

## **Historical Review of Contribution of Jainism to Early Kannada Literature**

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### **Abstract**

*Kannada, a Dravidian language, is one of the historical and important literary languages in India. It has a script of its very own and has a population of about sixty million. It had branched off from the Proto-Dravidian circle of relatives of languages in round 6th century BC, and had end up a written language via the beginning of present day generation.*

*The records of Kannada language and literature could be very vast, various and encompasses a selection of genres. Lamentably, its salient capabilities were no longer properly and systematically brought out of doors the Kannada world. Such an objective account remained a desideratum for a long time. To cope with the problem some attempts were made by way of Ferdinand Kittel (1832-1903), E.P. Rice (1849-1936) and B.L. Rice (1837-1927). B.L. Rice (1898) became the first to edit the epic Vikramārjunavijaya of poet Pampa (901-950), and write a piece of writing in English approximately the epic, as early as in 1882. His brother, E.P. Rice (1921) wrote *The Kanarese Literature*, the earliest e book in English at the Kannada Literature. He wrote in the concluding paragraphs:*

### **Sheldon Pollock's Book *Language of the Gods in the World of Men***

Albeit, the credit score of organizing Kannada as one of the major literary languages of a ways more significance and measurement is going to Sheldon Pollock (SP). In his recently published book, *Language of the Gods inside the global of men* (2006), he has remarkably narrated the records and described the middle characteristics of Kannada literature, and effectively accomplished the undertaking that became long due. Glory and singularity of Kannada world - language, literature, lifestyle, polity, religion, geography, royal dynasties, land and those in brief - become never provided and projected on this manner and on this type of big canvas. The general prominence and nexus of poetry, poetics and polity is properly highlighted. as an instance, the insightful discussion and large

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critique of the Kavirājāmārga, “way of the King of Poets”, is the primary of its kind (pp. 338-342).

The eBook *Language of the Gods* within the global of guys, has a considerable canvas. Its macro and micro have a look at covers a huge spectrum of South East Asia, and focuses the start period of 2d millennium. Approximately 50 pages inside the chapter 9, “growing a regional world: The Case of Kannada” (pp. 330-79), and a few pages in chapter 10, are devoted to trace historical improvement of Kannada. References to the antiquity, density, historicity, sociology, literary manufacturing and different accomplishments are noteworthy. In quick, SP has attempted to shed a floodlight, and do justice to Kannada and Karnataka by way of chronologically and methodically presenting an genuine photo of medieval length. However, some of the grave mistakes inside the e-book are evident. In some places SP indulges in prolonged argument and is derived to unacceptable conclusions.

The *Vaḍḍārādhane* (C. 800), the first extant work of Kannada literature, does not figure in the book. This major work stands out for its (socio-cultural) poetic prose, profundity, and for many other reasons. SP missed to comprehend its scope and importance. Similarly, some more literary works of greater consequence are not noticed.

The book *Language of the Gods* has diluted the prominence of Regius poet Ravikīrti (634) and his role in the history of Bādāmī Cālukyas. SP states “Kṛṣṇa (934) commemorated the event with a praśasti, the first of that genre in Kannada” (334). SP is correct, but he mentions Ravikīrti’s great Sanskrit praśasti, possibly the best praśasti, praise poetry, written three hundred years earlier to Kṛṣṇa, in casual way. The mention of Kālidāsa in Bhaṭṭi’s (6th century) poem in Jāva, Cambodian inscription (7th century) and the mention of Bhāravi and Mayūra in an inscription of Yaśovarman etc., figure in the book (162-163), but there also Ravikīrti’s mention of Kālidāsa and Bhāravi is missing:

## **Halmiḍi Inscription<sup>1</sup>**

“The first actual Kannada inscription, the Halmiḍi report, which starts offevolved with a benedictory verse addressed to Viṣṇu and commemorates a man famed for his munificence in bestowing ritual victims for lots sacrifices - hardly the product of a Jain cultural surroundings” (Pollock 2006: 428).

The shortcomings in this statement are obtrusive. of the five dynasties mentioned


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in the inscription are the Sendrakas and Kellas. The roots of the Sendrakas, one of the ancient kṣatriya dynasties and feudatories of Banavāsi Kadambas, are far deeper and pass again to the third century. The Gokāk Plates of Dejjā Mahārāja (533-550), king of Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Mānpura residence, set up that the Sendrakas were Jains from the beginning (Nagarajaiah 2014: 97-102). Dejjā Mahārāja, homonymous with Devarāja, belonged to the Āguptāyika line of kings. not much is thought about the Āguptāyika kings besides that they arrive from the religious lineage of Vardhamāna (Mahāvīra), the twenty fourth Tīrthaṅkara. incidentally, the Sendrakas also belong to the Vardhamāna lineage. The Āguptāyika Royal house had initiated an technology of their own and named after them because the Āguptāyika generation:

“The Āguptāyika generation may additionally had been started inside the fourth century BC and it is able to very well had been started by way of Chandragupta Maurya, and he (Dejjā Mahārāja) must have been removed through Polekeśi I before advert 543” (Ramesh 1984: 85f.). The Jaina culture has given a clue for its reckoning. The Kalpasūtra of Bhadrabāhu has recorded in unmistakable terms that the Maurya emperor Candragupta ascended the throne and started out his reign in 312-13 BCE. From then on began the Āguptāyika technology. The Harivaṃśa Purāṇa of Punnāṭa Jinasena (793) mentions that the Guptas ruled for 231 years. Its source comes from the Tiloyapaṇṇatti (Trilokaprajñapti) of Jadi Usaha (Yati Vṛṣabha, 550 CE)” (Nagarajaiah 2000/2014: 8). Polekesin II (610-42), king of the Cālukyās of Bādāmī, become son of a Sendraka princess, and king kīrtivarman I (566-97) had married a sister of Śrīvallabha Senānanda, leader of Sendraka vaṃśa (Nagarajaiah 2005: fifty six-60). Vija Arasa, to whom the honor become bestowed, was son of Sarakella of Kella family (Nagarajaiah 1997).

Historian P.N. Narasimha Murthy has affirmed: “The Kellas were Jains and that they parent first inside the Halmiḍi inscription of Kadamba kākusthavarma (430-450)” (infra), and they in the beginning belonged to the “village named Kella Puttige, giving due reputation to that meritorious own family of Jain rulers” (Narasimhamurthy 1985: 32ff.). He additionally located an inscription, which clearly installed that Jainism and Jaina clergymen had rooted inside the South Kanara coastal area before fifth century CE. scholar and epigraphist, M.B. Neginahala, analysing the Halmiḍi inscription, has convincingly set up that Vija Arasa, son of Sarakella, belonged to the historic Kella own family (Neginahāḷa 1999). Nagarajaiah’s (2014: 9296) complete dialogue has shed extra mild at the situation.

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Submitted: 27 March 2010, Revised: 09 April 2010, Accepted: 18 April 2010, Published 30 May 2010

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The duration of Cuṭus (C. 3rd century) has yielded some coins suggesting Jaina association. The famous erudite ascetic Dharasenācārya's student Puṣpadanta, who compiled the Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama, "The Scripture in Six components", started out the Vanavāsī gaccha (lineage of Jaina monks from Banavāsī) in modern-day Banavāsī, inside the third century and laid a powerful infrastructure for Jainism. From then at the Nirgrantha creed bloomed to emerge as the country religion inside the Banavāsī Kadaṃba state. The 5th century constitution of Banavāsī rulers proclaimed in unequivocal phrases - yasmin jinendrapūjā pravartate tatra tatra deśa parivruddhihi, nagarāṇām nirbhayatā tad deśa svāminā corjā (anywhere Jinendra is worshipped the ones countries prosper, cities come to be unfastened from worry, the leader of that united states of america turns into energetic) which has broader implications (Gopal 1985). They commissioned Padmāvatyālayam, the earliest temple devoted to the Jaina goddess Padmāvātīdevī, inside the fifth century, near the royal residence (Nagarajaiah 2005).

## Scenario

The transformation of written language into expressive discourse in Kannada literature was achieved by Jain writers trained in Prakrit and Sanskrit languages. Key components of literary textuality like grammar, lexicon, metrics and theme were suitably appropriated from Prakrit and localized. This process virtually accelerated literary-cultural transformation and revolution. The learned began experimenting fresh genres. The lost but known commentaries of early Jain saint- scholars constitute most momentous event in the literary-cultural-political power in Karnataka. Not surprisingly, for Kannada-Tamil-Telugu, the three major Dravidian south-Indian languages, the earliest known writers were Jains. The earliest Tamil epic *Cilppadikāram* was written by Iḷaṃgo Aḍigaḷ (C. 4<sup>th</sup> century), a Jaina poet. Among 89 earliest extant Tamil inscriptions from 3rd century BC to sixth century CE, 85 are Jain records, and speak of Jain monks and nuns who were familiar with Kannada language (Mahadevan 2003).

The vernacularization process was initiated and promoted by the champions of religious movement. This, in course of time became a model for *deśa-bhāṣā*, "language of the country", and *jana-bhāṣā āndolan*, "a movement seeking priority for the language of the people". Jains and Buddhists resisted Sanskrit's dominance and opted to local languages. Śrīvijaya (810-880), Nayasena (1112), Āṇḍayya (1235), pleaded for Kannada and opposed

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Sanskrit's sway (Ramachandran 2015). Early Tamil inscriptional details go to establish the hectic activities of Jaina elites who had started writing in the vernacular from third and second century BC. In Kerala and Andhra also, early records belong to Jaina order. An early Marāṭhī inscription, datable to 981 CE, is found at the feet Bāhubali colossus on the bigger hill at Śravaṇabelagoḷa. We cannot afford to be blind to a chain of instances supporting the early literary activities lead by Jaina literates.

Worldly compositions of Jaina writers were not restricted to praise the deeds of royals or patrons. It documented the salient features of place and regional culture. They played a major role in the cosmopolitan - vernacular transformation of Kannada literature. In the process, they also wrote both religious and nonreligious works of greater consequence. The so-called strictly religious works also added salt and pepper, and enhanced Kannada literary horizon. They raised Kannada to become an excellent literary language on par with Prakrit and Sanskrit, and empowered Kannada language.

## Kannada Cosmopolis

The statement “early Kannada literature regularly has little or nothing to do with Jainism” (LG 426) is absolutely wrong and unsupportable. SP has now not established how “early Kannada literature” has “little” or “not anything to do with Jainism”. Now it is left for us to prove how the announcement isn't sustainable. let us examine “early Kannada literature”, and learn how it has lots to do with Jainism.

Jainism discovered its 2d fatherland in Karnataka: “Jainism was the nation-creed” (Ghosh 1973: 303). it's miles widely recognized that Jaina works constitute the corpus of early Kannada literature “the earliest cultivators of Kannada language were Jains. The oldest works of any volume and fee which have come right down to us are all from the pen of Jains. The period of Jains” predominance inside the literary field may additionally justly be called the “Augustan Age of Kannada literature” (R. Narasimhachar 1969). The Kavirājamārga (KRM) mentions names of some crucial prose and verse writers.

SP has neglected the fresh records recorded by using Nāgavarma II (1042) who has shed floodlight at the early phase of (Jaina) Kannada literature. the subsequent details had been not regarded from any other source:- unluckily, many of the 9aaf3f374c58e8c9dcdd1ebf10256fa5 facts have escaped SP's interest. Kannada literature and Karnataka were an homestead of Jainism as testified through epigraphic evidences.

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The Kupaṭūru Inscription vouches for Jainism's opulence in the nation. prominent historian B.A. Saletore's (1938) famous book *Mediaeval Jainism* figures inside the bibliography but its information relevant to SP's discussions isn't always availed. Astonishingly, without difficulty on hand and recognized information in favour of Jainism's imprints inside the first millennium are marginalized. The info in pages among 423 and 428 are an unnecessary elaboration and provide an impact that the writer is vehemently arguing to marginalize Jaina achievements. I would like to expose some greater times where essential facts are missing.

Inscriptions with invocation to the Jina or Jainism emerge from fifth and 6th century. these crucial hymns provide deep and direct perception into the spiritual studies of Jains:

"Jaina inscriptions have certain special characteristics which distinguish them from others. those inscriptions and the invocatory verses have, in their personal way, enriched Kannada language and literature, and they're the forerunners of later such writings" (Nagarajaiah 2003: 4). "Such poems inform us greater about the overall devotional ethos of medieval Digambara Jainism than the extra Philosophical texts upon which scholarship has tended to concentrate" (P. Dundas, *ibid.*, blurb), "there may be additionally much to be discovered from reading them as examples of that maximum ubiquitous of Jaina genres" J.E. Cort (*ibid.*, intro.), Kelting (2001) and Yocum (1977: five) have shown that it is important to look at hymns in all languages in India.

The important thing role of Jainism within the transition from oral to written culture, and from spoken dialect to conventional literary culture needs no exaggeration. The unique historical moments of leap forward for the literary vernacular came about in fourth and fifth century. Kannada changed into lurking within the heritage as *suptagāminī*, dormant. nearby literary genres of *ovanige*, *onakevāḍu*, *cattāṇa*, *bedaṇḍe*, and *pagaraṇa* undergo the reminiscence of orality. although preliterate oral composition turned into popular, it is hard to draw a sharp line among orality and literacy. Mere oral literature isn't enough to lift the language. The soar to literary lifestyle requires favourable occasions. It desires to be underlined that mere lifestyles of a language isn't enough motive to blossom and flourish as a language of literary subculture. increasingly more political and elite elegance patronization is required. Expressive texts, translations and commentaries written by means of Jain authors boosted Kannada language to bloom into political courtly

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literary language. Usually new converts become bigots and ferocious fanatics and close eyes toward positive aspects of other faiths. But converts to Jainism were liberal. Even otherwise, Jains were cordial and accommodative. Jaina *śruta-bhaṇḍāras* (libraries) were safe custodians of both Jaina and non-Jain philosophical works. Jains were equally facile and possessed sound knowledge of *śaḍ-darśanas*, the six traditional systems of Indian philosophy (i.e., Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Vedānta and Pūrva Mīmāṃsā).

The *campū*, a mixed prose-verse narrative / literary form, was favourite of medieval poets. It looks like an invention of local Jaina poets, but its inspiration is from Prakrit poetry.

A more convincing reason for this genre affiliation derives from the fact that Jaina writers were equally at ease and familiar with Prakrit language and literature. Jaina writers, particularly commentators, introduced a new style called the *maṇi-pravāḷam*, or “crystal-coral”. It is an intermixture of words from two different languages like Kannada and Prakrit or Kannada and Sanskrit. These compound expressions are not treated as words of *arisamāsa*, “compound of hostiles”. “Jaina cultivators of Kannada language considered that a facile fusing of Sanskrit and Kannada, Prakrit and Kannada will sound pleasing. Hence, they coined, to denote such a happy blending of the foreign and native words, a new term called *maṇi-pravāḷa-śaili*, ‘crystal-coral’ style”. This was to designate such a style of combining Sanskrit words including idioms and phrases with both free and bound morphemes of the local / indigenous language. Adept Svāmī Vīrasena (816) of the Pañcastūpa *anvaya* (lineage of Jaina friars) coined the term *maṇipravāḷa* as a designator of stylistics in his magnum opus, the *Jayadhavalā*, “Victoriously Luminous”, a commentary on the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama*, “The Scripture in Six Parts”:

Readers decoded the intention of the poem and enshrined the values of the classics. In other words, the poem was for a larger audience, if not for one and all. Palace-patronised works were not confined to the leaned pundits, but were also welcomed by the common people. Explaining pragmatically rather than ontologically or literally, medieval works were understood by their contemporary readers, as the modern readers understand modern Kannada works. Pampa concludes each chapter in this non-religious epic that he is a worshipper of the Jina’s feet. Thus, even works dedicated to non-Jaina themes had their seeds on the Jaina creed.

The Oral and Written binary is well known in literature. The very concept of binary genre of the *laukika* (this worldly/ political) and *āgamika* (scriptural / religious), being complimentary to each other, is singular to Kannada and world literature. The very concept is singular to Kannada literature. For over four centuries a dichotomy of producing poems in the two complimentary genres of *laukika* or “this worldly” (political) and *āgamika* or “scriptural” (on a Jaina theme) dominated Kannada literature. The unique way of creating a double narrative by identifying the historic person and patron with a mythological character seems to have been pioneered by Ravikīrti (Nagarajaiah 2005: 205-7). Corroborative evidences establish that it was Śrīvijaya who heralded the literary genre. He was followed by Ādiguṇavarma, Pampa, Ponna and Ranna. Ponna and Ranna achieved greater feat by identifying their patrons with the characters of the Purāṇas, also in the *āgamika kāvya* (scriptural Jaina poem). Apart from royal patrons, Kannada poets enjoyed patronage of affluent families and officials. Influential citizens like Attimabbe and her son (Aṅṅigadeva) and her father (Mallapayya) were eager to host writers (K. Hampana 1995). In Karnataka Jaina inscriptions are extant from fifth century and literary works from early ninth century. Tumbalūrācārya (C. 650) had written the *Cūḍāmaṇi* (lost), a voluminous scholium in Kannada. In Tamilnāḍu Jaina inscriptions begin from third century BC, and bear Kannada imprints. During this period, Malayāḷam had not yet branched off from Tamil. Jinavallabha’s (950) Jaina inscription of poetic excellence written in three languages (Kannada, Telugu, Sanskrit), is the earliest in Telugu country. All the earliest known and extant works in Kannada are by the Jaina order. Because some early Jain writers wrote in Sanskrit, SP asks: “Why did they (the Jains) not write in vernacular languages?” Not that the question is invalid, but the tone and tenor is not in good taste, and the conclusions are erroneous.

Moreover, this question is as meaningless as asking – “Why did not Brahmins write in vernacular before Jains?”; “Why did not Brahmins write in Sanskrit earlier to Jains?”

The Jains wrote earlier and became forerunners. After a silence of some centuries, Brahmins also started writing in the local language. The Brahmanas were silent till Jain writers had prepared the ground for literary models. Sanskrit was also employed by Jains. Śankarācārya (788-820), Rāmānujācārya (1017-1137) and Madhvācārya (1238-1317) wrote famous commentaries. But by the time they started writing commentaries,



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Koṇḍakunda, Tumbalūra, Akalaṃka, Pūjyapāda, Śāmakunda, Vīrasena, Jinasena, and a galaxy of other Jaina *ācāryas* had already composed commentaries in Sanskrit. For the sake of counter-argument, let us analyse the situation. If the Jains did not inaugurate Kannada literature, then who did it? This should be clearly established. Even if Jain writers did not inaugurate Kannada literature, does it not warrant an argument of this nature? Why did others not write even in Sanskrit, let alone Kannada, before the Jains? Does it mean they were illiterate, or did they not exist in Karnataka? How to interpret their long silence? If not from Jain literati, from where do we trace literary beginnings?

SP has missed many details of the Jaina socio-cultural, religious and literary impact. Paṭṭa-Jinālaya Gosāsa, the Yāpanīya, Jinavallabha's charter, and the text *Lokavibhāga* (Division of the Universe). The Yāpanīya (Jaina) sect, a golden link between the Digambara and Śvetāmbara, which played a prominent role from fifth century to twelfth and enjoyed the patronage of the palace and public, is also not mentioned.

The importance of Jinavallabha's (910-70) unique inscription is missing. Jinavallabha, younger brother of Pampa, was the earliest Telugu poet of merit, who wrote hundred years before Nannayabhaṭṭa (1040). He was adept in Kannada, adroit in Telugu and skilled in Sanskrit. He brilliantly scripted the famous Kurkyāla inscription in three languages. It records poet Pampa's genealogy and achievements. Its linguistic, literary and historical rarities in the entire corpus of Telugu, Sanskrit and Kannada inscriptions, needs to be underlined. It was the first and foremost brilliantly written record, which flows like beautiful *khaṇḍa-kāvya*, minor poetical composition (Nagarajaiah 2014: 254-7).

One more important Prakrit text, the *Lokavibhāga*, a Nirgrantha surrogate canonical text on cosmology by the ascetic Sarvanandi, has escaped SP's notice. It was completed on 25 August 458 CE, in the 22<sup>nd</sup> regnal year of the Pallava king Siṃhanandin I (436-60), at Pātalika (Tirupattirippuliyūr) in the North Arcot District of Tamilnāḍu. This rare Prakrit work contains 1536 verses. It was later translated into Sanskrit by Siṃhasūri (c. 12<sup>th</sup> century).

SP rightly observed how the percentage of Sanskrit in inscriptions diminished drastically during the Rāṣṭrakūṭa epoch, giving room for Kannada. It is Nagarajaiah (1999: 54f.) who first established the fact based on all the extant Rāṣṭrakūṭa inscriptions:

Once again, this statement is out of context, because pleading for Brāhmaṇas

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writing later was unnecessary. Moreover, in the context of Kannada literature and Karnataka history, this statement is erroneous. Brāhmaṇa writers entry was only at a far later stage, and have gracefully acknowledged that they derived inspiration from Jains classics. Jaina ascetic and scholar-poet Vādirāja (C. 990-1000), who had the sobriquet of *rāja-guru*, “royal-teacher”, was respected by one and all. Jagadekamalla Jayasiṃha (1018-1042), king of the Kalyāṇa Cālukyas, poets Nāgavarma II (1042) and Śāntinātha (1062) were his disciples. Brāhmaṇa poet Durgasiṃha (1031) was also Vādirāja’s *śiṣya* and got his poem the *Pañcatantra* corrected by Vādirāja. Durgasiṃha has remembered a galaxy of Jain poets - Śrīvijaya, Asaga, Pampa, Ponna, Kannamayya and Manasija. Rudrabhaṭṭa (1175), another Brāhmaṇa poet, also mentions many Jaina poets who were his predecessors - Pampa, Ponna, Gajāṃkuśa, Kaṇṇapa, Śaṃkhavarma, Śāṃtivarma, Guṇavarma and Manasija, and cherishes for their poetic qualities to adorn his poem. Thus, Brāhmaṇa writers were aware of the glory and contribution of Jaina literatures. Nāraṇappa alias Kumāravayāsa (1419-1446) wrote the epic *Bhārata Kathāmañjari* (*Gadugina Bhārata*) in *Bhāminī Ṣatpadi* metre, decoding what Pampa and Ranna wrote in *campū* style. Thus, the clinching evidences from the contemporary literary fraternity are self-explanatory and confirm Jaina imprints.

Despite being aware of the fact that the relationship between language, literature and religion is superficial, it is surprising why SP stumbled on this irrelevant topic of Brahmin and non- Brahmin, which dilutes the cordial atmosphere that prevailed during the period under discussion. The entire argument on this subject does not lead us anywhere.

Despite commissions and omissions, it should be placed on record that SP has done a commendable service to Kannada language and literature. His devotion and command over Kannada literature and political history is transparent. He quotes from local classics and gives English translations, and the readers experience a taste of Kannada. There may be excellent books or monographs on the language, literature, culture and polity of each state and country, either in English or in local languages. Albeit, a comprehensive work of this magnitude, covering entire Southern Asia, is very rare.

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