the Periyapurāṇam (Cēkkilār’s) talks
about Tiruvoṭṭiyūr. A Śaiva planted a male toddy tree. Few Jainas questioned him if these male trees could transform into female trees; they questioned Gñānasambandar, who sang a patikam and before dawn the trees transformed into female trees. The Jainas fled that village. The Tiruvoṭṭiyūr Śiva temple has frescoes showing impalement of Jainas (as in Madurai) 278 Again, Tiruvārūr Tirukkoḷam is a tank feeding 18 acres The Periyapuranam mentions that the Tāṇḍiaṭikal (Śaiva) tank was a small one surrounded by Jaina land and pāḷis on 4 banks. The Śaivas wanted to make it bigger by removing the Jaina settlements. Jainas protested. Cēkkilār mentions that Śiva appeared in the dream of the king to command destruction of the Jaina settlements at this place." 279

These stories reflect efforts at land appropriation and seeking control over the sources of cultivation – in the last case the tank which was the central point of these settlements. Extensive tank based agriculture; attributing divinity (through use of Purāṇic mythology) to tanks was in profusion in this period of conflict – which was not merely ‘religious’ in nature. There were underlying economic considerations. Incidentally, among the Tamil Jaina villages one visited the number of temples with kolams and agrahārams kind of cluster settlement are rare and very few; this kind of evolution of clusters around temple, irrigated land and tank networks were limited to and revolved around the temple bhakti worship.

There are just a few more stories that one needs to bring to note here, to highlight the point that though these are stories

278 Mayilaisini Venkataswamy, Samanamum Tamilum (Tamil), South India Saiva Siddhanta Publication, Tirunelveli, 1954,pp.68-69
279 Ibid, p.70
(not unbiased, and certainly myths perpetrated to state a point) that these stories were very much prevalent for later scholars and historians to record, shows that there was a general atmosphere of the Jaina persecution which the community itself internalised and that reflects in all its responses towards constructing its own identity.

Thurston records two stories regarding the Śaiva – Jaina conflict. “...The Madura District Gazetteer mentions taking from the Madura Sthalapurana about the origins of Anaimalai – The Jains of Conjeevaram tried to convert the Saivite people of Madurai to the Jain faith. Finding the task difficult, they had recourse of magic. They dug a great pit 10 miles long, performed a sacrifice thereon, and thus causes a huge elephant to rise from it. This beast they sent against Madura. It advanced towards the town, shaking the whole earth at every step, with the Jains marching close behind it. The Pandya king invoked the aid of Siva and the god arose and slew the elephant with his arrow at the spot where it now lies petrified....In connection with the long barren rock near Madura called Nagamalai – Local legends declare...it is the remains of a huge a serpent, brought into existence by the magic arts of the Jains which was only prevented by the grace of Siva from devouring the fervently Saivite city it so nearly approaches.”

“For the following account thereof, I am indebted to Mr. K.V. Subramani Aiyar. Sri Gnana Sambandar Svami who was an incarnation of Subramanya, the son of Siva...was sent into the world by Siva to put down the growing prevalence of the Jain heresy, and to re-establish the Saivite faith in Southern India...At the time a certain Kun Pandya

Pandyan was ruling the Madura country, where as elsewhere Jainism had asserted its influence. The Queen and the prime minister were Saivite, invited Gnana Sambandar (to extirpate the Jains). He came with thousands of followers and took abode in a mutt on the north side of Vaigai river. Jain priests, 8000 in number, found this out. They set fire to his residence. But disciples extinguished the flames. Sambandar made flames take the form of a virulent fever to affect one side of the King’s body, which he cured. The king became beautiful and was called Sundarapandya thenceforth. Books of Saivites travailed upstream and Jains’ books perished; (Post these trials, etc) many converted to Saivites. The number (of those who converted) was so great that the available supply of sacred ashes was exhausted. (Those who could not be converted) were impaled on stakes resembling sula or trident. The events (are) gone through at 5 of the 12 annual festivals at Madura temple. On these occasions an image representing a Jain impaled on a stake is carried in procession.

On “Textures of Time”, Constructing Cenji: Problematising the Cakkili rājā Story

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281 Ibid, pp 435-438; emphasis (and in parenthesis, mine); note that his ‘source for the story’ is a brahmin.

282 After the title of Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, Sanjay Subramaniam, Textures of Time: Writing History in South India (1600 – 1800), Permanent Black, Delhi, 2001. It must be mentioned here that on listening to the Tamil Jaina story of the ‘cakkili rājā’ and ‘0uy Cēlji rājā’ one searched a lot for ‘corroborating’ (‘historical’) records. Besides the Mackenzie manuscripts and Thurston mentioning this (apart from, of course, scholars such as Mayilai Sini Venkataswamy and Sripal referring to it) there was nothing else to be found. In any of the ‘histories’ of Cenji and South Arcot. About this episode which, even in its violent metaphor of beheading, seems significant. But then, why should the British records (with these two above mentioned too, taking it from the stories of those that narrated these accounts to them, which only says this account was importantly in the memories of the Jainas since long, which then makes it significant again) be seen as ‘historical’ when compared to the oral account of the Jainas in each village referring one to the story? While one was already more than half way through ‘making sense’ of this tale, one discovered Textures of Time. But as one had expected, one did not, again, find the mention of the Jaina rendering of the ‘Cakkili rājā’ story in this text. Hence, the ‘missing Tamil Jainas’. 
One would like to begin with a quotation the above mentioned book, which helps state one's case about the missing Jainas very succinctly. This is a translation of the story in the Prabhāvaka-carita of Prabhācandra, "which tells of conflict between Brāhmin intellectuals and the great 12th century Jaina teacher Hemacandra at the court of the King Kumārapāla. ^283 Once, during the rainy season Hemacandra gave an exposition about the life of Lord Nemi, in the course of which he told how the Pāṇḍava brothers of the Mahābhārata had renounced the world and become Jaina monks. The local Brāhmīns...protested: the Mahābhārata says that the Pāṇḍavas went wandering into the Himalayas at the end of their lives, devoted to Lord Śiva. The king called upon to arbitrate in the matter summoned Hemacandra, and asked (if what he said of the Pāṇḍavas was true, to which Hemacandra replied) - This has been said by our ancient acāryas...and it is... true their sojourn in the Himalayas is described in the Mahābhārata. But we do not know whether those Pāṇḍavas...described in our scriptures are the same as those...in the work...of sage Vyāsa... (Hemacandra, it is quoted here, then told the king of an account in the Mahābhārata wherein Vyāsa wrote an episode of Bhīṣma who told his attendants that his body should be cremated at the place where none was cremated before. When they went to do so after his death, the attendants heard a divine voice that said) - 'A hundred Bhīṣmas have been cremated here, and three hundred Pāṇḍavas...as for Karnas their number is beyond counting'. Having quoted this...Hemacandra said, hearing this, in our minds we believe that among the hundreds of Pāṇḍavas mentioned here, it is possible that some may have been Jainas..." ^284 This story is quoted by the

^283 Ibid, p15
^284 Ibid, pp.15-16
authors in the context of (questioning) "singularity of a reported story". 285

The three authors take up for analysis the story of the young Desingu (Jai Singh) Rājā, a Rajput ruler of Cenji who, refusing to submit to the demands of the Arcot Nawab, died fighting in a battle, and his young newly married queen committed sati in his pyre. They read the Telugu and Tamil versions of the story, and make it out to be a great tragedy, filled with brāhmiṇical metaphors. Thus, in the Tamil anonymous version, "...The battle was as fierce as when Bhīma fought his foes in the Mahābhārata, or as Rāma's fight with Rāvaṇa; the nawab's troops turned and ran, claiming to be Brāhmiṇs with sacred threads or foreigners (para-desi) who should not be killed....All of this happened...on and immediately after the autumn Mahānnavami festival..." 286 In the Telugu version it begins with Indira asking Nārada if anything new is happening on the earth and Nārada narrates the story." 287 The authors note the additions to the story — in the Tamil version, his going to the temple of lord Ranganātha who turns away his head from him (an ominous sign). 288

While one will not go into the detailed reading of the Desingu story itself offered by the authors, it is important to make a few points that connect one to one's own 'Cenji story' — of the 'cakkilī rājā' and 'sumantān talai pattu' metaphor. The metaphors used in explaining, decoding the texture of the story of Raja Jai Singh (Desingu rājā) come from an overwhelming purānic and Śaivite tradition. Which is understandable to a point, considering the fact that the

283 Ibid, p.15
284 Ibid, pp.156-157
285 Ibid, p.158
286 Ibid, p.168
versions follow from these paradigms. Then they move on to the 'Teyvīka-rājan' (god-king) katai (story) based on the talapurāṇam of Tirukkovalūr (site of a Śiva temple) whose antecedents are traced to the Śaivite family of gods. Again, it is a story of a local hero with divine (Purānic) antecedents, including the Tamil (now universalised) Murukaṇ. And in essence it is a brāhmiṇical tale. The authors link this story of the Teyvīka rājan to Desingu rājā in an almost linear movement through historical-cultural time. Which they any case do state - "There is, of course, internal movement from Teyvīka Rājān to Desingu Rājā - historical movement, that subsumes the switch in genres (from sthalapurāṇa to epic) and that also confronts a new temporality, even linear, and neutral. In Arcot we can trace the intersection of this new mode - let us call it 'clock-time' ...- with the self contained and self-perpetuating sequence of the autarchic hero entering into contest....There is a sense in which history, seen as a system, consists precisely in the unexpected juxtaposition and interweaving of such innately disparate temporal and causal modes...One striking aspect of the texts (they use) is the eerie synchronicity of their surviving social and ethical words, differently integrated in each case into a wider cultural sphere...." 

Where would the Jaina story figure in this account? Where, for instance, would a tradition of the 'sumāntān talai pattu' (for a different period of Cenji, although) figure in these linear synchronicities, bereft as it is, of all the metaphors and hyperboles available to the talapurāṇam and other brāhmiṇical story-forms of the medieval period; and basically far removed from the Purānic-Tamil interface?

289 Ibid, pp.181-182
Sadly, again, it remains a linear continuity of Cāñkam-Murukan-Śaiva (brāhminical) metaphors. Desingu Raja is generally seen as a good king. But in another sense Textures...seems to reflect as to which narrative, which ‘texture’ of the narrative, dominates in story telling tradition...It is that of Murukan-Śiva-Teyvīka Rājan continuity. To assume this understanding for the Arcot region as a whole without question – is the problem.

In the introduction to the Senji part of the book (Textures...) one notices a certain exoticising (though poetic) of South Arcot as a region and as a cultural zone. Senji, thus, is “one of the most melodramatic of all South Indian landscapes – a huge stony mountain rising out of the paddy fields and continuous with a neighbouring range of boulder-strewn hills and ridges. It is a site meant for a heroic stand....Arcot has its own social, political, and institutional integrity, that gives birth to a certain cultural perspective...” In the entire reading and partial representation of the history of the region, there is no mention to the Jaina tradition which has been prominent in Cenji (and South Arcot in general). Not far from the fortress mentioned, incidentally, is the rock face with 24 tirthankarascarved on it, at a place called Tirunātharkunrū, which, according to the local Tamil Jainas, was a place of pilgrimage even for the rulers of Cenji, including, of course Desingu Rājā, most prominently. Whether this is mentioned by the Jainas to gain sanction form association with the good king of Cenji, can be a valid question.

290 Desingu Rājā’s wife, in the account of some Tamil Jainas, was a Jaina. Though this one is not corroborated by evidence. But closest to the fact may be that she may have propitiated at various sacred centres, the Jaina temples and the rock at Tirunātharkunrū near Cenji for, being one of them.
291 Ibid, p.141
Cenji- 'Cenji was part of Tondaimanṭalam in Pallava times; and part of Jayaṅkoṇḍachōḷamaṇḍalam – Rājendravalanāḍu (1044 AD) and Uttamavalanāḍu (1114 AD), Siṅgapura division. In inscriptional records from 870 AD onwards it is mentioned as part of Siṅgapura nadu. Cenji was known in various times as Simhapuram (Pallava), Siṅgapuram (Chōḷa) and Siṅgavaram (Vijayanagara). Jainism was widespread in Cenji more than two thousand years ago, through the times of the Pallava, Chōḷa, Pāṇḍya, Sambuvarāya, Vijayanagar, and Nāyaka rulers.'

"Gingee (Chenji, formerly called Nasratgodda by the Musalmans), 16 miles south west of Tindivanam, population 524....The citadel on the north is called Kistnagiri, that on the south Chandrayan Drug (durg), and that on the west the highest and most inaccessible of the three is named Rajagiri or 'king of hills'. There is also a smaller and less important fortified hill, Chakkili Durg to the south of the last." Chakkili interestingly is the prefix to the king referred to in the Jainia stories. Probably it refers to this fortified hill, and the king that ruled from there; or who represented the administration at Cenji. Yet, there is the low-caste association to the king. Even if 'cakkili' may not have meant the 'cobbler' caste in these stories.

Motifs in The Cakkili rājā story - There is, for one, the lower caste angle to the 'cakkili raja', which may explain the nature of response to his proposal seeking a marriage alliance - tying a dog to a post and leaving a note on its

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292 Krishnamurthy, Cenjip Pakutivil Camaram (Tamil), Sekar Patippakam, 1994; pp. 23 -25. I thank Mr. Jinadas (Tindivanam – of Perumpukai) for lending me a copy of this book; a comprehensive account of Jainism in this region; also looks at the community settled today.

293 Gazette of South Arcot, 1906; p.347

294 Thurston refers to Kistnappa Nāyaka belonging to one “kavarai” caste (Thurston, cf.cit, p.429); Winslow’s Tamil English dictionary calls Kavarai a lower caste.
collar — and also explains the nature of punishments he is said to have meted on the community (beheading the Jainas). But there may be other angles to the story. Thurston records Venkatapati Nayaka (alias Kistnappa Nayaka)'s time to be 1478. “By late 14th century, northern Tamilnadu was organised into five or six provinces called rājya or ucāvaḍi...; this administrative system...was highly exploitative and colluded with local military leaders (nāyaka) and landlords (kaṇiyāḷar) in extorting as much revenue as possible...”295 And in 1429, a “revolt of cultivators and artisans”296 also seems to have taken place. In this context, “the nāyaka chiefs surfaced as agents of Vijayanagara in the restoration of peace and used their local leverage to consolidate positions of authority as nāyakaṭṭanam in the Kannada and Tamil regions and as nāyaṅkāram in Telugu speaking regions.”297 One has already referred to the ‘running away’ of peasants and artisans that Karashima mentions. Is it possible to conjecture then? That these nayakas (and their chiefs) could have colluded with certain castes and in this exercise? In which case, the Tamil Jainas (agriculturists) fled and their land was usurped by brahmins and Śaiva vellāḷars — the latter being in a larger majority today in the areas Karashima mentions. Are the Manjaputhu Chettiar among those that fled in this time and which is why they narrate the same story of their origin and they worship a deity that resembles a tirthaṅkara? In some places in Tamilnadu, any case, the Jainas do have the caste suffix of Chad. Something serious had to have happened which gave rise to this story - a story that is part of the collective memory of the Tamil Jainas of the South Arcot region.

296 Ibid, pp.4-5
297 Ibid, pp.4-5
Coming to the 'perpetrator' of this violence, Venkatapathy Nayaka, why did he desire to marry a woman from a 'higher' caste? Why did the brahmins direct him to the Jainas (if not, considering the popularity of Saiva and Vaisnava bhakti religiosity among them, to spite the Jainas)? Was it their planned 'mischief'? And why did the Jainas insult the king in the manner that they did? What had happened to their legacy of earlier stories highlighting their affirmative tradition, so to speak – the NVli story, for instance, where they were more than willing to take a goddess / spirit 'defiled' with a history of violence and bloodshed? Was there no other way than to insult the king, in that extreme manner? The story raises many other questions, too – of changing land relations, feudal economy, a revival of temple brahminism, persecution of a caste / community. There are several layers to this story (as there are layers to the story of the 70 vellalars who jumped into a burning pyre, which one engages with in the NVlakeci study). Surely, the Nayaka king being of a lower caste (as recorded) is also important.

The question as to whether the Jainas have indeed resorted to that kind of an insult or is it symbolic of their disdain for the proposal or the king, is moot. There are obviously deeper antagonisms at play in this story; and a sense of assault of some nature on the Tamil Jaina agricultural settlements or their identity as a community, at one level. At another, there is the aim / 'higher ambition' of a lower caste ruler (some sort of an oxymoron, with prestige associated with the ruling class, and 'shame' of a lower caste) aiming at upward mobility. The Jainas do have a caste status that is well known to the brahmins directing the ruler to them. They are among the 'higher' castes. From a religious community, they assume a caste identity – the king goes to them because they
belong to a higher 'caste' and not because they are Jaina, followers of the Jina dharma (which is the usual manner in which the Jaina stories take pride in themselves). The outcome of the king's anger in the story also suggests some interesting points to ponder. All of those who feared for their lives converted to Saivism (and not any other religious sect) adorning the sacred ash, 'throwing away their sacred threads'. They assume the identity of Saiva (nīr pūci) vellālars or nīr pūci nayinārs (the Jainas who smeared sacred ash). While some in the community (Tamil Jainas) assign this latter story to the bhakti movement, most others link it to the Cenji raja story. There are many dimensions to the story that suggest mass migration (at some point), mass conversion, caste-based conflict / tension, some sort of an agrarian unrest (all the cultivators - Jainas - fleeing), machinations of the brāhmins, and an insulted lower caste king seeking a change in identity and status based on his position of authority over the region. That the brāhmins did not think of a similar 'solution' to the dilemma faced when the king asked for their daughter also calls for some attention to the origins of the story. Did the story indeed originate among the Tamil Jainas of South Arcot? Or was it a Saivite revivalist story meant to show the weakness and fear of a community which turned into Saiva 'nayinārs' to save their lives? Or of a successful 'vanquishing' of the Jaina community from the region? Or, a comment on the level of insult meted out to the king? None could say where this story originated from, except that it has left an indelible impression on the Tamil Jainas in South Arcot, for whom it is their community folklore. It must have been what they told the copier or assistant of Mackenzie when they first approached the Jainas, the way they narrated the story to me. In that sense, it is historically part of the community's own perspective of its history - if with some element of
exaggeration on beheading of the Jainas, which does not seem to have been noted in any historical record. Whichever way we look at it, the story is rooted in some kind of identity crisis and conflict that occurred around 15th century (dates mentioning the cultivators and artisans unrest, the date mentioned by Thurston, and other scholars referring to this story coinciding very well). Sripal in one of his writings Sripal speaks of history writing and 'selective' history – of the victorious and not the victimised in the context of world history (in relation to the Jaina context on Tamilnadu). 298

Seeking colonial intervention – a 20th century Record

“In 1937 the Chennai Ibrahim Company had a record on Tirujnana Sambandar. Sripal got a copy. It had songs and speeches that were abusive to Jainas. At Chennai he met some Svetambara Jaina and shared that record with them. Sripal met the advocate Lobo, gave him a translated version of the same in English. On 20th January 1937 Jainas gathered. Advocate Lobo said to them this record by the HMV Company (Calcutta) was capable of spreading religious discord.” 299

Abstract from Fort St George, Madras, Public Department Notification, Fort St George, February 9th 1937, G.O. No. 299 (public, General)

“No.3 – In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 19 (of the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act 1931

“The Governor in Council hereby declares to be forfeited to His Majesty all copies wherever found of the booklet in

298 Jeavabandhu T. S. Sripal, Tamilakattil Jinaam (Tamil), 1975; p.58-9
299 Ka. Ci Tanakkoti Mohan Sundiran (1959), cf. cit, p.151
FORT: ST. GEORGE FEB. 9, 1937
G. O. No. 299 Public (General)

No. 3—In exercise of the powers conferred by section 19 of the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act 1931 (XXIII of 1931), the Governor in Council hereby declares to be offensive to His Majesty all copies wherever found of the book, in Tamil entitled "THIRUGNANA SAMBANDAR" written by one S. Narayana Ayyar of Madras and of the set of Four Double-Sided Gramophone Records in Tamil bearing Nos. N. 8422, N. 8423, N. 8424 and N. 8425, produced by his Master's Voice Gramophone Company, embodying the subject matter of the said book-let and all other documents containing copies of translations of or extracts from the said book-let or Gramophone Records on the ground that they contain matter which tends to provoke feelings of enmity and hatred between different classes of His Majesty's Subjects and are consequently of the nature described in Sub-Section (1) of Section 4 of the said act as embodied by section 16 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1919 (XXIII of 1919).

(Sd.) BRACKENBURY,
Chief Secretary.
Tamil entitled “Thirugnana Sambandar” written by one S. Narayana Ayyar of Madras and of the set of Four Double sided Gramophone Records in Tamil bearing Nos. N.8422, N.8423, N.8424 and N.8425 produced by His Masters Voice Gramophone Company, embodying the subject matter of the said booklet and all other documents containing copies of translations of or extracts from the said booklet or Gramophone Records on the ground that they contain matter which tends to promote feelings of enmity and hatred between different classes of His Majesty’s Subjects and are consequently of the nature of described in Sub Section (1) of Section 4 of the said Act as embodied by Section 16 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1932 (XXIII of 1932). Signed - Brackenbury, Chief Secretary.”

It seems significant that on this question the Jainas sought the help of the state, and the Digambara and Śvetāmbara Jainas came together in this matter.

**A Ritual Enactment of Persecution**

Sripal here recounts an episode from his life, in course of his campaign against animal slaughter in temples. Sripal attended this annual Tirumulaippāl of Ṣīrāṇa Sambandar celebrated at Śīrkāli in the month of April. A day before this, offerings of buffalos and goats used to be made to the Piḍāri amman shrine there. Sripal, accompanied by a SPCA member (Muthukumaraswamy) went there in connection with some SPCA work. He attended the ‘tirumulaippāl vilā’. Thousands had gathered that evening. Sripal described this ritual he saw – there were six people with shaven heads, saffron veṣṭī (dhoti), holding peacock feathers, and they stood before the utsavar (procession deity) of Jnana

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300 Refer to the copy of the order, attached.
Sambandar. Facing them were 10 Saiva devotees, who asked the former the question — in song — “what did Jñāna Sambandar say?” To which the former replied — in a song — “Samana peñkalai....” (speaking of women, Jaina women, describing each part of their body in graphic detail. Apparently Sripal started to cry listening to this kind of abusive language and a ritual that celebrated this — the son apparently formed part of Sambandar’s Tevāram — Maññakaṭilum’. He regrets that such a festival is celebrated to this day. 301

A Letter to the Mahatma

I reproduce here an interesting letter written to Gandhi by a Jaina Bar-at-Law in London on the question of attack on the Jaina religious tenets in one of the issues of Navjivan by Gandhi, here, influenced by the view of Sardar Patel.

“An Open letter to Mahatma Gandhi (from C.R. Jain302, C/ O. Imperial Bank of India, 22, Old Broad Street, London, EC – 2) 303

Letter dated 15 July 1931

“Dear Mahatma ji,

I am distressed to read in the Navjivan in one of its recent issues your support to the sacrilegious views entertained by Sardar Vallabhai Patel concerning the nudity of Jaina saints

301 Jeevabandhu T. S. Sripal, Tamilakattil Jainam, pp.61-62

302 Says he was a Barrister

303 Jain Gazette, Vol XXVII, Nos. 7 and 8, Madras July and August303, pp.133 – 140. Found at the Prakrit Bhavan, National Institute of Prakrit Studies and Research, Dhavalatirtha, near Sravanabelgola, Karnataka. I thank the administrator of the said Institute for allowing for hours of peaceful reading and access to books.
and your own impolite notions on the subject. Sardar Patel is a national hero and in his own department (Satyagraha) it will be well nigh impossible to challenge his views except by a man who has put in an equal amount of self denying service. But as an athlete however excellently well trained, would not be entitled to speak on surgery and medicine, so the worthy Sardar should have refrained from expressing his opinion hastily on the subject of nudity of saints, which I am sure he does not understand in the proper way. As for yourself, you are an acknowledged great man – perhaps the most unique leader of men in the world today – but I am inclined to think that you yourself are aware more than anybody else of the fact that Jainism requires a life long study and a scientific intellectual acumen before its principles can be fully appreciated and understood. You will permit me if I criticise your views and incidentally those of the worthy Sardar in this letter... The views of the society may change from time to time, but religion is unchanging; it cannot change; if it did change it will cease to be correct and true. Today society is involved in frivolity and fun on the one side and politics and money on the other. Religion is almost ignored.... As for society, are the Jains not a society in themselves? The Jains are exalted and sanctified with the nudity of the saints, they worship it. Are they to be ignored altogether? ... And what about that section of (Hindu) society who go into temples of Shiva and worship the most direct and undisguised representation of the sexual origins of the two sexes actually engaged in the act of sex gratification?... And what about the images on the dome of the great temple of Puri in Orissa, where Hindus of all classes and communities flock in millions to worship the great Jagannath? .... Is the Hindu society shocked by its naked saints and by representations of sexual union in the temples... The Hindus count something like 250,000,000 in
India. When you referred to society, were talking on behalf of these 250 millions, if not why do you ignore this vast number of men and women who act in the way described above....If you have read anything of the past history of India, you must have known that not only Mahavira, but many other teachers like Makhali Goshal and Puran Kashyap all moved about naked, and nobody was horrified and shocked...The Jaina standard of morality and ethics has come down to us from time remote that it does not pay one to cite a calculation about it; and no swarajya is worth the having which will aspire to interfere directly or indirectly therewith. The British at least when they came to India did not suggest that there going to interfere with any well established religious usage or practice. The Home Rule you are trying to obtain dear friend, begins before it has materialised, by making an article of faith that the Jaina saints should abandon their ancient practice. Do you seriously maintain that your Swarajya can be worth having under the circumstances?

Abu Qasin Geelani was one of the Muslim saints who roamed about in Digambara attire. Higher Muslim saints, called Abdals, go completely naked.... Nudity of saints was respected alike in Hinduism, Mohamadism, and also in certain other religions in eth past. I do hope dear friend that you will re consider the subject once again and recognise fully the two principles which are involved in it namely, 1. Right of every community to practise its religion unhampered and unhindered by any other community or individual and 2. The guiding policy of the state, the strength and stability of which lies in the principle of non interference with any form of religion, new innovations being excepted.
Is it asking for too much to demand that they (Jains) should be allowed to nurse their own "follies" without interference from any one? (Signed Champat Rai Jain, Bar-at-Law and life President Digambara Jain Parishad)

Some Thoughts on Identity Construction

The reasons for conflict and contestation come from the political and economic concerns as well—land, power, in turn intrinsically linked to ideology and religious systems. While different cults, faiths, belief systems and god-concepts co-existed in Tamilakam prior to the 5th century AD (even during the early occupation of the rock-cut caves, natural caverns by Jaina monks and nuns). Why did it take the most vigorous form between the 7th and 9th centuries? The reasons have to be seen not merely in religious antagonism but in the larger ownership and control of resources, manifesting only partially in the nature of religious antagonism and conflict. Between the 9th and 13th centuries again, there is an effort to codify Purānic myths and by 15th—16th centuries, brahminical sacred centres (in the Purānic pantheon) again the centres patronised by the ruling classes—have their own talapurāṇams, treating of divine visitations and sacredness of tanks, temple lands, and so forth. While initially Jaina and Buddhist religious establishments contested for support from ruling classes (and the laity) it shifted to Jaina-Śaiva (and to a limited extent Vaiṣṇava304)—brahminical conflict.

The persecution stories of different time periods signify the ways in which the Tamil Jainas constructed their identity vis-à-vis the other(s). The Śaiva bhakti bards, the Cakkili 304 The Tamil Jaina community is most vociferous about saying the Śaivas were more intolerant of them than the Vaiṣṇava bards and followers.
rājā (or Cenji rājā), in few cases, also the Arcot nawab; and the anonymous person who brought out the HMV record and literature abusing them — all of them figure as the ‘mainstream’ / powerful others, who victimised the Tamil Jainas. When a community is in the midst of pressure and cannot confront, it finds it easier perhaps to succumb. The conversion of Jainas to Śaivism (Appar’s conversion is a recorded fact) — going by the nīr-pūci-nayinār story — may have been partly out of fear, and partly to protect their (landed, and in some cases trading) interests and to be part of a traditions that promised to promote their interests or to protect them.

Modern scholarship (works of Sripal, Chakravarti from among the Tamil Jaina community) writing as representatives of Tamil Jaina tradition (in case of Chakravarti it was more from a liberal desire to ‘modern’ ideals as has been mentioned elsewhere) the issue of Jainas with a rightful share, as participants and partakers of a common history of Tamilakam is important. It is not just about the history of religions, but about literature and language, and political history. This scholarship comes from nationalistic, and at times, liberal enlightenment discourse and a sense of belonging to a larger universal Tamil tradition and culture. Sripal seems to tackle the Jaina identity question both by resorting to writing and publishing books, keeping acute sense of the trends in Tamil literary criticism about ‘Jaina’ works, organising talks and oration on Jaina literary texts, as well as by engaging with State and legislation. In the colonial period, it is with getting the colonial administration to ban copies of a supposedly abusive record on Jainas, while post independence it is to campaign for the legislation on banning animal sacrifice in temples of Tamilnadu. But the discourse on sacrifice was way different from the Śaivite
and brāhmiṇical discourse. It revolved around the opinion that these rituals were instruments of oppression created by the brāhmiṇs, 'misleading' the lower castes; and were, in the first place, part of a system that helped create and sustain the interests of a certain (brāhmiṇ) caste. Interestingly, too, Sripal did not address Islam with this logic. And considered Islam a system with its own set of beliefs and practices. 305 This entire campaign focussed on the 'Hindu' temples in several villages in Tamilnadu.

However, this legislation (The Madras Animals and Birds Sacrifice Prohibition Act 1950) brought forth controversy and debate in contemporary times as well, and revolved around the issue of caste and cultural practices most essentially. It is interesting to see that in 1930s and 40s the same campaign looked at the issue from the perspective of 'redeeming', as it were, the oppressed castes and people from 'superstitions' and 'blind beliefs' and had few advocates from among those who were at that point involved in constructing a discourse against brāhmiṇical hegemony on the one hand and constructing an idea of a nation that would 'break the shackles' of ritualism and 'blind faith' it perpetrated.

It is important to look at the Dravidian movement and Self Respect movement (Suya Marīyātai Iyakkam) vis-a-vis the Tamil Jaina community in the modern context, considering that in close connection to these developments the Tamil Jaina scholars were writing about Jaina Tamil literature (Chakravarti printed his Nīlakēci with English translation in 1934; Sripal was writing a lot too) Somewhere both the

305 In this sense, for the Jainas anything that involved killing of animals is anyway denounced in their system. While with the 'Hindus' they found spaces and ways to enter into a debate on the same with the hope of converting them (since Jainism had brought in people into its fold through convincing) perhaps they left certain systems out of their discourse – Christianity and Islam, for instance, which for them, are based in a belief that is an anti-thesis to the Jaina doctrine.
Tamil Jaina identity consciousness (rather, revival) and the discourse on Tamil as against Sanskritic culture which the Tamil purist movement, Dravidian movement and others addressing language, caste, seem to have enriched the Tamil Jaina identity discourse as also both converged at some level.

Tamil Jainas have tremendous respect and regard for Bishop Caldwell. Among the figures that they admire in history. They keep referring to Caldwell, sometimes also Ellis, Beschi (the Italian missionary) and Pope, not as much. They are aware of the contributions of these figures to Tamil language, but Caldwell is important to them. Caldwell published his *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Languages* in 1856 wherein he pointed out the distinct evolution of Tamil as a Dravidian language, without Sanskritic influence / association. He in fact further asserted that brāhmaṇs had nothing worthwhile to give to the Tamil literary tradition. He also noted the contribution of Jainas to the same. Now it is not too difficult to see where and why the ‘convergence’ happened. Caldwell’s book had also given food for thought as well as a basis for the Dravidian movement - Tamil, and Tamilness - devoid of Sanskritic influence of the north, brought in by the brāhmaṇs. This idea was the basis for the convergence. But herein also lay a critical and difficult point. That Sanskrit was perceived as brāhmaṇical, of the brāhmaṇs. But Sanskrit was also being used by the Jainas, and there could have been another way of constructing this language and literary tradition removed from its brahminical associations. But this did not happen. And was not, at that point, the central focus of the Dravidian movement and the anti-brāhmaṇ movements. Sanskrit, equated with Sanskritism in terms of ritual tradition of the brahmins was the focus of the criticisms. In the Jaina case, however, even though there was within the Jaina tradition,
use of the Sanskrit language, it was Tamil that the (Tamil) Jainas took recourse to, in constructing their place in Tamil history. They were also aware that in the case of Tamilakam, Tamil predated Sanskrit. And the Jaina caverns with Tamil - Brahmi inscriptions and Jaina associations gave them a firm basis for this understanding. It was not a tradition looking to the ‘north’ for sanction / sanctity.

Pandian says that Caldwell’s “reading of the Tamil language, culture and past was appropriated by the Vellāla elite in negotiating their new found marginality.” 306 “…A number of Vellāla elite scholars like P.Sundaram Pillai, V.Kanakasabhai, Nallaswami Pillai and Maraimalai Adigal contributed to the shaping of the early ‘Dravidian’ ideology…” 307 There were certain larger historical processes at work within which the Tamil Jaina identity consciousness needs to be located. In the ‘Āryan-Sanskritic’ – Dravidian-Tamil lay the convergence and the influence of the contemporary discourse was evident in some of Sripal’s writings. For example, where he equates the Dravidian to Tamil and Jaina and calls Jainas ‘Dravidian’ or “Drāvida mētaikaḻ samanarkaḻ” (Samanas were Dravidian intellectuals); or “Ādi kāla Tamil makkaḻ”, or “Drāvidarkaḻ Jainarkaḻ”. 308 He talks of the ‘tāi moli’ (mother tongue), and mentions P.Sundaram Pillai who was part of the Dravidian movement discourse.

306 M.S.S. Pandian, “Notes on the Transformation of Dravidian Ideology (c. 1900 – 1940), Social Scientist, 22, nos. 5-6, May-June 1994 (pp.84-104); p.89
307 Ibid, p. 89. The thought of looking at Dravidian movement and ideology happened ‘late’ in my course of research; essentially from the conversations on Sripal with the Tamil Jainas. The way they related to him. He was ‘one among us’ for them. His time period too coincided with these movements; and went until the post independence times. In his organising of numerous talks, lectures, recitation of texts, as well as part in the independence movement, also had a connection to a strong Jaina identity. But few or no scholars have touched on the Tamil Jainas and their involvement in any of these movements in the modern period.
308 T. S. Sripal, Tamilakattil Jainam, 1975; p.133-135
The Dravidian movement looked at brāhmiṇism as not being rooted in the Tamil soil and the latter’s constructs such as Agastya coming down to civilise the Tamil country supplemented this belief amply. The Jainas perceived themselves as part and parcel of Tamilakam (which they were) and hence the importance attached to the language. Both these discourses had a common ‘other’ to contend with. Interestingly, a veḷḷāla identity (Saiva Veḷḷāla) – as distinct from the brāhmiṇ and other non-brāhmiṇ identities – also seems to be emerging in the Dravidian movement’s discourse. Maraimalai Adigal 309 (or S. Vedachalam Pillai, 1876–1950) launched “the Tamil Purist Movement (Tanitamil Iyakkam) in 1916 which battled Sanskritic accretions in Tamil language.” “Maraimalai Adigal pursued his project to a great measure, within a Western / Enlightenment framework…” 310 (and) “developed a specific sequencing of history which typologised occupations as signs of progress or otherwise.” 311 And from here, what will follow – in terms of Maraimalai Adigal’s perception of history and his perspective on Dravidianism, is what is intriguing and interesting from the point of view of the Tamil Jaina Śaiva veḷḷāla (nīr pūci nayiṅār) origin story. What one is not doing here, is to ascribe Maraimalai Adigal this category. But it is indeed interesting at the same time to find reflections of the Jaina notions of the occupational categories (as assigned by Rṣabha, and the reasons thereof), ideas of non-killing (kollāmai) and other ideas which, the Jainas believe the Śaiva veḷḷālars retained even after adopting the Śaiva religion, either during or post-bhakti movement, or much later. At another level, one is also looking at how different communities in Tamilakam constructed different identities.

309 All points referred to him from Pandian, in Social Scientist (referred earlier), pp.84ff.
310 Ibid, p.89
311 Ibid, p.90
and origin stories vis-à-vis the brāhmiṇs and brāhmiṇḍ, and constructed a relatively pure Dravidian history. Interestingly, E.V.Ramaswamy ‘Periyar’ was closer to the Jaina identity question when he attached the Śaiva bhakti bards’ excesses, which is supposed to have upset Maraimalai Adigal and his supporters. The Self Respect Movement in that sense, and the Tamil constructs of a history of Tamil Dravidian identity, seem to fall within a common discursive paradigm. This one will come to later. Back to Maraimalai Adigal – his perspective on the occupational origins, which is very Jaina, is like this (as Pandian notes) – “before knowing...cultivation...people lived in great difficulty without enough food and proper clothing...The, such as regime full of scarcity, hardship and other negative qualities of life, drew to a close as the Veḷḷāḷas discovered and refined the modes of settled agriculture...(and when they did that)...the murderous act of killing animals for food ceased, compassion and munificence, based on sharing the surplus harvest of paddy, pulses, and other crops to the starving ones, thrived...” 313 The Jaina concepts of kollāmai (non killing), non-violence, compassion and dāna (of śāstra, medicines, food, etc) can also be found in the following statement. According to Maraimalai, “Śaiva Siddhānta...had one of its central tenets non killing (read vegetarianism)...His sequencing of history developed an identity between the Veḷḷāḷas and traditional occupation of cultivation and Śaivism as the apotheosis of history...” 314

It is important to note here an alternate construction of veḷḷāḷ identity from within that community. One is looking

312 One may just mention in passing that in Tamilnadu today, vegetarian food / food culture is referred to as “śaivam”. In restaurants people understand ‘śaivam’ to mean vegetarian!
313 Pandian, op.cit, p.91. Emphasis, wherever, mine. Pandian quotes from Maraimalai Adigal’s Veḷḷāḷar NīgarTam
314 Ibid, p.91
at the way multiple community identities emerged and found the need to assert themselves and their contribution to Tamil society, and history; they either converged, against a singular other, or contested with each other for their own distinct socio-cultural, political space. “Maraimalai Adigal continued to maintain the temporal distance between the Vellāla and brāhmiṇ n terms of his teleological scheme. In other words the brāhmiṇ was the usurper of power and the power that he exercised was illegitimate. Such a construction of the self and the other was indeed a discursive means for the disempowered Vellālas to contest the pervasive authority of the brāhmiṇ in colonial Tamilnadu.”

For the Tamil Jainas the ‘other’ were (they distinguished themselves from and felt victimised by) the Śaivas and the brāhmiṇ; and the Śaiva and brāhmiṇ identities at times seem juxtaposed, or an extension of each other. The Śaiva Vellālas in fact were a past Jaina community (according to them) that had been victimised into entering the Śaivite religious order. On the whole, the entire discourse in this period together seems to have created a distinct Tamil cultural society sans the brahmin.

Maraimalai Adigal’s perspective may be also seen as representing a community influenced by Jaina ideas. Or the Jaina influence on the vellala community can be gauged from these view points which tally with the Jaina construct of occupations, non killing and so forth; sans the Jainas’ lived history of persecution by Śaiva bards, who the Śaiva vellālas almost valorised.

315 Ibid., p.93
The Self Respect Movement initiated by Periyar, meanwhile, "could...address a wider range of issues by problematising a number of inferiorised identities. The newly opened up terrains of conflict was what ensured the Self Respect Movement a basis for mass mobilisation. Different subordinate social groups such as Adi Drāvidas, śūdras, women and labouring poor could, thus, articulate their grievances through the Movement."\(^316\) To these sections, one might add a minority group such as the Tamil Jainas too. Perhaps it involved and engaged attention of all those groups who were building a case for their marginalisations in Tamil history and culture. In our case, the Tamil Jainas must not be seen in a vacuum, unaffected by these broader movements.\(^317\)

Having said this (since issues such as these cannot have a well-rounded 'ending') one is carrying forward the narratives of the Tamil Jaina community, based on dialogues with them, to the chapter that delves into inscriptive records. In a sense, this present chapter addressing the community and identity, the next engaging with Nīlakeci the text, and the one following on epigraphs, need to be seen as threads of a single weave. Each has to be read in connection with the other, to make sense of Tamil Jaina history as a community. Linking up the narratives of the community to inscriptive records has a meaning to it which will be discussed in that chapter.

\(^{\text{316}}\) Ibid, p.99
\(^{\text{317}}\) This idea - of looking at the Tamil Jainas in terms of these modern identity movements in Tamilnadu - needs further work. It is an idea that is being posited. Keeping in mind the amazingly little literature on this aspect, one has developed these arguments based on readings on these movements as much as (or more so) dialogues with the Tamil Jainas, and their texts.