

## THE CONCEPT OF WAR AND AHIMŚĀ IN JAINISM IN KARNATAKA

In Somadeva's *Yaśastilaka Campū*, there is a question being asked—'What is dharma?' The answer that is given is 'that which inculcates kindness to all creatures'.<sup>1</sup> In Pampa's *Ādi-purāna* (2.7), *dharma* is being described as having a body consisting of kindness, charity, penance and character as its limbs.<sup>2</sup> It is further stated that it is this *dharma* that carries mortal men upto the point of liberation. It is very clear from these and many other numerous statements that *dayā* 'kindness towards all living beings' or *ahimśā* 'non-killing' is the corner-stone of Jainism (*Jīvadaye Jaine-dharmam*).

*Ahimśā* is not abstention from mere killing. It includes abstention from all other possible kinds of violence. For example using abusive language could be a form of *himśā*. It is said that *ahimśā* includes in its fold also the 'very idea of killing, the complete absence of any *saṅkalpa* or will that might have the remotest connection with injury to living creatures'. A Jain monk is ordained to take upon himself what is popularly known as the *Mahāvratas* 'the great vows' among which *ahimśā* is one and perhaps the most important. He is expected to observe this vow very scrupulously, avoiding all kinds of violence, whether intentional or unintentional.

As Jacobi puts it,<sup>3</sup> in Jainism, like in any other religion, 'the ideal of conduct is that of the monk which a layman, of course, cannot realize, but which he tries to approach by taking upon himself particular vow'. The vows that are prescribed for laymen are not as severe as the 'great vows' and are, there, called the *pañca-aṅuvratas* 'small vows' which are five in number<sup>4</sup>. The first one is *prānātipātaviramāṇa-vrata* which enjoins a layman never to destroy any living being intentionally.

Non-Killing of any kind of being looks like an impossible ideal from a practical point of view. For example, an ascetic may not wage a war. But the society, which consists mainly of laymen, cannot always keep itself away from wars which could be both offensive and defensive. Jainism has taken note of this problem and has tried to offer solutions. In general, a layman

is forbidden to keep weapons for himself or to give over them to others. He is asked to follow three *guṇavratas* which are aids to the five *anuvratas*. One of the *guṇavratas* is *anarthadaṇḍa-virati* which prescribes, among many other things, ban on possessing weapons and on imparting *śastra-vidyā* to others. *Tatvaratna-pradīpikā* (P. 277), a Kannada commentary on Umasvāmin's work, says that giving away arms as gifts involves *himsā* and, therefore, should be avoided. (*viṣa-kaṇṭaka-śastra-agni-rajjukadaṇḍādi-himsopakaraṇa-pradānām himsāpradānam*).

Keeping the layman in view, *himsā* is conceived as being of four types.<sup>5</sup>

1. *Saṃkalpī*,
2. *Virōdhī*,
3. *Arambhī*,
4. *Udyōgī*.

*Virōdhī-himsā* is injury caused by a person while defending himself or others. A war may be fought for defending one's land or religion. Thieves may be killed in an encounter. Among the four *himsās*, *saṃkalpī* should at any cost be avoided. As regards the other three *himsās*, they are an-avoidable, but even there the layman is advised to be discreet and show restraint. Commenting on Jaina ethics, J. Jaini has the following comments to make<sup>6</sup>—“Jaina ethics are meant for men of all positions—for kings, warriors, traders, artisans, agriculturists, and indeed for men and women in every walk of life. The highest will find in the Jaina rules of conduct satisfactory guidance for their affairs; and the meanest can follow them. ‘Do your duty, Do it as humanely as you can’. This, in brief, is the primary precept of Jainism. Non-killing cannot interfere with one's duties. The king, or the judge, has to hang a murderer. The murderer's act is the negation of a right of the murdered. The king's or the judge's order is the negation of this negation, and is enjoined by Jainism as a duty. Similarly the soldier's killing on the battlefield. It is only prejudiced and garbled accounts of Jainism that have led to its being misunderstood.”

This is, in summary, the theoretical aspect of the concept of war in Jainism. War is only for defensive and never for offensive. Neither should it be undertaken for personal or national glorification. Even in wars, violence should be kept in the minimum.

## II

Now, we will go to myths which portray the beliefs, ideals and aspirations of a society or religion in the form of stories. It is very clear from Jaina myths that all the Tīrthaṅkaras were Kṣatriyas, which was the ruling and the fighting race. Jainism has always glorified this *varṇa* over the other *varṇas*. Thus, Brahmashiva in his Kannada *Samayaparīkṣe* says ‘(2.23) that the Kṣatriya is the master of the land’, that he is the Tīrthaṅkara and, therefore, superior to every other person in the world. It is said that the first Tīrthaṅkara himself created the three *varṇas* except the Brahmins’. Besides, he prescribed to them, among other duties, the duty of ruling the country, protecting the distressed and even waging war if necessary, and forgiving if it comes to that (“Kṣatriya jātige satya tyāga prajāpālana saranāgataraksana praharana kṣamādi guṇācāramumam...”—Kannada Ādipurāṇa, 8.73, prose). King Atibala is described as a devout Jaina (jinepadapankaja-bharamara) in the story of Sukumārasvāmin by Poet Śāntinātha. At the same time, it is said that he took up the sword for protecting his land and his people (*Sukumārasvāmi-charitam*, 1. 79–80). Somadeva in his *Nītivākyaṃṣtam* argues that a king who does not maintain his army properly fails in his primary duties. In Janna’s *Yasodharacarite*, the sword of king Yashodhara is described as being continuously washed by the blood of his enemies. It should be noted here that the same king committed a sin, a *pāpakarma*, when he sacrificed a fow made of wheat flour. The *hiṃsā* here was *sankalpī*, because, though he knew that he was not killing any being, yet he was not free from the idea of killing something as a sacrifice. This *hiṃsā* made him to suffer untold miseries in many later *bhavas* ‘births’. We have again the story of Jīvandhara, wherein both Satyandhara and his son Jīvandhara fight many battles. While in the end Jīvandhara renounces his kingdom, he advises his son (1) not to run away from battle, (2) not to give up *dharma*, (3) and not to forget the feet of Jina—(“Dhuradoodadiru... dharmava toreyadiru, jinapādapadmava mareyadiru). These and many other stories clearly suggest that waging war and killing is part of the ‘Profession’ of a Warrior, his *Kṣatriya-dharma*. A tradesman does his trading an agriculturist his ploughing, a weaver his weaving. So a warrior does his fighting. Therefore fighting itself does not mean in itself

either good or bad. A farmer kills many insects while ploughing, but it is unintentional. Even then he could try to minimize killing, so also a soldier, while fighting. A Jaina warrior is expected not to inculcate hatred towards his enemy. He should do minimum killing. That is the way a soldier can pursue his profession and still be a man of religion.

Wars cannot always be for the defensive. Jaina ethics has allowed kings to go out of their lands and annex fresh territories. Mention may be made here of the of *digvijaya* by Bharata in Rathnakaravarani's *Bharatasa Vaibhava*. Bharata worships and invokes the blessings of Jina before taking his army out of his capital for conquests. Again, Jainism, like Buddhism, believes not in the conquests of arms but in the conquests through *dharma*. These conquests, the *dharmajayas*, were achieved by the Tirthankaras and are glorified by almost all Jaina poets.

### III

Jainism has made some signal contributions towards Karnatak culture. Among them its contribution towards the heroic tradition of the country is equally noteworthy. That the religion which lays stress on non-violence as the supreme ideal should have as followers some of the greatest warriors looks rather strange. We have seen earlier that fighting wars was never rejected. At the same time we should remember that fighting, even fighting for a good cause, was never glorified in Jaina ethics. It was given a place in the system for purposes of utility and it is highly doubtful that a normal layman was really conscious of it. Even taking for granted that he was conscious of it, it becomes almost impossible to observe to the letter the limitations imposed on killing. For example, how can any king be always on the defensive? How can anybody help not having an attitude of hatred towards his enemies? How can a warrior do minimum killing on the war-field? That amounts to saying that inspite of itself, Jainism produced some of the greatest heroes.

Jainism was not only patronized by almost all royal families of Karnatak, both major and minor, some of the rulers were themselves its devoted followers. It is recorded in the inscriptions belonging to the Ganga dynasty<sup>7</sup> that it was Simhanandi, a Jaina Monk, who inspired Madhava to establish the dynasty. The

advice given by this celebrated teacher is believed to contain some basic moral precepts prescribed for Jaina kings. He is said to have advised him not to run away from the battle even in times of danger (“ . . . . āhāvāṅganadōlodidodam kindugum kulavratam ”). Rulers who succeeded Madhava patronized the religion to a great extent and a few of the rulers devoted themselves to its cause. Marasimha was one such who ruled during the end of the tenth century. One of the inscriptions at Shravanabelgola<sup>8</sup> describes in length his voluntary death by the vow of *sallekhanā*. He is praised as a great warrior who fought many battles and conquered many fots. It is further stated that the dedicated most of the wealth which he amassed through conquests to the cause of his religion. (palavedeyol ariyaram priyaram kādi geldu palavedegalolam mahādhrājamanettisi mahādānangeydu negalda vidyādharam . . . dharmāvātāram kadanakarkasam . . . .” The Chalukyas of Badami were mainly Saivites or Vaisnavites. Yet they did not hesitate to patronize Jainism. Mention may be made here of the famous Aihole inscription of Ravikirti, which records gifts made over to the Jaina temple by the Emperor Pulakeshi II. Rāṣṭrakūṭas who succeeded the Chalukyas continued the patronage. Among them Amoghavarṣa Nṛpatuṅga (850 A.D.) and Indraraja (982 A.D.) were devoted followers. The Shravanabelgola inscription of 982 A.D.<sup>9</sup> describes the death of Indraraja by *Sallekhanā* vow. It calls him ‘a hero among heroes’ (*bīrara bīra*). The later Chalukyas of Kalyana, the Hoyasalas, the Vijayanagar kins and many other minor dynasties extended their support and patronage to the religion. All these examples are quoted here to show that Jainism was a religion which did not come in the way of might kings the emperors in building and expanding their kingdoms.

The religion has produced some of the greatest generals of Karnataka. Chavundaraya and Shankaraganda were great generals who served under the Gangas and the Rashtrakutas. Chavundaraya got the gigantic image of Bahubali made in Shravanabelgola and he was also the author of a Kannada prose work entitled *Cāvundarāyapurāna*. His work records his many titles which he had earned as a general and a soldier. He was called ‘Vairikula Kāladaṇḍam’, because he had killed a hero called Tribhuvana in the forts of Bāgeyūr. He was also called ‘Bhatamari’ which title

he had earned by killing numerous soldiers ( " Vīrabhatakōtiyam Kondudarim Bhatamāri " ). From his inscription at Shravana-belgola we come to know that he belonged to the family of the *bramha-ksatriyas*. Another contemporary of his, and equally a great name in the history of Jainism was Attimabbe, and extraordinarily pious lady. She not only built a very beautiful temple for Lord Jina in Lakkundi, but also patronized the great poet Ranna. It was she who was mainly responsible for Ranna composing his *Ajītanāthapurāṇatilakam*. Hers was a family completely devoted to the cause of Jainism. Her father Mallappa was mainly responsible for Ponna composing his classic *Sāntipurāṇa*. It was also a family of warriors. Mallappa himself was wellversed both in *sāstra* and *śāstra* ( " . . . Mallapanallade Peranavano śāstra-śāstra vidyākuśalam " )<sup>10</sup>. His younger brother, Attimabbe's uncle, was Ponnamayya. He fought for his master Tailapa on the banks of the river Kaveri. He is described by Ranna as announcing ' Let Tailapa be victorious ' ( . . . tailapanrpam balgendu . . . ) before he charged into the army of the enemies with a sword in hand, killed his enemies and got himself killed. Her husband Nagadeva was also a great warrior and was called the ' Champion of the ruffians ' ( *Oraṭara malla* ). The martial tradition continued : her son was Padevala Taila or Major General Taila. A great army officer during the times of the Hoysalaṣ was Gangaraja ( 12th century ). He was the greatest social leader of the Jaina community of his times and was looked upon as an equal to Chavundaraja of the tenth century. He was called the *Kalingalābharana* ' jewels of heroes ' .<sup>11</sup>

A few names of generals who died taking upon themselves the *sallākhanā* vow are recorded in inscriptions. For example Buchana,<sup>12</sup> Baladeva,<sup>13</sup> Singana.<sup>14</sup> A remarkable official under the Rattas of Saundatti was Manichandra. The Rattas were ardent devotees of Jina Dharma and their royal preceptor ( *rattarāja-guru* ) was Munichandra who was their minister also. By his sheer wisdom and military tactice he was able to expand the territories of the Raṭṭa Kingdom.<sup>15</sup> He was a teacher who gave formal education as well as military training to the king Lakshmi-deva ( *śastra-śāstra sthira parinātiyol Lakmīdēvange dīksāguru-vādam* ). Jaina poets like Pampa and Janna participated in political activities and fought battles.

The persons mentioned above—kings, officials and poets—were intellects who had a fairly clear knowledge of Jainism and knew that their profession as warriors had religious sanction. It is true that religion is a personal thing. At the same time the religious beliefs and convictions could have an impact on the outlook of an individual, on his likes and dislikes, on his sense of which is right and which is wrong.—A Jaina warrior, in spite of his knowing the religious sanction for his profession, cannot escape from a mental agony of having killed or wounded many on the battle field. As we have seen, in Jainism it is the man who suffers and never the man who inflicts suffering that is painted in vivid colours. This could supply some explanation as to why some generals took up the *sallekhanā* vow and ended themselves. They did it, probably, as a kind of atonement, *Prāyas-citta*, for the acts they did in their prime of youth, as warriors or as army officials. Sometimes our emotions could get an upper hand over our intellectual convictions.

A layman, an ordinary householder, will always have a very broad concept of his religion. To him religion is a bundle of rituals and beliefs. His sense of right and wrong will be shaped by the culture into which he is born. If *ahimsā* is the key-note of Jaina culture, there is no escape from the fact that it becomes an important part of the ethical system of the layman. A cursory study of the hero-stones in Karnatak reveals that there are comparatively few which can be treated as Jaina. Hero-stones record the death of heroes, soldiers, men who actually fight and die. We have a large number of Jaina kings and generals whose names are recorded in inscriptions. But the number of ordinary heroes is comparatively small. Could the reason be that ordinary layman thought that fighting in general was taboo for Jainas? Could it be that a Jaina in general was reluctant or at least not enthusiastic about participating in wars or warlike activities?

The popular Hindu conception prevalent in earlier times was that a warrior who dies fighting goes to heaven to enjoy heavenly pleasures, amidst fairies. This is—depicted in the form of sculptures on hero-stones. In later times, the hero is depicted as being in the presence of God himself. The notion that a yogi and a hero both get liberated through their yoga and heroic death

is expressed in many inscriptions. (“dvavimau purusam loke suryamandala bhedinaul Parivrat yogayuktasca rane cābhimukhe hataḥ”). This notion is something unacceptable to Jainism which allows fighting as a profession only. Besides Jainism does not believe in God who could shower grace or divine mercy on human beings. It is man and man himself that should do his *karmaccheda* and attain liberation. Brahmaśiva—(12th Cent. A.D.) in his *Samayaparikṣe* (9.34) makes fun of the popular notion mentioned above and says that it is only the ignorant that believe in heavenly damsels carrying the dead warrior to heaven. Soul is formless, and how can the damsels carry this formless thing, he asks. Devappa, a poet of the Sixteenth century, repeats the same idea. He describes, no doubt, the deceased heroes going to heaven and enjoying among damsels there. (*Rāmavijaya Kāvya*, 18.85–90). But he takes care to say that he has described so because of poetic convention.<sup>16</sup> That the dead heroes went to heaven was a popular convention acceptable to all but jains becomes amply clear from the above statements of Brahmaśiva and Devappa Kavi.

But there are a few Jaina Hero-stones which depict the hero as going to heaven or to the presence of Jina, but their number is so small that we are compelled to treat them as exceptions. In Kaikini, in North Canara District, are a bunch of hero-stones kept near the Jaina temple there. On the top panel of a few of them the hero is depicted as sitting near the Jina. The first two panels at the bottom contain scenes of battle, the third one depicts the hero being taken to heaven by fairies, the fourth depicts dance by the damsels, the fifth or the last panel contains the picture of a hero, the Jina and a Jaina monk. (There is a similar sculpturing on a hero-stone in Bhatkal). All the inscriptions on the hero-stones in Kaikini belong to the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. One of the inscriptions<sup>17</sup> begins with the usual verse praising *jinaśāsana* and goes to describe how the hero Mabunayaka killed many and was killed in the battle-field. Another<sup>18</sup> inscription begins with the phrase *vītarāgāya namaḥ* and states that the hero-stone was erected to commemorate the death of Thammanānāyaka. It further states that the erection of the stone facilitated the hero to go to heaven. There is a similar hero-stone at Hāḍuvalli in the same District.<sup>19</sup> There are one or two similar hero-stones in

Śravaṇabeḷoagoḷa itself.<sup>20</sup> But the most interesting comes from Udri of Sorab Taluk, Shimoga District.<sup>21</sup> It describes the death of a hero-Baicappa, while fighting against the Konkanigas and killing many of them. In the beginning of the inscription he is described as 'reaching the feet of Jina' ("... aidida jinapāda-padamam baicappam"). While still fighting, all of a sudden he seems to have taken up *sallekhanā* vow on the battlefield itself and dies. He is said to have reached 'heaven' ("... samādhividhānamonde cittadolu māravirodhi...ārjita nākalokamam saridam"). He reached the feet of Jina, because he died of *sallekhanā* vow; because he died while fighting on the battlefield he went to heaven. I do not know whether the composer of the text of the inscription was conscious of the difference between heaven and the word of Jina. The hero-stones at Kaikini depict Jina on the top panel. This is in imitation of the usual hero-stones; the Hindu God, usually Śiva or his emblem and occasionally Viṣṇu, is replaced by Jina. But nowhere do they expressly say that the hero went to the world of the Tīrthaṅkaras. The inscription at Udri is the only place where a hero is described as going to the world of Jina, and even here, as we saw above, the composer is in confusion.

The arguments which I have put forth in the latter half of this paper seem to contradict the earlier-statement that Jainism has its own contributions towards the heroic tradition. I have also tried to answer this apparent contradiction. Jainism, as a religion, was never militant, and by its very nature, it could never be on such. As D. S. Sharma has rightly observed, "... it is remarkable that for scores of instances that could be cited for persecutions directed against the Jains, there is hardly a single instance of retaliation by the latter".<sup>22</sup> Though controversial, I still believe that this lack of militancy was one of the factors which contributed towards its decline. That is as good as saying that it could not stand up against more militant religions. That is a different story, rather a sad one, and it is not for me to speak about it here.

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## NOTES

1. K. K. Handiqui : Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture, Pp. 246-7  
 (Ko bhagavann iha dharmo yatra dayā bhūpa sarvasatvānām)
2. "bhavavārāsi nimagnaram daye dānam tapam silamembive  
 meyyāgire sanda dharmame valam pottettugum mukti-paryavasānambaram".
3. "Jainism (Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics).
4. "Kole pusi Kalavu paradāra atikānkse embivam torevudu anu-  
 vratangal" (Giving up killing, telling lies, stealing, illegal, sexual connections  
 and greediness are the small vows).
- Maghanandi's Kannada Padārthasāra (Ed. C. Padmanabhasharma),  
 P. 149.
5. Hiralal Jain : Bhāratiya Samskritige Jainadharmada Kodige  
 (Tr. into Kannada by Mirji Annarao, P. 318).
6. Outlines of Jainism (1940), P. 72.
7. Ep. Carn. VII, SK. 421.
8. Ep. Car. II. (Mysore, 1973), No. 64.
9. *Ibid*, No. 163.
10. Ajitanāthapurānatilakam, 1.31.
11. Ep. Car. II (Mysore, 1973), No. 82, 1118 A.D.
12. *Ibid.*, No. 155, 1113 A.D.
13. *Ibid.*, No. 174, 1139 A.D.
14. Ep. Car. VIII, Sb. 149.
15. KI. IV, No. 73, 1228 A.D.
16. "taruni lālisu kavitāmārgake nānorevenallade durbhavadalil  
 maranava padedavarige svargavuntēmba pariya jainaru meccuvare" (Rāma-  
 vijaya kāvya, 18.92).
17. KI. I, Page 92, 1415 A.D.
18. *Ibid.*, P. 104, 1423 A.D.
- 19.. *Ibid.*, P. 106, 1423 A.D.
20. - Ep. Car. II (Mysore, 1973), Bos. 171 and 72.
21. Ep. Car. VIII, Sb., 152, 1380 A.D.
22. Jainism and Karnatak Culture, P. 150.