

CHAPTER 5

JAINA AND BUDDHIST LITERATURE

Religion played an important role in the lives of the Indians from the earliest times, as in the case of many other ancient nations of the world. From the pre and proto-historical periods up to the twelfth century CE, it assumed many forms with manifold designations in religion to different groups of the people associated with them. Religious ideas, thoughts and practices differed among those groups and transformation and developments took place in course of time. These changes were very often brought about by the ideas and actions of intellectual thinkers. Religion in India was never stationary in character. The Pālī works mentioned that at the time of Mahātmā Buddha, there were about sixty-two different sects¹ existed (but according to Jaina texts, their number was 363)². The most important teachers of the time were Mahātmā Buddha and Lord Mahāvīra, which were the founder of Buddhism and Jainism respectively.

The early Jaina adopted Prākṛit language of the common people to preach their doctrines. The religious literatures of the Jainism were written in Ardha-magadhī and Jaina texts were finally compiled in sixth century CE at Vallabhī in Gujarat. Dr. Jacobi called this language old Mahārashṭri or Jaina Mahārashṭri. But this designation has not been accepted and it is simpler and better to call it by its traditional name Ardhamagadhī³. Ardhamagadhī and Māhārashṭrī were cultivated above all by the religious sects of Jaina who made them a linguistic medium for their literary work, rejecting classical Sanskrit linked with Hindu scripture. As a result, a mass of literature came out advocating its principles of philosophy and religion. Jaina writers and

1 R.S. Sharma, *Prārambika Bhārata Kā Parichaya*, p. 162.

2 D.N. Jha, *Early India A Concise History*, p. 72.

3 Hiralal Jain, "Literature of Jainism" in S. K. Chatterji (Ed.), *CHI*, p.156.

Philosophers were busy with literary activities of considerable magnitude during those ancient days. Many regional languages developed out of the Prākṛit languages. The Jaina literature contains epics, Purāṇas, novels, dramas and grammar etc. They also contributed to the Kannaḍa in which they wrote extensively.

Gautama Buddha, the lord and founder of Buddhism, had the dynamic personality. The personality of Buddha and method adopted by him to preach his religion helped the spread of Buddhism. The use of Pālī, the language of the people contributed to flourish the literature. Pālī, the leading language of Middle Indo-Āryan language group, is the language of the holy texts of the Buddhist. This is a name (Pālī) given to the sacred language of the southern Buddhism⁴. Pālī means language of the common people. Kosambi, a Buddhist scholar, thinks that the name is derived from the root पाल (Pāla) is to protect, to preserve, and originally means the books or literature in which the Buddhist Canon is preserved⁵. Later it indicated the sacred words of the Buddha as also the texts, which embodied Buddhist teaching; and finally it signified the language of the texts. The canonical literature comprises Tripiṭaka (literally means basket), which are named *Vinaya-piṭaka* (rules of the monastic order); *Sutta-piṭaka* (ethical principles of Buddha's teaching); *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* (metaphysical principles undertaking the doctrine). The *Milindapaṇho* (conversation between Minender and Nāgasena), *Dipavaṃsa* (a chronicle of the island of Ceylon, which gives an account of the introduction of Buddhism) and *Mahāvaṃsa* (a coherent, refined and enlarged version of the *Dipavaṃsa*) are the chief historical works.

Pālī, the language of the sacred canon of the Buddhist of Ceylon (Śrilankā), Burmā (Myanmār) and Siam (Thāiland), has a long history. Most of

4 P.D. Gune, *An Introduction to Comparative Philology*, p. 195.

5 *Ibid.*

the works during the period of early medieval are the product of learned Theras (monks) from Ceylon, the contribution from the mainland of India being meagre⁶. The period may rightly be regarded as a brilliant epoch in the history of Pāli literature of Ceylon.

The Sanskrit language regained its position in the literary field, in mixed and pure form, when the Buddhist was divided into two sects i.e. Hinayāna and Mahāyāna. A galaxy of eminent scholars, which became very popular in central Asia, Tibet and China, further enriched the Buddhist literature in Sanskrit. The Jaina and the Buddhist literature written in Sanskrit and Dravidian languages had already mentioned in the respective chapter topic wise. The literature of both religions in all languages is full of legends, fairy tales and stories in prose and verse in the form of sermons for the followers of the religion. This literature is not only confined to religion but also touch every aspect of life secular and non-secular both.

Jaina Literature

Jaina literature begins with Lord Mahāvīra; last Trīthankara of Jaina in the six-century BCE. The Jaina Canon took its present shape in the second council (CE 512 or 525) at Vallabhī. According to arrangement now prevailing the canonical books are divided into six groups, called the Aṅgas, Upaṅgas, Prakīrnaka, Chhedasūtras, Mulasūtras and an unnamed group⁷. The Jaina literature of this period (7th-12th century CE) is very extensive, varied, and numerous references of social, political, economic, and religious values are scattered in it. Jaina non-canonical works throws light on historical aspects. The Jaina literature of this period is written not only in Sanskrit, Tamil, and Kannaḍa but also in Prākṛit Apabhraṁśa and the Deśabhāshas. No Digāmbara literary work, written before the 7th century CE, is now available⁸. The earliest

6 A. D. Pusalker, "Non Canonical Pāli Literature" in R. C. Majumdar (Ed.), *The Classical Age*, p. 399.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 416

8 Asim Kumar Chatterjee, *A Comprehensive History of Jainism (upto 1000 AD)*, p. 300.

datable work of Ācharya Revisena's the *Padmapurāṇa*, which was written c. 678 CE.

Jinadāsagani Mahattara, a Śvetāmbara, was the most important chūrṇī (commentary) writer in the seventh century CE. The following chūrṇīs are generally attributed to him — *Niśitha viśeshachūrṇī*, *Nandichūrṇī*, *Āvaśyakachūrṇī* etc. He was also an expert storyteller and later writers copied some of stories told by him.

Haribhadra Sūri, a Śvetāmbara scholar, who flourished in the later half of the eighth century CE. He was a Brāhmiṇa by caste and had the advantage of higher studies and knowledge. He provides reliable information about Mahāvīra's life in his work named *Āvaśyakavṛtti* (c. 775 CE). He was a disciple of Jinbhaṭṭa and belonged to the Vidyadhara kula. He was one of the most learned men of his time. His works and Ṭikās in Sanskrit, thus is giving an impetus to a tendency, which bore ample fruit in later days. He was not only a great philosopher, but also one of the finest literary figures of the early medieval period⁹.

Another well-known personality was Dhanañjaya (Digāmbara), probably flourished in the eight century CE. He was the author of the *Rāghava-pānḍavīya* or *Dvisandhāna*, which is an epic in eighteen cantos. Dhanañjaya was probably not a monk but a Digāmbara layman. Various poets including the famous Rājaśekhara who flourished around 900 CE have praised his work.

The *Kuvalayāmālā* composed by Śvetāmbara scholar Udyotanasūri¹⁰ at Jābalipur modern Jalor (Rajasthan) in c. 778 CE. This work is written a colophon (Praśasti) in Mahārashṭri Prākṛit. During the reign¹¹ of Vatsarāja, Gurjara-Pratihārā king of Avanti. This work provides us useful historical

9 *Ibid*, p 280.

10 Ed. In two parts by A.N. Upadhye in Singhi Jain Granthmālā, Bombay.

11 *E.I.*, XII, pp 202-203.

information and probably the most interesting and complex Jaina literary text of the eight century CE.

Jinasena's *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* is the earliest Jaina epic (composed in 783 CE) on the subject of the *Mahābhārata*, the chief heroes being the twenty-second Tirthankara Neminātha and his cousin Krishṇa Nārāyaṇa. It contains very valuable information of historical importance in the concluding verses. It mentions the name of the contemporary kings of that period¹². It has preserved an unbroken genealogy of the Jaina teachers from Lord Mahāvīra onwards.

Another Jinasena, (Digāmbara) who was the preceptor of the Amoghavarsha, king of Rāshtrakūṭa, wrote the *Ādi-Purāṇa* which was completed by his disciple Guṇabhadra in the ninth century CE. Amoghavarsha's reign produced a galaxy of Jaina writers, including the king himself. The *Ādi-Purāṇa* is undoubtedly one of the finest poems written in the early medieval period. Guṇabhadra, the great disciple of a great preceptor, as mentioned already, is the author of the last portion of the *Ādi-Purāṇa* and the whole of the *Uttara Purāṇa*. The two poems are together known as the *Maha-Purāṇa*. The work of Jinasena may be called the Jaina encyclopaedia¹³.

The two great Digāmbara literary luminaries of the tenth century CE were Pushpadanta and Somadeva Sūri. The celebrated Pushpadanta is the author of the following three works *Tisatthimahāpurisagunālankaru*, *Nāyakumārachuriyu* and *Jasaharachariyu*, all of which are written in Apabhraṁśa. Pushpadanta was undoubtedly the greatest poet of the Apabhraṁśa language.

Somadevasūri was the celebrated author of *Nītivākyāmrīta*, *Yaśastilakachampū* and *Ādhyāmatarṅgiṇī*. His *Nītivākyāmrīta*¹⁴ (the Nectar of

12 Gulab Chandra Choudhary, *Political History of Northern India from Jain Sources (c.650 AD to 1300 AD)*, p. 1

13 Hiralal Jain, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

14 MDJG, Bombay, 1887-88.

the Sayings of Polity), is largely based on the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya and is written in prose in c. 959 CE. This work is an excellent treatise on the science and the art of politics covering the period from c. 100 BCE to 900 CE. The *Yaśastilakachampū*, a literary romance in Sanskrit prose and verse, composed in CE 959, is one of the finest novels in the Sanskrit literature. He was flourished in the reign of Rāshṭrakūṭa king Krishṇa III (c. CE 940-948). The later Chālukyas of Bādāmī probably patronized him. The author himself tells us that, “he finished that work in chaitra śaka year 88’ (CE 959) during the rule of the Chalūkyā prince Krishṇarāja Deva” which shows both his historical sense and chronological consciousness. The third work of Somadevasūri, is *Ādhyāmatarṅgiṇī*, also known as the Yogamārga, and as the name indicate, it deals with spiritual matters. Gaṇadhara-kīrti wrote a commentary on it in the first half of the twelfth century CE.

Dhanapāla, a Śvetāmbara Jaina, who flourished in the last quarter of the tenth century CE, is the author of the *Tilakamañjarī*¹⁵ (composed c. 970 CE) during the reign of Śiyaka-Harsha (949-72) the early Parmāra ruler of Mālavā. In this work some extremely valuable information regarding the early kings of the Paramāra dynasty has been given. It provides a trustworthy information of the social, economic, religious, cultural and artistic life of the people during the period of early medieval. It is said that it “ranks among the few first-rate works written after Baṇābhāṭṭa.”¹⁶ Dhanapāla attained fame for his religious zeal and writings.

In the eleventh century CE, we have, the *Surasundarīcharia* of Dhaneśvara and the *Pañchami-kahā* of Maheśvara, both in Prākṛit, which are interesting for their story. Śrīchandra (11th century CE) wrote the Apabhraṁśa *Kathā-kośa*, in which short stories written primarily for religious instruction,

15 Ed. Kāvya-māla Series, Bombay 1938.

16 G.P. Yādava, *Position of Women as Depicted in Dhanapāla's Tilakamañjarī*, p. 28

also serve for amusement. This work tells us that the author has the people of Virachandra of Śanti-sūri wrote the *Jīvaviyāra* in 51 Ārya verses. It discusses the nature of beings after dividing them into various classes. Another important work of the eleventh century CE is the *Mahāvira-charīta* of Guṇachandra. It describes the life of Lord Mahāvīra based on various legends up to his attaining the supreme knowledge.

The greatest Jaina scholar of twelfth century CE was the famous Hemachandra (CE 1088-1172) who belongs to Śvetāmbara School. He was a celebrated poet, grammarian, and historian. He is the author of various works – scientific, historical and literary. He wrote *Kumārapāla-charita* or *Dvyāśraya-Kāvya* in honour of his patron Chālukya king of Aṅhilavāḍa, Kumārapāla. This work is into two languages, partly in Sanskrit and partly in Prākṛit. His work named *Parīśiṣṭaparvan* in Sanskrit is a work of immense historical value. It mentions a dynastic list containing the names of some of the prominent kings of different dynasties that ruled over kingdom with their genealogies, chronology and other relevant details. He made significant contribution to the evolution of historiography in ancient India. He was a great commentator, a prolific writer and bore the title Kalikāla-sarvājña.

Buddhist Literature

A Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang's account gives us reliable information about the condition of Buddhism in Indian in the seventh century CE. In Kashmir, he was received with great honour by the king who gave him twenty Paṇḍitas to make copies of Buddhist work besides a few monks to help him in his mission¹⁷. The most important Buddhist monastic centers in the early medieval period were located in Kashmir, Bihar, Bengal, which were the great centers of literary activities. Nālandā was the oldest and had attained worldwide fame by the seventh century CE. The architecture of Nālandā was

17 Nalinaksha Dutt, "Buddhism" in R. C. Majumdar (Ed.), *The Classical Age*, pp 394-95.

so impressive that the Turks mistook it for a big fort and fired it. Many original works of Buddhist were burnt in the library of Nālandā, which might be a great source to construct the history of India and Buddhism. The monastery of Vikramaśilā founded by Dharampāla was the greatest institution of the age and surpassed Nālandā¹⁸. Tāntrik Buddhist texts were composed during this period, which showed that Tantricism was became the part of Buddhist. Many Buddhist scholars adopted the Sanskrit as a medium of their work. The *Tathagata-guhyaka*, which probably belonged to the seventh century CE, contains Mahāyāna teachings mingled with elements of Tantricism in Sanskrit¹⁹. Dirṃnāga (600 CE) founded a new critical school of Buddhist philosophy. He was the father of Indian logic²⁰. His work named the *Nyāyapraveśa* is a monumental work on logic. He has been described one of foremost figures in the history of Indian philosophy. He was originally a Hinayānī but later became a devotee of Mahayanism. He is stated to have written one hundred works out of which some were studied as texts.

Chandragomin, a Buddhist, a contemporary of Chanderkirti was a grammarian of repute. He was a poet and a philosopher and created a name in the Buddhist world during the seventh century CE. His *Śisyalekh-Dharma-Kāvya*, a letter to a friend, was a poem of brilliant scholarship.

Jayāditya and Vāmana, both Buddhist writers, wrote the *Kāśikā-vritti*²¹, a commentary on the *Sūtras* of Pāṇini. This work is admittedly best, on account of brevity and clarity, commentary par excellence on the sūtras of Pāṇini. The *Kāśikā* was the joint work of both, Jayāditya left it incomplete (due to his death c. 660 CE) in four parts. Vāmana gave it the definite and finished form. But I-Tsing mentioned Jayāditya as its only author. This book was very popular

18 G.C.Pande, "Buddhism" in R.S. Sharma and K. M. Shrimali (Ed.), *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. IV, Part 2, p. 55.

19 Ankul Chandra Banerjee, "Buddhist Literature" in S. K. Chatterji, (Ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 205.

20 *Ibid*, p 207

21 Ed. In Benaras Sanskrit Series.

among the Buddhist scholars of Sanskrit language. I-Tsing himself was taught Sanskrit through this grammar. Sarvajñāmitra, a Buddhist of the eight-century CE wrote *Sragdharāstotra*, in thirty-seven stanzas dedicated to Tārā, the Buddhist Goddess.

Dharmakīrti was a famous Buddhist scholar and logician. Probably he was flourished in the first half of the eight-century CE. The *Nyāyabindu* by Dharmakīrti is regarded as one of the important work on logic. Vinītadeva, who wrote commentaries on some of the work of Dharmakīrti and a few independent works on logic. He was also the author of the history of the eighteen sects of early Buddhism²².

Śivasvāmin, Kashmirean Buddhist during the reign of king Avantivarman of Kashmir in the ninth century CE, has given us an epic named *Kapphaṇā-bhyudaya* in twenty cantos. This is based on a tale in the *Avadānaśataka*. He was highly influenced by Bhāravī and Māgha. He was the prodigious author of seven Mahākāvyas, several plays, songs and eleven hundred thousand hymns on Śiva²³.

Jñānaśribhadra, the author of *Parmānaviniśchayatikā* and several Tibetan translations, Jayanāga (c.1050 CE), Bhavyarāja (c. 1090 CE) who bore the title of Kashmīra-nyāya-chudamaṇi, the well known Śankrānanda and the polymath Kshemendra who composed the *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*, may be mentioned among the Kashmir Buddhist savants of the age²⁴.

A supplement to the *Amarakośa* is the *Trikāṇḍadeśesa* of Purushottamadeva, a Buddhist. This work is a supplement in three parts, containing 1050 verses to the *Amarakośa*. He is also the author of a small dictionary of 278 verses, the *Hārāvali*. The work is in two parts-on synonyms and homonyms words, but not in common use. He says that he had worked on

22 Nalinaksha Dutt, "Buddhism" in Majumdar R.C. (Ed.), *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, P. 267.

23 V. Raghavan, "Sanskrit Kāvya Literature: A General Survey" in S. K. Chatterji (Ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 217.

24 G.C. Pande, *op.cit.*, pp 54-55.

this book for twelve years i.e. during this period he had collected rare words from literature²⁵. This work is considered a rare creation. His third important work, the *Varṇadeśanā*, is in prose. The author was flourished probably in the twelfth century CE.

Most of literatures of early Buddhist sects have disappeared in its original form. Tibetan and Chinese translations of Tripiṭakas and their Central Asian fragments, however, prove that this literature existed at one time. The Tantras are the most esoteric of the Buddhist texts. In Tibet, there are found a large collection of translations of Indian Buddhist texts numbering more than 4500. At one time, there was a vast Buddhist literature in Pālī, the Prākritis, mixed Sanskrit and pure Sanskrit. But “not a single Buddhist work, with the exception of the *Manjuśrimūlakalpa*, has been found within the borders of India.”²⁶ Probably due to the passage of time or through desecration of and vandalism in the monasteries, innumerable manuscripts were destroyed. The Buddhist literature that we study today has come to us from monasteries outside India, in Ceylon, Myanmar, Thailand and Nepal and in translations from Tibet, China and Mongolia.

25 M. Winternitz, *HIL*, Vol. III, Part II, p. 457.

26 S.R. Goyal, *A History of Indian Buddhism*, p. 192.