



**Bulletin of the Department of Museums
Chennai**

Edited by
DIRECTOR
Department of Museums

Prof. T. Balakrishnan Nayar Memorial Endowment Lecture
On
Jainism in Tamilnadu

by
Thiru R. Rangaraj,
President
Chennai 2000 Plus Trust

Published by
Director
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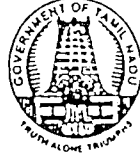
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Foreword

Thiru. T. Balakrishnan Nayar Memorial Endowment was instituted by Tmt. Maitreyi Ramadurai and Rs.10,000/- was deposited for the institution of the Endowment as per G.O.Ms.No.19 Tamil Development and Culture (S1) Department dt.17.01.1985 to conduct the Endowment Lecture in the subjects namely Archaeology, Numismatics, Anthropology or Museology. So far, 13 Lectures were conducted.

Thiru. T. Blakrishnan Nayar popularly known as prof. T.B. Nayar was a part time Numismatics curator in the Government Museum, Chennai. He was a former professor of History in the Presidency College, Chennai.

His work “Dowlaishwaran Hoard of Eastern Chalukyan and Chola coins” was published as a bulletin of Madras Government Museum as early as 1966. Several distinguished scholars delivered the prof. T. Balakrishnan Nayar Memorial Endowment Lecture from 1985.

This lecture deals with Jainism in Tamil Nadu from third century-second century BCE through inscriptions. The Main objective of this study emphasizes the growth and development of Jainism in Tamil Nadu. Jain Ascetics resided in the natural caves in the hills of the Tamil Nadu and left the inscriptions behind them. The Vestiges of this ancient Jain Culture are still available in the form of caves, temples, rocks and literary works. Puzhal near Chennai is related to the birth and development of traditional Jainism in Tamil Nadu. Jainism played an important and integral part in Tamil literature. Jainism preaches the religious tolerance. This religious liberty had a great and salutary influence upon intellectual and moral development of the Tamils. This study of Jain sites of Tamil Nadu is about its architecture, the iconography, epigraphy as well as rites and celebrations.

Thiru. R. Rangaraj is an Editor, Senior reporter, Member, Press Accreditation Committee and President of Chennai 2000 plus Trust. His Trust also works with educational institutions to promote awareness of history and antiquity. He conducts music programmes and lectures to enrich of Tamil language and culture. He has written several articles in various media on History, Archaeology and Tamil Culture. His lecture on “Jainism in Tamil Nadu” delivered as an Endowment lecture under prof.T.Balakrishnan Nayar Memorial Endowment lecture on 29.12.2016 is brought out as a bulletin of the Department of Museum, Chennai.

I hope that it will be useful lecture in understanding our past ancient rock art to the students, scholars and general public who have keen interest in this field. I appreciate the speaker for having given the script of the lecture in time and also for delivering an interesting and informatics lecture.

Date: 28.12.2016


Director

JAINISIM IN TAMIL NADU

The Jain religion is one the oldest religions of India and is an integral part of Indian culture and heritage.

More than 2,500 years have passed since the Nirvana of Sramana Bhagwan Mahavira, who was the 24th and last Tirthankara of this period.

Jainism is one of the oldest religions of the world. The Jain religion and its philosophy were originated in Ancient India. Jainism was traditionally known as 'Jain Dharma'. Jainism stresses spiritual independence and equality of all life.

The Jains follow the teachings of the 24 Jinas (conquerors) who are known as Tirthankars. The Jain community is the most literate religious community in India. Jains continue to sustain the ancient ascetic tradition. Jains represent less than 1% of the Indian population; their contributions to culture and society in India are considerable.

A Tirthankara ("Fordmaker") (also Tirthankara or Jina) is a human who achieves enlightenment (perfect knowledge) through asceticism.

Tamil films and plays make fun of Jains, as people speaking broken Tamil in a heavy, northern accent, using words like 'Nambilkki, Thumbilkki' and so on. Few are aware that Jains are among the ancient settlers of Chennai and many other parts of Tamil Nadu going back to over 2,000 years, and have greatly contributed to Tamil language and literature. Three of the five Tamil epics have been authored by Jains! The other two epics by Buddhists! So, where does that leave the so-called original Tamils?

Right from the ancient times, the Tamil land has been a confluence of different religions. Vedic, Buddhism and Jainism spread their influence here and all enjoyed patronage from the local kings. At the advent of 3rd century B.C. during Chandragupta Maurya's period there was a famine for twelve years in North India, owing to which the king accompanied by his Guru Srutakevali (highly learned in scriptures) Bhadrabahu and thousands of disciples, came over to South India and they had made their stay at Sravanabelgola in Karnataka state. From Karnataka, Vishakh, a renowned Jain Saint, accompanied with his thousands of disciples came to Tamilnadu where they were warmly received by the local people.

WHEN DID JAINS COME TO TN:

The Jains were among settlers in Tamil Nadu. It is generally believed that Jains have been in Tamil Nadu for over 2,000 years.

Several historians record that the influx of Jains into Tamil Nadu began in IVth century BC.

P T Srinivasa Iyengar: "After a splendid reign of a quarter of a century – the most splendid that the world knew in the last quarter of the IVth century BC., Chandragupta like many other Indian monarchs, was possessed by a sudden access of Vairagya and in one night gave up sword and scepter and became a Jain ascetic and one of the 12,000 disciples of Bhadrabahu. He trudged on foot along with his master and fellow-disciples to Sravanabelagola, in what is now the Hassan district of the Mysore Province.

There Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta stayed, the others going to the Pandya and Chola countries. Then the emperor who had turned beggar ministered to his guru's wants, till the latter died; Chandragupta survived his master for twelve years, begging his daily food, till, like a true Jaina, when he knew the purpose of his life was achieved, and his body was of no more use to him, he starved himself to death, practising the Jaina rite of Sallekhana. ...thousands of Sadhus, as we call them now, transported themselves from North to South, as a matter of course, just as pilgrims do daily today. These Jaina ascetics resided in natural caves in the hills of the Tamil districts and left inscriptions behind them, the deciphering of which has thrown some light on Tamil literary history.

Like the Jains, Bauddhas also wandered to South India in search of lonely haunts where they could practice Yoga undisturbed and they too took to living in natural caves and have left inscriptions. In several cases, it is a little difficult to decide whether Jains or Bauddhas used a particular cave. Such caves have been discovered in various hills of the Pandyas and the Chera countries.

These early migrants of monks were not due to political causes or propagandist enthusiasm. Like the Rishis of an earlier age, the Bhikkus of the V and IV century BC left their native province only to escape from the semi-condescending patronage of royal personages or the uncomfortable adulation of admiring lay disciples who desired to acquire cheap merit and lay by a store of punya by lavishly entertaining saintly sanyasis.

The Jaina and the Buddha had to undergo systematic mental training by the method of Yoga, which required solitude for its successful practice. In addition, the Jains required, besides, shelters far from the haunts of men, where they could die in peace in the peculiar manner called Sallekhana. These monks of early times had no burning desire to "save souls". Mahavira and Buddha did not found religions that would translate men in bulk to heaven, but taught sanyasis methods of psychological training which would save the individual from the wheel of compulsory birth and re-birth. These prophets did not appeal to the worldly but to the ascetic; they founded not churches but monasteries. They stimulated the hearts of their disciples by inspired utterances and filled their mind with dogmas".

A C Burnell: "The exodus of members of both sects (Jains and Buddhists) from the favoured North to the unattractive South, was, probably, the result of political events in the former country. The Jains as heretics were most likely driven out by the orthodox Buddhists (Dr Buhler has ascertained that the Jains are the heretical Buddhists excommunicated at the first Council), and the Brahmans followed some centuries later..."

K Kanakasabapathy Pillay: "It may be recalled that Buddhist and Jaina devotees had found their way into South India as early as the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C".

Buddhism and Jainism, which arose in North India, made their advent in South India roughly in the 3rd century B.C., probably during the period of Ashoka (M S Venkataswamy: Baudhamum Tamiuzhum - Tamil - p 19-33). That these two religions were widely prevalent in South India in the early centuries of the Christian era is clearly borne out by the abundant references to them in the Sangam literature.

Several scholars believe that Jainism existed in Tamil Nadu and other parts of South India well before the visit of Bhadrabhu and Chandragupta. They refer to the caves with Jain inscriptions and Jain deities around Madurai, Tiruchirāppalli, Thanjavur and Kanyakumari. Jains are said to have flourished in Tamil Nadu at least as early as the Sangam period. The Tamil Jain tradition is believed to have existed even prior to that.

A number of Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions have been found in Tamil Nadu from the third century-second century BCE. They are regarded as associated with Jain monks and devotees as well.

Already the non-violent culture propagated by the first Tirthankara Lord Rsabhadeva and other Tirthankaras was in vogue in Tamilnadu and hence these ascetics did not find any difficulty in continuing their religious practices smoothly. Jain religion was highly influential amongst the common masses right from the 3rd or 4th century B.C. till 8th century A.D. This has been substantiated from the inscriptions found in the caves of Pudukottai, Madurai, Ramnad and Tirunelveli district. The Jain saints and nuns travelled all over Tamilnadu and a few cities, such as, Madurai, Kaveripoompattinam, Tiruchirapalli, Kanchi, Kumbakonam, Pudukottai, Cuddalore and Mylapore become very important centres of Jain heritage.

During the lengthy period of more than 1,000 years of Jaina influence in Tamil land, many Jain Acharyas and Saints achieved popularity here.

It is in this conducive atmosphere the highest development of Jaina literature, art music and architecture blossomed.

The Pallava king Simmavarman, Simmavisnu, Mahendravarman, Pandya King Nedumaran, Kanchi king Sivakoti and other kings were great patrons of Sramana Dharma and this religion spread widely during their reigns. The patronage was not available due to Bhakti movement

during the 8th century A.D. In spite of this Jainism held its way in Tamilnadu in isolated pockets amongst the chieftains and masses.

The vestiges of this ancient Jain culture are still available in the form of caves, temples, rocks, and in literary works. With the passage of time, many Jain temples, rocks, caves, buildings and settlements were destroyed. Even then a few temples are still available and worshipped regularly by the devotees.

The Tamil Jains, who practice Digambara Jainism, are about 85,000 in number, around 0.13 per cent of the Tamil Nadu population.

They are predominantly found in northern Tamil Nadu, particularly in the districts of Kanchipuram, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Cuddalore besides Madurai and Thanjavur.

GROWTH OF JAINISM INTO A POWERFUL RELIGION:

V. Kanakasabhai points out that the Nigranta and the Bauddha religions were popular among the Tamils. "These two religions considered the rites and ceremonies of the Vedas to be useless labor....The Nigrantha system were older than Buddhism, and the Nigranthars called the Buddhists Paashandas or heretics. The Nigranthas worshipped Argha whom they considered the Supreme Intelligence which governs the universe. His image was generally in the form of a naked man, seated, or standing under an Asoka tree, with a triple umbrella above him. They had two principal vows, not to speak an untruth, and not to kill any living creature.

They trained their minds to avoid, envy, greed, anger and evil speech. Their community was divided into two sections: the sravakas (hearers) or laymen and the religious men; ...both men and women were allowed to enter the monastery, and to take vows of celibacy. ..Their monks and nuns carried an alms-bowl, a hoop made of twine to suspend a water-pot, and a bundle of peacock feathers with which they could sweep away insects, without injuring them, from the places where they have to sit or lie down.

One of the greatest facts of ancient Tamil society was religious tolerance, the spirit of free enquiry, or the liberty of the human understanding. The monarchs themselves openly encouraged religious discussion, for, they invited teachers of every sect to the public halls, and allowed them to preach their doctrine during Buddhists aimed at a high ideal of morality. Justice, humanity, charity to all living beings and love of truth were the virtues which they taught by precept and example. These two religions necessarily exercised a very considerable influence upon moral and intellectual order, and upon public ideal and sentiments. The pure conceptions of morality which the Tamils had formed were the real basis of their civilization".

P T Srinivasalyengar pointed out "In Kaveripoompattinam, there were "monasteries for (Bauddha and Jain) ascetics.

(Pattinampaalai)...The Arya cults, especially the Bauddha and the Jaina ones, were practiced in the outskirts of the town (Madura) in Nedunjezhiyan”.

In the region near Budalur near Tiruchirapalli, served by the road which leads from Thanjavur to Namakkal, numerous relics of the Bauddha and the Jaina cults have been unearthed”.

K R Subramanian: “The first two Tevara hymers (seventh century AD) sang only about what they saw, namely, the wide prevalence of Buddhism and Jainism which they denounced and suppressed.

Silapadhikaram and Manimekalai convey to us that Buddhism and Jainism were popular in their time though Brahminism and the Primitive Religion existed side by side.

The Epic of the Anklet (Silapadhikaram) mentions in Puhar, the Chola capital, Buddhist viharas, Jain monasteries, Muruga, Siva and Vishnu fanes and also Bhuta squares.

So, the two new religions made headway in spite of many obstacles. Hemmed in by Buddhist Ceylon on one side and the Deccan, which was Buddhist and Jain from the early times till the 11th century A.D., on the other, the Tamil country also had to give way to the peaceful penetration of the two religions. ..So it is the South which began the Hindu revival and gave it the impress of Bhakti which knew no caste or sex differences , like the anti-Vedic religions on whose ashes it thrived vigorously.

So the old worship and rituals of the people, purified by Aryan influences and deprived of their bloodiness by Buddhism and Jainism, invaded the entire Hinayana and changed it. .

Epigraphy and Archaeology come to the support of our contention that before the age of Sambandar, first Buddhism and then Jainism had obscured Brahmanism.

The popularity of Buddhism was on a downward trend in the 5th or 6th century AD, and Jainism grabbed the opportunity to score over Buddhism (K R Subramaniam: The Origin of Saivism and its history in the Tamil Land-1929, p. 40). It was a glorious period for Jainism in the latter half of the sixth and first half of the 7th centuries A.D., as it brought Pandyan king Ninrasir Nedumaran and the Pallava king Mahendravarman in its fold, and formed a real threat to Vedic Hinduism

Jainism became supreme in Pandya Nadu on the decline of Buddhism. According to Periyapuranam, Jainism increased in Pandya during the rule of Vaduga-karnatakas who have been identified with the Kalabhras by epigraphists.

Appar and Sambandar have sung that Buddhism and Jainism prevailed everywhere in the Tamil country. As Sambandar denounces them in every hymn, we have to infer that the religions were very popular. But for corroborative evidence that there were Jains in or near every Saiva kshetra of his day, we would brush aside his repetitions as a matter of routine.

So Sekkizhar is not wrong in describing Pandya as entirely given up to Jainism. Even after the time of Sambandar, there were well-known Jain teachers in Pandya who are referred to by Sundara (ninth century AD), and the Vetteluttu inscriptions assignable to the eighth and ninth centuries.

Namananandi, Karmavira and Dharmasena are the only Jain teachers in Sundara's hymn, Gunasena, President of the Kilakudi monastery, Ajjaanandi are mentioned thrice in Pandya inscriptions of the eighth century, Kanakavira, Gunavira, Maaganandi, Abhinandi, Puvvanandi, Indrasena, Mallisena, Gunamathiyar, mother of Ajjaanandi, find mention in the Vetteluttu inscriptions.

As late as the time of Parantaka I Chola, there was a big Jain centre in Pandya in and round Vilappakkam and in Kurandi. The Jain images reported to have been found in Ramnad tend to confirm the conclusions.

The archaeological remains in Travancore bear eloquent testimony to the long prevalence of Buddhism and Jainism there.

An inscription of Varaguna (ninth century) features images by Tamils in a Jain temple. In British Malabar, Palghat and Sultan Battery have Jain temples.

Jain figures whose dates are uncertain are reported to have been found in Vijayamangalam (Coimbatore district), Dharmapuri, and Adigamankottai (Salem district).

The star of Saivism, Sambandar, rose in Chola and spread its light rapidly throughout the country.

Chola

Archaeology has brought to light a Jain figure in the second entrance to the Siva temple and a large round carved figure of a standing Buddha in Tiruvalanjuli. Appar mentions the existence of a Jain colony at Palayarai near Kumbakonam.

In his Meeyachur (Peralam) Appar refers to Buddhist and Jain temples existing there. At Puhar, 12 miles from Shiyali, the birthplace of the boy-saint, Sambandar who as usual denounced the Buddhists and Jains living there sings two temples. From an unexpected source, Buddha-datta, we learn that there were Buddhist viharaas there and a Kalamba (=Kalabhra) probably a Jain ruling Chola in the fifth century A.D. There is strong proof that Nageswaram had a Jain temple, and Jain sculptures have been picked up in the fields.

Nagai Karonam, so called after Kayaarohana in the north, had Buddhists and Jains in the seventh century according to Sambandhar.

Sambandhar has sung on a few temples round Tirutturaipoondi near which there was probably a Jain settlement as late as the thirteenth century.

Tiruvarur, according to Sekkizhar, was full of Jains before the time of Sambandhar in the time of Naminandi. Even now there are a few Jains near the place who claim to have been there for long.

The Jaina images and Jaina Street in Jayankondacholapuram, and the Jaina figures at Pettavarthalai and the Jain remains in Mahadanapuram, Annavasal and Vellanur in Tiruchirapalli district prove the prevalence of Jainism around those places probably from Tevaram days.

Nadu Naadu

Like Thanjavur, Chengalpattu and Kanara, the Nadu Naadu still has a small Jain population.

We need not doubt its existence from the pre-Tevaram days. Paatalika (modern Cuddalore) had a monastery in which the Jain work Lokavibhaga was written in Saka 380, the twenty-second year of Pallava Simhavarman of Kanchi. Sekkizhar in the Purana of Appar refers to the same monastery. In the hymns of Appar and Sambandhar on temples around Paataliputra, there are innumerable references to Jains. This city according to Sekkizhar was near Thiruvadhighai or Tiruvadhi so famous in Appar's biography as the temple of Gunaradhesvaram was built there by his king, persecutor and then disciple Mahendra alias Gunadhara.

Thirunaatharkunru near the famous Gingee, Sirukadambur, Tirumalai and Vallimalai, Vengunram and Tirrakol have Jain remains.

Images from Tirthankaras in North Arcot district are found in the Chennai Museum.

Tondai Naadu

Tondai Naadu had the great Buddhist and subsequent Jaina centre, Kanchi, one of the seven sacred cities of the Hindus. Manimekalai was initiated into Buddhism and her Guru Aravana of Puhar gave her discourses on the religion there. Hiuen-tsang says that Kanchi was old a Buddhist centre as Buddha himself. Two Chola kings of the Sangam age built Buddhist viharas there, according to the epic.

Some Buddhist images were found in Kamakshi temple by T A Gopinatha Rao. Out of the five images, two were within the temple. One of them is now in the Chennai Museum. Jain figures are also reported to exist in the second prakara of the same temple. A Jaina image was found on the road to Big Kanchi. The influence of the Buddhist viharas on the style of building can be clearly seen in the style of the Vaikuntaperumal temple, which is designed after them.

Around Kanchi, there is a bumper crop of materials to establish the prevalence of the Jaina faith in olden days. As in the Northern Circars, so in Tamil Nadu, the Jains, and then the Hindus,

established themselves in Buddhist buildings on the decline of Buddhism some time about the fifth century A.D. So we have very Buddhist remains. At Tiruparuthikunru, and near it, there are Jain temples. At Aarpakkam, a Jain temple, at Aarperumbakkam and Vishaar, mutilated Jain images, at Siruvakkam an early Jaina grant, at Anandamangalam three groups of Jaina images with an inscription of Parantaka I, at Uttaramerur a stone image of a Jain preacher in the Vishnu temple, at Punadagai the foundations of a Jain temple and two large Jaina idols – these remains are reported from Kanchi Taluk.

Near some of these is found a Jain population but the remains are distinctly old. Their existence in such large numbers points to their origin in the hey-day of the Jainism.

However, Jainism began to decline around the 8th century A.D., as several Tamil kings moved to Hinduism, especially Shaivism, though there were some Chalukya, Pallava and Pandya kings who took to Jainism.

Vestiges were discovered in Anandamangalam, a small hamlet near Orathi village in Kancheepuram district of Tamil Nadu. The ruins had the rock-cut sculptures of yakshini (tutelary deity) Ambika and tirthankara Neminatha and Parshvanatha.

Ancient Jain temples:

Jinakanchi: This famous tirtha is situated four km. from Kanchipuram at Thiruprutikundram village and is surrounded by high walls. This temple was said to be built during the 6th century A.D. in the period of Pallava Kings. Beautiful icons of Lord Mahavira and Lord Chandraprabhu are installed, while the ceiling of Music hall of the temple is adorned with beautiful paintings of ancient times.

In 640 A.D., Chinese travellers have said there was a big settlement of Jains here. King Mahendra Varman and Kulottunga Chola I gave precious gifts to this temple.

Puzhal: The ADEESWAR JAIN TEMPLE, at Puzhal, a Chennai suburb, is related to the birth and development of traditional Jainism in Tamil Nadu. This ancient and popular tirtha of Tamil Nadu is just 2 km. from Red Hills village in Chennai. This ancient shrine is dedicated to Adi Bhagwan, Adeeswar, Rishabhadev, and the first Teacher of Jainism. It has a grand image of the first Tirthankar Lord Rsabhadeva, besides a statue of Lord Parsvanatha. The original temple is believed to be of antiquity and its sanctity is beyond doubt. The tirtha is said to be at least 1,500 years old. King Koorumar of Chola dynasty, who was a great devotee to Jina, was said to have constructed the temple. The Puzhal temple is mentioned in literature, inscriptions and legends of the State. It was believed to be a noted centre of worship and religious studies in the olden days.

The village was a flourishing town inhabited by a large number of Jains adhering to traditional way of religion and by Vaishnavas for their worship. The people of Puzhal followed their respective religions and lived in bonds of goodwill, a Jain organisation said. In the suburbs of

Puzhal, Jains inhabit several villages even today. One can see the vestiges of Jainism in ruined temples and images. The main town of the area was known as Puzhal Kotalam, known for religious worship and scriptural studies, for its Jain ascetics and scholars. .

Prof Raman says the temple must have been built on the insistence of a Jaina saint. The story goes that when the saint visited Puzhal, he was asked by one of the locals to have food with them. The saint said he would eat the food only after worshipping God as a Jaina image. A sculptor was summoned to make a Jaina image as per the Jaina scriptures. The saint offered his prayers to the image and then had his food. When leaving the village, the saint asked his host to build a temple for the village, which wish was carried out.

The original temple is believed to have been built in the first century BCE. Thiruvalluvar was said to be a regular visitor to this temple.

Jingiri: This pilgrimage centre is situated on a hill near Thirunarunkonde village, 20 km away from Ulundurpet in the erstwhile South Arcot district. It has grand statues of Tirthankara Parsvanatha and Chandraprabhu, and three beautiful towers, which are excellent specimens of Chola architecture.

You can find caves and stone beds where the Jain Saints had done penances, and these are said to be old as the 3rd to 5th centuries A.D. From the inscriptions, Jain scholars, point out that the successors of Rajaraja Chola I, Rajendra Chola I, and Kulottungachola I, Pandyas and Vijayanagar Kings had helped in the development of this area. Princess Kundave, the sister of a Chola king, is said to have built a water tank here, which is still in existence. Acharya Gunabhadra was among the many saints who visited this centre. His disciple Sri Mandalapurush wrote the Tamil Nigadu "Chudamani" here.

Melchittamur: This tirtha, also called Jinkanchi Madham, which has a fine image of Lord Parshwanatha, is 20 km away from Tindivanam. A famous Jaina centre in ancient times, it has a statue of Lord Neminatha, which according to some was brought from Mylapore in Chhenai after the destruction of the temple. The seat of Bhattarakaji (Head of Jain community) is nearby.

Ponnurmalai: This centre is located 3 km from Ponnur village, 10 km. from Vandavasi and 40 km from Tindivanam. It has a fine image of Lord Mahavira. This tirtha was said to have come up in the 1st century A.D. The noted Jain Acharya Kundakunda had made this a religious centre to practice austerities. In the hills nearby, the footprints of Acharya Kunkunda are found inscribed on a stone. Kundakunda had written hundreds of books. Some Jains believe that Thirukural was written by him, in effect claiming that Kundakunda was the Thiruvalluvar who wrote the Kural. This, however, is disputed by historians who maintain that Valluvar had not revealed any inclination towards any religion, and there was no proof regarding his identity.

Tirumalai : This centre is situated in the Thirumalai village on a 300 feet high hill, at a village five km from Vadamadimangalam village in erstwhile North Arcot District, about 150 km from Chennai. The statue of Lord Neminatha is installed here in the Kayotsaraga (standing in meditation) posture. The area has many ancient icons, springs and caves. In one of these caves, there are paintings of ancient scenes. There is also a temple dedicated to Lord Parsvanatha where footprints of Acharya Samantabhadra, Rsabhasena and Varadatta are available.

It was considered a reputed Jain pilgrim centre, visited by over 800 Jain saints including during the Chola and Pallava rule. The sister of the first Chola king Kundave built a temple dedicated to Lord Vardhamana, which is now famous as the Kundavae water tank.

More than 50 inscriptions belonging to Chola and Pallava age were available here. Some of the inscriptions are dated to the period between 1023 to 1042 A.D. Some inscriptions revealed that there were many Jain settlements here.

Many Tamil literary works were said to have been written in what is considered a holy place. Pandita Gunavira composed Neminathanam here. Vachandimallai was also written in this place. This place is called Sravanabelagola of Tamil Nadu.

Munigiri: This centre is located at Karande village 15 km from Kanchipuram, and has a splendid icon of Tirthankara Kunthunatha. This was an important centre for meditational practice for Jain saints in the 3rd century A.D. Rajaraja Chola, Rajendra Chola and many other kings have made gifts to this temple. Sri Krishnadevaraya and Ramadevaraya of Vijaynagar Empire were said to have gifted lands to this tirtha. It was a prosperous pilgrimage centre till 13th century A.D.

It was called Munigiri, because it was an important centre for many Jain Saints including Acharya Akalanka who conducted religious dialogues with Buddhist monks and overcame them.

Vijaymangalam: This pilgrim centre is located in the village Vastipuram, 20 km away from Erode. It has a splendid image of Tirthankara Chandraprabhu. The tower's pillars and ceilings have images of Pancakalayanaka representing Tirthankaras. The temple also has icons of Tirthankara Adi Prabhu and goddess Ambikadevi.

It was said to be well-developed city of 24 cities in Kongunadu area even during the 6th century A.D. The ruler, King Konguvelur was said to have built this temple. It was also an important seat of Tamil scholars. it is now called Amnesvara temple.

Mannargudi: This centre is situated at Haridranadi village near Mannargudi, about 34 km from Kumbakonam, with the temple constructed in the 12th century A.D. during the region of a Chola king. This tirtha occupies special importance amongst the Jain temples of the State. It has a fine image of Lord Mallinatha, besides images of Sri Sarasvati Devi, Sri Padmavati Devi, Sri Dharma

Devi and Sri Jvalamalini Devi. . It is said that Lava and Kush, sons of Rama, came here for worship.

JAINS AND TAMIL LITERATURE:

Jains played an important and integral part of Tamil literature, especially in the early period when Tamil literature was scarce. Several of the Tamil classics were written either by Jains or by Buddhists.

Silapathikaaram was a major contribution by a Jain – Ilanko Adikal. The story of how Ilanko became a Jain monk is fascinating.

V Kanakasabhai in 1904 records that Cheran king Athan II had two sons, the elder of whom was called Chenkudduvan, and the younger was known as Ilanko-Adikal or the “Royal Monk”. The latter Prince composed the poem Chilapathikaaram. He relates in this poem “on a certain occasion when he and his brother were seated in the audience hall at the foot of the throne occupied by their father, a seer appeared before the king. He surveyed the features of the king and his two sons and foretold that the king would soon depart his life and that the younger son had every chance of becoming the sovereign. This remark of the seer annoyed Ilanko-Adikal, who loved his elder brother dearly, so much so that he resolved to renounce the world at once and embrace the life of a monk at the Nigrantha sect, so that all hopes of his succession to the throne may be cut off.

Several centuries later, the Bhakti movement ensured that it could generate enough Tamil literature while literature of Jains and Buddhists virtually dried up, as confirmed by P T Srinivasa Iyengar.

Kanakasabhai believes that the Jains had made a significant contribution to Tamil literature even in the first century of the Christian era.

Kanakasabhai says, “ The Augustan period of Tamil literature was, I should say, in the first century of the Christian era; and the last College of Poets was then held in Madura in the Court of the Tamil king Udra (The Terrible) Pandya. The works of not less than fifty authors of this period have come down to us. ... Some were Nigranthas, some Buddhists and some of the Brahminic faiths.

The information afforded by these poems, regarding the religious and social customs of the Tamil people, would alone guide us to fix the probable date of this literature in the earliest centuries of the Christian Era; ... there were Nigranthas who called the Buddhists, heretics, but who had not commenced the worship of their Saints or Tirthankaras.”

“Tamil literature, the oldest of the Dravidian literatures, contains innumerable references to Buddhism and Jainism and owes a great deal to their encouragement.

A C Burnell:Hiouen-Thsang, who visited the Peninsula about 640 D, mentions the Nirgranthas or Digambara Jains (ascetics) as the most prominent sect in the South, and this corresponds with the actual remains of the early Tamil literature which are in fact Jain...

Three of the five great epics of Tamil literature are attributed to Jains. Jivaka Chintamani, Silappatikaaram, and Valayapathi were written by Jains, while Manimegalai and Kundalakesi were authored by Buddhists.

Prof. R. Champakalakshmi of the Centre for Historical Studies, J. N. U., New Delhi, in her paper on Jaina Literature, has said, "Jain scholars have enriched the Tamil language, composed elegant poems, written works on grammar and prosody, compiled lexicons and presented lofty ideals of ethics in pithy verses".

The nature of Jain contribution to literature and its impact on Tamil society can be best studied and understood against the background of the historical processes which transformed Tamil society from a basically tribal, kinship based, anthropocentric and humanistic organisation of the early centuries of the Christian era to a highly complex, hierarchical, caste oriented or stratified one by the medieval times.

In the early historical period, many of the poems of this heroic age were composed by Jain poet-scholars, the Saanror, who by virtue of their ability to master the vernacular, were counted among the great poets of the Tamil Sangam at Madurai, the Tamil city par excellence, under the royal patronage of the Pandyas.

Ulosanar, one of the Jain poets, composed several verses, which have been classified under the akam and puram collections, the Kuruntokai and Natrinai. Kaniyan Punkunran, another Jain poet and probably also an astrologer, was the author of a Puram verse (192) and a Narrinai verse (226).

The Maduraikkanci of Mankuti Marutanar, while describing the city of Madurai, refers to Jain monks of a monastery in the city and the sravakas or Jain laymen who paid homage to them. These monks are believed to have been great seers, who could look into the past and the future along with the present. The Jain practice of self-immolation by slow starvation i.e. vatakkiruttal (sallekhana) is mentioned in several Puram verses. Such references indicate the spread of Jainism in the Tamil region by the beginning of the Christian era and to the presence of Jain ascetics and scholars who were respected in early Tamil society.

The early Tamil classics were systematically collected and arranged under different anthologies much later in the 7th - 8th centuries A. D. The name Sangam was often traced to the Jain Dravida Sangha founded by one Vajranandi, a pupil of Pujiyapada, in Madurai in the V. E. 525 = around 470 AD. It is further believed that this Sangha merely revived the Mula Sangha of the Jains presided over by Sri Kundakundacharya around the 1st century B.C. at a place called

Patalika identified with Tirupattirippuliyur in South Arcot district, where a major Jain monastery existed perhaps from the 1st century B.C. The Jain Sangha at Madurai is also said to have produced several works in the viruttam genre, some of which (Nariviruttam, Eliviruttam and Kiliviruttam) were known to the Tamil Saiva Bhakti saints like Tirunavukkarasar and Gnanasambandar.

The post-Sangam period marked a transition towards a new socio-economic formation, the earliest evidence of such a change appearing from the beginning of the 7th century A.D. The intervening period - from the 4th to 6th centuries A.D., - represents the transition during which both Buddhism and Jainism, particularly, the latter, emerged as the dominant religions. It is significant that a series of works on ethics, morality and social norms were composed during this period, almost all of which have been attributed to Jain and Buddhist authorship. These are known as the Padhinen Keezhkanakku or the eighteen didactic works. Some of them such as the Naladiyar have been regarded as treasures of Tamil literature and are held in high esteem by the Tamils till today. The eighteen didactic works owe their origins, largely, to Jain authors. There are, however, quite a few instances in which the Jain claims to authorship have been controversial, as they are not incontrovertibly borne out by either internal or external evidence, says Prof. Champakalakshmi.

She points out that "foremost among these works is the Kural, one of the greatest Tamil classics. Different views have been expressed regarding the religion of its author Tiruvalluvar, every sect claiming the poet to be its own. Attempts have been made to interpret the verses to favour the claims of each sect, its religious principles and moral codes. The Kural is of universal importance in its ethical and normative value". G. U. Pope, however, does not accept the Jaina claims, based on a couplet in the chapter on the greatness of ascetics, which is, according to him, goes contrary to the claim that Tiruvalluvar was a Jaina. The eclecticism of Tiruvalluvar, Pope believes, is nowhere more conspicuous than in this chapter. Prof. Champakalakshmi states, "In fact, the Kural expounds the ideals of ahimsa in all its implications, ethical, social and economic. The author addresses himself, without regard to castes, peoples or beliefs, to the whole of humankind. Thus, whatever may be the views expressed by scholars on the origin of the Kural, there is no doubt that it is first an ethical work. The principles expounded in it are of universal application".

The Naladiyar, which is rated next to the Kural, is also said to be a Jaina work.

While not much is known about its compiler Padumanar, Pope calls it a companion volume to the Kural and says that these two great works, serving as natural commentaries, together throw a flood of light upon the whole ethical and social philosophy of the Tamil people.

The current tradition is that once 8,000 Jaina ascetics, driven by famine, came to the Pandya country where they were supported by the Pandya King (Ugrapperuvaludi). When the famine

was over, they wished to return to their own country but the Pandya king refused to allow them to leave. They were forced to depart secretly by night, each leaving a quatrain under his seat. The next morning the quatrains were examined and found to differ widely from one another. The king out of anger, ordered them to be thrown into the river Vaigai, but it was found that the palm-leaf scrolls containing four hundred quatrains floated and swam against the current and came to the bank. To these the king gave the name Naladiyar, Some other verses are said to have reached the banks at other spots and are said to be found in the two collections called Pazhamozhi and Aranerisaram.

The Pazhamozhi and Aranerisaaram also belong to the group called Padhinen Keezhkanakku. The author of the Pazhamozhi is said to be a Jain, Munruraiyanar, who has collected and edited valuable old sayings in the venba metre. These proverbs contain principles of conduct and worldly wisdom, some of which are quoted in the Jivakachintamani. The author of the Aranerisaaram or "the essence of the way of virtue" is one Tirumunaippadiyar.

Another work of Jain origin is the Elaadhi, which is one of the eighteen lesser classics (Sangaseyyul). Its author, Kanimethaiyar, was known as a disciple of Makkayanar, son of Tamil asiriyar, one of the Madurai Academies. The Elaadhi deals primarily with morals and emphasises the virtues of ascetic life.

Kanimethaiyar is said to be the author of the Tinaimalai Nuttraimbadhu. This work deals with the principle of love and war and follows the Sangam tradition. It is frequently quoted by medieval commentators.

The Naanmanikkadigai, which in respect of literary merit ranks second only to Kural and which is another of the eighteen lesser classics is also considered to be written by a Jain, one Vilambinathar.

The Ainthinai Ezhupadhu, also dealing with akapporul, a major theme of the Sangam works, is said to have been written by a Jain, Muradiyar, in the 5th century A.D.

The minor classics are generally assigned to a period before the 7th century A.D. though they appear to be spread over several centuries.

Prof Champakalakshmi opines that, "The twin epics Silappadikaram and Manimekalai, which would also fall in the same period, attest to the dominance of the Jain and Buddhist religions and the numerical strength of their followers, particularly in the urban centres like ports and market centres".

The Silappadikaram is an epic of great literary and historical value. Apart from describing some major cities like Puhar, Madurai and Vanji as centres dominated by Jainism, Buddhism and the trading community, this epic provides useful insights into the nature of the Jain religion, the Jain

monasteries and nunneries whose inmates played an influential role in contemporary society. It also lays emphasis on karma as preordained (ulvinai) which is explained through the story of the hero Kovalan and his young, chaste wife Kannaki and Madhavi, the courtesan.

The Manimekalai of Sittalai Sattanar, the Buddhist epic of the same period, contains no favourable references to Jainism as it was mainly intended to establish the greatness of Buddhism vis-a-vis all other religions and philosophical systems. Yet, the work undoubtedly indicates the preponderance of Jain influence and the numerical strength of its followers in the Tamil country. It also points to a situation of rivalry between these two non-Vedic sects.

By the 6th century A.D. a strong reaction set in and the Puranic religions of Saivism and Vaisnavism began to vie with the Jain and Buddhist sects for royal patronage and social base. This is reflected in the hymns of the exponents of Bhakti, the Alvar and Nayanar, with their highly emotional appeal and emphasis on the perception of a personal God.

Due to the change in royal patronage and the expanding social base for the Bhakti cult, the Jains lost their influence in major centres like Kanchipuram and Madurai and were forced to confine their literary activities to the adaptation of major Kavyas and Puranas in Sanskrit by rendering them in Tamil. However, their contribution to grammar continued to be significant and in addition they also turned their attention to prosody and lexicography. In the early medieval Jain literature, the major concern of the Jains was to impart religious and moral instruction in keeping with the Jain tradition. The Jain works of this period also introduced new themes, concepts and techniques of narration in medieval Tamil literature.

The Jains also adopted certain typical Tamil genres of poetry like the Ula, Nuttrantati and malai or garland of verses as a popular style of narration in order to carry to the masses complicated themes of the Sanskrit Kavya and Purana oriented works like the Merumandara Puranam, Perunkatai in the form of Merumandara malai and Udayanakumara kavya as well as the Appandainathar Ula.

Turning to Kavya literature in Tamil, it is evident that Jaina influence was most predominant here too. Of the five major epics in Tamil, two, the Jivakachintamani and the Valaiyapathi are definitely contributions of the Jainas. The Jivakachintamani, which is perhaps the most remarkable of Jaina literary works, is also considered the greatest existing Tamil literary monument. Tiruttakkadevar, the author of this romantic epic, was said to be a native of Mylapore. According to Jaina tradition, he belonged to the Chola royal family and was known as Poyyamozi. A later tradition cherished by the Tamil Jainas adds that after a full course of study in Tamil and Sanskrit, he turned into an ascetic at an early age

The Jivakachintamani is the story of prince Jivaka, who after many tribulations regains the kingdom lost by his father and later renounces the world and lives the life of a Jaina ascetic and gains bliss at last.

The Jivakachintamani and other Jaina works show that it was through the Jainas that many Sanskrit and Prakrit words were introduced into the Tamil language. A beautiful tradition associates the famous Kamban, who wrote the Ramayanam in Tamil, with the Chintamani by saying that Kamban admitted his indebtedness to the Jivakachintamani and the inspiration he drew from it.

The Valaiyapathi, another major epic, was also composed by a Jaina author.

All the five minor epics in Tamil, the Yasodharakaavyam, Sulaamani, Udayanan Kathai, Nilakesi and Nagakumaara Kaavyam, are said to have been composed by Jaina authors, according to Prof. Champakalakshmi.

The author of the Sulaamani was one Tolamozhi-ttevar, evidently a Jaina, patronised by the chief Vijaya, who ruled in Karveti in the Cholanadu. The author probably belonged to the sixth century A.D. According to M. Srinivasa Iyengar, however, Tolamozhi-ttevar composed the work in memory of Jayantan Maravarman Avani Sulaamani (A.D.620-650) and therefore must be placed in about A.D. 650.

The Nilakesi, a work on Jaina philosophy, was apparently aimed at countering the Buddhist work, Kundalakesi, one of the five major epics, which is lost to the world. Nothing is known about the author..

The author of the Nilakesi has adopted the famous method of philosophical dialogue, between the Jaina and other religious sects, prominent among which are the Buddhist and the Ajivika. It concludes with the final acceptance of Jainism as the 'true religion.' Jnanaprakasa, a commentator of the Sivajnana Siddhiyar, quotes many extracts from it and also from its commentary.

There is an excellent commentary on Nilakesi called Samaya Divakara Virutti, written by Vamana Muni (in the manipravala style) who has been identified with Mallisena Vamana, the famous Jaina teacher who flourished at Jina-Kanci in the fourteenth century A.D.

The Tamil classic Perunkathai, dealing with the story of Udayana, is probably an independent work, not included in any of the traditional lists. The author was a Jaina, Kongu Velir, the Vel (Chief) of Kongu. A verse, in a recent work, the Kongumandalasatakam, states that he was a native of Mangai, which has been identified with Vijaymangalam in the Coimbatore district. Kongu Velir discusses the Jaina doctrines in some detail, with a simple and elegant style. The poem is postioned high among the literary classics of the Tamil world. The work embodies the

essential characteristics of the mythology and cosmography of the Jains and in particular deals with the Vidyadharas.

The Jains have made remarkable contributions in the field of grammar, prosody and lexicography. The Yapparungalam and the Yapparungalakkarigai of Amidasagara were written towards the end of the tenth century A.D. The Karigai, an abridgment of the Yapparungalam, is an important treatise on prosody. The latter is unique in its range and it contains an exhaustive treatment of the different metres in Tamil. It has given rise to a fine commentary, in which a large number of literary specimens, otherwise unknown, are preserved. Gunasagara, a disciple of Amidasagara, wrote a commentary to the Karigai, which is also regarded as an important contribution. The Yappilakkanam that consists of ninetyfive sutras is ascribed to Gunasagara.

The Agapporul Ilakkanam is an important work on grammar, based on the poruladikaaram of the Tolkappiyam and deals with love and allied experiences. The author was one Narkavirajanambi who is believed to have lived at Puliyangudi, on the banks of the Porunai river during the time of Kulasekhara Pandya.

Another important work on grammar, the Neminatham, was composed by one Gunavira Pandita, a Jaina. It is a short treatise comprising ninetyseven venbas and treats of the orthographs and parts of speech of the Tamil language. This work, based on the Tolkappiyam, is named after the Tirthankara Neminatha of south Mayilappur- Ten Mayilapuri. The author was a disciple of one Vajranandi and a native of Kalandai. He is believed to have lived during the time of Kulottunga III (late 12th century A.D.).

Perhaps the most remarkable contribution of the Jains to Tamil grammar is Nannul by Bavanandi, who is said to have lived in late twelfth century during the reign of Kulottunga III. According to the Kongumandalasatakam, the author was patronised by Amarbharanan Siyagangan, a ruler of Kongu. The work also says that Bavanandi was a native of Sanakapuram in Kurumbunad, which has been identified as a place near Vijayamangalam in the Coimbatore District. Bavanandi is also said to have composed it on the request of his patron. This work is also based on the Tolkappiyam, and it has, by its simplicity and terseness, practically displaced all other works as the beginner's handbook of Tamil grammar. The work stands next to the Tolkappiyam in estimation, but unlike the latter, it makes Tamil grammar simpler and easier to follow.

The three important works on lexicography, the Divakaranigandu by the Divakaramuni, Pingala nigandu by Pingalamuni and the Sudamani nigandu by Mandalapurusa are identified as Jaina works. Mandalapurusa must have lived in the sixteenth century.

The Tiruppugalpuranam that is credited to the authorship of Mandalapurusa is probably a reference to the Sripuranam.

The Merumandarapuram by Vamanacharya is another important Tamil classic which is based on a Puranic story relating to Meru and Mandara, the ganadharas of the thirteenth Tirthankara, Vimala. The author Vamanacharya is identified with the famous Jaina teacher Mallisena Vamana, who flourished in the fourteenth century at Jina Kanci.

The Tamil Jainas hold the Sripuranam, another important work, in high esteem. The work gives an account of the lives of the sixty-three salakapurusas, who are the twentyfour Tirthankaras, the twelve Chakravartins, the nine Vasudevas, the nine Baladevas and the nine Prativasudevas. Several tenets of Jainism are explained in detail. According to Jaina tradition, the author of the Sripuranam went to Sravanabelgola, from his native place Perumandur, to learn the Samaya Sastra.

There are a number of such stories of Tamil Jainas visiting Sravana Belgola, the most important Jaina centre in South India

Works like the Sripuranam enriched the Tamil vocabulary and literary style through manipuralam (gem and coral), wherein whole sentences in Sanskrit were interspersed with Tamil. The style enabled blending of the two literary traditions to create new works of formal and thematic excellence.

Chennai region produced another brilliant writer -- Mayilainathar. He wrote the venerated commentary on Tamil grammar, Nannul, written by Bavanandi. Mayilainathar was a Jaina who belonged to Mayilapur.

The 22nd Thirthankara Neminatha, for whom a temple was built at Mayilapur, was also known as Mayilainatha. Apparently, Mayilainathar called himself after his Lord Mayilainatha. In the book, he refers to the Jaina books and Jaina religious traditions to convey his point of view. He is also seen as lavish in praise of Jaina religion and its founder.

In typical style, Mayilainathar's commentaries also include the question and answer format. He was evidently a remarkable Tamil scholar as he showed he was fully conversant with earlier grammar works. That Mayilainathar had complete control over Tamil language, literature and grammar is repeatedly demonstrated throughout the work. It can be presumed that he lived between the 12th and 14th centuries AD. He must have lived when the Jaina temple for Neminatha or Mayilainatha existed in Mayilapur. Also, his commentary on Nannul is among the earliest, prompting historians to give him an early date (Dr U V Swaminatha Iyer, Nannum Mulamum, Mayilainathar Uraiyum, 1918, p xvii; M S Venkataswami, Mayilai Neminathar Padikam, p 11).

JAINS AND TAMIL SANGAM:

P T Srinivasa Iyengar says the word Sangam is the Tamil form of the Sanskrit Sangha, first popularized by the Jains and the Buddhas. The former used the word to indicate the organized body of the followers of Mahavira, composed of the Bhikhu, the Bhinni, the Sraavakaa and the Sraavikaa. The former two were men and women ascetics, who followed a strict code of laws, involving extreme self-mortification, and practised a difficult course of yoga practice, generally ending in the Sallekhana, suicide by starvation.

The latter were lay disciples of both sexes, who were candidates for asceticism. The whole was a systematically organized body of aspirants for jinahood.

.... A Jaina Sangha was for the first time established in the Tamil country at Madura in 470 AD. It has to be noted that this was not a Tamil Sangam, as we understand it, but an organization of the Jains of the Tamil country for teaching the Jaina Dharma to lay disciples. When the Saiva cult began to compete with the Jaina and Buddhist cults in Madura in the VI th century AD., the Saivas naturally desired to boast of a Sangha of their own, as a rival to those of the heretics; (PT Srinivasa Iyengar)

K Kanakasabapathy Pillai, however, says that "While it is likely that the term Sangam was derived from the Jains or Buddhists, PTS Iyengar's suggestion that the Tamil Sangam was established on the model of Vajra Nandi's Jain Sangha of AD 470 at Madurai, seems to be little more than a piece of guesswork".

"Some scholars think that the Tamil Sangam was organized on the model and imitation of the Dravida Sangha established by the Jain Vajra Nandi in 470 AD. The natural order of expectation indicates the reverse of this. Vajra Nandi's move might have been prompted by the desire to create a rival for the Hindu organization already in existence. It is significant to remember that in later days Jains and Buddhists in South India adopted the phraseology of the Tamil Saiva saints to express their own religious ideas. For instance, in the Silappadhikaram and Chintamani, the God of the Jains and the conception of salvation are described in terms of the Saivite religion.

In these works, Aruhan the Jain God is called Siva Paramurti, while the state of ultimate bliss is described as Sivagati.

Moreover, the reference of Saint Thirunavukkarasar in the 7th century AD to the Sangam as an established institution of poets shows that it had acquired a standing before his time".

On the other hand, **V Kanakasabhai** believes that the Jains had made a significant contribution to Tamil literature even in the first century of the Christian era and for the Tamil Sangam in Madurai.

Kanakasabhai says, “ The Augustan period of Tamil literature was, I should say, in the first century of the Christian era; and the last College of Poets was then held in Madura in the Court of the Tamil king Udra (The Terrible) Pandya. The works of not less than fifty authors of this period have come down to us. These poets were of various castes various religious persuasions, and belonged to different parts of the Tamil country. Some were Nigranthas, some Buddhists and some of the Brahminic faiths. There were kings, priests, merchants, doctors, farmers and artizans among their number.

The information afforded by these poems, regarding the religious and social customs of the Tamil people, would alone guide us to fix the probable date of this literature in the earliest centuries of the Christian Era.

JAINS AND UNITY:

V Kanakasabhai pointed out that, “One of the greatest facts of ancient Tamil society was religious toleration (tolerance), the spirit of free enquiry, or the liberty of the human understanding. The monarchs themselves openly encouraged religious discussion, for; they invited teachers of every sect to the public halls, and allowed them to preach their doctrine during festivals and other occasions of public gathering. They protected impartially the temples and monasteries of all sects; and although they might have personally inclined to believe the doctrine of a particular sect, and built and endowed places of worship for that sect, they cautiously avoided interfering with the rites and ceremonies of rival faiths. This religious liberty had a great and salutary influence upon the intellectual and moral development of the Tamils...The Nigranthas and Buddhists aimed at a high ideal of morality: Justice, humanity, charity to all living beings and love of truth were the virtues which they taught by precept and example. These two religions necessarily exercised a very considerable influence upon moral and intellectual order, and upon public ideal and sentiments. The pure conceptions of morality which the Tamils had formed were the real basis of their civilization”.

S Krishnaswamy Aiyangar ... (Early period to the fifth century AD). Happy confusion prevailed in matters religious, a single street often containing shrines sacred to the bright beneficent Vedic deities and the bloodthirsty and vengeful devil worship. Alongside both of these are the quiet abodes of the holy ones of the Jains and Buddhists as well. ...There seems to have been more unity in society... Buddhist and Jain influences are at work; but the worship of Siva and Vishnu seem to carry the largest clientele.

..... Jains, Buddhists, Brahmins, Saivas, Vaishnavas and people of other persuasions, both major and minor, all lived together and at peace with one another.....The three rival systems of the Brahmins, and those of the Jains and the Buddhists flourished together, each with its own clientele unhampered by the others in the prosecution of its own holy rights.

The **French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP)** has completed the documentation of nearly 500 Jain sites in Tamil Nadu, and is preparing to release a DVD-ROM on its study. The team has undertaken photographic documentation of Jain sites spatially distributed throughout Tamil Nadu detailing their cultural and religious heritage.

The exhaustive study documented 459 sites including 86 sub-sites such as Jain temples/cave temples, rock bed inscriptions and loose sculptures throughout Tamil Nadu.

The study has also documented 13 rituals and festivals of the community and around 7,873 images of temples/cave temples, rock shelter sites and dilapidated temples. The study has given special emphasis on the iconography of 24 Tirthankaras and other associated Gods, the rituals and festivals of Jain community and their role for the development of Tamil language.

“Though Jain temples in Tamil Nadu make up for a rich heritage they are still unrecognised. Many of the historically important temples are in ruins and in a dilapidated condition and it is important to document them. The documentation shows the temples in their artistic and religious dimension, as an architectural heritage and living place and also sheds light on the uniqueness of Jainism in Tamil Nadu, says Mr. N. Murugesan, Researcher, Department of Indology, and IFP.

Spatial distribution of Rock beds: Most of the Jain rock cut beds are found around Madurai, Pudukkottai, Karur, Namakkal, Villupuram and Chengalpattu districts. Mostly the beds are found inside the natural rock caves of the hills with little elevated areas. They are Tondur, Tirupparankundram, Meenakshipuram, Karadipatti and Kongar Puliyankulam.

Largest sites: There are some sites that have a large number of beds or many bed sites in the same hill. They are Tirupparankundram, Kongar Puliyankulam, Kilavalaivu, Meenakshipuram, Ayyer malai – Kulittalai and Sittannavasal.

Rock cut Jaina images: Tirumalai, Tirunatharkundru, Kilavalaivu, Kalukumalai and Chidaral.

Toughest sites: Some of the rock cave beds are situated in highly inaccessible areas. The sites documented are: Senji - Konaipudur - Chandragiri hill, Theendakkal malai of Karur, Ayyer malai of Kulittalai, Arachalur near Erode, Tirupparankundram, Meenakshipuram and Kalluthu hills of Madurai region.

Sites in Danger: Some of the rock bed sites are facing the problem of granite quarrying and are in danger. They are Kilavalaivu, Tiruvadavur, Melakkuyilkudi, Vikramangalam of Madurai district, Arachalur of Erode district and Kusumalai of Chengalpattu district.

Temples: Jains have built temples where images of their Tirthankaras are venerated. Tamil Nadu has many Jain temples mostly distributed in Chennai, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Villupuram, Tiruvarur and Erode districts. The temples located at Tirupparuttikundram, Mel Sittamur and

Vijayamangalam are big in size. Small and medium size temples are found distributed in Tiruvannamalai and Villupuram districts. Majority of the temples have palm leaf manuscripts.

Ruined Temples:

Sadayaparai pottal, Mailapatti, Chettipatty, Melur, Mosakudi, Sembattur of Pudukottai district and Hanumanthakudi of Ramnad district.

Converted temples: Many Jain temples have been converted to other temples. They are Aliyar / Kaliyapuram, Aivar malai / Ayyampalayam, Puliur, Vikramangalam, Kilakuyilkudy - Samanar Malai, Varichiyur / Kunnathur, Kilaiyur – Kilavalavu, Pondi Munisvara temple, Kalugumalai, Eruvadi and Chitaral.

Temples in bad shape: Annamangalam, Kovilampundi, Nethapakkam, Aranipalayam, Mullipattu and Thingalur.

Paintings: The historically famous Jaina paintings of Sittannavasal, Tirupparuttikundram, Tirumalai and Mel Sittamur are notable ones.

Inscriptions: There are lot of inscriptions found in the Jain rock bed sites and temples. Emphasis is given to highlight the inscriptions including the Arachalur musical inscriptions. Contribution to the study of the early Tamil Brahmi Jain inscription in Tamilnadu, some of which date back to 2nd century BC.

Schools : The Jain training centers also known as Jain schools were located in Vedal, Kilavalaivu and Kongar Puliyanukulam. The school that was located in Vedal was a lady monks training center.

Jains and the Development of Tamil: The Jains of Tamilnadu largely contributed to the development of Tamil language and literature. Many important works have been written by them or have been attributed to them. In many cases, this attribution is a matter of debate. Among works belonging to one of these two categories are Tholkappiyam, Chilappathikaram, Perunkathai, Vachchanandi Malai, Civaka Cintamani, Naladiyar, Nannul, Tirukkural, Avinayam, Indirakaliyam, Yapperunkalam, Yapperunkalakkargai, Amudhasagaram, Neminatham, Venbappattiyal and Agapporul vilakkam.

JAINS AND THE CONFLICT WITH HINDUISM (SAIVISM and VAISHNAVISM)

K R Subramanian: The first two Tevara hymers (seventh century AD) sang only about what they saw, namely, the wide prevalence of Buddhism and Jainism that they denounced and suppressed.

Silapadhikaram and Manimekalai convey to us that Buddhism and Jainism were popular in their time though Brahminism and the Primitive Religion existed side by side.

Therefore, the two new religions made headway in spite of many obstacles. Hemmed in by Buddhist Ceylon on one side and the Deccan, which was Buddhist and Jain from the early times till the 11th century A.D., on the other, the Tamil country also had to give way to the peaceful penetration of the two religions. ..So it is the South which began the Hindu revival and gave it the impress of Bhakti which knew no caste or sex differences, like the anti-Vedic religions on whose ashes it thrived vigorously.

The Propaganda of Appar and Sambandar:

Appar and Sambandar have sung that Buddhism and Jainism prevailed everywhere in the Tamil country. As Sambandar denounces them in every hymn, we have to infer that the religions were very popular. At the same time, the existence of the Saiva temples and many Saiva devotees to welcome the saint wherever he went, show plainly that Saiva worship was fully alive during the heyday of its rivals.

The main achievements of Sambandar and Appar are their triumphs over Jainism which had the largest following in Tondai and Pandya kingdom at that time.

Foremost among Nayanmars in this regard was Appar or Thirunavukkarasar, who lived in the beginning of the 7th century. Born in a Vellala family at Thiruvamur in South Arcot district, he was said to have been a staunch Jaina before he became a Shaivite. He undertook a pilgrimage of all the important Shaivite temples in the country, fiercely committed, as he was to root out Buddhism and Jainism. During one of his missions, he went to Kanchipuram and converted the Pallava king Mahendravarman I from Jainism to Hinduism.

Mr C V Narayana Iyer wrote, "Appar's deep religious fervour, through scholarship, exemplary life and mellifluous poetry, were bound to have enormous influence over his contemporaries and advance the cause of Shaivism by leaps and bounds. In combination with the other great luminary of his days (Sambandar), he may be said to have practically driven Jainism out of the Tamil land". (C V Narayana Iyer: Origin and Early History of Saivism in South India, p. 388).

Like Appar, Sambandar also undertook visits to several important places in South India to promote Shaivism and to check the influence of Buddhism and Jainism. Sambandar would criticise them very harshly in his Padikams.

The propaganda of Sambandar was a very vigorous one. The reception accorded to the two saints was royal in character. 'Do not listen to the Buddhists and Jains who condemn Siva who does not care for them. What do the Buddhists and Jains know? Before falling into their nets, go and worship Siva. Be not misled by the sweet words of the tactful Jains. Their preaching and disputation are no good' – this is the strain of propaganda and pages may be filled with quotations bearing on this theme.

Thirugnanasambar, who opposed heterodox religions, in his padikams on Mayilapur and Tiruvanmiyur, refers to both religions. He hits out at them as cunning and who speak lies (M S Venkataswami, op.cit., p. 37). In his Pumpavai Padhikam (which he sang at Mayilapur), while singing he is credited with restoring the dead girl Pumpavai, refers to the presence of Buddhists and Jains who were astonished by his miracle. Sekkizhar, who wrote the history of Sambandar, points out that Shivanesan, the father of Pumpavai and a prominent merchant of Mayilapur, was a great opponent of Buddhism and Jainism, which he called 'the cruel religions', and said that Sambandar came to Mayilapur with a view to restrict their influence.

The mission of Sambandar was to revive Vedism and Saivism. He was resolved to put down Buddhism and Jainism. To revive the sacrifices hated by them, to restore the prosperity of the Gods, Brahmins and cows, and to re-establish the Saiva religion in all its glory — these were his cherished objectives. He considered Saivism as the essence of the Vedas. He refers to Siva's triumphs over the Buddhists and Jains. The Periyapuram speaks of the impaling of 8,000 Jains from the eight hills of Pandya.

...Jainism became supreme in Pandya on the decline of Buddhism. According to Periyapuram, Jainism increased in Pandya during the rule of Vaduga-karnatakas who have been identified with the Kalabhras by epigraphists. Murthy Nayanar gave the first blow to Jainism there by his resistance to the king. There is a hymn by Sambandar who destroyed Jainism in Pandya, in which he refers with contempt to the Jain monks of Anaimalai and the neighbouring hills. Sandusena, Indusena, Dharmasena, Kandusena, Kanakasena, Kankanandi, Pushpanandi, Pavananandi, Sunakanandi, Kunakanandi and Thivananandi were some of the Jain leaders of Pandya in the seventh century. In another hymn, he refers to the numberless Jains of Madura.

Near Punadagai (in Kanchi taluk) is Tiruvaathur noticed by Sewell in his lists and reported by the epigraphist as containing traditions of the persecution of the Jains by the Saivas who demolished the Jain temple and built their own with those materials.

According to Sekkizhar, Sambandhar performed a miracle at Tiruvothur in Tondai as a result of which male palmyrahs began to yield, and after which the Jains of the place ran away (or were driven out?).

At Thirumaagaral sung by Sambandhar, there are two Jain images in Adipatta Alagar Koil (the Jain temple there was called Adi-Bhattaraka temple).

In the Chennai Museum, there is a Jaina image discovered at Villivakkam, as also a Buddhist image discovered at Kuvam. Kuvam was called Tiruvirkolam by Sambandhar who sang a hymn on the temple there. The hymn describes the place as Kuham. Remarkably enough, the saint finishes his hymn with the words that Siva gives plenty to his devotees who do not heed the preaching of Jains and Buddhists.

There were Buddhists and Jains in Mylapore in Sambandhar's days.

As late as 754 A.D., Akalanka, a well-known Jain teacher, is said to have defeated the Buddhists at Kanchi at Hemasitala's court. These plentiful Jaina remains should not blind us to the fact that Kanchi had early Saiva associations. Buried lingas were discovered in Tondai as early as the time of Sundara. Karikala, no Buddhist or Jain, covered the temple at Kanchi with gold. Some of the old Saiva saints like Saakkiyan, who was afraid of professing his faith because of the great popularity of Buddhism, and some of the early Vaishnava Alvars belonged to Tondaimandalam.

K Kanakasabapathy Pillay "Religious tolerance and goodwill prevailed among the Tamils only till about the 6th century AD. The Saiva Nayanmars and the Vaishnava Alvars traversed throughout the country visiting temples and pouring forth their devotional songs. This fervour was primarily provoked by the Hindu hostility towards the Jains and the Buddhists".

The popularity of Buddhism was on a downward trend in the 5th or 6th century AD, and Jainism grabbed the opportunity to score over Buddhism. It was a glorious period for Jainism in the latter half of the sixth and first half of the 7th centuries A.D., as it brought Pandyan king Ninrasir Nedumarān and the Pallava king Mahendravarman in its fold, and formed a real threat to Vedic Hinduism.

Prof K V Raman points out that "Thereafter, Hinduism, with its offshoots, Shaivism and Vaishnavism, took up the challenge. The 7th century saw a conflict between Jainism and Buddhism on the one hand, and Shaivism and Vaishnavism on the other. Shaivite Nayanmars and Vaishnavite Alvars toured extensively to spread the bhakti cult, with their simple language appealing to the people. This resulted in stopping the Buddhism and Jainism juggernaut and brought about the revival of Hinduism. From the 7th century, both Buddhism and Jainism began a path of decline in South India". They continued to be around till the 13th and 14th centuries with the odd activity but they could no longer threaten Hinduism. Buddhism declined at a faster rate than Jainism (M S Ramaswamy Iyengar: Studies in South Indian Jainism pp 59-60).

Thirumazhisai Alvar, who hailed from Thirumazhisai near Ponnammallee, dabbled with religions like Buddhism and Jainism. is said to have been a Buddhist initially and later a Jain, before he became a Vaishnavite. After turning into a Vaishnavite, he severely criticised Buddhists and Jains. A reading of the Naalayira Divyaprabandham and Thevaram indicate that Buddhism and Jainism were powerful in South India and that they posed a serious challenge to Hinduism.

Thirumazhisai Aazhwar himself describes his journey with various forms of religion thus: "We have learnt the religion of the Sakya, that of the Samanas and we have examined the agama work composed by Sankara (Shiva). But by our own good fortune, we have put our faith in the Black One with red-eyes (Vishnu)".

He has also made very aggressive remarks against Buddhism, Jainism and Shaivism. He says, "The Samanas (Jains) are dull-headed; the Bauddhas are in a delusion; and those that worship Shiva are ignorant. Those who do not worship Vishnu are of low intelligence indeed".

Thirumangai Aazhwar's visit in the 8th century is considered another important milestone in the history of Vaishnavism.

Thirumangai Aazhwar had a prominent role to play in checking the growth of Buddhism and Jainism in South India and promoting the growth of Vaishnavism.

JAINISM SOFTENED HINDUISM:

K R Subramanian: "The influence of Buddhism and Jainism on the Bhakti movement has already been indicated. The new Brahmanism incorporated in itself some of the essentials of the former and thus bridged the way for the absorption of the Buddhists and Jains.

It was a popular movement and expressed itself in the popular tongue. It saw no difference of caste or sex and embraced all to its bosom as the anti-Vedic religions had done before. Sacrifices, Vedic and un-Vedic, decreased in number and rituals were set at nought. Spontaneous and unfammelled devotion to the cause of all those whose existence was ignored or denied by the Aavidika religions flowed like the waters of a hitherto dammed torrent

The system of sacrifices to Gods received a rude though not fatal blow because of contact with Buddhism and Jainism, the central tenet of which was self-control of which Ahimsa was the first manifest expression. These aspects of Siva and Sakthi worship were softened partly by Aryanism and partly by the un-Vedic religions. The Bali-Pitam remained but unstained by blood. The aspect of Siva as a Yogi and Guru were presumably emphasized".

THE DECLINE OF JAINISM:

P T Srinivasa Iyengar, writing on decline of Jainism, states, "It was only when the moving waves of inspiration had passed on and been succeeded by the standing pool of reflection, when the desire for salvation for oneself by following the hard-path of self-discipline had been supplanted by the desire to save the souls of others by teaching them dogmas and catchwords...that the teachings of the Jina and the Buddha became degenerated into Jainism and Buddhism, two more sects which the self-regarding instincts of men have manufactured to the detriment of the people of India. "

..."The Saiva and the Vaisnava cults spread to the exclusion of the Bauddha and the Jaina cults and have produced an endless stream of devotional literature, whereas Tamil Bauddha and Jaina literature dried up in a few centuries".

The popularity of Buddhism was on a downward trend in the 5th or 6th century AD, and Jainism grabbed the opportunity to score over Buddhism (K R Subramaniam: The Origin of Saivism and its history in the Tamil Land-1929, p. 40). It was a glorious period for Jainism in the latter half of the sixth and first half of the 7th centuries A.D., as it brought Pandyan king Ninrasir Nedumaran and the Pallava king Mahendravarman in its fold, and formed a real threat to Vedic Hinduism

Many Jain temples have been constructed in recent times, including 38 in Chennai alone. Of them, the Juna Mandir, Naya Mandir and the temple at Choolai are well known. These three temples, statues of Lord Chandraprabhu had been installed. Mint Street has a Gujarati temple, where a statue of Lord Parsavanatha is built with a green stone.

The SRI JAIN SWETAMBER DADABADI TEMPLE in Ayanavaram on Konnur High Road in Chennai was said to have been founded around the year 1838. It covers roughly 150 grounds. The Gurudev (Dada Saheb) Temple is about 138 years old. Around 1928, Lord Sumathinath temple was constructed at the northern end of the gardens. Twice a year about 20,000 people visit the temples, on Full Moon days of the Hindu Karthik and Chaitra months. An average of 500 to 1,000 people visits the temple every day.

There is also evidence of Jainism in the Chennai region. These are found to be reliable. An old manuscript has revealed the tradition that Mayilapur was inhabited by a large number of Jains, and that there were many Jain pagodas there. It is said that one of the Jain saints had a dream that the town would be swallowed by the sea. Therefore, the idols of the Jain temples were moved to an interior part of the town. The old temples were said to have been submerged by the sea.

Tradition has it that Mayilapur was an important Jain colony and that there was a Jain temple dedicated to the 22nd Tirthankara Neminatha, and this is confirmed in archaeological and literary sources. In 1923, the Archaeological Survey of India unearthed two Jain statues of about 40 inches in height from the vicinity of San Thome. They were male Digambhara statues. One of them, in a slightly damaged condition, is surmounted by the hood of a five-headed cobra, while the other one is without a hood. Father Hosten had found another Jaina statue in the Saint Thomas Cathedral at San Thome. There is literary evidence to prove that there was a temple at Mayilapur dedicated to Tirthankara Neminatha.

Neminathan provides an invocatory verse in honour of Tirthankara Neminatha of Mayilapur. A Jaina poet, perhaps of the 14th century, in his work called Thiru Nutrandadi by Avirodhalvar, has provided 103 verses in honour of Neminatha and mentions his shrine in the first verse itself. The author makes a fervent appeal to the God 'abiding at Mayilapur' to give his blessings to mankind.

There are also some unpublished padikams on Neminatha, which have references to his shrine at Mayilapur. The editor of Neminatham provides a long verse of one Padikam in which the poet describes a beautiful Jaina temple on the seashore at Thirumayilapuri (Mylapore).

The Jaina statues found at San Thome and the several literary references to Neminatha of Mayilapur clearly point to the establishment of a Jaina temple in Mayilapur. It must have been an important temple going by the number of literary references to it.

At Villivakkam, 10 kms north of Chennai railway station, 2 beautiful stone images of Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara, one in a standing posture and the other in a sitting posture, were found. They are kept in the Government Museum, Chennai.

Another image of Mahavira was found in Poonamallee. An inscription at Thirunageswaram, in suburban Kunrathur, and another at Mangadu, makes an indirect reference to a Jaina palli. There must have been several Jaina colonies in and around Chennai.

VANDALISM:

The noses of the bas-reliefs of two Jaina tirthankaras at Keezhavalavu, 38km from Madurai, were vandalized.

SANGAM age Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions on, hundreds of Jaina beds sculpted on their floors, bas-reliefs of Jaina tirthankaras and paintings of prehistoric artists face destruction in the hills in the vicinity of Madurai in Tamil Nadu. This is attributed to granite quarrying and vandalism. Iron Age burial sites datable from 2nd century B.C. to 3rd century AD., are said to have been destroyed by real estate companies. The inscriptions provide evidence to Tamil's classical language status and refer to Jainism in the Tamil Sangam age and later period, and provide valuable data on how kings, chieftains, traders, village chiefs and the people helped in the growth of Jainism, making donations for the sculpting of Jaina beds. They also throw light on the trade guilds that operated then on the trade routes.

Some of the rock bed sites are facing the problem of granite quarrying and are in danger. They are Kilavalaivu, Tiruvadavur, Melakkuyilkudi, Vikramangalam of Madurai district, Arachalur of Erode district and Kusumalai of Chengalpattu district.

Jainism was widespread as one of the largest religions in Tamil Nadu and it had shrunk as one of the micro communities figuring only 0.13%. The Jains played key role for the Tamil development and Tamil literature and culture. Several historically important monuments are in the stage of vandalisation, many are getting converted as Hindu temples and many have started disappearing. So, it is important to document the historically important Jain monuments and carry out considerable research.