



# CONCEPTS OF JAINA MONKS AND NUNS IN INDIAN SOCIETY

SMT. VIMALA S. SANGOLLI

REASERCH SCHOLAR

OPJS UNIVERSITY,

CHURU, RAJASTAN

## INTRODUCTION

India may be called the homeland of monasticism and ascetic practices. Jaina monarchism means the collective life of the monks and nuns organized at the fixed place where they live together under one authority for spiritual liberation. According to Jaina philosophy, all 24 Jaina Thirthankaras were born as human being but they have attained a state of perfection or enlightenment through meditation and self realization. They are the Gods of Jainas as per Pruthi, R.K. (2004).

Lord Mahaveera's ways of meditation, days of austerities, and mode of behaviour furnish a beautiful example for monks and nuns in religious life. He attracted people from all walks of life, rich and poor, kings and commoners, men and women, princes and priests, touchable and untouchables.

He organized his followers, in to a four-fold order, namely

- Monk (Sadhu)
- Nun (sadhvi)
- Layman (Shravaka)
- Laywomen (Shravika)

Later on they are known as Jainas according to Pruthi, R.K. (2004). Here the researcher is more concentrated on Jaina monks and nuns.

## CONCEPT OF JAINA MONKS

Monks appeared in Jainism right from the time of the first Tirthankara Rishaba, who had a following of 84,000 monks headed by Rishabasena Parshanatha had 16,000 monks headed by Aryadatta. Mahavira had 14,000 monks headed by Indrabhuti as per Deo S.B.

According to Kunda-Kunda Jaina monk is;

*Dehadisangarahio Monakaseahim sayalaparichatto*

*Appa appammi rao sa bhavalingi have sahu*

*(Prabhrita- Samgraha- Kunda- Kunda)*

It mean only he is as ascetic in reality who does not possess any material belongings, has completely castoff ego or pride, and is totally absorbed in realising the self (soul, atma). It also means that Jaina monk and missionary carrying the light of the doctrine penetrated in to the farthest recesses of the land and established a shrine and monastery of his creed. Leading a life of devotion and selfless service, he made great impression on the mind and heart of the masses that were attracted towards him. The Jaina monk attended not only to their spiritual yearnings and religious needs, but also looked to their material requirements, Desai, P.B (2001).

According to Deo, S.B, the fundamentals of monk's life are four,

- Nudity, (acelakha)
- Tonsure (loca)
- Indifference to the body (vosatta sarirada) and
- A suitable place for meditation (Padilihana).

**TEN VIRTUES OF MONKS**

Along with the five great vows, monks strive after the ten-fold virtues of a self controlled ascetic. The layperson follows these virtues partially.

- Kshamaa – Forbearance, Forgiveness
- Maardava – Modesty, Humility
- Aarjava – Straightforwardness, Candor
- Saucha - Contentment
- Satya - Truthfulness
- Samyam- Self-restraint, Control of senses
- Tapa – Austerity, Penance
- Tyaga - Renunciation
- Akinchanya – Non- attachment
- Brahmacharya - Celibacy, chastity

Monks are required to bear self-control towards all living beings friends and foes alike. In addition to the ten-fold virtues Monks live on alms, do not eat food at night, do not use any kind of conveyance, and do not possess any property.

Jaina monks were experts in sastras, logic, astrology, grammar, philosophy, politics, music, poetry, mathematics etc. The epigraphs describe the debating ability and intellectual supremacy of jaina monks or teachers. The jaina monk Nagachandrasiddanthadeva was well versed in sastras, astrology and distinguished advocate of the Jaina doctrine. Works on philosophy, religion and logic were written by Jaina monks to which the epigraphs bear testimony. The studious habits of jaina monks, their skills in debate and their way of convincing others can be understood from the epithets they bore.

## CONCEPT OF JAINA NUNS

The history of Jaina order of nuns is a unique feature of Jainism right from the times of their first tirthankara rishaba.

According to Digambara liberation was impossible without complete non-attachment. But Svetambara believed that women can attain moksha because they believe that the 19<sup>th</sup> tirthankara Mallinatha was a woman.

The Digambaras, being more severe in their view of asceticism, differed from the Svetambaras in this and another important respect, viz., as regards their treatment of women. The Svetambaras admitted that women could attain salvation and hence allowed them to become nuns. There are rules in their sacred books for the guidance of nuns no less than for the monks as stated in Kalpa Sutra. The fundamentals of moral discipline were the same for Digambara and Svetambara nuns. But the attitude of Digambara towards nuns was more strict than that of Svetambara.

The nuns were called as Ajjis and Kanti. According to P.B. Desai, the Ajjis, Ajji being of the tadbhava of sanskrit Arya, and sometimes as Kantis. The Ajji and Kantis seem to denote two different categories of nuns. The Ajjis, who are more numerous, represent, probably, that ordinary class of woman who had renounced the world and taken to the life of asceticism. They appeared to have been a special class of nuns who owned higher status in the monastic organisation with which they were intimately associated by the rigid rules of the order.

There are epigraphs which nuns being disciples of teachers causing nisidhi stone for her teachers after their death.

*Ex; Tejabbekanti caused a nishidi stone installed for Trikalayogi, who observed fasting for three days and attain salvation.*

## DIFFERENT RITUALS FOR INVITING DEATH

For monks, the epigraphs refers to different rituals deaths such as

- Sallekana-marana,
- Sanyasana-marana,
- Aradhana-marana,
- Ratnatraya,
- Ingini-marana also called Pandita-marana and
- Samadi-marana followed and attained moksha by the Jaina teachers or monks.

There are references states that nuns ended their lives by fasting upto death. The modes of death were many like attaining death by sanyasana observing vrathas, and performing vows. Jakkiyabbakanti, daughter of Nijabbekanti disciple of Nemichandrabbhattara of kundakundanvaya and belladugana, observed sanyasana and attain moksha.

## STATES OF NUNS COMPARED TO MONKS

The monks were given seniority over nuns. It is said that a newly initiated monk was superior to a nun who practised the life of a nun over a longer period. The Kalpa Sutra laid down many a rule restring social intercourse between monks and nuns. The terms in which these rules are stated betray an utter lack of faith in woman's nature, if not in human nature itself. Nuns attained moksha by performing rituals like monks. The mode of inviting death preferred by nuns were observing sanyasana, vrathas and vows but the mode of death found among monks were sallekana, inginimarana, Ratnatraya and Samadhi-marana.

## CONCLUSION

In the Jaina religion monks and nuns were real transmitters of Jaina religious thoughts and practices. Jaina monarchism means the collective life of the monks and nuns organized at the fixed place where they live together under one authority for spiritual liberation. It appears to be the most important development in India during the early medieval period. The study of contributions and achievements of Jaina monks and nuns also deals with how there were schisms in Jainism which further led to the various sub-divisions in Jaina monastic order.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- DEO S. B, HISTORY OF JAINA MONACHISM. PP-57,61,70.
- DESAI, P.B. (2001) JAINISM IN SOUTH INDIA AND SOME JAINA EPIGRAPHS, JAINA SAMSKRITI SAMRAKSHAKA SANGHA, SOLAPUR.
- KALPA SUTRA, RULERS FOR YATIS, S. B. E. XXII.P,297.
- PRUTHI, R.K. (2004) JAINISM AND INDIAN CIVILIZATION, DISCOVERY PUBLISHING HOUSE NEW DELHI.
- SHARMA S. R (1940), JAINISM AND KARNATAKA CULTURE, KARNATAKA HISTORICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY DHARWAD.
- SHASHI KANT, HATTIGUMPA INSCRIPTION OF KHARAVELA P-62.

