CHAPTER 3

POSSIBLE IMPACT OF STORIES IN VADDARADHANE
ON CONTEMPORARY AND LATER SOCIETY

The revered Jina Vijayamuni has rightly observed that in composing or narrating stories, the lofty ideals kept and maintained by the Jaina scholars have hardly any parallels: in edifying and instructing the laity in an entertaining manner, in guiding them to trod the right path successfully, the Jaina stories stand with few equals in the literature of other sects in India.1 And the author of the Vaddārādhane and his stories in it are no exception to this fact.

It has been well noticed, in Part I, that though the author of the Vaddārādhane narrates these stories with a view to encouraging the Arādhaka monk to maintain equanimity at the critical hour of death, he is always keen in the edification and instruction of the pious laity, who, technically speaking, to pay homage to the Arādhaka supposed to be a tīrtha. And these stories, with such a sanctity as of Arādhana, may have been, naturally, discussed in groups of younger monks and read and renarrated among the pious laity in the author's days and in subsequent periods of the history of Jainism in Karnatak,

and influenced their life at least to some extent. Hence the possible impact of these stories may be said to be restricted mainly to the members of the Jaina community and incidentally to those of the neighbouring ones.

In these stories, the unselfish, hard and pure life of the Jaina (Digambara) monk, where Ahimsa has the highest place, is lucidly depicted. He strictly adheres to the prescribed code of conduct and remains wandering as an ideal model for other monks and the pious lay disciples. He is always helpful to others: In St. No. 1, when Suryamitra, who mistakes the Avadhi knowledge for astrology, approaches the teacher Sudharma and enters Order with the desire of learning astrology, the teacher treats and teaches him with such affection and goodwill that by the time he covers Dravyanuyoga, he becomes well acquainted with the scriptural knowledge and acquires perfect Samyaktva, and, within twelve years, reaches the rank of Acarya (pp. 5-6). His soul is a fountain of forgiveness: Being abused and insulted by his own former pupil, the teacher Suryamitra forgives him and calmly moves away (pp. 7-8). He is least worried even if nobody offers him food during his begging round: The sage Tapovara, on his begging round, wanders

2. Ariyamagga Sutta (1.6.3.3) teaches: "As birds (feed) their young ones so are the disciples regularly to be instructed day and night": Jaina Sutras, Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXII, ed. Hermann Jacobi, Delhi 1964 (Reprint), p. 58.
through the streets of the whole village; but none stops him to offer food. Consequently he silently moves out of that village (pp. 163-164).\(^3\) No affliction, nor hardship nor fear of death can desist a monk from his adherence to his adopted vow or austerity, the illustrations of which are strewn throughout the entire course of narration of these stories. Their effects are shown in further illustrations that even wild beasts like a tiger (p. 48), animals like an elephant (p. 156), other sub-human beings like a monkey (p. 172) and birds like jatāyu (p. 179) adopt vows. All these features would, naturally, convince the laity of the efficacy of the teachings of the Jainas.

Barring off the various spells of the Viḍyādharas (in St. Nos. 2 and 4) and instances like the Tejorādhī (p. 176, 9-14), some supernatural powers like the knowledge of Avadhī and Manah-paryaya, which are given a note-worthy place in the narration of these stories, are not impossible or improbable with the Jaina monk endowed with high spiritual discipline.

---

3. Dasaveyāliya Sutta (I.2-3) lays down: Just as bees suck honey from the flowers of a tree and do not make the flowers fade although they satisfy themselves, similarly these monks in this world (who are free from external attachments) are intent upon seeking faultless food given by house-holders. Dasaveyāliya Sutta, ed. by Prof. K.V. Abhyankar, Ahmedabad 1938, Tr. p. 58.
Dr. Kalghatgi in Ch. VII, Supernatural Perception, of his Some Problems in Jaina Psychology, states: "In the west modern scientists have begun to take more interest in such perception although they call it paranormal and not supernormal perception. The society for Psychical Research has carried out investigations on this problem. It is now recognised that cognitions independent of senses are possible. Such phenomena as clairvoyance, telepathy and the like have been recorded to prove the possibility of the occurrence of extra-sensory perception." Recently I came across an interesting news-item, under 'Telepathy can score over radio waves', in which Dr. H. N. Banerjee gave an account of a ten-year-old boy's relating some experiences of his past life that were verified to be true. The learned Doctor diagnosed the phenomenon as "extra cerebral perception." Hence at least some Jaina monks, in each generation, may have possessed such perception and, therefore, wielded such command over the faith and devotion of their laity. And such accounts given in these stories would, no doubt, kindle similar faith and reverence in them. The cārana-risā, the supernatural power of flying in the air, attributed to some sages in these stories (cārana-risā : p. 37.11 etc.) may be symbolic of the Jaina monk's fast moving from place to place. 4

5. Indian Express, Bombay, 17-8-1965.
Thus the picture of such hard life and sincere struggle to practise and propagate the teachings of the Jinas depicted in these stories, would capture not only the mind of the pious lay community, but also influence that of others in the neighbouring communities that would read or listen to these stories. Such instances can be seen even to this day: Svāmī Labdhisūrīji, belonging to the heirarchy of Jaina saints in the tradition of Lord Mahāvīra, who left his mortal coil in 1961, walked twenty thousand miles to propagate the teachings of the prophet in several provinces of India and earned praise from all sections.7 Recently the Śvetāmbara Teraṇapāthi Aśārya Tulasī with his Saṅgha, consisting of sixty members, has been moving on foot from Bengal to South India, carrying his Aśvāṃśa Movement that has drawn to him, wherever he goes, not only Jaina followers but also non-Jainaś, merchants, politician, etc. Hence such saintly life and teachings, of which Ahīṃsā is the key-note, depicted in the stories in the Vaddārādhane, would have, spiritually and morally, healthy effect on the mind of the pious lay community and also on that of others in certain respects. And such effect is of considerable abiding value and depth. Such stories may have partly played their role silently in making the people of Karnatak mostly vegetarian and peace-loving.

There is another integral part of the stories, as a whole, in the Vaddārādhane, viz., the sermon, which would

produce promising results in the spiritual and moral life of the lay community. Though the sermons in these stories (pp. 9-10, pp. 96-99, pp. 126-27 etc.), the Jaina teacher, besides instructing the laity, in some dogmatical matters like the true phase of Samyaktva (which is without twenty-five flaws), the nature of true god (who is the Jina) and that of true religion (which is Ahimsa) etc., explains the Doctrine of Karman through the illustrations of retribution for good and evil deeds and thereby teaches him some ethical principles like not to steal, not to lie, not to hunt, not to eat things like honey, wine, flesh etc., in other words not to break the prescribed code of conduct. The description of the birth of a soul in the four existences (gatis) depending on past deeds (pp. 96-99) would certainly remain as a helpful guide in the mind of the lay disciple who would be convinced of the ethical principle that progress or fall lies in one's own hand. The recognition of

8. i) Vasunandi in his Sravakacara (gaha 239) openly tells that "the masses must be coerced by the fear of punishment and the hope of material reward" : Jaina Yoga, p. 252.

ii) Through this kind of illustrations and other higher modes of ethical teachings, the Jaina teachers have always taken sufficient care of their lay-community, which fact is said to be one of the important reasons that made Jainism survive in India, whereas Buddhism perished: The Wonder that was India, by A.L. Basham, Orient Longmans Ltd., Bombay 1963, p. 292.
this responsibility and adjusting his conduct accordingly by each lay disciple, would lead to the formation of a society marked with peace, happiness and prosperity.

Some sub-stories, anecdotes and episodes in these stories also illustrate the retribution for good and evil deeds and thereby teach the laity some ethical rules. The narration of sub-stories, with further emboxed ones, in St.No. 1 illustrate the importance of the Anuvratas (Minor vows). Queen Jayavati, as a result of her anger towards her husband and hatred against the Jaina Faith, was reborn as a tigress (pp. 47.32 to 48.3). Gomati, a hunter's wife, as a result of her adopting and practising vows of the lay disciple, was reborn as a princess (pp. 159.12 to 151.7). The merchant Nandimitra, as a fruit of his offering some food to a hungry monk is reward-ed with birth in the Bhoga-bhūmi (region of all enjoyment and no labour) (pp. 163.22 to 164.7).

The Dvādasavidha Šrāvaka-dharma (twelve-fold conduct of the lay disciple) or the Caturvidha Šrāvaka-dharma (four-fold conduct of the lay disciple) mentioned and taught in sermons, and illustrated in the various sub-stories, anecdotes and episodes, as noted above, are so framed by the ancient

9. Dr. Hiralal Jain observes that through these Anuvratas an attempt is made to control those social trends that are sources of the main social evils like enmity, jealousy etc. Moreover the infractions of these Anuvratas can reasonably be called moral sins : Bharatiya Sanskritimeh Jainadharmakā Yogadāna, Bhopal 1962, pp. 255-256.
Jaina seers that their honest and sincere observance would go
to build a healthy and happy society at any time and in any
place. Pt. K. Bhujabal Shastri thinks that a single Ānuvṛata,
viz., Parima parigrāha (restricted belongings), if observed
by Indians today, would build up for them a true socialist
state. 10

Every story in the Vaddārōdhane exemplifies the hard
sufferings of the hero who meets death by the rite of Prīyopē-
gamana 11 and there are numerous characters or associate monks
and nuns who are shown, in the course of the whole length of
narration of these stories, to have courted voluntary death by
the rite of Saṁnyasana, Samēkomāra or Samadhī, which is mostly
Bhaktapratyākhyāna (abstention from food unto death). How would
this feature of these stories be felt by the common members of
the Jaina community and the society in general?

It is just possible that some non-Jainas would not
like this feature of the stories. It is worth considering, at
this context, that some foreign scholars in the field of Jaini-
sm like Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson have called this kind of relig-
ious death as a "terrible vow". 12 Several others, both in
India and outside, have termed it as a 'suicide'. Pt. Sukhbalalji

11. Except Cānakya, the hero of St.No.18, who dies by the rite
of Iñgīñā.
Samghavi has presented convincing critical observations on this point in his article 'Santhāra aur Ahīṃśā'. He points out that the term 'suicide', used for the Jaina way of religious death, implies some sort of contempt. For the same, scriptures have laid down 'Samādhimarana' or 'Panditamarana'. Dr. Kalghatgi in his paper, The Jaina Theory of Saṅkekhā, notes that this doctrine has been much misunderstood both in theory and practice, and observes: "It would be inconsistent to believe that those who considered life as sacred and those who condemned hiṃśā (injury) of any type, should have so little regard for life as to preach self-destruction". Thus it is quite probable that the misunderstanding of this mode of religious death on the part of some scholars is owing to the imperfect knowledge of the meaning and connotation of ahīṃśā as taught by the Jinas. The Tattvārtha Sūtra lays down that hurting of the vitalities by passions is hiṃśā (injury). And in the case of one, who voluntarily submits himself to this mode of religious death, no passion of any kind is seen. Hence it cannot be called suicide. It is so very interesting to notice at this context that some Jaina stories have openly condemned suicide. For instance, in the story of Asokadatta and his son

Srīpati in the Kathākosa, Srīpati, out of utter disappointment owing to the destruction of his entire wealth, goes to a mountain and is about to throw himself from its top. A sage, in Kayotsarga, sees him and exclaims, "Srīpati, do not act rashly; by such a death you will attain a condition of a demon; do not die an evil death, for:

In taking the halter, and in swallowing poison, in fire, and in entering the water,

Weared by hunger and thirst, they slay themselves, and become demons.

Therefore do not inflict death on yourself".  

The Mūlācāra, to which the author of the Vaddārādhane refers more than once, contains a gāhā, with similar contexts, that expressly condemns such attempts at suicide, and states that the suicider is tied to the cycle of birth and death.

The Jinas have taught that a soul can attain liberation only through human existence and that too through Samādhi-maraṇa. Out of seventeen kinds of death, only three, viz., Bhaktapratyākhyaṇa, Iñgini and Prāyopagamana are commendable for Samādhi-maraṇa. The last two are too hard to be resorted to by men in the Kali age for physical reasons. Hence Śivārya


has described at great length in the Bhagavatī Ārādhana the
Bhaktapratyākhyāna which alone, in this age, would lead the
liberal souls to eternal bliss. And, naturally, the author
of the Vaddarādhane has left no chance in making every worthy
character in his stories submit to this mode of religious
defeat. Since Candragupta Maurya submitted himself to this
kind of death, after his teacher Bhadrabāhu, on a hill at
Sravanabelgola, there appears to be the least misunderstanding
regarding it among the Jaina community of Karnatak. It is in-
teresting to know, "no less than 94 individual cases are record-
ed at Sravanabelgola alone, besides the 700 who are said to have
followed the example of Prabhācandra in performing Saṃplekhanā
noted in S.B. 1. The other inscriptions of Sravanabelgola
which record such death are No. 11, 64–66, 117, 118, 126–129,
159, 389 and 477 and eighty others. The earliest goes back to
the 7th cent. A.D. These include both men and women, mostly
monks and nuns; 64 males and 16 females. Out of these, 48 of
the former and 11 of the latter died between the 7th and 8th
centuries".18 This is how these lines speak of the degree of
faith in and esteem for the Samādhimarana that prevailed among
the members of the Jaina community in Karnatak in those days.
And there is no wonder if the stories in the Vaddarādhane added
to such faith and esteem among those people in its contemporary
and later period.

18. Jainism And Karnataka Culture, by Prof. S.R. Sharma,
Dharwar 1948, p. 193.
It may passingly be noted that Samādhirāma was not restricted only to the long past days. Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics notes several instances of monks and nuns embracing this mode of religious death in the early twentieth century in India. To speak of Karnataka, the example of the great Sāntisāgara Mahāraja, the Digambara patriarch, who courted Sahālekhanā in Sept. 1955, is worth remembering. The most recent example, outside Karnataka of course, is that of Jagajivanā Mahāraja who abstained from food on 23-12-1967 and left his mortal coil on 5-2-1968 on the Udayagiri hill of Mount Rajjagiri in Patnā district (Bihār).

---ooo0oo---

19. Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. XII, p. 34.