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Biotic Scale to Sign and Symbol :

Concept of Vira in Jaina-Saiva Cults: A Comparative Study



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Abstract

All religions are, basically, titular, signal-prone and symbolic and Jainism also can not be and is not an exception. The religious practices, which are at the ground level, with in a social reach are all 'titular'. By titular, we can find an adjectival expression to 'title' (N), which means: "right or claim, especially, to the ownership of property, a word used into speaking to or about him". Titular means, "having a certain title or position, but no real authority." As such, one can understand by 'titular', name-sake function to speak about theosophy.

It is signal-prone- having a signal to say. By signal it means, "something intended to warn, command or give a message- such as a special sound or action." Adjectivally, it also means, "not ordinary-conspicuous". Being signal prone, one can expect a not ordinary and conspicuous message.

It is symbolic. The word symbolic is an adjectival form of symbol, which means: "something which represents or suggests something else such as an idea or quality.....sign or figure, which expresses a sound." Symbolic means, : "if being or using a symbol".

Hence, one can understand that all religions are : (a) having certain title, no real authority; (b) having something intended to give, command or a message and (c) having something representing an idea or quality. Jainism is also having such features.

It is so, because, Jainism is not the one and the only religion. There are plethora of religions, and even not having a religion-like -thing is also a religion. Its title lies in its antiquity being traceable to Rig Vedic period. Secondly, it gives through command a message, which says 'Syadvada'. By Syadvada, it is understand that, "nothing can be predicted with certainty, because, the matter is eternal, creation is internal and self-sown". This message wants to perpetuate an ideal of not thinking of a God and promoting self-imposed discipline to become a siddha-successful. Thirdly, Jainism stands as a symbol for spiritual conquest. It is a symbolic expression of movement from something of the eternal matter to everything of the eternity, by matter, through matter and for matter. Even though many cults speak of a spiritual sublimity, no where the idea of conquest is used so deliberately and expressively in the early cults, as in with Jaina tradition.

A gradual hierarchicalisation of the cult system acquires an attention, with its corroborative effects in which the Jaina is to be successful. This gives the idea of 'Vura bhava' and one who gets success in that context is called 'Vira' or 'Jina', the conqueror.

Objectives

This article aims basically, to understand the idea of 'Vira' in the growth of Jainism from the period of Rishbhanatha and further to Mahavira and afterwards. It also aims to discuss the expansion of Jainism from forest life to pastoral life and then to the peasant zone finally reaching the urban zone, forming the total biotic scale. Similarly the life of Jainism in the post-Mahavira period is dealt with as a sketch to substantiate its changes basing on the evidence from epigraphs too. In this study, certain practices in Vira Saiva and Saiva cults are comparatively assessed in the light of Jainism, and its relations with other cults.

Keywords:

Introduction

This term Vurabhava is widely and variedly used in the Indian cultural dimensions. 'Vira', in literature, is considered to be one among the important nine 'rasas'. The popular literary custom goes to say that, the

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hero of any epic or play must be either a representation of Sringara (romance) or and Vira (prowess). The basic idea or sthaayii bhaava of Vira is called 'Utsaaha' . which expresses 'Virya'.

Virya is a word, which is derived from the root 'vri varane' - to select. Hence, virya lyes with what to select and getting control of. The actions which are representing this idea of selection qualify an virabhava. If spoken from the material perspective it is to select and echoes the idea of natural selection..... Selecting the nature; selecting by nature and also selecting naturally. Hence, 'Vira' is a personification or symbol of the idea of selection.

The activity of a hero, how he expresses him in a process of selection, was depicted by Jayapa Senani in his famous 'Nritta Ratnavali', a treatise on dance, datable to 13th century A.D.

He considers 'Vira' as expression (Drishti) along with the other eight, 'Kantaa', 'Haasya', 'Raudri', 'Karuna', 'Adbhala', 'Bibhatsa', 'Bhayanaka'. He says that the pupil of the eye will be blazing wide, undisturbed and the eye is opening in the middle expressing sublimity. The eye lashes show this an idea by a vigorous movement. It expresses a spirit of 'dual' in identifying enemy and fighting with.

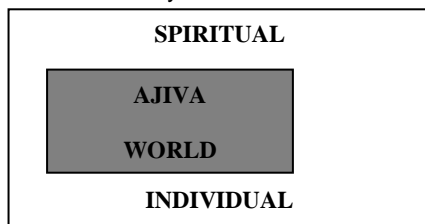
Hence, the 'Vira' has blazing, undisturbed, delightful, catholic vision and perspective with a spirit to attack, what he sees and what he selects.

Where as this 'Virabhava' was also expressed in 'Tantricism'. It has been told that, "keeping on with meditation being sitting in the lap of a beautiful, young naked woman". It shows in saadhana, exercise for spiritual advancement, an un-diverted and un-daunted effort to give up what all that lures, and makes the man to fall behind.

One more expression is found in Saiva traditions. The words like Vira, Viraachara, Viranga, Virasiromandapa and Vira Saiva, respectively speak of a hero, a vigorous heroic commitment, a own limbs and himself and a trait among the Saivaites with robust fanaticism respectively. The Saiva mendicant is committed to his cult, God, and Guru that they seldom allowed anybody even to lodge in the constructions made by and made for the Saivaites. A Chalukyan record from Vijayawada goes to say, that, in a mandapa, if the members other than the Saivaites reside, they accrue the sin of killing a cow in Banaras.

This Virabhava has to be understood of its activity in the Jaina idea of: "the world is real; the world is material while the souls are spiritual Matter, the principle of motion (dharma) and the principle of rest (adhama) space and time constitute the non-soul (ajiva). Hence, the entire religious identity evolved as: a step from one reality to another reality by passing through and conquering 'ajiva'. One who comes out is siddha.. successful and jina..... conqueror.

This hierarchy can be described as:



As such, an individual, Jiva, fighting with 'Ajiva' to become a spiritual entity 'Jivaajiva'. Once an individual fights "to remove the crust of karma matter on soul by rigid moral discipline" he can be omniscient, as "omniscience is liberation".

Structure

The exponents of Jainism in different periods were known as Tirthankaras. They were 24 in number. Rishabhanatha, Ajitanatha, Sambhavanatha, Abhinandananaatha, Sumatinatha, Sitalanatha, Padmaprabha, Suparavanatha, Chandraprabha, Suvidianatha, Sitalanatha, Sreyamanatha, Vasupujya, Vimalanatha, Anantanatha, Dharmanatha, Santinatha, Kunthanatha, Aranatha, Mallinatha, Munisuvrat, Naminatha, Neminatha, Parsvanatha and Mahavira constitute the panth of the Tirthankaras.

Of them, Rishabhanatha was the founder of the cult and also known as Adinatha. He was datable to c. 2800 B.C. Where as the modern Jainism had its offshoots in the tenets laid down by Parsvanatha and Mahavira the later datable to c. 600 B.C. (Mahavira left this world in 527 B.C.)

All these Tirthankaras in general promoted in Jainism, a spirit to fight with Ajiva, to become Jivaajiva, one with the matter, one with the soul, nourishing an ideal of infinite permanence. For them, 'Virabhava' is a sign of acquisition of infinite permanence. For them, 'Virabhava' is a sign of acquisition of infinite permanency, also a symbol of trials to internally wipe off the 'Pudgala' which represents 'ajiva'.

Rishabhanatha is the real founder of Jaina tradition. He belongs to the Vairaaja dynasty of Bithoor in 29th century B.C. married Jayanti, the daughter of Indra, left the rajya to his son Bharata, and practised severe penance and became a siddha.

Among the rulers of Vairaaja dynasty, Priyavrata, son of Svarochishamanu possessed lands in Africa, and Bharata, son of Rishabhnanatha conquered islands in the Indian ocean.

Rishabhanatha, the first Jina expressed the following tenets.

1. Salvation os possible without the idea of God.
2. Matter is eternal, creation is internal and self-sown.
3. Moral self-culture.
4. Perfect preservation of all life.

Rishabhanatha represents an age, when Rigveda recognised powerful Sudra kings and also when, "some tribes of the Northern Aryans appeared to have been antogonistic to the Vedic religion. They were atheistic and did not believe in Gods, soul, religious rites, next world and lived in the eternity of matter".

The age of Rishabhanatha also witnesses certain Rudra families, dominating the Aryan scene; the Rudras being, "able bodied, terrible, wearing gold ornaments, youthful, terrible like beasts and destroyer of foes".

The Rudra and Rudriyas were treated as occupying forbidden places and they were "in every respect analogous to the Theoi Appomapaioi of Greece".

Even though Jainism was not known to Rigveda, its founder Rishabhanatha was mentioned in

Rigveda, along with one more Jaina Tirthankara, Arishtanemi. Rishabhanatha was also considered to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu along with Kapila and Buddha among the 21 Avataara of Lord Vishnu.

Even though this conjecture is very much latter, it is due to an expression where in Lord Vishnu himself was considered as Upendra (one who is in the vicinity of / next to Indra).

Hence, by the time of Rishabhanatha himself, the following concepts emerged into Jainism.

1. Relevance to Indra.
2. Significance to agriculture, bull and cattle pens.
3. Legality to caste system.
4. Desertion of sacrifices.
5. Non-violence.
6. Isolation.
7. Self-discipline.
8. Truthfulness.

Of these eight, relevance to Indra gave way for the Jaina mythical traditions. Significance to agriculture, bull, cattle, and desertion of sacrifices created an affiliation to land, responsibility towards socio-economic life and also relations with followers of Rudra. So also, this concept of affinity to and attest to protect one's own land is giving the scope for the origin of concept of 'Vira'. It also gave significance to 'Karma' ideology, where in, 'Karma' is described as, "infra-sensible particles of matter generated by passion and evil actions". Whereas, non-violence, isolation, self-discipline and truthful gave way for individual advancement to spiritual life. In this concept he can become a Jina and Siddha.

Post-Rishabhanatha Period

As the period of Rishabhanatha and his immediate future is datable to the Rigvedic tradition, the Post-Rishabhanatha period is datable between C. 2700-700 B. C.

In this period, the latter Vedic cultures became significant. The kings grew in number; became sarvabhaumas from the level of Rajans. They lost direct control with 'Gotras' and land, and maintained their survival on the promotion of the three Vedas and sacrifices. The kings gave scope for the promotion of mercantilism. No coimage came into light. During this period, one important development is the adaptation of Rudras into Vedic pantheon, under the name Siva. It has been described: "Atharva veda certainly represent a traditional stage between the concept of Rudra in the Rigveda as the systemic philosophy of Saivism in the Svetasvataropanisad.

It is essential in this context to know about the antecedents of Rudra.

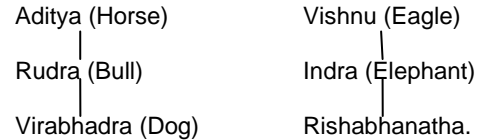
Rudra- his antecedents

Saivism, which had developed leaps and bounds with different subjects like, Samanya Saiva, Vira Saiva and other were related with Siva and his proto-type 'Rudra'. The particulars of Rudra were mentioned very much in Rudra sukta of Rigveda. Sage Grtsnamada detailed about Rudra very much.

Prof. Bipin Behari Sen made a comment on the signs of zodiac in Rigveda as: "Siva is the bull-bannered God. Formerly his conveyance was a dog; replaced by bull latter on. The sign Taurus, is the bull, its side is Sirius, called Rudra." It was also mentioned, "when the Northern Daityas grew a little weakened,

the Southern Daityas came forward against the Devas. South now became the dancing ground of Mars. Rudra (Siva) again led an army and after a hard struggle killed Tripura". Rudra was more a ferocious one. Rudra was considered to be the God of people next to Vishnu, and one of the Antariksha of Madhyamadevatas, the others being Apmanapat, Vayu, Vata, Apah, Parjan Matarisvan, besides Indra and was invoked to avert lightning. Rudra in Aryan sense meant roarer (from the root Rue=Rodane).

If we consider this situation the following hierarchical net work can be identified in the location of Gods :



The famous chanting according to Vedic tradition invoking the death ceremonies consider as:

"Vasu rudra aditya svarupan" (referring respectively to father, grand-father and great-grand father) a cosmogoneology that made one's existence possible on earth. The position of Indra and Rudra is similar having respective mounts of elephant and bull. Elephant is symbol for power and bull is for agriculture. Being the proto-type of Rudra, Virabhadra mounts on a dog and he is kept away from the habitation. When Rudra turned out into Siva, by the period of Yajurveda itself, Siva was provided with the mount bull. So Rudra and Virabhadra present the tradition of agriculture. Siva hold water, Rudra in-charge of bull to cultivate and Virabhadra the dog to protect and make one's own self conscious of nature and time.

If we consider Rishabhanatha next to Indra, he can be equal to Virabhadra, the proto-type of Rudra.

Virabhadra represents a ferocious tradition protecting the settlements and Jainas represent at an early date the foresters.

In the earliest stage, the land zones of forest, pro-forest (pastoral) and rural (Village) zones were respectively occupied by the followers of Jaina, Rudras and Vaidika traditions. When, by the latter Vedic period, the ideology of Vedic sects moved away from the rural zone to the newly found, towns, the followers of the cult of Rudra and Virabhadra moved to the villages and the followers of Jaina tradition occupied by the pastoral zone (pro-forest area). This pastoralism can be found by the times of Arishtanemi (Neminatha).

In this period the bull of the Jainas was taken over by the Rudra cult. Virabhadra remained with dog and Rudra after transforming into Siva still continued to be with the bull, representing the agriculture sector. As the towns were being placed in a situation of being supported by the village hinterland, Rudra was considered to be providing welfare, (Siva) and creator of peace (Samkara). Mahabharata considers Sankara of Rudra as a form of Vishnu. In this stage Jainism was in full darkness, until it was revived by Parsvanatha.

During this period, the Rudriya and Jaina agricultural tradition merged equalising them as 'Vira'

(hero). This can be understood from later examples that Virabhadra and his followers like Bhairava remained sub-servant to Rudra-Siva, being ferocious remained safe-guard to earth, resorted to offering their lives and services to the welfare of villages, and even resorted to self-immolation, by cutting off one's own hands, tongue and head.

This ideal of Rudra's sect was adopted by the Jainas is clear from the ideal practice of Sallekhana and claiming them as Viras not having anything of their own, even clothes. Bhairava and Virabhadra are depicted generally naked.

No Jaina tirthankara spoke of self-killing or nakedness. They stood for killing the internal 'pudgala' but not the body. They wanted to cultivate the thought of non-ownership in mind, but not representing the same through the nakedness. This is evident, very much in Mahavira, the last thirthankara, giving up clothes, which was not accepted by Parsvanatha, the penultimate Tirthankar.

One more important evidence, that, Jainism had sufficiently identified itself with the cult of Rudra was found in the names of Sasanadevis like, Chakresvari, Sasanadevi of Rishabhanath, Kali, Sasanadevi of Suparsvanatha, Mahakal, Sasanadevi of Pushpadanta, Gauri, Sasanadevi of Sreyamsanatha, Ambika, Sasanadevi of Neminatha and Siddhayika, Sasanadevi of Mahavira.. directly speak of affiliations to the cult of Rudra Even though scholars may argue them as an impact of Hinduism on Jainism, actually it must be treated as that of Rudra cult, but not of Siva, wherein Siva became more prominent a Vedic God of grass tradition and Rudra remained a representation of little tradition.

Parsvanatha-Mahavira Epoch

This is the chronological base, when the tenets of modern Jainism came into existence by the efforts of parasvanatha and Mahavira and can be dated between C. 700–527 B.C.

During this period the socio-economic set up had sufficiently changed. The development of the shodasa mahajanapadas, amply justify the growing population, political segments and also the varying income variables. The institutions like 'Nigamas' and 'Srenis' which were not found in the post-Rishabhanatha period, made their appearance. Jainism still remained a theosophical aspect, individual oriented and it has reputation for self-elevation. The concept of self-elevation, replaced the self-immolation, and this trait gave way for the ideals of 'Ahimsa' (Non-violence), 'Satya' (truthfulness), 'Asteya' (Not to hold property) and 'Aparigraha' (not to go for alms). Vardhamana Mahavira added one more ideal..... Sacchila (chastity) and tried to revive the earliest ideologies which the post-Rishabhanatha phase represented.

But this phase had further more competitive ideology personified through Buddhism.

Even though, Vardhamana and Buddha tried to take a patent of their respective religion forms from the thought of Kapila, as mentioned in Sankhya darsana, Buddhism could develop more contemporaneity; and Jainism due to its conventional affiliations to the Rigvedic culture lagged behind the Buddhism. Buddhism established completely a new

society, avoiding the Vedic cultural ideals. As such it could prosper more, but for an occasional significance given in Jainism. Buddhism contributed for a society, where in the individuals is only the Buddha and the rest a part of Sangha. The significance was bestowed more to 'Dharma' than to 'Yama and Niyama' representing self-discipline.

In this conjecture, Vardhamana was cognisant of his duty. He spoke more of a Vira concept, directly related to the land and people and not Jina concept, which speaks of individual affiliation to spiritual life. Even though he himself was also considered as Jina, the modality turned to make him a Mahavira (the great hero) never known to Jaina thought, as he made efforts to popularise the convention sticken Jainism and kept it on wheels.

In fact, the Sarvashti vaada philosophy of Buddhism remained off shoot of the Jaina thought of the world reality.

The period of Mahavira outspokenly established the idea of reality, as a basic priority than that of soul and spirit.

Post-Mahavira Period

During this period Jainism could become and urban religion. As long as Buddhism was practically dominating Urban zone, Jainism could be restricted to the rural zone. When Buddhism reaped a decline Jaina religious groups became substitutes to the Buddhist activity. The ideas like Sangha, Stupa, affiliation to Nigamas and Srenis, were taken over by the Jainas; they resorted to building Basatis, the trading centres were called as 'Bastis', and Jainism lost its touch with the rural zone. By that time Jainism was adopted by the invaders. Jainism lost its spiritual affiliations and turned completely into social cult.

In this stage, religious practices led for mass-congregations. The sympathy for truthfulness and non-violence were lost. They became the heroes to fight but not the heroes to protect the land.

At this stage, the Chalukyas stand as the best example for adopting Jainism, and the same tradition was continued by the kakatiya also. The Cholas who remained contemporary to the Chalukyas of Kalyani, remained very much neutral to jaina thought. It adopted certain Saivite principles at this stage also. The Jaina saints were called as 'Arugan' and also 'Arulalivendan', which means people with piety. The Saivism, which remained a staunch supporter of the caste system influenced the Jaina temples and examples are found where in Jaina temples were named as 'Caityalaya', 'Catta Jainalaya' and 'Brahma Jinalaya'. Of these three 'Catta Jainalaya' was dated year 6 of Chalukya Vikrama Era = 1082 A.D. and Brahmajinalaya was dated to S. 1200=1278 A.D.

When the Kalachuri interregnum suspended the Chalukyan rule during 1157–1182 A.D. and Basava promulgated Virasaivism from Kalyanapuri Saivism moved towards the urban centres and gradually drove away Jainism.

Findings

In this process from C. 2800 B.C. to C. 1278 A.D. Jainism had undergone the following changes.

1. it started its life from the forests with a nucleus idea of becoming a Jina.

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2. In the second stage it reached the pastoralism, when it could adopted the principles of the cult of Rudra.
3. In the third stage, that is during the period of Mahavira, Jainism remained a challenging rural cult.
4. In the post- Mahavira era, Jainism became a substituted for all activities of the Buddhists in urban areas. Thus at this stage, Jaina religion lost touch with the perspective of isolation, and self-discipline. It became a mass cult with Bastis. In this state In this state it had to adjust with Saivism.
5. Finally, with the ushering of Vira Saiva ideology, Jainism lost its patent.

In these stages the biotic scale from forest zone to urban zone is very much clear in the example of Anantapur district.

The epigraphic evidence goes to say, that in Anantapur dist. Jaina settlements are found at: Togarakunca (Dharmavaram Taluk), Gutti, Kondakondla (Gutti taluk), Amarapuram, Hemavathi and Pata Sivaram (madakasira taluk) and Rayadurgam (Raydurgam taluk). All these places are falling within the ecotone zone of forest-peasantry zone only. The prevalence of hills, dry climate, occupation by bushy forests is main characteristic of these area. Wherever the rivers are following: Pennar (near Gutti), Hagari (near Rayadurgam) and Jayamangali (near Hemavathi) formed the zones of peasantry. In the places mentioned above, Gutti, Rayadurgam and Hemavathi remained the urban centres and the rest constitute the rural zone.

In these place references wer made to the Jaina groups of Mula sangha and Nandi sangha; of Pustaka gachcha and Sarasvati Gaccha and Desiya, Kanur and Balatkara ganas and all considered unanimously to be of kondakaundanvaya. When it had reached the Urban zone the cult developed insitutions like Basadis, also called Jinalayas.

Conclusion

As such, all 'Vira's are not Jinas, but all Jinas are Viras. The fore-runners for modern Jainism, Parsvanatha and Mahavira motivated themselves towards this idal only. Both Parsva and Mahavira proved to be more Vuras, and Vardhamana also equipped his followers with a way to become Jina and Siddha too. The interspacing period between Jina tradition and Vira tradition can be sketched in the fokkowing way.

Thus, in the post Rishabhanatha period, Rudra could become Siva. Jainists could occupy pastoral life, embracing the commitment for life being 'Viras and to kill even themselves just for land.

This can be accepted due to the concept of jainism, that world is realy, what we see is real, and to fight for preserving what we see make a person a hero (Vira) and a person who becomes a Siddha, in this process could be a successful conqueror (Siddha-Jina).

Thus by this end of the Post-Rishabhanatha period (C. 700 B.C.) Jainism and th cult of Rudra could become one, where as Siva could be treated as a mighty God with systemic philosophy, the cults of Rudra and Jina remained cults at the village level.

As, "the Buddhist doctrine of change and of nothingness, which postulates that all things are transitory, was contrary to facts", Vardhamana's shrewdness rose to the occasion to make a fact and to deal with a fact as a fact. Convention yet made hime not to gallop. As such for an individual elevation, the idea of spiritual reality was given more significance and the saadhaka became 'Digambara' (naked); whereas for social living the reality of the world is more significant. As the world, according to Jainas, "contains being and becoming; permanence and change; unity and plurality, generality and particularity" Mahavira spoke of samyak Darsan (Integrated vision), Samyak Jnana (Integrated Knowledge) and Samyak Charita (Integrated Action) to understand this complex system. It promoted the Svetambara tradition.

It is also to be found that, in all these places the Saiva institutions made their appearance. near Gutti, Pamidi represents Bhogisvara, Konakondala represents Mallikarjuna, Mangesvara, Numambesvara, Nannesvara, Siddhesvara, Nolambesvara and Doddesvara all from Hemavathi, Siddhesvara Mallikarjunadeva and Signesvara Mahadeva from Uravakonda do stand as fine examples. In these evidences the very name Siddesvara inevitably associated with jaina siddha tradition was taken over by the Saiva groups of early Rudra origin.

Finding though the example also, it can be stated that, in the five stages, the Jaina teachers also changed from Siddhas to jainas, Jinas to Vira and Viras to Mahaviras. That is why Mahavira has Siddhayika as his Sasanadevi, where in the Siddha concept is equivocal to such wording 'Chakresvari' of Rishabhanath, where in 'Chakra' representing latter 'Sri Chakra' was symbole of energy. Once who holds an identity, title, singal and symbol of such energy could become a Vira.

Thus, between a prolonged coercion between the biotic scale and time scale, the symbol of Vira became a sign of Virya.... prowess. By this stage the relaity of the world is more established than the reality of spirit and spiritual identity.

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