

# Exploring Jainism in Early India with Special Reference to Odisha- A Study



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## Abstract

Jainism was very close to early Odisha. The study on Jainism in Odisha was made to attempt by many scholars from foreign, national and regional levels. The Jaina literature and monuments are also support the association of Jainism with early Odisha. Since the rise of Magadhan imperialism in India, Odisha had prevalent Jainism. The people of Odisha were followed Jainism much before the Mahavira was born. The Odishan society, culture was mostly influenced by the Jaina faiths. The modern Odishan culture has also found some of the principles of Jainism. The art, architecture of Odisha had also found influenced by the Jainism. The language script in modern India was also influenced by the Jainism. Many religions in India and Odisha had followed the principles of Jainism. The purpose of the paper is to find out the course of investigation in this field and the various influences on Odishan society, culture, religion and science and technology as well. Through this paper one can understand the chronological development of Jainism in Odisha and process of the investigation by the various historian and scholars.

**Keywords:** Jainism, Mahavira, tirthankara, archaeology, Jainamonuments.

## Introduction

Jainism is one of the distinct religions of ancient world. It has been studied well both by countryman as well as foreigner from various point of view. It has given rich cultural heritage to India as its birth place but it is not popular as Buddhism had. It is not spread beyond India. Several books, monographs, reports and research papers were published on the archaeology of Jainism, its philosophy, art, architecture and other material remains. Generally the evolution and spread of Jainism are studied through the inscriptions and monumental heritage that includes the caves, temples and sculptures. Alternatively, the scholars in Jaina philosophy and religion have found it necessary to look at Jainism in terms of its pristine ideological or philosophical content based on its texts. Though the Jainism was very ancient religion in India, there were no much evidences available about the last 22<sup>nd</sup> tirthankaras. It was much highlighted and spread during the 24<sup>th</sup> Tirthankaras Mahavira Jaina in 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The preaching of Jina is known as *Arhat, Arihant and Tirthankaras*.

The early archaeological investigations and excavations were mainly focused on unearthing the buried structures which were brought to the notice by the local people or located the sites by chance by the archaeologists. The methods of archeologists recorded what they found by the most adequate means available in the days before photography – namely by maps, notes and drawings. The sincere efforts of the earliest archaeologists and ideologists have enabled us to know much about the archaeology of early Jainism with regard to early Jaina rituals, functions, and patrons of religion, donor, and nature of donations, type of monuments and their functions. With vast expenses our country has discovered the Jaina monuments in different regions. The work of the early archeologist did not simply satisfy to confine them to provide a narrative of the architectural history of monuments and descriptions of the material remains. But they also were establishing tradition with regard to the recording of the data, description of the geographical setting of the sites and environments in which the ancient monuments and inscriptions and statues were situated. The precision and accuracy was achieved due to some reasons that the early archeologists who conducted the research and contributed to archeology were mostly professional army or irrigation Engineers or mathematicians turned surveyors. With advancement of knowledge and scientific development new technique methods and approaches came into practice in archaeological research resulting in enriching the historical knowledge about Jainism in ancient India. Through

careful study of Indian society, it provides some insight thought of Jainism that could not have been gain from any other sources. In the reconstruction of reliable dates of Jainism, archaeological evidence is of central importance. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the literary sources for the better understanding of the subject as there is a good reason to believe that Jina monks preserved their sacred texts with tenacity and accuracy over long period of time. Many scholars of Jainatexts have provide fine details on Jaina thought and its development sometimes they are inaccessible to the archaeological research. At the same time, the archaeological research suffers due to limitations in obtaining the complete data due to either natural or manmade disturbances. Both textual knowledge and material remains collected from the sites in the form of inscriptions, coins, art and architecture, geographical setting environment are equally important in resolving the history of Jainism in ancient India as well as Odisha also.

Though the Jainism is evolved much before Mahavira, there is not any evidence found to prove it. If historically access the Jainism, it is very difficult to find. There is no clear evidence about the early twenty two Tirthankaras; specifically the last two Tirthankaras are real founder of the religion. Besides that the archaeologist like Sir John Marshall<sup>1</sup> and Sir Mortimer Wheeler<sup>2</sup> believed from the findings of the Indus excavation the naked meditation posture of a naked man which probably regarded as Jainism prevalent in the Indus civilization. There were no clear ideas found till the Mahavira.

Like Buddhism, Jainism was also developed in the middle of the Ganges valleys in little before the Buddhism in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Mahavira himself has influence Jainism during the Sisunaga period and became royal patronage to have bestowed by king Udayana, the son of Ajatasatru and also succeeding to Nandas in the (413-322 B.C) appear to have been friendly towards the religion. In the second century B.C. the evidence has been found about the patronizing Jainism by the king of Kalinga<sup>3</sup>. In the very inception of Christian era are relatively dark in the history of Jainism. However, the city of Ujjain was just mentioned in connection with Samprati, an important centre of religion. The Saka ruler devoted themselves to honoring the teaching of Jinas. At this time Jainism was of eastern India as well as in the western India Ujjain in particular. In the second century A.D. at the city of Mathura on the bank of Jumna river developed the important center of Jainism during the Kushana period. In the early medieval period the Jainism was spread in Central India best known caves of Jaina was at Ellora with similar grown with Buddhist and Hindu caves. In the later medieval times almost innumerable shrines were constructed throughout India. The important shrines of Jainism in the South, the SravanaBelgola of the Vindhyagiri hill, the Khajuraho, in the central India was one of the important shrine of Jainism which is also known for the Hinduism. At the hills of Girnar one of the important shrine for Jainism probably constructed during medieval period. Besides all the most famous

of all temples of Jainatirtha on the Mount Abu in the western part of India which is existed in the southern desert of Rajaputana. The Jainism was founded in western India probably in 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D there are many temples were constructed during this period. There is recovered large number of Jaina sites in the form of either rock cut or structural monuments<sup>4</sup>. There are several archaeological evidences to state that Jainism has spread in the early Odisha.

Jainism has played a prominent role through the ages in the socio-cultural life of Odishan people. There is paucity over the exact date of origin of the Jainism in Odisha. The earliest studies on Jainism in Odisha were focused mainly on the identification of the technical and stylistic details of the sculptures and contents of the inscriptions noticed at those places. This has also given rise to understanding how the Kalingan type art and architecture has been developed in Odisha. With regard to entry of Jainism in Odisha was traced back to a period of much earlier than that of the rise of Buddhism. The Jaina sacred literature and epigraphic evidences suggests that possibly the Jaina faith obtained a footing in Odisha from the earliest time of its appeared in India. There is some reason to believe that among the heterodox faith Jainism had gained popularity in Odisha. The Jaina literatures refer Kalinga in connection with her culture and association with Jaina Tirthankaras. It is believed that the Eighteenth tirthankaras, Aranath had visited Rajapura of *Kalinga*. Then the 23<sup>rd</sup> Tirthankara Parsvanatha had believed to have visited Odisha and preached Jainism in the region. The *Harivamsa Purana* records that Mahavira Jaina preached Jainism in *Kalinga* and he personally visited the kingdom because its king was a friend of his father. C. J. Shah<sup>5</sup>, in his book has rightly said that during the Mauryan period, Samprati the grandson of Asoka, much zeal to induce his vassals to embrace to patronize his creed. So not only in his kingdom but also in adjacent countries the monk could practice their religion. Hema Chandra said, how the Samprati had sent missionaries probably Svetambara as far as south India. In order to extent the sphere of their activities to uncivilized countries. Thus the uncivilized nations were brought under the influence of Jainism.

With regard to sculpture in 11-12<sup>th</sup> line of Hatigumpha inscription refers about the image of KalingaJina which was much before the evolution of sculpture in India. R.D. Banarjee<sup>6</sup> has identified the KalingaJina as the tenth tirthankara Sitalanath. But the analysis of nomenclature the image is identified with the first tirthankara, Rishabhanath. After the fall of Chedi dynasty in about 1<sup>st</sup> Century B.C. to 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D, the history of Jainism is Odisha cannot be systematically traced. The Jainism retained its popularity among the mass and also admittedly it suffered a partial set back during this period owing ascendancy of Buddhism and Saivism. According to observations of Chinese pilgrim Hieun-Tsang, Jainism was still in a flourishing condition in Odisha in 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D<sup>7</sup>. In 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D the Jainism was not in the state of decline, many evidences have been found in support of Jainism during the Sailodbhavas

dynasty. Jainism was continued to flourish in Odisha during Somavamsi rule although the Saivism was in the ascendancy<sup>8</sup>. There are many Jaina images carved on the Saiva temples during the Imperial Gangas and even the Gajapaties. Jainism was not in a state of decadence in Odisha. Of course by this time the ruler and the subject had become patron of Brahmanism and was predominant faith in Odisha. Gradually, some Jainacentres might have been victims to its influence and thereby Jainism was gradually in the decline stage. Number of Jaina images are found to be worshiped as Hindu deities. After 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the Jainacentres of Odisha, Khandagiri was found deserted. The Khandagiri and Udayagiri have acquired the spiritual domination of Jainism. Since 2000 years till stand with silent witnesses to the rise, growth and decline of the Jainism in Odisha<sup>9</sup>. Though Jainism has decline in Odisha, but the sculpture in the caves and temples reflect the presence of Jainism.

It is observed from the Hatigumpha inscription of Kharavela for worship of the Image of Jina was very much prevalent during the Nanda dynasty, which was taken away by the Nanda king. It was probably in the 5<sup>th</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C where there was not any sculptural art was developed in India<sup>10</sup>. Many historians K.P. Jayaswal, N.K. Sahu, R.P. Mahapatra and K.C. Panigrahi had different opinion about the tirthankara image. Besides that the Udayagiri and Khandagiri has left master piece of sculpture which was broadly divided into two groups. In the first group there is depicted popular legends historical episodes, religious observances and dancing performance. In the other groups comprise individual guards, brackets, figures, vidyadhara, capitals of pillars and series of decorative design. In the early period the European like L.S. O' Malley, Ferguson, and W.W. Hunter has some descriptions about the sculpture and its importance. Which in the later time the engineer archaeologists like R.L. Mitra, A.C. Mittal, and D. Mitra had studied about detail study of the sculptures? In the later stages the local historians like N.K. Sahu, K. C. Panigrahi, R.P. Mahapatra, P.K. Mishra, and A.K. Rath had made socio-cultural and religious links to the sculptures. Besides that there are many historian and archaeologists had also studied on this aspects such as R.N. Ramachandran, M.M. Ganguly, R.D. Banerji, K.P. Jayaswal, A.S. Srivastava, A. Agrawal etc. The Jaina antiquities and monuments have found many places throughout Odisha which indicate the popularity of Jainism in ancient and medieval Odisha<sup>11</sup>.

An exploration conducted in Prachi Valley by the state department of Archaeology has brought lime light several Jaina images inside the ruined temples. In Adaspur, there are numerous Jaina images and sculpture has been found. And the images also found in many temples in Odisha like Svapnesvara and Nilakanthesvara temple in Bhubaneswar. In the northern Odisha which yield abundance of Jaina antiquities are at Khinching, Khuntapal, Nakatipat and Kosali in Mayurbhanja districts<sup>12</sup>. In the range of Anandapur, YogichhatraPodasingidi of Keonjhar

district have been found the antiquities of Jainism. In the Cuttack and Balasore Jaina antiquities are found in large like Badacharpai, Bhanpur, and Chaudvar and in the Cuttack. Hatadih, Jajpur, Kanika, nasikakotiam and Pratapnagari in Jajpur district. The famous Jaina sites in Balasore are at Ayodya, Purosottamaraj, Charampa, Manikchak and Martasol. In the South Odisha had also found some Jaina sites. The Koraput district is one of the important sites of Jaina antiquities. The sculpture of Jainatirthankaras has been found from Kamta, Charmula, Bhairavasingpur and Jamunda respectively.

With the antiquities it is interesting to note that there are dozen of Jaina texts which hasgives some reference about the Jainism in Odisha as well. The Jaina texts hastake important role in the interpretation to ancient Indian history and culture. From the early days the Jaina texts are reflected to Kalingadesha through which History of odisha can easily understood. The important texts of Jaina like Uttaradhyayana Sutra, Harivamsa Purana, Haribharyavrti<sup>13</sup>, ParsvanathCharita of Bhavadeva Suri<sup>14</sup>, Avasyaka Sutra<sup>15</sup>, Bhagavati Sutra has describe about the Kalingaand its relation with Jainism. With these texts the inscriptions and plates are also indicate the presence of Jainism in Odisha. The foremost inscription is the Hatigumpha Inscription of Kharavela in 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. which through light on the conditions of Jainism in Kalingafrom Nanda period to 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.Tracing the history of Jainism in Kalinga the early Christian centuries the scholar have focused the attention upon the archeological discoveries at Sisupalgarh in 1948-49 the excavation included one gold coin issuer name was Maharajadhiraja Dharmadamadhara<sup>16</sup>. According to A.S. Altekar, he was Jaina by faith who ruled probably in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. The Asanpat stone inscription of Maharaja Satrubhanja a ruler of Naga family which was ascribed in 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. where it imprecate that the king was leaning towards the Saivasfaith but donated to *Bhikshu* and *Nirgranthas*<sup>17</sup>. During Mathara dynasty they used elephant symbols which indicate to their respect towards Jainism<sup>18</sup>. In the seventh century A.D. the visit of Chinese pilgrim was helpful to study the status of Jainism of Odisha during the rule of Sailodbhabas<sup>19</sup>. The inscriptions of Sailodbhabas it is known that for spiritual attainment leaving home practice yoga in caves for away from fasting, living on water, air, or fruits and even inhabiting smoke was common in those days. The Banapur plates inscribe by Dharmaraja II alias Manabhita was recorded about the land grants given by his queen Kalyani Devi at ThoranaVishaya in favor of two Jaina monks ArhatacharyaNasichandra and his disciple Ekasata<sup>20</sup>. In the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the seals and inscriptions had bear only symbols of sitting deer and Parsvanath. According to the inscription in the Lalatendu Kesari cave, the Somavamsi king Uddyotakesari got the decayed wells and tanks cleaned for convenience of the Jaina monks. In the Navamuni cave there are two inscriptions engraved in the 18<sup>th</sup>regnal years of Uddyotakesari. One of the inscription states that the cave was caused to excavate by the illustrious Jain monk Subhachandra,

the disciple of Kulachandra for the above of the sages of *Aryasangha* belonging to Garhwal<sup>21</sup>. The second inscription reveals that monk Subhachandra dedicated a Chhatradvaja in honour of the Tirthakaras. However, in the Imperial Gangas a stone inscription from Bhogapura village dated 1178 A.D which reveals that one Kannan Nayak a devout worshiper of Jaina<sup>22</sup>. According to S.N. Rajaguru there are epigraphic evidence found where writer and engraver of copper plate charter bearing names such as Khandi Chandra, Sarva Chandra, Bhanuchandra, Vinayachandra and Devachandra etc. who are belong to the Jaina sects. The decline of the Jaina sects indicates in the Bhaumakaras period in the 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D<sup>23</sup>. The Jaina images were installed in the outer surface of the octagonal compound wall in Siva temples<sup>24</sup>. For the first time Jainism was attempted to assimilate with Saivism in Odisha that at present indicate the Odishan religion was inherent of Jainism.

The Jainism has prominent contribution to Indian culture and civilization. The Jaina thought on origin, soul, life, nonliving, deed and rebirths has input on Indian Philosophy and provide energy towards executions and research in India. According to Nilakantha Das, K.N. Mahaptra and B. Mishra have propounded that Jagannath cult is originated from Jainism<sup>25</sup>. The rituals connected with worship of the deity are non-vedic. Some scholars believe that the name Jagannatha was originated from Jainism. According to Abhidhana Rajendra, Jagannatha was another name of Jinesvara or Jina tirthankara Rishabhanath. As per the Das, the symbols and cultural tradition associated with Jagannath are Jaina origin. He also believed that the three main deity of Jagannath cult Balabhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath collectively stand for the Jaina Trinity (three Ratna) concept of *Smyakjnana*, *Samyakcharita* and *Samyakdristi*. The concept of *Kaivalyamukti* is believed both in Jainism and in the Jagannath cult. One of the important concepts of Jainism was *Kalpa* tree which exists in the precincts of the Jagannath temple. The *Kalpa Vata* of Jagannath temple is come from the profounder of the theory associated the *Kalpa Briksa* of the Jaina concept. Although there are some common features with the Jainism and Jagannath cult it is very difficult to give any strong evidences to justify the Jagannath cult is originated from Jainism. With the common feature there are also many differences in philosophy. The sacred worshiping places of Rishabhanath is known as *Chakra Khetra* such as the sacred place of Jainism at Mount Abu in Rajasthan and at Podasingidi in Adampur range of Mayurbhanja district also known as the *Chakra Khetra*. Such as the sacred place of Jagannatha, Puri is also known as *Chakra Khetra*<sup>26</sup>. The Jainism is also influenced on Natha religion. Like the Jaina Tirthankaras all the Natha-Sidhas entitled themselves as Natha rather than their deed or name. Like Jainism the Natha cult has no distinction in caste or creeds<sup>27</sup>. The Jaina religion has also influenced to rise the Mahima dharma in Odisha in the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Most of the principles of Jainism has adopted by the Mahima religion such as the principles of Mahima dharma are truthfulness, non-violence, forgiveness,

patience, love, simple living, honesty, chastity, etc. which are also chief principle of Jainism<sup>28</sup>. Like Jainism, Mahima cult has believed on casteless society. According to B.C. Majumdar, the completely prohibition of food after the Sunset was one of the principle of Jainism also accepted by the Mahima cult. The inhibition against excessive sexual desire and their practice of buring dead shows the influence of Digambara Jaina.

The Jainism had great contribution in the development of Indian language, literature and art. Through much Jaina literature it is possible to know the Ancient Indian History, practices, culture, philosophy, geography, mathematics, astrology and science. Many Jain intellectuals, Philosophers and literary person described *Chaupei* and *Dohain Prakrit* and *Apabhramsa* language. Among them Hema Chandra Pradhan who had contributed in the literature are Sidhahema Sadhanusasana, Chhandanusasana and Parisisthparvan. Gradually, the languages like Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati are rises from the Apabhramsa. Mahavira has propounded his religion in *Ardhamagadhi* language. The language was easy and locally spoken by the common man, though it is very easily accepted the teaching of Mahavira by the people<sup>29</sup>. That became influence over the Hinduism and gradually tried to teach in the spoken language. The teaching of Mahavira was described in *Ardhamagadhi* language in twelve books. The scripture is called *Srutanga*. Besides that there are also written in Sanskrit language the renowned Acharyas like Jivasena, Junabhadra, Puspadanta and Somadeva has written in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsa and Kannada language respectively. Many South Indian intellectuals had written many scripture in Tamil and Kannada language. The Tamil language scriptures are *Jivaka Chhintamani* and *Padinenkilkannak* which influence on Jainism. In 941 A.D. the first and foremost Kannada poet named Pampa has written *Adipurana* which is written on the first Tirthankara Rishabhanatha. In the work of *Ekachampurana*, the *Ajita Purana* has made on the 2<sup>nd</sup> tirthankara Ajitanatha. Besides that much Jaina literature has written on Mathematics and Astronomy among them *Surya Prajnapti*, *Chandra Prajnapti*, *Triloka Prajnapti*, *Trilokasara*, *Triloka Bibhaga*, *Jambudvipa Prajnapti* are important. The work of Acharya Mahaviracharya's work 'Ganita Sarasamgraha' is one of the important on Mathematics. The work of Dharacharya's '*Jathatilaka*' is one of the important contributions on Astronomy<sup>30</sup>.

### Conclusion

Jainism was one of the important religions in ancient India in general and Odisha in particular. The religion has greater contribution to the Indian society, culture and religion as well. Odisha had one of the rich evidence for the Jainism in India. The Jainism has influenced the whole Indian society, economy, culture, religion, art and architecture Odisha was one of the important seats of Jainism. Through period there are many researches has been made on the Jainism in Odisha by the various eminent historian and scholars. But till the date it has not sufficient enough to find out

the role of Odisha in the development of Jainism in India. The Jainism has one of the primitive religions in India and the people of Odisha were taking very leading role in it. Before commencement of Buddhism, Brahminism in Odisha the people of Odisha were completely followed the Jaina which is mostly observe the religious rites of Odisha in the present day but there is no such clear evidence on it.

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