

Julia A.B. Hegewald

**Jainism Under Threat: Extreme Forms
of Dependency in Medieval Karnataka,
South India**

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South India**

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eds. Janico Albrecht, Jeannine Bischoff, Sarah Dusend

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Julia A.B. Hegewald

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This book is dedicated to the memory of
Norbert Michael Graf
12 May 1968–25 August 2022

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1 Introduction: Medieval Jainism and Dependency Studies

Dependency studies examine the dependency of certain individuals as well as of particular societal, social and religious groups on one another, with a particular emphasis on examining situations of severe asymmetrical dependency. In most instances, the story of such strong unequal dependencies is an account of which communal group has access to the resources which are unavailable to others. These commodities may be food stuffs, water, raw materials, but also access to knowledge, the right to dwell in a certain area or other privileges, political power as well as the right of entry to or advantages along the path to salvation, to mention but a few. If some individuals or groups of a society have only restricted access to resources and cannot escape this situation, this results in uneven power relations and asymmetrical dependencies.¹

The primary religious goal of the Jainas in the medieval south Indian state of Karnataka²—the main object of study in this publication—was the attainment of liberation. In the context of Indic religious groups, deliverance is generally understood as a breaking out of a relentless succession of continuous births and deaths, known as the cycle of transmigration (*saṃsāra*), to which humans are believed to be bound until they reach religious enlightenment. Consequently, the story of dependencies in Karnataka during the Indian Middle Ages is, at least to a certain extent, the narrative about which of the many rival faith groups of the time promised the most direct and secure path to liberation (*nirvāṇa*, *mokṣa*). That particular faith was then able to attract the largest number

¹ On this issue, see Julia Winnebeck et al. who provide the following definition for strong asymmetrical dependencies: “Asymmetrical dependency is based on the ability of one actor to control the actions of another actor and/or their access to resources. [...] the dependent actors cannot simply change their situation by either going away (‘exit’) or by articulating impactful protest (‘voice’)” Julia Winnebeck, Ove Sutter, Adrian Hermann, Christoph Antweiler and Stephan Conermann, “The Analytical Concept of Asymmetrical Dependency,” *Journal of Global Slavery* 8 (2023): 1–59, 8, <https://doi.org/10.1163/2405836X-00801002>.

² The official transliteration of this modern Indian state is Karṇāṭaka. In this publication, however, I shall use the English spelling without diacritics.

of followers, gain most financial support and in consequence obtain the highest status and the largest influence throughout the region. As religion and politics are usually closely interlaced in South Asia, the overriding faith group had access to the greatest protection, royal and societal sponsorship and was best able to control economic exchanges, such as commerce and trade. This permitted the dominant religious group to also gain a position of political hegemony in the region. Therefore, the dependency story told in this publication is about a large number of competing religious groups, the financial support from rulers and other instrumental sections of society, and the power of economics.

Roughly from the second century CE, Jaina influence rose steadily and steeply, so that between around the eighth and the early twelfth centuries CE, the Jaina community was able to offer particularly appealing options in most of these dependency-related areas. These included a swift route towards enlightenment through new alternative Jaina paths, such as *bhakti* and Tantrism; royal and societal protection, generous funding, and control over local and transregional commercial activities. However, in response to their rapid success the Jaina community introduced changes to their own religious practice and self-understanding.

In the past, their ascetics had been poor and homeless, their community had been open to everybody without caste discrimination, and they had employed a comparatively simple temple ritual without demanding large financial investments from the laity. Their new way of life was at least partially settled, often as influential landowners; the lay population fragmented into a hierarchy of castes and the ascetic community into diverse monastic orders, and their newly developed religious rituals were elaborate and often costly. All of this caused internal frictions and criticism from within their own ranks. Whilst these changes undoubtedly made the faith more attractive to some and led to the acquisition of new converts, these very same modifications upset and alienated other sections of the religious community and led to divisions within it. In consequence, the hegemony of the Jainas did not last long, and the peak of their authority, between roughly the eleventh and the early twelfth century, coincided with the beginning of their marginalisation and oppression in certain areas of the state, and the decline of this once powerful

faith in the region of Karnataka. This fall was so sudden and extreme that the Jaina community had lost almost all of its control by the fourteenth century, and did in fact become a suppressed minority.

While the success of kings and kingdoms, religious teachers and faith groups is always “of an ephemeral nature and only of momentary importance,”³ as Sivaramamurti describes, the Jaina tradition in Karnataka has also left more enduring and permanent marks on the local culture, such as in the areas of ritual paraphernalia, sacred statuary, temple structures and monastic architecture. It is this evidence which will form the primary focal point of examination in this publication. Whilst I shall refer to textual sources in the form of inscriptions and literature, in my investigation into the rise, decline and to a certain extent the persistence of Jaina culture in Karnataka, I shall mainly rely on material remains in the form of sculptural and architectural evidence as support for my argument.

In terms of geographical remit, I shall in this study focus on the area more or less occupied by the modern state of Karnataka. However, state boundaries have changed repeatedly, and regions that today no longer lie within the limits of modern Karnataka were in the past part of the wider Kannada *deśa*, the lands of Karnataka. Furthermore, the complex situation of intense religious and political competition which I will discuss affected not only the Jains in this portion of South India. It also impacted the surrounding areas, as well as the other main non-Vedic religious group of the time, the Buddhists.⁴ However, as Jainism flourished exceptionally well in the area of modern-day Karnataka, the Jains’ loss of influence was also felt most strongly in this part of India, making this a particularly fascinating case to investigate. The main questions raised

³ Cf. Calambur Sivaramamurti, *Royal Conquests and Cultural Migrations in South India and the Deccan* (Calcutta: The Trustees of the Indian Museum, 1955): 1.

⁴ For a discussion of the decline of Jainism in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, cf. Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions: The Conundrum of the Rise and Decline of Jaina Influence in Medieval Karnataka,” in *Jaina Culture in Medieval Karnataka: Dominance, Dependency and Endurance*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Dependency and Slavery Studies* 18 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025): 141–51. For the decline of Buddhism at the same time, refer to the same source on pp. 151–56.

and answered in this study are, firstly, what were the main reasons for the rise and the sudden decline of Jainism in Karnataka, and, secondly, how this rise and decline affected the position of the Jainas in terms of the freedoms or dependency relations they experienced.

In my quest to explain these matters, I shall first provide a brief historical overview of the introduction of Jainism to the region of Karnataka (2.1), outline various reasons for its flourishing (2.2 and 2.3) and offer an account of its highpoint in power as well as of its starting decline (2.4). The following section (3) then examines in more detail the particular appeal which Jainism had at this time. The increased popularity and growth in membership led the Jainas to introduce changes to their self-understanding and religious institutions (4.1), their social structure (4.2), their ascetic community (4.3) and their sacred and ritual practices (4.4.). While many of these modifications initially increased their following, some of them appear to have endangered the uniqueness and the necessary unity of the creed in the long run. However, external factors also contributed to the decline of Jainism, such as the arrival of a number of rival faith groups in the area (5). Of these, it was the Viraśaivas in particular who threatened the Jainas, not just because they offered attractive religious and social alternatives, but because of their growing dominance in trade. This led to the economic breakdown, severe financial and economical dependencies and eventually the persecution of the Jainas in medieval Karnataka (6). In the subsequent conclusion (7), I summarise my main results on the rise, decline and the ensuing asymmetrical dependency position of Jainism in Karnataka during the Indian Middle Ages. Despite the resulting unyielding unequal dependencies, the final chapter also points toward the continuity and survival of Jaina practices and culture in the south, albeit on a limited level and in selected regions only.

2 Jaina History in the Medieval Deccan

This section summarises briefly what we know about the introduction of Jainism to the region, and gives a brief overview of the development of the religion from its modest beginnings in Karnataka to one of the most prominent and influential faith groups of the area. Particularly interesting for us are the factors which contributed to the quick expansion and firm establishment of the creed. As we will see, it was often these very same factors that would contribute to the decline of Jainism in the area at this time. The period of interest here corresponds largely to what in Western historical research we refer to as the Middle Ages or the medieval period, which in an Indian context is also seen to last from around the fifth to the late fifteenth centuries.

2.1 Dates and Routes for the Introduction of Jainism to Karnataka

According to Jaina religious history, the faith was born in the north-eastern state of Bihar, where in the sixth or fifth century BCE the enlightened teacher Mahāvīra probably reformed an earlier creed to shape the beginnings of what we today call by the all-encompassing term of Jainism. According to an obscure legend, it was Mahāvīra himself who brought Jainism to Karnataka,⁵ but there is no evidence for the historicity of this story. Conversely, there is proof that in the third or fourth century BCE a severe drought befell the east of India, which brought about an acute and lengthy regional famine. This resulted in large sections of the local population migrating away from the area in two major directions.⁶

⁵ Cf. Rajalakshmi Misra, "The Jains in an Urban Setting (The Ascetics and the Laity Among the Jains of Mysore City)," *Bulletin of the Anthropological Survey of India* 21, no. 1–2 (1972): 3.

⁶ Jaini argues that this migration of the Jainas from Bihar might also have been due to the rise of the *Brāhmaṇical* Śuṅga dynasty (c. second to first centuries BCE) in the region, whose rulers did not favour non-Vedic groups. Padmanabh S. Jaini, "The Disappearance of Buddhism and the Survival of Jainism: A Study in Contrast," in *Studies in History of Buddhism: Papers Presented at the International Conference on the History of*

One section moved to the north-west, largely into the modern states of Rajasthan and Gujarat, and the other mainly into the south. This caused a division of the religious community (*saṅgha*) into two distinct factions, leading eventually to a schism. Those who remained in the north predominantly formed the Śvetāmbara (white-robed), and those who travelled south primarily the Digambara (sky-clad) group of Jainism. However, there has never been an absolutely strict regional division, and interactions between the distinct communities and regions have been documented from early on and still continue today.⁷ Differentiations between the two factions are visible in particular in the dress code of their ascetics. Whilst male and female Śvetāmbara mendicants wear white cotton robes, a practice also shared by Digambara nuns (*sādhvis*), Digambara monks (*sādhus*) go completely naked (Plate 1).⁸

Legend recounts that those Jainas who fled south during the twelve-year food crisis were led by the religious teacher (*ācārya*) or preceptor Bhadrabāhu.⁹ He is also known as Śrutakevali or Śrutakevalin, which is the official title given to an ascetic who has knowledge of the entire Jaina canon and accordingly is considered omniscient. Jaina myths recount that the learned teacher travelled together with Candragupta Maurya (c. 321–297 BCE), the grandfather of the emperor Aśoka. The two famous men, who were accompanied by a large group of disciples, journeyed south to Shravanabelgola (Śravanabelgola) in Karnataka.¹⁰

Buddhism at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, WIS, USA, August, 19–21, 1976, ed. A.K. Narain (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1980): 82–83.

⁷ On this, see P.B. Desai, *Jainism in South India and Some Jaina Epigraphs*, Jivarāja Jaina Granthamālā 6 (Sholapur: Jaina Saṃskṛti Saṃrakshaka Sangha, 1957): 97–98.

⁸ For further details on the migration, the schism and the differences between the two communities, see Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India: The Development of a Distinct Language in Space and Ritual*, ed. Stiftung Ernst Waldschmidt, Monographien zur indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie 19 (Berlin: G + H-Verlag, 2009): 17–19.

⁹ See Robert J. Zydenbos, “Jainism Endangered: The View of the Medieval Kannada Poet Brahmasiva,” in *‘Minorities’ on Themselves*, ed. Hugh van Skyhawk (Heidelberg, University of Heidelberg, 1986): 176.

¹⁰ Cf. Bhasker Anand Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism: With Special Reference to the Vijayanagara Empire* (Bombay: Karnataka Publishing House, 1938): 3; and K.M. Suresh, “Jaina Monuments in and Around Hampi: An Art-Historical Appraisal,” in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (New Delhi: Saṃskṛti,

They are supposed to have introduced their form of Jainism to the town and to the wider region, which turned into Digambara Jainism. When I refer to Jainism in this publication, I mean the local form of Digambara Jainism, prevalent in medieval Karnataka, unless stated otherwise.

Local Jainas believe that Candragupta converted¹¹ to Jainism and that following this, he adopted the religious name Prabhacandra which is recorded in an inscription at Shravanabelgola which dates to 600 CE.¹² Both learned men are held to have reached enlightenment (*kevalajñāna*) on the smaller of the two local hills, called Candragiri.¹³ The name of this mound relates to Candragupta Maurya,¹⁴ whilst the other, located on the opposite side of town, is known as Viṇḍhyagiri. Bhadrabāhu's enlightenment and death are believed to have occurred in 297 BCE (170 A.V.), and Candragupta is supposed to have passed away twelve years later.¹⁵ Bhadrabāhu is presumed to have ended his life by performing religious death rituals and his auspicious example initiated a ritual tradition followed by many at this sacred site in subsequent centuries (Plate 2).¹⁶

2011): 179. Alternative spellings are Śravana Belgoḷa and Śravanabelgoḷa. The first time a place name is mentioned in this publication, I give its form with diacritical marks in brackets, if it differs from the English spelling. In cases where there is a common ancient or modern version of the place, this is also given.

¹¹ In this publication, we will hear a lot about conversions from one to another religious belief. These are very common in the religious history of South Asia. Mallebrein has written in detail on this practice in an Indian context. See the entire publication by Cornelia Mallebrein, *Die vertauschten Götter: Religionswechsel in Indien* (Heidelberg: Synchron, 2011), and in particular pp. 19–26.

¹² On this date, see Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 476, n 6; Julia A.B. Hegewald, "Jaina Temples in the Deccan: Characteristics, Chronology and Continuity," *Journal of Deccan Studies* 1, no. 1, special issue on Jainism, ed. Prof. Aloka Parasher-Sen (2007): 2. Also see K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyar, "Origin and Decline of Buddhism and Jainism in Southern India," *The Indian Antiquary* 40 (1911): 214; and Misra, "The Jains in an Urban Setting": 4.

¹³ Cf. R.V.S. Sundaram, "Elements of Jaina History in Kannada Literature," in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (New Delhi: Samśkṛiti, 2011): 30.

¹⁴ See Robert J. del Bontà, "The Shantinatha Basadi at Jinanathapura," in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (New Delhi: Samśkṛiti, 2011): 117.

¹⁵ On this, see Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 3.

¹⁶ Cf. del Bontà, "The Shantinatha Basadi": 117; and Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 3. The ritual of self-mortification is known as *sallekhanā* and will be discussed below in section 3.1, "The Connection Between Jainism and the Military."

Jaina literary sources from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, their time of flourishing in Karnataka, continue this narrative of the southward migration of Jainism, by describing the subsequent introduction of the faith to Tamil Nadu and Kerala.¹⁷ The fact that these accounts on the spread of Jainism emerged during the heyday of Jainism in Karnataka may reflect the Jaina's feelings of superiority and dominance and their focus on Karnataka at this time.

Although the story recounted above still represents the dominant religious narrative today, the events surrounding Bhadrabāhu, the conversion of Candragupta, the introduction of the religion to Karnataka at this early age, and the path along which it was taken south, have been much disputed by historians and other academics.¹⁸ In fact, all evidence for this account, whether in the form of lithic inscriptions or literary narratives, comes from a much later date than the legendary events they refer to.¹⁹

However, based on dated Jaina inscriptions and surviving monuments, it is more likely that Jainism was taken south from its place of origin in north-eastern Bihar through the modern state of Jharkhand, into Odisha (until 2011 Orissa),²⁰ Andhra Pradesh and conceivably areas of modern Telangana²¹ and into Tamil Nadu. From there, it appears to have been introduced into Karnataka, but only during the first centuries

¹⁷ See R. Champakalakshmi, "Monuments & Sculptures 300 B.C. to A.D. 300: South India," in *Jaina Art and Architecture*, vol. 1, ed. A. Ghosh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1974): 92.

¹⁸ See for example Suresh, "Jaina Monuments": 179; Asim Kumar Chatterjee, *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, vol. 1, *From the Earliest Beginnings to AD 1000* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000 [1978]): 105, and Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 319, 476–77.

¹⁹ Much evidence on the Jainas in Karnataka has been deduced from literary sources. R.V.S. Sundaram emphasises the importance of literature for historical research. See Julia A.B. Hegewald, "Introduction: The Jaina Heritage of Southern India and Karnataka," in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald, Heidelberg Series in South Asian Studies (New Delhi: Samskriti Publishers, 2011): 3; and Sundaram, "Elements of Jaina History": 29.

²⁰ The official spellings of these states are Jhārkhaṇḍ and Oṛiṣā.

²¹ In 2014, the state of Andhra Pradesh was divided into Andhra Pradesh (Āndhra Deśa, Āndhra Dēśa) and Telangana (Telaṅgāṇa).

CE, most probably in the second century.²² This is corroborated by Jaina caves with inscriptions in Tamil Nadu, which date back to as early as the second to first centuries BCE (Plate 3).²³ These caves are therefore much older than the earliest preserved Jaina cave excavations in Karnataka, which date to merely around 600 CE.²⁴ The dating of these Tamil Jaina caves make the eastern route a more probable one. Furthermore, it is unlikely for the religion to have been taken south in a single journey, as in the Bhadrabāhu-Candragupta narrative. In fact, continuous waves of introduction appear to be the more likely fashion for the transfer of the faith towards the south.²⁵

Regardless of which of the different routes represented the primary passage by which its believers took the religion to the south, the Jainas undeniably became firmly established in Karnataka in the early centuries of the Common Era. Their authority increased significantly during the following centuries, and from the fourth century CE onwards there is abundant evidence for the prevalence of Jainism throughout the state.²⁶ From the fifth to the seventh century CE, depending on the particular area of the state, Jainism rose steadily to a position of central dominance, which it reached in most areas by the eighth century CE.

2.2 Success Through Royal Support and Donations

One aspect which emerges as particularly important in the Jaina's rise to supremacy in medieval Karnataka appears to have been the backing they received from a number of major and minor ruling dynasties. This

²² On this issue, see Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 6; and Misra, "The Jains in an Urban Setting": 4.

²³ Cf. Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 475–78.

²⁴ For these caves in Karnataka see Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 478–79.

²⁵ Cf. S.B. Deo, "The Expansion of Jainism," in *Jaina Art and Architecture*, vol. 1, ed. A. Ghosh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1974): 34.

²⁶ On this point, see Olle Qvarnström, "Stability and Adaptability: A Jain Strategy for Survival and Growth," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 41 (1998): 44; and Suresh, "Jaina Monuments": 180.

support, which provided them with physical protection, an elevated status and important financial funding, appears to have commenced quite early.

When examining the basis for the success of these royal houses that gave support to the Jainas, it becomes clear that their ability to retain and expand their power base largely depended on their military strength. Their emphasis on martial force could be seen as somewhat paradoxical when it comes to their connection with the peace-seeking Jainas, whose first ascetic vow and most important religious tenet is absolute non-violence, *ahiṃsā*. Because of this, one could expect that to work closely with and to profit from warrior kings, militant aristocrats and members of their combatant forces could have been viewed as problematic by the Jaina followers.²⁷ However, surprisingly, many lay Jainas in Karnataka were high-ranking members of the army themselves.²⁸ This demonstrates that the Jainas at this time were not only pious theoreticians concerned with religious dogma, but energetic actors involved in political affairs and worldly concerns, who interacted with rulers and strengthened their people and their faith as members of the armed forces.²⁹ Despite *ahiṃsā*, self-defence (*virodhi hīṃsā*) and to a certain extent even warfare, were permitted by the Jainas.³⁰

²⁷ This conundrum has also been emphasised by Paul Dundas, *The Jains*, Library of Religious Beliefs and Practices (London: Routledge, 1992): 102, and Sabine Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka: A Socio-Religious Survey of the Rise and Decline of a Religious Tradition,” in *Jaina Culture in Medieval Karnataka: Dominance Dependency and Endurance*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald, Dependency and Slavery Studies 18 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025): 233–34. Also see Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985): 79.

²⁸ Pinto has written on this issue: Pius Fidelis Pinto, “Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire: The Survival of the Religion in the Capital and in the Coastal Region of Karnataka,” in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (New Delhi: Samskṛiti, 2011): 78–79. According to local information, a village called Adaguru, near Halebid in Karnataka, derives its name, from the term “*adoge*,” which means “to cook” and refers to Jaina soldiers who used to live and cook at this place. This is based on personal conversations with Jaina families at Adaguru in 2006.

²⁹ Cf. Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 101.

³⁰ On self-defence, see Dundas, *The Jains*: 102, and on *virodhi hīṃsā*, see Amitabh Vikram Dwivedi, “Jainism,” in *The Sage Encyclopedia of War: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Paul Joseph, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483359878.n345> (2017). On Jaina warfare more generally, consult Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1990 [1979]): 281; and Paul Dundas, “The Digambara

The most famous Jaina general of this time was Cāvuṇḍarāya (Cāmuṇḍarāya) (940–989 CE), who is also renowned as one of the greatest patrons of Jaina religious sites. Cāvuṇḍarāya is best known for commissioning the carving of the monumental, roughly twenty-metre rock-cut Bāhubali monolith on Viṇḍhyagiri at Shravanabelgola in around 981 CE (Plate 4).³¹ There were other recognised Jaina generals who contributed to the enlargement of the empire, in particular during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.³²

Although martial activities appear to have been accepted in early Jainism, at least in the context of self-protection, Jaina history is no chronicle of combativeness and aggressive expansionism. This pacifistic feature may have contributed to their suppression by more radical and militant religious groups later on in history.³³ The tension between the primary Jaina precept of *ahiṃsā* and their close link to warring monarchs will be further explored in section 3.1, “The Connection Between Jainism and the Military” below.

Furthermore, the rise of Digambara Jainism in early medieval Karnataka appears also to reflect a kind of anti-*brāhmaṇ* attitude amongst some local rulers at the time.³⁴ *Brāhmaṇs* are the highest Hindu caste, largely comprising priests. By threatening the position of the *brāhmaṇs*, the monarchs challenged the attainment of privileged position simply

Jain Warrior,” in *The Assembly of Listeners: Jains in Society*, ed. Michael Carrithers and Caroline Humphrey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 169–86.

³¹ On this monolith, see Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Jaina Tradition of the Deccan: Shravanabelagola, Mudabidri, Karkala*, Deccan Heritage Foundation / Jaico Guidebook Series (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2021): 38–41; and Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity: The Legacy of Jaina Temple Architecture in Karnataka,” in *Jaina Culture in Medieval Karnataka: Dominance, Dependency and Endurance*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald, Dependency and Slavery Studies 18 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025): 406–8. See also B. Sheik Ali, ed., *History of the Western Gangas*, vol. 1, *Comprehensive History of Karnataka*, Other Publications 61 (Mysore: Prasaraṅga, University of Mysore, 1976): 324–25. Saletore has also written on Cāvuṇḍarāya (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 101–12).

³² Saletore, for instance, refers to general Śāntinātha in the second half of the eleventh century. As he was in charge of the treasury, he was also known as Daṇḍanātha Śāntinātha (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 112–14). For celebrated Jaina generals of the twelfth century, see the same publication on pp. 114–15.

³³ Sundaram has written on this subject (Sundaram, “Elements of Jaina History”: 37).

³⁴ I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this aspect.

through birth. The supremacy of the *brāhmaṇs* is to a large extent a definition of most forms of Hinduism. Rulers themselves, however, traditionally come from the second caste, the *kṣatriyas*, which is the caste of rulers and warriors. The twenty-four Jinas, the human but enlightened teachers of the Jaina faith, are also all thought to have been born into *kṣatriya* families.³⁵ After a long period of the supremacy of Hindu *brāhmaṇs*, Jainism offered an attractive alternative path, which made the Digambaras appealing to local rulers. The latter's direct support for Digambara Jainas at this time can be seen as a successful endeavour, at least temporarily, to take away power from *brāhmaṇ*-dominated groups. As we will see later, the power of Hindu groups and of *brāhmaṇs* returned in the end.

The regal protection, recognition and support mentioned above were absolutely vital for the prospering of Jainism at this early stage.³⁶ Traditionally, Indian royalty offered a certain measure of tolerance, protection and support to all religions in their territory. It was particularly important for the non-Vedic *śramaṇa* faith groups³⁷ such as Jainas and Buddhists, who both came from the north and were relatively new arrivals in the south, to obtain more extensive royal backing during their formative periods. This allowed them to build up standing and assets and establish their own sacred sites in order to consolidate and substantiate their position in what was at least initially a Hindu-dominated society.³⁸

³⁵ For further information on the liberated Jinas, see section 4.4, "Widening the Group of Venerated Beings and Temple Rituals" below.

³⁶ This has also been stressed by Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 276. On the other hand, sovereigns also needed to be legitimised by important religious personalities, and they required spiritual guidance from Jaina ascetics. On this issue, see Qvarnström, "Stability and Adaptability": 44–45; and Scholz, "Digambara Jainism in Karnataka": 235–36.

³⁷ All non-*Brāhmaṇical*, heterodox schools of Indian thought and religion which strongly focus on asceticism are referred to as *śramaṇas* (Padmanabh S. Jaini, "Śramaṇas: Their Conflict with Brāhmaṇical Society," in *Chapters in Indian Civilization: A Handbook of Readings to Accompany Lectures in Indian Civilization*, vol. 1, *Classical and Medieval India*, ed. Joseph W. Elder [Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1970]: 41).

³⁸ See also Jaini, "Disappearance of Buddhism and the Survival of Jainism": 83, and Qvarnström, "Stability and Adaptability": 43–44.

The influence of royal patrons and other influential donors was crucial for the construction and maintenance of temple complexes. Hegde identifies the socio-political motivation behind the support for Jaina temples as a new dynamic typical of the early Indian Middle Ages, in which religious centres and the state interacted closely.³⁹ The various *Brāhmaṇical* faith groups and their places of worship had enjoyed a much longer history of interaction with and support from important empires to build up their position.

The royal backing the Digambara Jainas received from a number of early dynasties made the period from the fifth to the twelfth centuries particularly successful for them.⁴⁰ In Karnataka, a group of families who strongly supported the Jainas were the Kadambas of Banavāsi (c. 350–550 CE).⁴¹ The fact that the Digambaras must have flourished considerably under their rule is shown by the fact that the tradition of making generous grants to religious establishments appears to have commenced during Kadamba rule. The Kadambas were followed by the Gaṅgās of Talakāḍ, also known as the Western Gaṅgās (350–650 CE and 650–1004 CE),⁴² and then by the Early or Western Cālukyas of Bādāmi (c. 540–753

³⁹ On this issue, see Rajaram Hegde, “Temple-Hierarchy, Mathas and Socio-Political Factors in Medieval India—A Regional Context in Karnataka,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 58 (1997): 233.

⁴⁰ For further details about the period of prospering of Jainism see Misra, “The Jains in an Urban Setting”: 5; and Suresh, “Jaina Monuments”: 180.

⁴¹ There are a lot of discrepancies in the dates given for individual dynasties in different sources. Saletore explains this with unreliable inscriptional records and similar names carried by different monarchs (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 7–8). These dates have been taken from Noboru Karashima, “Prologue: Dravidians—Immigrant or Indigenious,” in *A Concise History of South India: Issues and Interpretations*, ed. Noboru Karashima (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 58. Mugali, for instance, gives 300 to 600 CE as the dates for the Kadambas (R.S. Mugali, *The Heritage of Karnataka (In Relation to India)* (Mysore: Geetha Book House, 1990 [1946]: 52).

⁴² For the dates of Gaṅgā rule, see I.K. Sarma, *Temples of the Gaṅgas of Karṇāṭaka*, Architectural Survey Temples 6 (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1992): 6–25. Saletore dates the start of the Gaṅgā dynasty to the second century CE (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 8). This might have lasted until the tenth century CE (400–974 CE) (Misra, “The Jains in an Urban Setting”: 5). This shows that the dates provided by various authors even for large and well-studied dynasties vary considerably. Locally, Talakāḍ is also known as Talakāḍu.

CE).⁴³ Some of these ruling houses were Hindu and simply extended a certain amount of general support to all religions in their realm, as did the Kadambas.⁴⁴ However, there were other dynasties which had a closer and more direct link with Jainism. The royal installation of the Gaṅgā rulers themselves, for instance, is believed to have been due to Jaina support as it is said to have been the Jaina ascetic Simhanandi Ācārya who brought Gaṅgā King Kongaṇivarmā (Konguṇivarmā) to power. Most sources give the very early date of 265 CE for this event.⁴⁵ However, as inscriptions referring to Simhanandi's intervention only date from as late as the tenth century CE, its historicity is unclear.⁴⁶ If true, this story would provide further evidence that Jaina saints were not just world-renouncing ascetics, but must have wielded considerable political influence. Although tradition discouraged Jaina monks and nuns from taking an active part in politics, Simhanandi's involvement appears to have been celebrated.⁴⁷

⁴³ See *Epigraphia Carnatica* 2: Shravanabelgola, 2nd ed. (Mysore: Institute of Kannada Studies, University of Mysore, 1973), https://opendigi.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/opendigi/EC_02_1973#p=10: lxxix; Deo, "The Expansion of Jainism": 32, and Pius F. Pinto, "An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka: From the Third Century BCE to the Sixteenth Century," in *Jaina Culture in Medieval Karnataka: Dominance, Dependency and Endurance*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Dependency and Slavery Studies* 18 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025): 208–11.

⁴⁴ Cf. Misra, "The Jains in an Urban Setting": 5. Saletore points out that a number of the Kadamba kings were also Jains (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 30).

⁴⁵ Cf. Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 9–17; Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 279–80; Dundas, *The Jains*: 102; P.N. Narasimha Murthy, "History of Jainism in Karnataka: Developments from the Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries CE," in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (New Delhi: Saṃskṛiti, 2011): 40, 55; and Pinto, "Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire": 78. Despite this, most scholars give later dates for Gaṅgā rule.

⁴⁶ On the dating of the story, see Jonathan Geen "Jainism and Hinduism," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Jainism*, ed. John E. Cort, Paul Dundas, Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristi L. Wiley, *Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section Two: South Asia* 34 (Leiden: Brill, 2020): 319.

⁴⁷ See Aloka Parasher-Sen, "Jaina Women, Ritual Death and the Deccan," in *The Jaina Heritage Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (New Delhi: Saṃskṛiti, 2011): 225–26. Jaini wrote in this context that religious life at the time was characterised by "the moral ambivalence created by the need for royal support on the one hand and the demands of the spiritual life on the other" (Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 280). Singh is rare in questioning the involvement of Simhanandi in bringing the Gaṅgās to power (Ram Bushan Prasad Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka (c. A.D. 500–1200)* [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975]: 6).

Although some of the Gaṅgā rulers were Vaiṣṇavas, a large majority converted to the local form of Jainism, and the rest at least endorsed the religion.⁴⁸ This situation created a relatively peaceful coexistence and cooperation between Digambara Jainas and Vaiṣṇavas, at least from the fourth to the early eleventh century CE. Many Jaina temples were constructed throughout the area during this period (Plate 5). Even Gaṅgā monarchs who were not Jainas themselves often employed large numbers of Digambara ministers in their administrations and Digambara commanders in their militaries. In consequence, the administrations generally tended to be favourably inclined towards the local Jaina community,⁴⁹ which allowed them to gain further influence, in a number of provincial courts in particular.⁵⁰

The Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Maḷkhēḍ (735–973 CE) also strongly backed Digambara Jainism.⁵¹ The newly arrived *śramaṇa* faith expanded and bloomed under their rule. During this early flowering, significant numbers of earlier Jaina temples were restored and enlarged, and new ones were built. The endowment of shrines and icons and their veneration, all considered to be meritorious acts, further increased in popularity under the subsequent Rāṣṭrakūṭa rule.⁵²

Such religious donations were—and still are today—known as *dāna*, or as *mahādāna* if they are particularly large.⁵³ Gifts made to Jaina religious institutions could be movable items, such as money in cash (for instance to pay for religious ceremonies), gold, jewellery (worn by temple icons other than the Jinas),⁵⁴ animals, produce and religious statues, as well as immovable structures such as temples, other religious institutions, rest houses, schools and hospitals, to mention but a few. The

⁴⁸ On this point, see Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 30; Sheik Ali, *History of the Western Gangas*: 309; and Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 280.

⁴⁹ See Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 226.

⁵⁰ Saletore argued that by gaining the support of “feudal lords and the great commanders,” the Jainas gained weight in “various provincial seats over which these high officials were placed” (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 172).

⁵¹ Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 34–40, has written on this issue.

⁵² Cf. Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 24.

⁵³ On this issue, see Suresh, “Jaina Monuments: 178.

⁵⁴ Jewellery and precious robes associated with Digambara Jaina goddesses in particular will briefly be discussed in section 4.4.2, “Rise of the Cult of Goddesses (Śaktism).”

thriving Jaina community in Karnataka invested especially in the construction of temples and from the seventh century CE, large numbers of new structures were erected throughout the region.⁵⁵ The establishment of new shrines and sacred centres was strategically employed to disseminate the religion throughout the state.⁵⁶ Some donated items such as oil-mills, cultivable fields, entire villages, fruit gardens and arable land could be used to generate further wealth, which could pay for the maintenance of sacred edifices. In addition, donees also engaged in the offering of food and shelter to wandering ascetics. All these endowments were regarded as devout spiritual acts and charitable activities, conferring religious merit onto the lay benefactors. In fact, such bequests were considered fundamental obligations of the Digambara Jaina laity in Karnataka at the time.⁵⁷ Although we know about kings and queens and affluent members of the community making such gifts, ordinary but reasonably well-off peasants also made substantial contributions to local Jaina religious institutions.⁵⁸ Donations represented the primary source of income for temples and other religious institutions and all of the assets were exempt from tax, with the entire revenue going to the religious establishments themselves.⁵⁹

While the early support from royal households was particularly important for the initial establishment of the faith in Karnataka, once the Digambara Jainas had acquired holy places of their own and set up sacred centres, continued financial support and protection were essential for their continued flourishing and further expansion. The influence of the sedentary Jainas continued to expand under the later royal protection and patronage of the Later Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa (973–1156 CE and

⁵⁵ Zydenbos has highlighted this (Zydenbos, “Jainism Endangered”: 177). See also the discussion of many of these temple structures in Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 357–413.

⁵⁶ On this issue, see Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 185, 216.

⁵⁷ Cf. Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 82–83.

⁵⁸ On this, see Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 228.

⁵⁹ Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 116, has written on this.

1183–1200 CE)⁶⁰ and the Hoysaḷas of Dvārasamudra (Dōrasamudram; today, Halebid) (985–1346 CE).⁶¹ As was the case with the Gaṅgās, the Jains are believed to have once again been instrumental in bringing a royal lineage to power, this time the Hoysaḷas. This dynasty appears to have been invested with royal power by the Jaina Sudatta Vardhāmana in the late tenth or early in the eleventh century CE.⁶² Not only the later royal households of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and Hoysaḷas themselves, but again also their military commanders regularly professed Digambara Jainism.⁶³ The monarchs and their officials continued to contribute to the spread of Jaina sites throughout the area. They made donations, often in the form of land grants or entire villages, to new and already existing shrines (Plate 6), and supported the growing local Jaina ascetic community.⁶⁴

This period was one of accelerated growth and expansion, leading towards the pinnacle of Jaina political, religious and cultural influence in the region. The regional Digambara Jaina community had experi-

⁶⁰ Alternatively, Malkhed can be spelled Malaked (Maḷakhēḍ), Mānyakhēṭa (Deo, “The Expansion of Jainism”: 32) or Mānyakhēṭa (G. Jawaharlal, *Jainism in Andhra: As Depicted in Inscriptions* [Hyderabad: Prakriti Bharati Academy, Jaipur and Akhil Bharatiya Sri Suwarna Jain Seva Fund, 1994]: 39). The Cāḷukyas of Kalyāṇa are also known as the Cāḷukyas of Kalyāṇī (Deo, “The Expansion of Jainism”: 32).

⁶¹ These royal houses and their support for Jainism have been discussed in *Epigraphia Carnatica* 2: lxxix; and Deo, “The Expansion of Jainism”: 32. See also Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 209–13, 216; and Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 214–16.

⁶² For the details of the story, see Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 281–82. See also Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 67; Pinto, “Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire”: 78; and Sabine Scholz, “The Revival of the Digambara Muni Tradition in Karnataka During the Twentieth Century,” in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (New Delhi: Samskriti, 2011): 259–60. With reference to the Jains of Karnataka, Saletore underscores that by “playing the part of king-makers, they had secured for generations royal patronage” (Saletore: *Mediaeval Jainism*: 172). “King-maker” is a term also used by Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 280. In addition, see Vidushi Jain, “Loquacious Warriors: Passive-Aggressive Jaina Monks of Early Medieval Karnataka,” *Social Scientist* 47, no. 11/12 (558–559) (2019): 24–25.

⁶³ Zydenbos, “Jainism Endangered”: 175 has written on this.

⁶⁴ Pinto refers to a number of inscriptions, which provide evidence for this (Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 215). See also Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 24.

enced an immense upswing through the backing of royalty, their feudatories and military commanders.

2.3 Commercial, Agrarian and Societal Backing

The extensive recognition and support offered by royalty, the aristocracy and high-ranking members of the state administration and military led other groups in society to change their religion or at least take up the cause of Jainism as well. Amongst these were, for instance, the influential mercantile classes, as well as landowners and farmers.⁶⁵

2.3.1 Support from Traders

The Jainas, who were in the process of becoming an influential group in state and economic affairs, managed early on to gain the support of the merchant classes for their religious institutions and charitable activities. From the tenth century CE onwards, these traders themselves often converted to Jainism.⁶⁶ It was easy for merchants, in particular, to abide by the religious principle of *ahimsā*.⁶⁷ As the trading classes were quite prosperous, they were generous donors who further supported the rise of the new faith.⁶⁸ It seems that local Jainas, who so far had pursued other occupations, subsequently also changed their profession to get involved in trade. With their increasing affluence, the commercial groups of society represented a significant segment of the middle class.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 180, has also commented on this.

⁶⁶ See Dundas, *The Jains*: 102, and Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 114.

⁶⁷ Cf. Rajaram Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations: Saivism in Medieval Karnataka,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 60 (1999): 194. Because it is easy to avoid violating the precept of *ahimsā*, Jaina families were very prominent in banking, money lending, commerce, the trading of jewellery (*māṇikya nagaranga*) and cutting precious stones, cf. Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 183. On pp. 269–70 of the latter source, Saletore stresses the important influence which Jaina *ahimsā* had on the Hindu community of Karnataka as well.

⁶⁸ Singh has written on the involvement of merchants in reinforcing Jainism (Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 113–16).

⁶⁹ On this also see Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 173.

The expansion of royal power, under the Cālukyas and the Rāṣtrakūṭas, especially during the sixth to the tenth centuries CE, supported the liberal exchange and transfer of commodities and services throughout the region, and agriculture, manufacturing and commerce flourished.⁷⁰ Craftsmen and other businesses were controlled by organisations amongst whom the merchant guilds, the *samājas*, were particularly powerful.⁷¹ The merchants of central Karnataka are commonly referred to as Bāṇajigas and the entire mercantile class as the Vira Bāṇajigas,⁷² whilst those active in coastal Karnataka are known as Seṭṭi or Seṭṭikārs.⁷³ Until the end of the twelfth century, most of the merchant guilds were in Jaina hands. The guilds organised standards and work processes, but also offered charity.⁷⁴ The prominent involvement of Digambara Jainas in commerce and the merchant guilds created a period of relative security and prosperity for the Jaina community in medieval Karnataka.

2.3.2 Farmers as Patrons

Another substantial section of south Indian society consisted of agriculturist groups. Their practice of ploughing fields, pulling root vegetables out of the ground and harvesting with cutting tools was considered challenging from a Jaina religious perspective, as such activities clearly disrupt, dislocate, injure and kill insects and other living beings, violating the tenet of *ahiṃsā*. However, rural populations and their political and financial elites also followed Jainism, even though they engaged in and depended on agricultural activities. It was the prevailing faith in the region, and proximity to the influential classes was advantageous for the farmers, too. Furthermore, Jainism set out as an anti-caste religion,

⁷⁰ Cf. Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 40.

⁷¹ Cf. K.R. Srinivasan, “Monuments & Sculpture A.D. 600 To 1000: The Deccan,” in *Jaina Art and Architecture*, vol. 1, ed. A. Ghosh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1974): 185.

⁷² The Bāṇajigas are also spelled Baṇajigas or Bāṇjigas, and the Vira Bāṇajigas alternatively Vira Baṇajigas. See Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 172. On the Bāṇajigas consult Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 122.

⁷³ Seṭṭi can additionally be spelled Śeṭṭi. For additional information on the merchant groups of Karnataka, see Pinto, “Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire”: 80, 87, 89. On page 87, Pinto also mentions other coastal mercantile groups, such as the Halas and the Yelames (Elames) (Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 221).

⁷⁴ Cf. Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 40–41.

enhancing the status of small farmers, and initially it did not demand costly rituals and donations for the upkeep of temples and other religious institutions, something that may have appealed to less well-off sections of society. Frequently, it was the leading local families who adopted the faith first and the ordinary people who followed suit.⁷⁵

At this time, technological inventions and advances, especially in the form of larger-scale artificial irrigation through the use of rain water tanks, particularly in the fertile areas of northern and western Karnataka, led to a remarkable increase in agricultural production (Plate 7). Farmers became wealthy and influential members of society, who actively promoted the local form of Jainism and the extension of sacred sites. The financial gains of these farming groups gave rise to the founding of new agricultural settlements, which proliferated in particular during the twelfth century,⁷⁶ and further boosted commercial activities. This increase in trade, favoured by a surplus of agricultural products, also accelerated an urbanisation process that began around the tenth century CE.⁷⁷

Later on during the breakdown of the Digambara Jaina hegemony in South India in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it was the devotional (*bhakti*) groups of Hindu revivalism, which had already commenced their rise to influence during the seventh and eighth centuries CE, which deliberately and even more strongly than the Jainas affiliated themselves with peasant groups. As a result, they managed to break the newly acquired dominance of the non-Hindu faiths of Jainism and Buddhism.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Scholz emphasises that despite this initial support for Jainism, farming communities were later attracted in particular to Virāṣaivism, when the latter started to be a dominant force from the mid-twelfth century onwards (Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 262).

⁷⁶ See Hegde, “Temple-Hierarchy”: 233; Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 197. On page 239 he emphasises the presence of loyal Jaina followers especially in rural settlements.

⁷⁷ On this issue, see Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 193.

⁷⁸ Cf. Richard H. Davis, “The Story of the Disappearing Jains: Retelling the Śaiva-Jain Encounter in Medieval South India,” in *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History*, ed. John E. Cort (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications 1998): 215–16. The *bhakti* form of devotional veneration of a personal deity will be discussed below (5.5 The Power of Hindu *Bhakti* and Tantrism).

Especially Śaiva *bhakti* groups,⁷⁹ and later on the independent form of Viraśaivism,⁸⁰ understood the power of the farming communities and were exceptionally active in the villages.⁸¹ This points to the influence the Jainas must initially have derived from the numerically strong farming communities.

Although Jainism was accepted by all strata of society during its peak, including farmers who also acted as generous supporters and benefactors, the Jainas were traditionally more closely associated with cities, trade centres and political headquarters.⁸² This had to do with the types of professions which they preferred, as well as their desire to be close to royalty, state functionaries and the military who were their most influential champions.

2.3.3 Female Benefactors

In addition, the support given to the local form of Jainism in medieval Karnataka by the wives of public officials, such as ministers and generals, and by aristocratic and royal women is especially noteworthy.⁸³ We have many references to such gifts, in which these donors appear to have acted quite independently from their husbands. This is surprising, as historically we do not usually think of women in South Asia as financially independent and controlling their own assets. The earliest preserved reference is to an elite woman by the name of Kandācchi, who donated an entire Jaina temple; it dates from 776 CE.⁸⁴ Some royal, aristocratic or otherwise privileged women continued to follow and support Jainism, even after their husbands had converted to other faiths. One of them was queen Śāntalā Devī in the twelfth century, whose husband, King Viṣṇuwardhana, became a Śrīvaiṣṇava under the influence of

⁷⁹ For further details, see 5.2 “Śaivism and Heterodox Śaiva *Bhakti* Tantric Groups.”

⁸⁰ On this turn to section 5.3 “Viraśaivism as a New Developing Faith” below.

⁸¹ McCormack emphasises that Viraśaivas (he calls them Liṅgāyats) are mainly farmers (William McCormack, “On Lingayat Culture,” in *Speaking of Śiva*, ed. A.K. Ramanujan [London: Penguin Books, 1973]: 177).

⁸² This has also been stressed by Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 275.

⁸³ Sāletore has dedicated an entire chapter of his book on Medieval Jainism in Karnataka, to the role played by women as defenders of the faith (Sāletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 154–71).

⁸⁴ Cf. Sāletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 154–55.

the saint Rāmānuja.⁸⁵ Her father was a Śaiva and her mother a Jaina, reflecting a mixed religious family background similar to her own and her husband's.⁸⁶ Śāntalā Devī donated the Savati Gandhavāraṇa Basadi at Shravanabelgola and two entire villages, as well as land to pay for its upkeep, in 1132 CE.⁸⁷ *Basadi* (*basti*) is the local term used in Karnataka to refer to a Jaina temple.⁸⁸

As mention of the two temples referred to above has already indicated, female benefactors were particularly renowned for bestowing Jaina places of worship. The women are named in the donor inscriptions of these structures,⁸⁹ such as on the Terina Basadi on Candragiri at Shravanabelgola, which dates from 1117 CE. The record on the offering stone at the front of the temple names Mācikabbe and Śāntikabbe, the mothers of the royal merchants of King Viṣṇuvardhana, Poysaḷa Seṭṭi and Nemi Seṭṭi, as donors of the religious edifices.⁹⁰ Only one year later, in 1118 CE, Lakṣmī, the wife of general Gaṅgarāya, donated the Eraḍukaṭṭe Basadi (Yaraḍu Kaṭṭe Basadi), which is not far away on the same hill.⁹¹ Below Candragiri, the intricately carved Akkaṇṇa Basadi in the small town of Shravanabelgola was also donated by a lady, called Aciyakka or

⁸⁵ On this issue, see K.V. Soundara Rajan, "Monuments & Sculpture A.D. 1000 To 1300: The Deccan and South India," in *Jaina Art and Architecture*, vol. 2, ed. A. Ghosh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1974): 310–32. On Śāntalā Devī, see Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 166, and Narasimha Murthy, "History of Jainism in Karnataka": 45.

⁸⁶ Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 165, has written on this.

⁸⁷ Cf. Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 166. On the temple see Hegewald, "Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity": 447–48 and Plate 5.29.

⁸⁸ The term *basadi* or *basti* is derived from the Sanskrit word *vasatī*, meaning "temple" (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 367). Alternatively, the term *jinālaya* is also used to refer to a Jaina temple.

⁸⁹ On female donors, also see Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 219–20. Narasimha Murthy discusses the role of Jaina women as patrons of the arts (Narasimha Murthy, "History of Jainism in Karnataka": 44–46), as do Parasher-Sen, "Jaina Women, Ritual Death": 229, and Pinto, "Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire": 79–80.

⁹⁰ For further information on the temple structure, see Soundara Rajan, "Monuments & Sculpture": 316; M.S. Krishna Murthy, "The Development of Jaina Temple Architecture in Southern Karnataka," in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (New Delhi: Samśkriti, 2011): 106, and Hegewald, "Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity": 442–43.

⁹¹ See Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 162; Soundara Rajan, "Monuments & Sculpture": 317; del Bontà, "The Temples and Monuments of Shravana Belgola," in *Homage to Shravanabelgola*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 1981): 80, 86; and Hegewald, "Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity": 446.

Acaladevī, in 1181 CE (Plate 8).⁹² The ending *-akka* means “older sister” and is used as a term of respect.⁹³

Probably the best-known and most prolific female benefactor of Jaina temple buildings in medieval Karnataka was Attimabbe, alternatively known as Attiyabbe (c. 950–1016).⁹⁴ She was the daughter of Mallappa, a general of the Western Cālukya ruler Tailapa (973–997 CE).⁹⁵ Although she is credited with having donated very large number of temples, the most famous is the Brahma Jinālaya at Lakkundi. However, Attimabbe’s association with this temple may in fact relate to an earlier structure at this site, as the date of the present building is usually given as 1172 CE.⁹⁶ She is also said to have donated icons made of gold and precious stones, and to have had sacred texts copied in the honour of the Jinas, the group of twenty-four enlightened teacher saints of Jainism.⁹⁷

In addition to generous benefactions for Jaina religious icons, temples and the copying of sacred manuscripts, women of royal and noble birth also renounced all their belongings, led austere religious lives and died a religious death by performing *sallekhanā*.⁹⁸ This practice, by which Bhadrabāhu is also believed to have ended his life, will be discussed in more detail below (see section 3.1 “The Connection Between Jainism and the Military”).

⁹² Her full name is Hērggaḍīti Acaladevī. On her donation, see Krishna Murthy, “The Development of Jaina Temple Architecture”: 110, and on the temple see Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 438–41.

⁹³ Cf. Julia Leslie, “Understanding Basava: History, Hagiography and a Modern Kannada Drama,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 61, no. 2 (1998): 228.

⁹⁴ Her full name is Dānacintāmaṇi Attiyabbe. Dānacintāmaṇi means “the jewel of benevolence.”

⁹⁵ On this, see Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 156.

⁹⁶ Cf. Soundara Rajan, “Monuments & Sculpture”: 310, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 416–17.

⁹⁷ For this information relating to Attimabbe see Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 156–57. For additional details on the liberated Jinas see section 4.4 “Widening the Group of Venerated Beings and Temple Rituals” below.

⁹⁸ For many other cases see Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 154–71.

2.4 The “Jaina Age”: Hegemony and the Beginnings of Decline

The Jainas reached the hight of their authority in Karnataka between the tenth and the twelfth centuries.⁹⁹ Under the rule of the Gaṅgās, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa and the Hoysaḷa kings, the Jainas rose to become a leading, if not the foremost power in the region. Large sections of the population, regardless of their previous religious affiliation, converted to the local form of Digambara Jainism,¹⁰⁰ making it the majority religious denomination in the state. At this time, the Jainas undoubtedly put other faith groups and sections of society into positions of severe asymmetrical dependency on them, a situation the Digambara Jainas of Karnataka were to suffer themselves from the later Middle Ages onwards, as I will show. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact peak of Jaina power in Karnataka, as it is a comparatively large area, and a relatively lengthy process, which did not affect all parts of the state simultaneously.

At this time, Jaina thought and practice not only dominated the fields of religious and ritual doctrine and philosophy, but state affairs and economics, as well as all areas of cultural and artistic expression, such as sculpture and architecture, literature and poetry.¹⁰¹ Accordingly, the period between the tenth and the twelfth or even up the thirteenth centuries, depending on the particular region of Karnataka, has been referred to as the “Jaina Age.”¹⁰² The Digambara Jainas strongly supported the

⁹⁹ Jain and Pinto are more specific and date the high point of Jaina influence to the eleventh and twelfth centuries respectively; Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 25; Pinto, “Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire”: 78. See also Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 6; Krishna Murthy, “Development of Jaina Temple Architecture”: 112, and Suresh, “Jaina Monuments”: 180.

¹⁰⁰ On conversions to Jainism, see Sundaram, “Elements of Jaina History”: 32, 33.

¹⁰¹ In fact, this situation appears to have prevailed already from around the eighth century CE (Misra, “The Jains in an Urban Setting”: 4; Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 135.

¹⁰² For this expression, see Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 38–39. In the same publication, he states that the “history of Kannada literature begins with the history of Jaina writing in Karnataka” (p. 42). This idea is shared by Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 396, and Misra, “The Jains in an Urban Setting”: 5–6.

arts, especially temple building and literature, not only for their own purposes, but also to sustain and expand the spread of Jainism as a faith more generally. Hundreds of Jaina temples and monasteries were established during this period,¹⁰³ to broaden the area of influence of the religion and to add to the further glorification of the Jinas (Plate 9).

In addition to the term “Jaina Age,” the period from the ninth to the eleventh centuries CE has also been described as the “glorious and commendable phase” of Jaina history in Karnataka,¹⁰⁴ and the Hoysala period as a “golden age.”¹⁰⁵ However, as epithets such as “glorious” or “golden ages” are based on a strictly linear perception of time and cultural evolution, they are in fact not helpful for a deeper understanding of historic and artistic processes. In these linear narratives, “early” or “archaic” periods are described as leading via phases of transition and refinement towards a so-called classical high point or peak of development, classified as a golden age. This zenith is said to be followed by an obvious decline and relative artistic degeneration. Such value judgements, which praise only brief points and devalue expansive phases of artistic developments, are not conducive to understanding cultural developments, and represent very subjective views which are always applied retrospectively. It is questionable whether the people living at the time would have agreed with such evaluations which classify their age as golden and ideal.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Cf. Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 39; Sundaram, “Elements of Jaina History”: 32, 33; Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 53; Shantinath Dibbad, “The Construction, Destruction and Renovation of Jaina *Basadis*: A Historical Perspective,” in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (New Delhi: Samskriti, 2011): 64, and Suresh, “Jaina Monuments”: 180.

¹⁰⁴ For this statement, see Sundaram, “Elements of Jaina History”: 31.

¹⁰⁵ This expression has been used by Krishna Murthy, “Development of Jaina Temple Architecture”: 108. See also Zydenbos on a “golden age” of Kannada literature with authors such as Pampa, Ponna and Ranna, from the tenth century CE onwards (Zydenbos, “Jainism Endangered”: 175–76). Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 24 has also written on this issue.

¹⁰⁶ For further details on “golden ages” see Julia A.B. Hegewald, ed., *In the Shadow of the Golden Age, Art and Identity in Asia from Gandhara to the Modern Age*, Studies in Asian Art and Culture (SAAC) 1 (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2014), and in particular Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Introduction: Out of the Shadow of the Golden Age,” in *In the Shadow of the Golden Age: Art and Identity in Asia from Gandhara to the Modern Age*, Studies in Asian Art and Culture (SAAC) 1, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2014): 31–76.

It needs to be pointed out that Jainism was not the only religion that thrived at this time. The period from the ninth century CE onwards is one of general religious and societal tolerance and harmony,¹⁰⁷ of religious diversification and large-scale temple building campaigns. The period from the eleventh to the thirteenth century in particular was an especially dynamic and vital phase for practically all religious groups in the area.¹⁰⁸ Naturally, this burgeoning of a number of faith groups in a comparatively small area led to confrontations. It is as part of this general development that the Jainas still continued to thrive in certain areas, but began to lose much of their power at the overall state level.

The adverse impact of rival religious groups affected the northern regions of Karnataka earlier than it did the south and the south-west. The twelfth century in particular was a volatile age. It epitomises the mixed fortunes of the Jainas in Karnataka, with continuing expansionism and prominent building campaigns in some areas, as well as the start of severe confrontations with other religious groups and a resulting weakening of Digambara Jainism in other regions of the Deccan.

Sundaram defines the phase of hegemony of Jainism in Karnataka as an age of “valour and heroism” and calls it a *kṣatra yuga*, a world age of the powerful rulers of the warrior caste. It was a period in which many patrons and authors of literary works and poetry that eulogised Jainism were generals or officers in the local armies, who also protected the faith with force.¹⁰⁹ Thus, the Jainas fought with their material presence in the form of temples and monasteries, with words in debates¹¹⁰ and in their writings, and with defensive weapons on the battlefield.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 217–18, and Davis, “The Story of the Disappearing Jains”: 214.

¹⁰⁸ Hegde describes this period as “the most active phase of the worshipping cults and sects” and backs this up with numbers of newly constructed Jaina temples from the Shimoga and Haveri districts (Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 193–94).

¹⁰⁹ On these issues, see Sundaram, “Elements of Jaina History”: 32.

¹¹⁰ Debating competitions will be discussed in section 5.1 “From Equilibrium to Religious Competition,” and 6.2 “Persecution and Survival of the Jainas in Karnataka.”

The massive regional expansion and the increase in Digambara Jaina followers in Karnataka, during the eighth and ninth centuries CE in particular, caused conflicts with other religious sects in the area.¹¹¹ Royal and elite support for the local Jainas started to weaken already during the rule of the Cāḷukyas of Kalyāṇa, who had basically reinforced the faith. In addition, isolated persecutions appear to have occurred,¹¹² as is evidenced in inscriptions from the eleventh century. Jaina temples and their icons started to come under attack at least in certain areas of the state.

For instance, Vaiṣṇavism spread through the teachings of the Advaita Vedānta saint Ādi Śaṅkara or Śaṅkarācārya (788–820 CE), who established multiple *maṭhas* throughout Karnataka.¹¹³ Later, Vaiṣṇavism gained even more strength with the conversion of the powerful Hoysaḷa ruler Viṣṇuvardhana from Jainism to the Vaiṣṇava form of Śrīvaiṣṇavism in the early twelfth century.¹¹⁴ However, other faith groups also flourished and started to compete for hegemony in the area, but the relative and wide-ranging religious tolerance of the Cāḷukya rulers allowed Jainism to continue to evolve in Karnataka at this time.¹¹⁵

This reflects the enormous instability and unpredictability of these times. In terms of religion, new faiths appeared on the scene and politically, numerous feudatories declared themselves independent from their rulers and founded their own small kingdoms. Some of these, as well as other smaller regional royal households, supported the local form of Jainism, such as the Seuṇas (Sevunas) or Yādavas of Devagiri (835–1336 CE), which started off as a Jaina dynasty. Another example is the short-lived

¹¹¹ This has also been stated by Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 216.

¹¹² Pinto refers to the activities of the ruler Taila II and his direct successors (Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 213). See also S.R. Sharma, *Jainism and Karnataka Culture* (Dharwar: Karnataka Historical Research Society, 1940): 29.

¹¹³ Advaita Vedānta is a monistic form of Hinduism. Cf. *Epigraphia Carnatica* 2: lxxix. The most prominent Śaṅkarācārya *maṭha* is at Sringeri (Śringeri). On this, see Mugali, *The Heritage of Karnataka*: 99.

¹¹⁴ For further information on Śrīvaiṣṇavism, see section 5.4 “Vaiṣṇavism and its *Bhakti* Form of Śrīvaiṣṇavism.”

¹¹⁵ On this period of continued flourishing and beginning tensions, see *Epigraphia Carnatica* 2: lxxix–lxxx and Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 41.

royal lineage of the Kaḷacuris of Kalyāṇa or Kalyāṇi (1156–1183 CE),¹¹⁶ who eventually however became followers of Vīraśaivism.¹¹⁷

After Hoysaḷa ruler Vīra Ballāla (r. 1173–1220),¹¹⁸ the Jainas no longer received the financial support they needed to carry on lavish building campaigns and to look after the many temples and other religious institutions they had established during the past two hundred or so years.¹¹⁹ Even though Jaina shrines continued to be built, and certain famous examples exhibit a highly lavish style, the majority are modest and unpretentious, with strongly reduced iconographic and ornamental details embodying the changed financial circumstances faced by the Digambara Jainas in Karnataka from the late eleventh and early twelfth century onwards.¹²⁰ With certain exceptions, these later temple designs cannot match the earlier artistic achievements, accomplished under Gaṅgā and Hoysaḷa patronage, in terms of complexity and size, and they visually demonstrate the obvious loss in power and affluence of the local Jaina community (Plate 10).

During the twelfth century, the Jainas in Karnataka lost so much influence that in some cities they were barred from constructing new temples altogether, as the shadow cast by one of their shrines onto a non-Jaina residence was considered inauspicious.¹²¹ At this time, the tradition of ascetic Jaina teachers (*munis*), whether settled or itinerant, also started to decline.¹²²

¹¹⁶ On these families, see Deo, “The Expansion of Jainism”: 32–33; Hegde, “Temple-Hierarchy”: 237, and Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 216–17.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Karigoudar Ishwaran, *Speaking of Basava: Lingayat Religion and Culture in South Asia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992): 3.

¹¹⁸ Alternatively, the name is spelled Vīra Ballāla (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 81).

¹¹⁹ Other religious institutions such as monasteries which were established by the Jainas will be discussed in section 4.1 “Settled and Landowning Ascetics.”

¹²⁰ For a discussion of later Jaina temple architecture in Karnataka, see Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 414–67.

¹²¹ For further details on this situation, see Zydenbos, “Jainism Endangered”: 184.

¹²² On this issue, see Sabine Scholz, “The Digambara Jainas of South Maharashtra and North Karnataka Since the Late 19th Century: Towards the Establishment of Collective Religious Identity and a Digambara Jaina Community” (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2011). The tradition of settled ascetics will be discussed in section 4.1 “Settled and Landowning Ascetics.”

Above, I gave a brief historic overview of the arrival of Jainism in Karnataka and its establishment as one of the most prominent and powerful faith groups in the region, followed by some brief information on the religious and political climate that led to its decline. In the section below, I shall return once again—and in more detail—to the reasons for the particular appeal of the local form of Jainism to the people of early medieval Karnataka, who favoured the rise of this non-*Brāhmaṇical* religion. These issues are very important, as many of them eventually contributed to the decline of the faith in the region, a process which will be analysed in more detail in sections 5 and 6 of this study.

3 Factors for the Steep Rise in Jaina Influence

Above, I delineated the steady growth of Jainism from its first arrival in the region to one of the prevalent faiths in Karnataka during the Middle Ages, in only roughly a thousand years. Jainism appears to have expanded more quickly and spread more widely throughout India than Buddhism, the other non-Vedic *śramaṇa* faith that penetrated the area only slight earlier.¹²³ The rapid success of Jainism during the early centuries of the Common Era was due to a number of accelerating factors, the most important of which I shall outline below.

3.1 The Connection Between Jainism and the Military

Such rapid growth could only be achieved by appealing to large parts of all sections of society in Karnataka on a number of different grounds. This included that Jaina ascetics not only concentrated on religious issues but got involved in politics and governmental activities as well. Above, I mentioned the two dynasties, the Gaṅgās and the Hoysaḷas, who were founded due to the engagement of Jaina teachers, according

¹²³ Buddhism seems to have reached Karnataka already during the fourth to second century BCE, i.e. in the Mauryan period (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 6).

to legend at least. I also referred to the fact that the Jainas attracted the support of warring kings and their vassals, despite their commitment to the concept of *ahiṃsā*. The core ethical precept of Jainism is articulated in the expression: “*ahiṃsā paramo dharmah*,” which means “non-violence is the highest religious duty.”¹²⁴

The connecting element between the Jainas, who preach non-violence, and warring rulers and their military appears to have been the belief of the military classes in the martial skills of fearlessness and heroism. These they found reflected in the Jaina path of harsh and self-denying asceticism, which is extremely hard and demands a lot of bravery.¹²⁵ This Jaina practice is used to eradicate bad *karma*. The concept of *karma* basically describes the law of cause and effect, meaning that actions carried out in a previous life have a direct effect on one’s next incarnation.¹²⁶ While virtuous deeds can lead to the accumulation of good *karma* (*puṇya*), negative actions lead to bad *karma*. The effect of a person’s harmful actions in this and previous lives can only be eradicated, and the accumulation of new bad *karma* prevented,¹²⁷ through the application of strict religious practices. This involves rigorous asceticism and penance, intense study of holy writings, prolonged meditations, severe fasts, a complete termination of all desires and total detachment from the material world. In this context, it has been observed that in the ninth-century Digambara *Ādipurāṇa* by Jinasena (c. 770–850 CE), a Digambara monk and scholar who served as royal spiritual advisor to the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Amōghavarṣa, “Jainism is described as a weapon of war (1.4), the various ascetic practices are compared to an army which

¹²⁴ For this quote, see Kristi L. Wiley, “*Ahiṃsā* and Compassion in Jainism,” in *Studies in Jaina History and Culture: Disputes and Dialogues*, ed. Peter Flügel (London: Routledge, 2006): 438.

¹²⁵ Although Hindus, too, find in the *Bhagavad Gītā* a kind of harmonisation of religion and military service, the Jaina practices went beyond this and established a closer tie between ordinary practicing Jainas and heroic acts, which seems to have appealed to the military rulers at the time.

¹²⁶ On this, see Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 215, and Padmanabh S. Jaini, “The Digambara Jain Warrior,” in *The Assembly of Listeners: Jains in Society*, ed. Michael Carrithers and Caroline Humphrey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹²⁷ Jainas differentiate between already accumulated *karma* (*nirjarā*) and the incursion of new *karma* (*saṃvara*) (Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 23).

conquers the enemy *karma* (4.153 etc.), and the monk is instructed to abandon his body like that of an enemy on the battlefield (11.98).¹²⁸ In fact, the term Jina means “victor” or “conqueror,” by which is meant the “conqueror of the self.”¹²⁹ Following this, a Jina is a hero, *vīr* in Hindi, a term which is also contained in the name of the twenty-fourth Jina Mahāvīra, which means “the great hero.” This religious ideal of the self-negating abstemious ascetic who combats all worldly desires and attachments by exerting heroic self-perfection was likened to the image of the heroic and fearless soldier fighting on the battleground. In this regard, it is fascinating also to observe that all twenty-four Jinas were born into the *kṣatriya* caste, which is the warrior caste.¹³⁰

Some Jainas went even one step further in their courageous actions. During the medieval period, the religious practice of slowly starving oneself to death under close religious guidance, known as *sallekhanā*,¹³¹ became very widespread in Karnataka. In Jainism, it was considered a highly desirable and very auspicious way of ending one’s life,¹³² which is still practised to the present day, albeit on a much reduced scale.¹³³ Parasher-Sen emphasises that *sallekhanā* was understood as conducting “war against worldly desire through the weapon of self-mortification.”¹³⁴ Foot representations¹³⁵ and stelae, some set up inside small roofed stone

¹²⁸ For this quote, see Dundas, “The Digambara Jain Warrior”: 173–74. On the same issue, also see Suhil Jain, “Jaina View of War, Warrior and Violence,” Itihaas Indian History Resources: Jainism, <https://itihaas.tripod.com/jainism/war.html>.

¹²⁹ On this, see Jain, “Jaina View of War” and Dwivedi, “Jainism.”

¹³⁰ Cf. Dundas, “The Digambara Jain Warrior”: 173, and Dwivedi, “Jainism.” On p. 174 of the same source, Dundas points out that the Buddha also belonged to the *kṣatriya* caste.

¹³¹ Bhadrabāhu died at Shravanabelgola following the performance of such death rituals. On *sallekhanā*, see Hegewald, *Jaina Tradition of the Deccan*: 121–22.

¹³² On this, see Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 230.

¹³³ Present-day continuities have been discussed by Scholz, “The Revival of the Digambara Muni”: 272–74.

¹³⁴ Cf. Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 235. Places where *sallekhanā* was carried out will be discussed at the end of section 4.4.1 “Extended Ritual Activities.”

¹³⁵ As the foot representations are no negative indentations but positive foot shapes, in the Jaina situation, I prefer the expressions “foot image” or “foot representation” to footprint or foot imprint. On this, also see Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Foot Stones and Footprints (*Pādūkās*): Multivariate Symbols in Jaina Religious Practice in India,” in *In the Footsteps of the Masters: Footprints, Feet and Shoes as Objects of Veneration in Asian*,

pavilions, still mark the sites where *sallekhanā* was performed (Plate 11). It was not least due to this extreme religious practice that reigning monarchs and their martial classes considered Jainism a religion of “vigour and bravery”¹³⁶ which strongly appealed to them. This was decisive, particularly during the early stages of the development of the faith in the region, when the procurement of ample financial and political support was essential for the growth and firm establishment of Digambara Jainism in Karnataka.

I mentioned above that many formerly Hindu kings converted to Jainism in the course of the early and middle medieval period. A Jaina monarch was expected to be a moral ruler, *cakravartin*, but also to defend his kingdom and religion, and he even had to follow “a king’s obligation to expand the kingdom.”¹³⁷ The same applied to Jaina generals, whose religious duty or *dharma* it was to fight, even in a Jaina context, where normally non-violence was preached.¹³⁸ This pressure to fight was known as *udyogi hiṃsā*, “professional or occupational violence,” which is an obligatory act of aggression for a ruler or warrior.¹³⁹ While monarchs and Jinas are both *cakravartins*, universal emperors, worldly kingship is considered to be temporary, fleeting and inferior to what in the *Ādipurāṇa* is called the “true kingship of austerities of the monk” or the Jina.¹⁴⁰ The same differentiation also is made in the popular story of Bāhubali, who receives such prominent worship in Digambara Jainism in particular. Bāhubali’s conquest of his own desires and his ensuing complete austerity is considered superior to his brother Bharata’s position as king of Ayodhya. For the details of this story see section 4.4.1 “Extended Ritual Activities” below.

Islamic and Mediterranean Art, Studies in Asian Art and Culture (SAAC) 7, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2020): 371.

¹³⁶ This expression has been taken from Dundas, *The Jains*: 102.

¹³⁷ Cf. Dundas, “The Digambara Jain Warrior”: 175, Jain, “Jaina View of War,” and Dwivedi, “Jainism.”

¹³⁸ Jain, “Jaina View of War” has written on this issue.

¹³⁹ On this, cf. Dwivedi, “Jainism.”

¹⁴⁰ This is said in the *Ādipurāṇa* 17.80, 263; 34.114–24, 132). On this, see Dundas, “The Digambara Jain Warrior”: 180.

A related factor, which also added to the quick increase in popularity of the newly established Digambara faith, was that Jainism as a religion was introduced to South India from Bihar in the northern *aryan* (*āryan*) regions of the subcontinent. Traditionally, *aryan* culture has portrayed itself as superior in prestige to the southern Indian *drāviḍian* traditions. Burton Stein argues that by adopting Jainism, which at least initially was perceived as “northern,” the status of the southern *drāviḍian* martial classes was increased and gained in respectability.¹⁴¹ During the fifth and sixths centuries CE, these groups controlled the growing south Indian population of landowners and farmworkers almost completely.¹⁴² As these warrior classes had not wanted to associate themselves with local agrarian Hindu groups,¹⁴³ Jainism offered an attractive alternative. However, it is not entirely clear whether the Jainas of northern India were really so clearly associated with *aryan* culture in the north.¹⁴⁴

As a result of the support offered by the royal elite and their martial classes to Jainism at this time, the ordinary people soon became Digambara Jainas as well. The masses usually followed the religion practised by the ruling sectors of their society. Through close ties on all levels of society, the Jainas in medieval Karnataka quickly succeeded in controlling local political affairs, as well as in safeguarding and enhancing financial support for their expanding faith.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Cf. Burton Stein, “Brahman and Peasant in Early South Indian History,” *The Adayar Library Bulletin* 31–32 (1967–1968): 229–69, and Stein, *Peasant State and Society*: 79. See also Davis, “The Story of the Disappearing Jains”: 215, and Dundas, “The Digambara Jain Warrior”: 175. In this context it is interesting that Padoux suggests that Viraśaivism arose as a southern Indian reaction against *aryan* *Brāhmaṇical* dominance (André Padoux, “Viraśaivas,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* 13, ed. Mircea Eliade [New York: Macmillan, 1987]: 12). See also Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 232.

¹⁴² See, for instance, Davis, “The Story of the Disappearing Jains”: 215.

¹⁴³ On this, see Dundas, *The Jains*: 102.

¹⁴⁴ I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

¹⁴⁵ See Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 224.

3.2 General Tolerance and the Accommodation of Converts

Additionally, in their rise towards supremacy it was important for young religions to make it as easy as possible for others to change over to their new faith. The Jaina approach towards other faiths and their practices has generally been described as “tolerant, “liberal,” “noncommittal” and even as “lenient.”¹⁴⁶ Saletore wrote: “[I]t cannot be denied that the Jainas fostered the principle of toleration more sincerely and at the same time more successfully than any other community in India.”¹⁴⁷ Qvarnström states that the Jainas exhibited great flexibility towards converts, who were not asked to completely abandon their former faith’s traditions and were permitted to continue certain social norms and local practices, such as the Hindu *saṃskāras*.¹⁴⁸ The latter are rites of passage that mark important events in the life of a person, such as birth, marriage or death. Householders who had recently become Digambara Jainas were at liberty to continue their former Hindu customs and traditions, as long as they respected the core Jaina doctrinal elements.¹⁴⁹ This openness also led to the assimilation of certain Hindu gods, such as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, by the Jainas. This attitude eased and sped up the process of establishing and expanding Jainism in areas outside of its region of origin in Bihar.

In a way, this tolerance was employed as a missionary strategy, which functioned very well in enticing new followers to Jainism in early medieval Karnataka. Arguably, at its core this openness was on the one hand a manifestation of *ahiṃsā*, of not harming or wanting to change others, while on the other it was an expression of the Jaina doctrine of *anekāntavāda*, which states that reality is manifold, complex, multi-perspectival and not one-sided.¹⁵⁰ However, as we will see, this understand-

¹⁴⁶ Qvarnström, “Stability and Adaptability”: 34–35, has written on this Jaina attitude.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 270.

¹⁴⁸ Jaini has also written on this (Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 291–92).

¹⁴⁹ For further details, see Qvarnström, “Stability and Adaptability”: 35–36, and Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 259.

¹⁵⁰ See Hampa Nagarajaiah, “Attacks on Important Buddhist and Jaina Centres in Karnataka,” in *Buddhist and Jaina Studies: Proceedings of the Conference in Lumbini, February 2013*, ed. J. Soni, M. Pahlke and C. Cüpfer, LIRI Seminar Proceedings Series 6 (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2014): 51.

ing of and interaction with other faith groups could both be a blessing and a curse.¹⁵¹ The Jaina approach contrasted very strikingly with the singular approach to reality and truth advocated by many of the monistic religions which became active in the area from around the eleventh century onwards. We will encounter many of these beliefs in section 5, “Danger from Rival Faith Groups.”

So far, I have concentrated on the more “passive” practice of openness and toleration which the Jainas displayed towards the customs of other religions. In addition, the Jainas also showed a more active ability to dynamically adapt themselves and their own tradition to local circumstances, which at this time were predominantly Hindu. Adaptability is also a skill closely associated with Hinduism, which can take on many different forms, and with Buddhism, which spread so widely throughout the world due to its flexibility. However, at this time, the Jainas proved particularly adjustable to new circumstances. This led, for instance, to their own composition of Jaina versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* epics,¹⁵² and the further development of already existing Jaina divinities, especially goddesses, as I shall discuss below (4.4.2 “Rise of the Cult of Goddesses [Śaktism]”), which were given more significance in ritual proceedings from the eighth century CE onwards. It is due to this capacity for adaptability that Digambara Jainism survived particularly well in the coastal region of western Karnataka, where it entered into an intense dialogue with Hindu and local sacred practices and cults, and where it survives as a prominent active faith group to the present day.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Qvarnström argues that this approach made the Jainas “better equipped to cope with matters challenging their survival and growth” (Qvarnström, “Stability and Adaptability”: 35). However, Subrahmanya Aiyar regards these developments critically. According to him, when it came to converts “number, not faith, seems to have been their aim” (Subrahmanya Aiyar, “Origin and Decline”: 216).

¹⁵² Davis has written on Jaina retellings of the story of *Rāmā* (Richard H. Davis, *Religions of Early India: A Cultural History* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024]: 299–300). For Jaina versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* see Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 304–6.

¹⁵³ Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 220–25, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 519–23, have written on these interactions.

This openness and adaptability initially helped the Jainas to flourish. However, it did not prevent them from severely declining in influence, at least in Karnataka from the eleventh to thirteenth century onwards. At the same time, Buddhism was also under severe threat and fared even worse in the south of India and the whole subcontinent.¹⁵⁴ In contrast to the Buddhist creed, Jainism survived as a living faith in India, even if its Digambara form lost much of its initial strength in Karnataka.¹⁵⁵

3.3 Intense Interactions with the Lay Community

By contrast to Buddhism, the Jainas appear to have engaged especially with the community of lay practitioners, and with lay women even more strongly. Whilst the laity in general and lay men more specifically are referred to as *śrāvakas*, lay women are known as *śrāvikās*. As a result of these powerful relations with the laity, too, many converts were attracted to early Jainism in Karnataka, causing the faith to flourish extensively.

3.3.1 Raising the Position of Women

Throughout the world, it is women in particular who play an important role in transmitting religion from one generation to the next (Plate 12). In India, although females are not permitted to act as priestesses, and nuns are generally considered inferior to monks, they still play a crucial role in upholding everyday ritual practices. In this context, Desai emphasised the critical role of women in spreading and preserving religious customs more generally,¹⁵⁶ and with regards to the situation in medieval Karnataka, Narasimha Murthy asserted that “[m]ore than men, women

¹⁵⁴ For further information on the decline of Buddhism in India, see R.C. Mitra, *The Decline of Buddhism in India*, Visva-Bharati Studies 20 (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1954); Jaini, “Disappearance of Buddhism and the Survival of Jainism”: 81–91; Giovanni Verardi, *Hardships and Downfall of Buddhism in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2011), and Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 151–56.

¹⁵⁵ See Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 218–25; Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 173–79, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 511–23.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 168. Refer also to Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 229.

proved devout Jainas.”¹⁵⁷ For this reason it is fascinating that in medieval South India, one Digambara Jaina school in particular engaged very actively and directly with women. But let us first look at the diversity of Jaina schools more generally.

The creation of different subgroups of Digambara Jainism was due to the enormous flourishing of the faith in Karnataka from the eighth century CE. Amongst these groups were the Japulis, Ājivikas and the Daṇḍajīvikas,¹⁵⁸ as well as the particularly popular and most influential subgroup of the Yāpanīyas.¹⁵⁹ The latter were an early reform movement, which set out to adapt the local form of Jainism more closely to the situation in medieval Karnataka.¹⁶⁰ In this, the Yāpanīyas appear to have been less dogmatic than the main branch of Digambara Jainism in south India, known as the Digambara Śrī Mūla Saṅgha. The Yāpanīyas preached that ordinary laypeople and not only learned ascetics could attain liberation.¹⁶¹

Moreover, the Yāpanīyas believed women to be capable of gaining enlightenment from within a female body, a prospect rejected by majority Digambara Jainism.¹⁶² This belief is based on the fact that Digambara ascetics are expected to give up all their belongings, including all their clothes. As social custom does not permit women to wander naked, so that they are forced to continue wearing simple white cotton robes, mainstream Digambara Jainas argue that women are barred from prac-

¹⁵⁷ This quote has been taken from Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 44.

¹⁵⁸ For further details, refer to Sundaram, “Elements of Jaina History”: 36, and Ashim Kumar Roy, *A History of Jainism* (New Delhi: Gitanjali Publishing House, 1984): 128.

¹⁵⁹ Saletore spells them Yāpanīyas (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 34). Alternatively, but much rarer, they are also known as Gōpya Saṅgha (Helmuth von Glasenapp, *Der Jainismus: Eine indische Erlösungsreligion* [Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1984 (1925)]: 356). According to the same author on the same page, “Gōpya” means “that which must be kept hidden.”

¹⁶⁰ For further details on the Yāpanīya, see section 4.3.1 “The Yāpanīya Saṅgha.”

¹⁶¹ See Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 167. They also argued that the followers of other religions could attain omniscience.

¹⁶² On this issue, refer to Padmanabh S. Jaini, *Gender & Salvation: Jaina Debates on the Spiritual Liberation of Women* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1991); Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 221–24, 218, 227; and Davis, *Religions of Early India*: 213.

ting the ascetic ideal to its fullest extent, and as such unable to attain enlightenment. Further factors preventing women from reaching liberation in the Digambara view are their ability to bear children, who are living beings, as well as their bodily constitution, which is allegedly insufficient to endure severe hardship.¹⁶³ In mainstream Digambara Jaina belief, women have to be reborn as men,¹⁶⁴ making the Yāpanīya stance on women a truly revolutionary one.

The Yāpanīyas further strengthened the position of women by appointing female teachers and investing them with high-ranking positions in their own religious institutions.¹⁶⁵ This appealed to female followers in particular, and inscriptional evidence shows that the number of lay women and nuns, known as *ajjis*, *āryikās* or *kantis*, considerably increased during the period from the eighth to tenth centuries CE (Plate 13).¹⁶⁶ This considerably increased the numerical strength of the entire community. Jaini highlights the inclusion of women as an important element at this time, and as a decisive factor in extending the power and enlarging the size of Jaina society.¹⁶⁷ This pronounced equality of women amongst the Yāpanīyas may also have aided the upsurge in the veneration of female goddesses, such as the *yakṣīs*, at this time (see 4.4.2 “Rise of the Cult of Goddesses [Śaktism]”).¹⁶⁸ The numerous and often large endowments made by queens, aristocratic and ordinary lay women to Jaina temples and religious establishments, which I briefly referred to

¹⁶³ Jinās are believed to have a special adamantine body, described as resembling a diamond (*vajra*), in order to endure the harsh asceticism necessary to reach deliverance (Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 68).

¹⁶⁴ Cf. the book by Jaini, *Gender & Salvation*, and Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 218–20.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 169–70.

¹⁶⁶ This has been discussed by Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 168–70; Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 126, and Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 47. On the title of nuns, see Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 168, and Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 127–30.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 275.

¹⁶⁸ On this issue, refer to Suresh, “Jaina Monuments”: 183; Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 170–73; Padmanabh S. Jaini, “Is There a Popular Jainism?” in *The Assembly of Listeners: Jains in Society*, ed. Michael Carrithers and Caroline Humphrey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 196, and Ramendra Nath Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults in the Deccan (c. A.D. 600–A.D. 1000)* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973): 59–60.

above, further illustrates a certain emancipation and empowerment of women at this time, particularly in the Yāpanīya community.

3.3.2 Involving the Laity in Religious Rituals

The subgroup of the Yāpanīyas intensified interactions not only with women, but with the community of lay people more generally. Monks and nuns, who were obliged to abide by the rules of ascetic poverty, relied on support from the public for shelter, food and other items for their survival. The laity, on the other hand, depended on the religious teachings, ritual expertise and spiritual guidance provided in turn by ascetics (Plate 14). This enhanced the impact of lay followers on religious dealings and intensified their contact with male and female ascetics and Jaina religious institutions.¹⁶⁹ As a result, gradually more lay people got attracted to a religious life.

To further foster relations with the laity, the Yāpanīya leadership established a number of settled monastic orders and encouraged their ascetics to reside close to the lay community.¹⁷⁰ Traditionally, the Jaina mendicants had been homeless wandering ascetics, who had often chosen remote and inaccessible places for their religious retreats. Therefore, settling down in the community represented a substantial change in Digambara Jaina practice of the later medieval period in Karnataka, which soon also affected other Digambara schools.¹⁷¹ Settling in the community provided the ascetics with more stability and permanence in the community and with more influence over local affairs.¹⁷²

In addition, the Yāpanīyas commissioned temples attached to these newly founded monasteries. Roughly half of all Jaina temples erected in Karnataka up to the mid-seventh century CE were connected with the

¹⁶⁹ Zydenbos has emphasised the importance of engaging the laity in religious life to guarantee the survival of religions (Robert J. Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus,” in *Aspekte des Weiblichen in der indischen Kultur*, ed. Ulrike Roesler [Swisttal-Odendorf: Indica und Tibetica, 2000]: 146–47).

¹⁷⁰ This has been stressed by Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 164.

¹⁷¹ The issue of monastic residences will be discussed in more detail below (section 4.1 “Settled and Landowning Ascetics”).

¹⁷² See Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 280.

Yāpanīya subgroup.¹⁷³ Furthermore, Yāpanīyas increased the quantity of ritual activities in these shrines and established a clear routine of daily and seasonal devotional rituals that regularly involved lay Jainas (Plate 15). This further solidified links between the two communities, which had previously only had very sporadic dealings with one another.

Another form of intensifying relations with the laity was for the Yāpanīyas to set up schools, hospitals, and rest houses (*choultries*). These charitable institutions permitted the Jaina community, who had profited greatly from public donations, to give back some of their wealth to the needy public.¹⁷⁴ During the seventh and eighth centuries CE, religious charity homes (*dānaśālās*) were often connected to Jaina temples, as they still are today.¹⁷⁵ These charitable institutions provided free lodging, food and medicines together with religious guidance. It is part of Jaina teachings to offer to society the “four gifts” or the “fourfold gift of charity,” which are food (*āhāra*), shelter or protection (*abhaya*), medicine (*bhaiṣajya*) and education or learning (*śāstra dāna*).¹⁷⁶ In Jainism, altruistic giving is seen as practicing *sāmāyika*, the temporary giving up of one’s possessions.¹⁷⁷ Donations, *dāna*, to religious institutions, homeless ascetics or to sick and frail people are considered virtuous acts, securing good religious merit (*puṇya*) for the donor and eliminating the bad effects of negative *karma*. By applying this practice, believers hope to shorten the long path to deliverance.¹⁷⁸ Saletore characterises these gifts made by the Jainas to society as the most important factor in the successful dissemination of their faith in south India.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷³ Cf. Dibbad on this subject (Dibbad, “The Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 66).

¹⁷⁴ Singh has commented on this (Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 107).

¹⁷⁵ On this, see Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 83.

¹⁷⁶ Additional information can be found in Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 173, 269; Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 85, and Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 229.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 215–16.

¹⁷⁸ See Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 82, and John E. Cort, “Bhakti in the Early Jain Tradition: Understanding Devotional Religion in South Asia,” *History of Religions* 42, no. 1 (2002): 76.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 269. By settling in the community and offering welfare activities, the Yāpanīya and Jainas more generally developed closer ties with main-

Taken all together, the different points outlined above transformed the Jainas within less than one millennium only into one of the prevalent religious powers as well as one of the most influential social, political and economic forces of the day in Karnataka.

4 Changes in Digambara Jaina Religious Organisation and Practice

The pinnacle of Jaina power in Karnataka and the inception of its waning were intimately connected. Many of the factors which initially fuelled the rise of the religion eventually contributed to its decrease in popularity and influence. To a certain extent, the Jainas became the victims of their own success. The popularity, enhanced financial and political authority and the newfound cosmopolitanism enjoyed by the Jaina community from around the eighth century CE appear to have led them to accept and themselves to undertake changes to the social, ritual and to a certain extent the dogmatic structure of their own religion. One could argue that to some degree at least, some Jainas started to pay less attention to some facets of their core ascetic tenets,¹⁸⁰ and replaced a probably reasonably austere approach of practicing their religion with a more institutionalised version, which involved more worldly and ritualistic elements. These issues will be discussed in more detail below.

4.1 Settled and Landowning Ascetics

As part of this complex process of modifying their faith, there was an important change in the area of the self-understanding and living conditions of some groups of south Indian Jaina ascetics. As part of their

stream society (Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 47–48; Pinto, “Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire”: 82).

¹⁸⁰ On these changes also refer to Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 41.

initiation ceremony (*dikṣā*),¹⁸¹ all Jaina monks and nuns would take—as they still do today—the five great vows (*mahāvratas*), one of which is the vow of non-possession (*aparigraha*).¹⁸² In the context of this fifth vow, the mendicants renounce all attachments. This involves giving up all physical possessions of material wealth,¹⁸³ but also renouncing all emotional links, such as connection to family and friends, as well as all wishes and desires, theoretically at least.¹⁸⁴ The only items which Digambara ascetics of both sexes are allowed to carry are a water pot (*kamaṇḍalu*) and a brush of peacock feathers (*piñchī*) (Plates 1, 16).¹⁸⁵ The latter is employed to clean the floor in front of them, to prevent harming insects or other living beings on the path they walk on. In order to preserve their respectability and dignity, Digambara nuns also own a simple white cotton dress.

In accordance with this same intention of parting with all possession and discontinuing all linkages with people and places, Jaina monks and nuns also have no fixed abode. Traditionally, they are wandering mendicants who walk from one Jaina centre to the next, usually in small groups, not permanently linked to any one particular place. Ascetics of both sexes receive alms, and are fed and provided with temporary shelter by temple establishments and devout individuals.¹⁸⁶ Only for very limited periods, such as the four-month rain retreat (*cāturmās*,

¹⁸¹ Singh has written in detail on Digambara initiation rituals in Karnataka (Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 69–74).

¹⁸² Within the framework of these five vows, the renunciates also promise to abide by the concept of *ahimsā*, already mentioned above, to speak the truth (*satya*), not to steal (*asteya*), and to lead a celibate life (*brahmacarya*). On this see Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 23.

¹⁸³ It is a difficult issue in India for Jaina monks to wander naked. However, as has been pointed out above, it is perceived to be unacceptable for nuns or women more generally to do so. They therefore do not give up their dress but commit to wearing simple white cotton robes.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. N.N. Bhattacharyya, *Jainism: A Concise Encyclopedia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2009): 35, and Misra, “The Jains in an Urban Setting”: 31, 47–56.

¹⁸⁵ Alternatively, *piñchī* is spelled: “*picchi*” (Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 166).

¹⁸⁶ See Scholz, “The Revival of the Digambara Muni”: 272.

cāturmāsa), are they permitted to stay in one place and reside amongst the lay community.¹⁸⁷

Thus, traditionally, Jaina ascetics neither had belongings nor a permanent home. Between the eighth and the tenth centuries CE, as will be outlined below, these important Jaina religious principles started to change, at least for some mendicants living in the area of Karnataka. Today, however, most ascetics abide again by the traditional rules laid out above.

4.1.1 *Maṭhas*, Land Tenure and Worldly Power

I have described above how through increased patronage, large numbers of new temples were built, and that monetary funds and land grants of entire villages were bequeathed for their upkeep.¹⁸⁸ To a certain degree, this contradicted the core precept of non-possession, as at least some ascetics now controlled large amounts of wealth and multiple properties. Even though these properties were not owned by individuals but by the local Digambara Jaina community as a whole, this was considered problematic by some and attracted internal criticism.¹⁸⁹ As heads of Jaina groups and large temple establishments, some Digambara ascetics became large-scale landowners (*gāvunḍas*). In fact, in places where they owned the majority of the land, they turned into village chiefs and obtained the status of worldly rulers alongside their positions as religious teachers.¹⁹⁰ Eventually, Digambara Jaina ascetics became a new landowning class.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ The rainy season is a period of strong vegetal growth and a pronounced movement of insects and other creatures. In order to protect flora and fauna, Jaina mendicants traditionally stay in one place. For further details, see Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 89–90; Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 21, and Scholz, “The Revival of the Digambara Muni”: 274.

¹⁸⁸ Donor records in the form of inscriptions from this time in Karnataka mention land grants, donations of entire villages and other sources of revenue given to Jaina religious establishments (Suresh, “Jaina Monuments”: 181).

¹⁸⁹ Davis has written on similar developments with regards to the Buddhist community (Davis, *Religions of Early India*: 208).

¹⁹⁰ Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 149, has written on this issue.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 119.

The involvement of Jaina monks, in particular, in the running of shrines and monasteries appears to have been a gradual process. From the fifth or sixth centuries CE, south Indian Jaina temples employed priests, known as *bhoja* or *bhojaka*, who took care of the slowly expanding ritual proceedings.¹⁹² From the seventh or eighth centuries CE, the term *ācārya*, teacher, was increasingly used for those in charge of the temple establishments. This illustrates the increased involvement of Digambara Jaina monks in the running of temples and monasteries.¹⁹³

For this purpose, groups of ascetics in early and middle medieval Karnataka started to settle permanently amongst the lay community. For their accommodation, monastic establishments known as *maṭhas* were constructed close to the temples (Plate 17).¹⁹⁴ Above, I have briefly referred to this practice in the context of the Yāpanīyas, who may have been the first to initiate this practice. Although the members of this subgroup were especially active in founding monastic institutions and permanently residing in them,¹⁹⁵ ultimately *maṭhas* were also set up by the followers of other Digambara groups. The proliferation of the monasteries throughout the state significantly promoted the spread of the religion, as they represented permanently settled seats of Digambara Jainism. The *maṭhas* functioned not only as religious and ritual headquarters of the Jainas in the region, but also as social and administrative

¹⁹² In Karnataka, *bhojas* or *bhojakas* belong to the priestly class.

¹⁹³ On this, see Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 47, 49. This situation is not reflected in Digambara Jaina *basadis* in Karnataka today. On this issue, refer to Hege-wald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 48–49, n 183. Priests employed by Jaina temples, who in Digambara Jainism can either be Hindu *brāhmaṇas*, Jaina *brāhmaṇas* (*brāhmaṇas* whose families converted to Jainism) or simply Jaina priests (*upadhye*), as well as the heads of monasteries (*bhaṭṭārakas*), carry out rituals before images and more abstract symbols. Nowadays, fully initiated monks do not normally touch or make offerings to statues. This has to do with the fact that Digambara ascetics have no belongings to offer and because they avoid bathing regularly to follow *ahiṃsā*. On Jaina *brāhmaṇas*, also refer to Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 291.

¹⁹⁴ There are references dating from the fourth and a larger number from the fifth century CE, which indicate the building of monastic accommodations next to temples in Karnataka. Singh highlights the close connection between shrines and monasteries as single units (Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 101).

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 99.

ones.¹⁹⁶ Many were also centres of education, and to some extent of jurisdiction.¹⁹⁷

There were separate monasteries for nuns and for monks. At the start of their existence, the female orders appear to have been less influential. However, the status of female ascetics rose significantly at least from the eleventh century onwards.¹⁹⁸

The practice of residing constantly in a monastic institution (*maṭhvāsa*)¹⁹⁹ represented a drastic change in the Jaina mendicant's attitude and practice.²⁰⁰ References from the ninth and tenth centuries CE in Karnataka clearly differentiate between the wandering and homeless, "forest-dwelling" ascetics, the *vanavāsīs*, and the settled "monastery-dwelling" mendicants, the *maṭhavāsīs*.²⁰¹ This indicates that not all ascetics settled down, although the monks and nuns based in monasteries appear to have gained in prominence and soon to have outnumbered those leading the more traditional, homeless lifestyle.²⁰²

While this change may be criticised as a departure from some core ascetic tenets, the settled nature of some Digambara ascetics allowed them to set up large centres of religious learning with prominent libraries. These permitted the settled ascetics associated with these places to preserve, study and enlarge their sacred scriptures and publications in the areas of Jaina philosophy and logic.²⁰³ Through their wealth, the *maṭhas* became centres of the arts more generally and many still house

¹⁹⁶ The combination of religious and worldly power in closely interrelated edifices is also known from Buddhism in Bhutan, for instance. The *dzongs* are the religious and monastic as well as the governmental and administrative headquarters of the different regions.

¹⁹⁷ On this issue, refer to Pinto, "An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka": 222.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 128–30.

¹⁹⁹ On this term refer to Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults*: 59.

²⁰⁰ This has also been discussed by Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 100. Although the *Pravacanasāra* has one reference to such "settled-down ascetics" (*maṭhavāsīs*) dating from the second century CE, this must have been unusual at this time (Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults*: 64; Scholz, "Digambara Jainism in Karnataka": 238).

²⁰¹ Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 106, has written on this distinction.

²⁰² This has been emphasised by Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 106–7.

²⁰³ Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 108–9, has written on this issue.

enormous cultural assets, such as extensive wall paintings, ritual images and palanquins, as can be seen at Shravanabelgola, to mention but one (Plate 18). Furthermore, settled monks and nuns in established administrative headquarters were also able to influence local politics and economics more directly and lastingly than small groups of dispersed wandering ascetics.²⁰⁴ Despite the obvious increase in power and privilege which was attained by settling down, I would argue that the first incentive for setting up monastic institutions was religious and spiritual.

From this time, householders were encouraged to donate to temple establishments as well as to *maṭhas*,²⁰⁵ which led to their enlargement and further proliferation, especially during the period lasting from the seventh to the twelfth centuries CE.²⁰⁶ This increased the prosperity of the Jaina ascetics and the religious Jaina community more generally, and added to their enhanced authority throughout the state.

When Jainism gradually lost influence in Karnataka from the eleventh century onwards, most of the *maṭhas* became impoverished and quickly stopped functioning. In the wider area of Karnataka, only six have survived to the present day. The most influential *maṭhas* today are Shravanabelgola,²⁰⁷ the main sacred centre of Digambara Jainism in Karnataka; Narasimharajapura (Narasimharājapura, Simhanagadde) in western Karnataka and Humcha (Hombuja, Pombuccapura) on the west coast.²⁰⁸ However, smaller branches such as the *maṭhas* at Kambadhalli, at Mudabidri and others, still provide centres of Digambara Jaina learning and veneration today. With the closure of many *maṭhas*, Digambara Jaina ascetics re-established and re-invigorated the practice of wander-

²⁰⁴ See, for instance, Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 110.

²⁰⁵ Cf. Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 104.

²⁰⁶ This has been described by Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 102, 104.

²⁰⁷ The *maṭha* at Shravanabelgola was established in 982 CE by Cāvunḍarāya, the general of Gaṅgā King Mārasimha II, one year before the tall Bāhubali monolith was carved (Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 105).

²⁰⁸ Pombuccapura can also be spelled Paṭṭi-Pombuccapura or Pompuccanagara. The *maṭha* at Humcha was founded during the eighth or ninth century CE (Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 105). For further details on these sites and their *maṭhas*, see Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 149–50.

ing homelessly on a large scale during the twentieth century.²⁰⁹ Today, small groups of male and female ascetics can again be seen moving from place to place.

4.1.2 *Bhaṭṭārakas* as Administrators and Mediators

The south Indian Jaina monasteries were headed by administrative managers known as *bhaṭṭārakas*, as those which have continued to exist to the present day still are (Plate 19).²¹⁰ An alternative term for *bhaṭṭāraka*, which is however used less frequently today, is *maṭhādhipati*.²¹¹ The newly created pontiffs were celibate but not fully initiated Digambara Jaina monks. While fully ordained male ascetics went naked, the administrative managers of the *maṭhas* wore simple orange cotton robes. Orange is perceived as an auspicious, ceremonial and sacred colour. As leaders of monasteries, the *bhaṭṭārakas* represented the religious community and handled its religious and financial affairs. This allowed at least some of the fully initiated monks to continue to observe their ascetic vows of non-possession and non-settledness. In addition, the *bhaṭṭārakas* were responsible for religious education.

Many *bhaṭṭārakas* managed schools and oversaw libraries and publication series. They were in charge of restoration projects and the maintenance of temples. Jaini compared them to the leaders of Hindu monastic establishments, known as *mahants*.²¹² As they went about dressed, they were more acceptable to Hindu and Muslim negotiation partners and could integrate more easily into society. By virtue of being in charge of the religious, political and economic power of an area, the Jaina *bhaṭṭārakas* attained positions comparable to that of worldly leaders, in addition to fulfilling their religious duties. Today, Jaina *maṭhas* in

²⁰⁹ Scholz alludes to this fact (Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 268). Also see the whole of her unpublished PhD dissertation on the subject (Scholz, “The Digambara Jainas”).

²¹⁰ For additional information on *bhaṭṭārakas* refer to Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 237–41. *Bhaṭṭārakas* are still to be found in southern India, including Tamil Nadu, and in Central India today. On the decline of the *maṭha* and the *bhaṭṭāraka* traditions in North India, see Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 159.

²¹¹ For this term, see Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 149.

²¹² Cf. Jaini, “Is There a Popular Jainism?”: 196.

Karnataka are still headed by *bhaṭṭārakas* who continue to perform the functions outlined above.

The setting up of *maṭhas* with administrative heads, the *bhaṭṭārakas*, represented a bureaucratic organisation, formalisation and an institutionalisation of Jainism on a large scale. This became necessary because of the plentiful bequests made to the community, which led to a massive expansion of the assets and properties held by the Jaina religious *saṅgha*. As a result, formerly poor and homeless ascetics, at least as a larger community became wealthy landowners. These developments, including the rise of dignitaries of the Jaina church into worldly governors, can be viewed negatively or at least critically, in so far as they represented a certain rejection of ancient and absolutely core Jaina ascetic values and contradicted some of the original teachings of Jainism in which austerity and self-mortification were seen as ideals.

It should be said, however, that these new forms of practicing Digambara Jainism as a settled or landowning ascetic simply offered an alternative, parallel path, which never replaced the fundamental teachings. Monks and nuns still continued to take the vows of non-possession and homelessness, and adhered to them. Furthermore, the permanent integration of settled ascetics into lay society brought religious and worldly spheres more closely together, reinforcing and solidifying connections and interdependencies between the two groups. As a result, Jainism further grew in popularity and was affirmed as a strong and stable component of the religious landscape of the later medieval state of Karnataka.²¹³ Nevertheless, one can argue that these alternatives somewhat weakened the clear delineation and absolute uniqueness of the Jaina path.

4.2 The Introduction of Castes

In contrast to the modifications discussed in the section above, which mainly affected the mendicant community of monks and nuns, other

²¹³ On this subject, refer to Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 107.

changes primarily concerned the continuously expanding lay community. In this context, the Jainas started to accept castes, most likely in order to accommodate converts from Hinduism.

Indian society has traditionally been structured by hierarchical layers into a social system of four main castes, known as *varṇa* or *jāti*.²¹⁴ During the Kadamba and Gaṅgā periods, between the fourth and sixth centuries CE in particular, former Hindu families changed their religious affiliation to become Jainas, but they retained their former Hindu occupational caste membership. This indicates an initially quite unintentional integration of caste remnants into Jaina society.²¹⁵ In the course of the medieval period, probably from the seventh or eighth century CE onwards, however, the Jainas in Karnataka addressed the topic of social organisation more directly and officially accepted caste stratification in Jainism.²¹⁶

With regard to this aspect, we can again outline positive and more negative effects of this change. A helpful outcome was a stronger integration of the growing Jaina community into wider society, which at least initially was majority Hindu and structured by castes. Through the acceptance of Jaina castes, people could participate more widely in social traditions, leading to an even firmer assimilation of Jainism into

²¹⁴ *Varṇa* means colour and refers to an earlier system of social stratigraphy with four castes, already found in the earliest Vedic texts (c. 1200 to 600 BCE). In later classical Hinduism, these were called *jāti*. The latter term can also be used to refer to a subcaste of a main *varṇa* (Klaus K. Klostermaier, *A Survey of Hinduism*, 2nd ed. [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994]: 334–36; Karel Werner, *A Popular Dictionary of Hinduism* [Richmond: Curzon Press, 1994]: 82, 170; Klaus K. Klostermaier, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Hinduism* [Oxford: Oneworld, 1999 (1998)]: 198).

²¹⁵ See Misra on Jaina castes in Mysore city, where she recorded Jaina *brāhmaṇs*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *Gauḍas* (Misra, “The Jains in an Urban Setting”: 17–25). Another Hindu practice which was absorbed into Jainism is the wearing of sacred thread, initially a *brāhmaṇ* custom, by Jaina boys, probably from the early medieval period onwards (Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 77, 81–82).

²¹⁶ On this issue, see Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 44; Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 259, and Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 54–55. Banks discusses the integration of castes into Śvetāmbara Jainism in the north of India, see Marcus Banks, “Defining Division: An Historical Overview of Jain Social Organization,” *Modern Asian Studies* 20, no. 3 (1986): 447–60.

the broader society.²¹⁷ A number of inscriptions even suggest that at this time, local Hindus provided safety and financial support for the construction and conservation of Jaina temples, and that marriages between Jains and other religious groups increased.²¹⁸ On the other hand, however, the affirmation of Jaina *varṇas* caused a certain fragmentation of the laity, which eventually may have contributed to jeopardising the unity of Jaina society as a whole. Banks, in fact, classifies the Jaina community, both lay and ascetic, as one of “the most fragmented religious groups in India today.”²¹⁹ However, the problem of inner division and disintegration was only understood as a danger by reform-orientated Digambara Jaina associations during the nineteenth century. They considered their fragmentation into numerous smaller groups and castes a serious dilemma, which they tried to remedy, albeit without visible success.²²⁰

Another problem arising from these new societal divisions was that caste-based discrimination appears to have become prevalent in Jaina society as well. Jaina members of the lowest caste (*śūdra*) were no longer permitted to join the mendicant community, a path which formerly had been available to all.²²¹ As we will see later, this made Viraśaivism—which at least in its initial stages completely rejected castes—very attractive to members of these levels of society. From the eighth century CE onwards, there are numerous reports referring to large land grants and donations made by individuals on becoming ascetics. It is not clear if these were compulsory fees, payments intended to provide access to the ascetic path for otherwise excluded layers of Jaina society, or entirely voluntary donations.²²² It is possible that members of lower social strata

²¹⁷ Cf. Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 44. These early converts appear to have contributed much to the social and cultural activities of Jainism at the time.

²¹⁸ Consult Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 43–44, 48–49.

²¹⁹ For this quote, refer to Banks, “Defining Division”: 447.

²²⁰ See Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 263. Jainism is a faith with a great internal diversity, ranging from severely ascetic and non-image-worshipping to highly devout groups that venerate a number of abstract and figural sacred objects.

²²¹ Cf. Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 73; Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 264, and Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 55.

²²² On this information, refer to Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 74.

could enhance their chances of becoming monks or nuns through such payments, as having an ascetic in one's family conferred an enormous prestige onto a household—as it still does today.

4.3 Diversification into Various Jaina Orders

Above, I discussed the inner fragmentation of the Digambara Jaina lay community in middle medieval Karnataka into different castes. A similar process can also be discerned in connection with the Digambara ascetic community at this time. With its rise to influence, it split into large numbers of religious subgroups, separate monastic orders (*guruvādis*) and lineages of individual teachers, the *gurus* or *ācāryas*. These subgroups were mainly known as *gaṇas*, *gacchas*, *anvayas* and *saṅghas*,²²³ although different factions of monastic lineages were also referred to as *kulas*, *balis* and *samudāyas*.²²⁴ Although today we do not precisely understand what was exactly meant by these different classifications, the many inscriptions referring to membership of specific subgroups of monastic orders show how important they must have been for shaping the identity and self-understanding of Digambara Jaina ascetics at their time.

This inner fragmentation occurred mainly during the eighth to tenth centuries CE.²²⁵ It could be argued that this splitting into a number of different sects was inevitable given the presence of multiple leaders in Jainism from the very start—for instance, Pārśvanātha and Mahāvīra—, and that it was further reinforced by the small groups of scattered migrant ascetics (*gaṇas*) traditionally travelling through distant parts of the state.²²⁶ However, despite this, the division into official subsects

²²³ On this issue, see Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 221; Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 136; Adinath N. Upadhye, “More Light on the Yāpaniya Sangha: A Jaina Sect,” in *Upadhye: Papers, Other Publications 77* (Mysore: Wesley Press, 1983): 192–93, 198; and Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 46.

²²⁴ Cf. Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 27.

²²⁵ Cf. Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults*: 41–46.

²²⁶ Banks refers to a first split into Jaina subgroups shortly after the death of Mahāvīra, which was caused by his son-in-law (Banks, “Defining Division”: 447). Upadhye provides information on a number of early breakaway groups and reminds us that the

represented a new phenomenon, resulting from the success and growth of the Digambara Jaina community in medieval Karnataka.

4.3.1 The Yāpanīya Saṅgha

The most famous and influential breakaway group of the Digambaras in Karnataka was the Yāpanīya community, which I have mentioned above in the context of their engagement with women and the laity, and with regard to their preference for dwelling in monasteries.

The Yāpanīya Saṅgha, the community of the Yāpanīyas, was founded during the first centuries CE, probably in the second century, at the time Jainism was first established in the state.²²⁷ During the fifth and sixth centuries CE, the Yāpanīyas consolidated their position in the area. They were most prevalent in the northern areas of Karnataka, in the districts of Dharwar, Belgaum and Gulbarga, and in the area of Kolhapur in modern-day Maharashtra.²²⁸ A prominent early centre which was probably their main stronghold was modern Halsi (ancient Palāśikā) in Belgaum District.²²⁹ The Yāpanīyas appear to have reached the southern regions of Karnataka only in roughly the seventh century CE.²³⁰ However, they were never able to establish themselves firmly in southern Karnataka, and there are no references to them at all in the plentiful inscriptions at the prominent Digambara pilgrimage centre of Shravanabelgola.²³¹ Although there is some evidence of a presence of Yāpanīya Jainism in

Śvetāmbara community also divides into a number of *gacchas* (Upadhye, “More Light on the Yāpanīya Sangha”: 192; Upadhye, “Yāpanīya Saṅgha”: 224–25).

²²⁷ This dating is given by Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 47.

²²⁸ On the regional focus, refer to Adinath N. Upadhye, “Yāpanīya Saṅgha—A Jaina Sect,” *Journal of the University of Bombay* 1, no. 4 (1933): 225, 229, 231, and Upadhye, “More Light on the Yāpanīya Sangha”: 193, 198. For further information, see Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 164, from Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 224–27.

²²⁹ Cf. Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 122. Other important Yāpanīya centres were Kagvad (Kāgavāḍ), Belgaum (Belgāum; ancient Vēṇugrāma), Aihole (Aihole; ancient Ayyavole) and Adargunchi (Adargūñchi). Also see Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 164–65.

²³⁰ On this, refer to Vatsala Iyengar, “Jaina Goddesses and Their Worship in Karnataka,” in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (New Delhi: Samskriti, 2011): 247.

²³¹ Upadhye has written on this (Upadhye, “More Light on the Yāpanīya Sangha”: 198).

the areas of modern-day Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, they do not appear to have ventured far beyond the present-day limits of Karnataka.²³² At that time, of course, there were no modern state borders.

It is surprising how little we know about the origins and organisation of this prominent Jaina subsect. The name Yāpanīya derives from the root yā, meaning “expelled,” probably referring to the more liberal approach of Yāpanīya Jainism towards women and the attainment of enlightenment more generally, which I discussed above.²³³ Some accounts even identify the Yāpanīyas as a Śvetāmbara subgroup,²³⁴ which points to their liminal position between the major sects of Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras, combining characteristics of both.²³⁵ Against this background, Saletore wrote: “The Yāpāṇīyas [Yāpaṇīyas] were an unorthodox Jaina sect with the appearance of the Digambaras but with the observances of the Śvetāmbaras.”²³⁶ For instance, the Yāpāṇīyas appear to have wandered naked and settled close to Digambara establishments. However, there is no uniform view with regard to their dress code. Jaini argues that the Yāpāṇīyas wandered naked outside of populated areas but that they wore “a single piece of clothing (eka-phālaka) when in inhabited areas.”²³⁷ Contrary to this, Singh supposes that the Yāpanīyas always wore simple white robes.²³⁸ Other aspects of their practice that we tend to associate more closely with the Śvetāmbaras are their belief in the capacity of women to attain enlightenment and

²³² On this, refer to Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 227, and to Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 98, 164, 166–67 and 169.

²³³ Cf. Upadhye, “Yāpanīya Saṅgha”: 227, and Upadhye, “More Light on the Yāpanīya Saṅgha”: 194. On the issue of heresy and objections to the Yāpanīya’s liberal approach, see Upadhye, “Yāpanīya Saṅgha”: 229; Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 169; Roy, *A History of Jainism*: 128 who calls them “false sects (Jainabhasa),” Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 48, and Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 227.

²³⁴ This has been discussed by Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 164; Upadhye, “Yāpanīya Saṅgha”: 227; Upadhye, “More Light on the Yāpanīya Saṅgha”: 193; Kristi L. Wiley, *The A to Z of Jainism* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 2006 [2004]): 238, and Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 47.

²³⁵ On the connections and similarities of the Yāpanīyas with both sects of Jainism, see Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 98.

²³⁶ For this quote, refer to Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 222.

²³⁷ This quote has been taken from Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 15.

²³⁸ See Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 126.

the practice of omniscient beings (*kevalins*) continuing to eat and drink. These are all views that ordinary Digambaras strictly reject.²³⁹ Owing to this Śvetāmbara-Digambara ambiguity, the Yāpanīyas were considered “unorthodox,” “pseudo-Jaina” and “heretics” by both Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras.

In spite of their unclear position, the Yāpanīyas were, as we saw, very popular among the people of medieval Karnataka, and appear to have been particularly successful in attracting donations and land grants from influential rulers and prosperous sections of society.²⁴⁰ Their influence appears to have increased substantially, especially under Kadamba rule in the fourth to sixth centuries CE.²⁴¹ At this time, many traders and other affluent members of the laity were Yāpanīyas. They gifted a great number of Jaina temples and bequeathed villages and land to these for their maintenance, particularly in the northern regions of Karnataka.²⁴² The Yāpanīyas seem to have been close to rulers, as can be seen from Simhanandi, who is credited with helping the Gaṅgās to royal power and believed to have been a Yāpanīya. Kuṇḍakuṇḍa, another influential Jaina teacher at the time, is also believed to have been a Yāpanīya.²⁴³

²³⁹ On this issue, see von Glasenapp, *Der Jainismus*: 356; Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 15, and Wiley, *The A to Z of Jainism*: 239. Consult also the book on the subject by Jaini, *Gender & Salvation*.

²⁴⁰ On this, refer to Upadhye, “More Light on the Yāpanīya Sangha”: 194–96; Wiley, *The A to Z of Jainism*: 239; and Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 47.

²⁴¹ On the firm establishment of the Yāpanīyas in the region, see Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 98–99, and Upadhye, “Yāpanīya Sangha”: 231.

²⁴² On these issues, see Upadhye, “More Light on the Yāpanīya Sangha”: 199, and Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 227. Temples dedicated to the twenty-second and the twenty-third Jinas, Neminātha and Pārśvanātha respectively, were particularly popular. Statues of deceased teachers were represented in the nude, probably similar to the living ascetics (Upadhye, “More Light on the Yāpanīya Sangha”: 198). Also refer to Roy, *A History of Jainism*: 127, and Wiley, *The A to Z of Jainism*: 239.

²⁴³ On this issue, refer to Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 226. Kuṇḍakuṇḍa is also known as Kuṇḍakunda or Kuṇḍakundācārya (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 225, 270). On Kuṇḍakuṇḍa’s significance, see Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 156. The dates of his life are disputed but he is likely to have lived at the beginning of the Common Era, probably in the first century CE (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 226, 270; Renate Söhnen-Thieme, “Jaina History and the Universal History of the Jainas,” in *Pure Soul: The Jaina Spiritual Traditions*, ed. Peter Flügel, Heleen De Jonckheere and Renate Söhnen-Thieme [Surrey: Centre for Jaina Studies, Calderstone Printers, 2023]: 48). Whilst Jain places him slightly later, in the second to third century CE (Jain, “Loqua-

In their professional administration of large Jaina temple establishments and the attention they gave to local communities, the Yāpanīyas are considered to have been forerunners of the later monastic heads, the *bhaṭṭārakas*, associated with Yāpanīya and other Digambara Jaina monasteries.²⁴⁴

The Yāpanīya subgroup seems to have prospered between the fifth and the fourteenth centuries in particular.²⁴⁵ They were viewed critically by mainstream Digambara Jainism. However, the strong reformist elements propagated by the Yāpanīyas appear to have stimulated and enhanced the authority of Digambara Jainism in Karnataka rather than destabilising the community.²⁴⁶ Despite their enormous popularity amongst ordinary citizens, the objections they faced from the upper echelons of the religious organisation eventually stopped their activities. After the fourteenth century, the Yāpanīyas were absorbed into mainstream Digambara Jainism.²⁴⁷ At this time, the Jains and their faith had come under serious threat throughout the region, so that the different subgroups had to reunite and combine all their strength in an attempt to survive as a unified group. In consequence, the Yāpanīya temples and icons were adopted by the mainstream Digambara community,²⁴⁸ which might further support the contention that the Yāpanīyas were closer to the Digambara than the Śvetāmbara form of Jainism.

cious Warriors”: 28), Pinto dates him to the first century BCE (Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 208).

²⁴⁴ This has been suggested by Upadhye, “More Light on the Yāpanīya Sangha”: 199. Zydenbos, too, considers the *bhaṭṭārakas* to be remnants of the Yāpanīya tradition (Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 149).

²⁴⁵ See Upadhye, “Yāpanīya Sangha”: 229, and Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 164.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults*: 61.

²⁴⁷ For their assimilation during the fifteenth century, refer to Upadhye, “Yāpanīya Sangha,”; Upadhye, “More Light on the Yāpanīya Sangha,” and Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 243. On the decline of the Yāpanīyas, see Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 223. Additional information can also be found in Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 47–48; Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 66; Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 221–23, and Iyengar, “Jaina Goddesses”: 247.

²⁴⁸ This has been stated by Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 15, and Upadhye, “More Light on the Yāpanīya Sangha”: 201.

4.3.2 Other Southern Jaina Saṅghas

The Yāpaniya Saṅgha was not the only breakaway group that rivalled the position and pursuits of the main Digambara Mūla Saṅgha, the foremost branch and oldest monastic order of Digambara Jainism in south India, with its seat at Shravanabelgola.²⁴⁹ Epigraphic records indicate that a number of competing ascetic orders were established in the areas of modern-day Bangalore and Hassan in the eighth and tenth centuries CE.²⁵⁰ This was the great Jaina heyday in Karnataka, during which the Digambaras generally diversified. Eighth-century CE inscriptions from Shravanabelgola list four coexisting Digambara orders associated with different centres. These were the Navilūr, the Kittūr, the Kolaṭṭūr and the Malanur Saṅghas.²⁵¹ At that time there was also the Draviḍa Saṅgha of Tamil Nadu, which had been founded by Vajranandi either in the fifth or between the ninth and the tenth century CE.²⁵² Although it had its headquarters in Mudurai (Maturai), it exerted influence over Karnataka as well. Jain also mentions a further Jaina monastic community by the name of Nandi Saṅgha.²⁵³

As a result, a large number of coexisting Digambara orders came into existence, with certain differences in doctrinal teachings, ascetic behaviour and ritual procedures. In an article on diversity in Hinduism, Doniger argued that intellectual pluralism and various schools within one faith group, which offer different, at times even contradictory, ideas, can all be perceived as valid, albeit not necessarily as equally valid,²⁵⁴ and need not be problematic. Especially seen from the Jaina perspective of *anekāntavāda*, diversity would not necessarily have posed a problem.

²⁴⁹ Cf. Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 221; Srinivasan, “Monuments & Sculpture A.D. 600 To 1000”: 185, and Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 119–21.

²⁵⁰ On this, refer to Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 123.

²⁵¹ For these *saṅghas* refer to Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults*: 41–44, and Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 123–24.

²⁵² Such unclear dates, even when associated with well-known saints and rulers, are typical of the history of South India. For the reference, refer to Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 124–25.

²⁵³ Cf. Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 27.

²⁵⁴ See Wendy Doniger, “Pluralism and Intolerance in Hinduism,” in *Radical Pluralism and Truth: David Tracy and the Hermeneutics of Religion*, ed. Werner G. Jeanrond and Jennifer L. Rilke (New York: Crossroad, 1991): 215.

However, conflicts arouse, as all these distinctive orders and their monasteries had to be managed by administrators of varying levels, who soon started to compete for the top-ranking monastic seat, leading to complex hierarchical structures of interdependent monasteries.²⁵⁵ One can argue that the competitiveness ensuing from this diversification in fact began to threaten the unity of the Digambara Jaina ascetic community in medieval Karnataka.²⁵⁶

The discussion above has shown that donations for the construction of Jaina temples and land grants for their upkeep led to the establishment of administrative headquarters and monastic institutions. Although the founding of permanent monasteries with dressed *bhaṭṭārakas* and the ownership of land and properties were contradictory to the central ascetic vows of homelessness and non-possession, this also intensified positive interactions between ascetic and lay communities. The creation of administrative headquarters indicates an increased institutionalisation in Jainism at the time.

In addition, we have observed a certain amount of Hindu influence on Jaina religious thought and practice. This can be seen in the form of the caste system through Hindu converts, particularly during the seventh and eighth centuries CE, the integration of Hindu life-cycle rituals into Jaina practice and the retelling of the Hindu epics.

We also noticed a certain fragmentation of the Jaina community at this time. The Digambara lay population divided into different sections, while the ascetic *saṅgha* split into a number of rival groups, dangerously fragmenting the unity of the community. Particularly noteworthy is the Yāpanīya Saṅgha, which had the greatest impact on the modification of Digambara religious life at this time.

Some Jainas at the time, as can be deduced from the ninth-century CE *Ātmānuśāsana* of Guṇabhadra, condemned these transformations,²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Singh argues that rivalling orders were formed out of “personal zeal” of individual monks (Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 123).

²⁵⁶ Cf. Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 127, and Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 58.

²⁵⁷ On this, refer to Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 107.

while some modern scholars of Jainism have likewise criticised and denounced them as indications of immoral, lax and decadent behaviour.²⁵⁸ Subrahmanya Aiyar goes as far as calling them “corruptions.”²⁵⁹ The changes may have made Jainism more vulnerable, which became detrimental when highly successful, more devotional Hindu movements penetrated into the region.²⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the new organisation and practice of Digambara Jainism in Karnataka became the prevalent approach at this time.

Others consider the changes as necessary modifications to better organise, unite and reinforce the Digambara Jaina community in opposition to the challenges faced in Karnataka at this time. These included in particular the antagonism caused by the Viraśaivas in the northern parts of the state, and the advent of Islamic invasions in Maharashtra and then in northern Karnataka.²⁶¹ Scholz explains that the Muslims, who opposed the habit of Jaina monks walking naked, accepted the dressed *bhaṭṭārakas* as mediators who were able to defend the faith.²⁶² I have also argued above that monasteries and the settled lifestyle of some of the monks at least initially reinforced the position of the Digambaras and led to a noticeable expansion of the faith in the area of Karnataka.

4.4 Widening the Group of Venerated Beings and Temple Rituals

Another voluntary change introduced between the eighth and the tenth centuries CE by the Digambara Jainas of Karnataka themselves was an increase in their ritual activities, and an expansion of the beings and

²⁵⁸ See Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 238, 263, 267 for further information as well as Subrahmanya Aiyar, “Origin and Decline”: 216.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Subrahmanya Aiyar, “Origin and Decline”: 216.

²⁶⁰ This has been argued by Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 263.

²⁶¹ Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 266, has written on this issue. The State of Maharashtra is locally spelled Mahārāṣṭra. On Viraśaivism, see section 5.3 and on encounters with Islam in Karnataka section 5.6 in this publication.

²⁶² Cf. Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 239. On this issue, also refer to Vilas Adinath Sangave, *Facets of Jainology: Selected Research Papers on Jain Society, Religion and Culture* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2001): 133.

objects they worshipped. This is particularly interesting in a Jaina context, where the focus of veneration lies clearly on the group of twenty-four human, but fully enlightened, teachers who have reached enlightenment, and by doing so have forever broken out of the cycle of rebirth known as *saṃsāra* (Plate 20). These venerated teachers are called Jinās (spiritual victors or conquerors) or Tīrthaṅkaras (fordmakers) and they are the only beings who can help devotees in their quest for liberation.²⁶³ However, as these saintly beings have broken all ties with the human world and are completely detached from our reality, they cannot react to the mundane needs, wishes and prayers of devotees. This may have made the religion appear somewhat abstract and remote to some practitioners.

Perhaps for this reason, more ritualistic forms of the religion were developed, which in addition to the Jinās also emphasised the position of more directly accessible sacred beings. This may have appealed to some Jainas who were less theoretically minded.²⁶⁴ As a result, the religion also became more attractive to new converts from Hinduism,²⁶⁵ who were used to an evolved cult of image veneration, important female divinities, and a more direct exchange with the gods than could be experienced with the world-withdrawn Jinās.²⁶⁶ It can therefore be argued that these changes helped the Jainas to better integrate into an originally Hindu-dominated society and eased the integration of new members who had converted from Hinduism into their own ranks. However, one can also argue that these developments somewhat lessened the central significance of the Jinās as primary objects of veneration and undermined the unique form of the religion. It must be stressed, however, that

²⁶³ Jainism describes the process towards spiritual perfection as a long and demanding journey, not attainable in this world age. The Jinās, who have reached deliverance, act as models and ideals on the human path towards enlightenment. On the Jinās, refer to Hegewald (*Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 7–17).

²⁶⁴ On this issue, refer to Iyengar, “Jaina Goddesses”: 244.

²⁶⁵ On the effect which converts from Hinduism had on changing Jainism, refer to Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 44. Popular stories and the eternal Hindu epics were also adapted by Jaina poets to provide continuity to Hindus who had adopted Jainism as their new faith (Suresh, “Jaina Monuments”: 180–81).

²⁶⁶ Authors who support this view are Suresh, “Jaina Monuments”: 182, and Iyengar, “Jaina Goddesses”: 244.

the Jinas always remained representative of the highest ideals and the beings most worthy to be worshipped.

4.4.1 Extended Ritual Activities

Inscriptions indicate a marked increase in ritual proceedings and an expansion of image veneration in the newly built Jaina temples during the middle medieval period in Karnataka, more precisely in the period between the eighth and the tenth centuries CE. Costly ceremonies, including regular daily bathing ceremonies and worship of a large number of religious icons, appear to have become customary practice with the Digambara Jainas in South India between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries (Plate 21).²⁶⁷ These rituals were conducted not only by priests and ascetics, but by laypeople as well.²⁶⁸

This does not mean that temple worship did not play an important role in the local form of Jainism before this time.²⁶⁹ However, I am highlighting a significant intensification of an already existing ritual tradition. In fact, the veneration of statues in Jainism seems to go back to the times of the Jinas themselves, such as Ṛṣabhanātha and Mahāvira, in centuries before the Common Era.²⁷⁰ Furthermore, there is plenty of evidence for the worship of icons of the Tirthaṅkaras from the second century BCE to the early centuries CE. This is, for instance, attested to by King Khāravela's Hāthīgumphā inscription from Udayagiri in Odiṣha, which dates from the late first century BCE or the early first century CE. In addition, various ancient Jina sculptures from Lohanipur near Patna (Paṭnā; ancient Pāṭaliputra) date from the early centuries CE, while bronzes from Chausa (Chausā) date from around the fourth century CE.²⁷¹ Both of those places are in Bihar. Around this time, the

²⁶⁷ On this, see Parasher-Sen, "Jaina Women, Ritual Death": 237.

²⁶⁸ This has been argued by Scholz, "Digambara Jainism in Karnataka": 244.

²⁶⁹ Here, I disagree with Singh, who supports the view that "the early Jainas did not practice image worship" (Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 23).

²⁷⁰ On this, see Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 65.

²⁷¹ Cf. Hegewald and Cort on these and other early Jina icons (Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 64–65; Cort, "Bhakti in the Early Jain Tradition": 67–68).

Jaina teacher Samantabhadra for the first time designated devotional practices as a lay religious obligation.²⁷²

As part of the rise in importance of the devotional *bhakti* traditions during the medieval period, the *pūjā* of eight substances (*aṣṭaparakāri pūjā*) and ablution rituals (*abhiṣeka*) of statutes (Plate 22) gained particular significance amongst the Digambara Jains in Karnataka. In addition to smaller daily bathing rituals, the Digambaras developed major ablution festivals during which colossal statues were anointed and reconsecrated at regular intervals. Especially well known and widespread in the state of Karnataka are largescale ablution ceremonies, known as “great head anointing ceremonies” (*mahāmastakābhiṣekas*) of monumental statues of Bāhubali.

Bāhubali, who is also known as Gommaṭa or Gommaṭeśvara, is one of the sons of the first Jina Ādinātha (Ṛṣabha, Ṛṣabhanātha), who through his legendary actions became a model of the ascetic path of Jainism par excellence.²⁷³ As Bāhubali was successful both in a worldly battle of physical strength and in conquering all of his desires, he is seen as a worldly warrior as well as a spiritual hero. Therefore, just like the Jinas, he appealed particularly to soldiers and the ruling martial classes. It is not surprising that the tallest (almost 18 metres in height) and most famous stone statue of Bāhubali at Shravanabelgola was commissioned by the famous Jaina general Cāvuṇḍarāya in 981 CE.

Ordinary devotees, who were also trying to conquer their desires, took Bāhubali as their ideal and participated in bathing rituals conducted on behalf of the ascetic saint. The official Mahāmastakābhiṣeka Festival of the monolith at Shravanabelgola is celebrated every twelve years (Plate 23). Other, similar statues are found at Karkal (Kārkaḷa, Karkāla; the statue measures some 13 metres and was erected in 1432 CE), at Venur (Vēṇur; c.12 metres, it was put up in 1604 CE)²⁷⁴ and at

²⁷² This happened in the first centuries CE. Samantabhadra can also be spelled Sāmantabhadra. On worship as a religious duty, see Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 23.

²⁷³ On the details of the story, see Hegewald, *Jaina Tradition of the Deccan*: 120–21; Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 80, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 406–7.

²⁷⁴ Alternative names and spellings are Venupura and Vaiṣṇapura.

Dharmasthala in 1973 (c. 12 metres).²⁷⁵ All are honoured with major ablation festivals and small metal statues set up at their feet are ritually anointed on a more regular basis.

In addition, other Jaina rituals were introduced at this time, such as the observance of the public celebrations in the form of chariot (*ratha*) processions, which are known as *jinaratha* festivals (Plate 24). More private, transformative rituals, such as the rite of *sallekhanā*, also gained in importance especially from the eighth century CE onwards, and continued to be very popular into the twelfth century in Karnataka.²⁷⁶ In particular, many inscriptions, foot imprints (*pādūkās*) and memorials (*niṣidhis*)²⁷⁷ record the places where *sallekhanā* was performed on Candragiri at Shravanabelgola (Plate 11).²⁷⁸ *Sallekhanā* was performed by male and female ascetics, by lay people as well as by royalty.

During the eighth to twelfth centuries, Digambara Jaina pilgrimage to sites sanctified by *sallekhanā* became more popular, temples were built close to the sanctified spots and the rite was subsequently also performed inside of shrines.²⁷⁹ Pilgrims increasingly contributed to the development of sacred sites in Karnataka by making donations to existing temples, as well as by endowing entire new sacred edifices, during the tenth and eleventh centuries in particular.²⁸⁰

During the beginnings of Jainism, image veneration and donating to temples had not been considered essential for reaching liberation. These practices and convictions probably gained importance and frequency as a result of monks and nuns having settled in monastic institutions in

²⁷⁵ For further details, see Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 89–91; Hegewald, *Jaina Tradition of the Deccan*: 38–40, 112–13, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 521–23.

²⁷⁶ See Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 65.

²⁷⁷ *Niṣidhi* is also spelled *niṣidhi* (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 112). Also see the detailed study by S. Settari, *Inviting Death: Historical Experiments on Sepulchral Hill* (Dharwad: Institute of Indian Art History, Karnatak University, 1986).

²⁷⁸ *Sallekhanā* was also regularly performed at Koppala, another sacred Digambara centre (Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 230–34).

²⁷⁹ Initially, *sallekhanā* was performed in remote places in nature. On this change, refer to Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 68.

²⁸⁰ On this issue, see Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 68, and Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 237.

medieval Karnataka.²⁸¹ The rituals and festivals that were newly developed between the eighth and the tenth centuries CE were not positively viewed and accepted by all. While they clearly attracted followers to the faith, brought Digambara Jainism closer to everyday life and the needs of the laity in the region, others considered this period and the modifications it brought to Jainism as a phase of spiritual decadence and decay. Some authors have argued that through the introduction of excessive ritual offerings, for instance, during the performance of the Mahāmastakābhiṣeka festival, insects might be killed, which would represent a violation of the vow of *ahimsā*.²⁸² While these reasons do not suffice to explain a starting decline of Jainism, they describe an atmosphere of openness and experimentation that naturally provoked some internal criticism and divisions in opinion amongst the Digambara Jains themselves at this time in Karnataka.

4.4.2 Rise of the Cult of Goddesses (Śāktism)

While the group of twenty-four Jinas remained unaltered and central to the religion, the number of Jaina gods and goddesses gained strongly in importance during the period between the eighth and the tenth century CE. This was not a borrowing from Hinduism, as male and female divinities and evolved devotional (*bhakti*) practices were present in Jainism from its earliest beginnings.²⁸³ As such, these modifications only represent an amplification of already existing cults and traditions.²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ This has been suggested by Suresh, “Jaina Monuments”: 182.

²⁸² See Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 51. On *ahimsā*, refer to Misra, “The Jains in an Urban Setting”: 30.

²⁸³ The idea that there was once an original, purely ascetic form of Jainism that focused exclusively on the Jinas, and that divinities were later adopted from Hinduism, has been refuted (Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 146–47, 153–55; John Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions,” *Numen* 34, no. 2 [1987]: 249–50). On this issue, see also Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 72–75. The earliest dated statue of Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning, for instance, is a Jaina and not a Hindu icon from Kāṅkālī Tīlā at Mathura (Mathurā) (132 CE), identified as such by an inscription (Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 236; Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 107). Despite this, Kalghatgi still claims that goddess veneration is alien to Jainism and was assimilated from Hinduism (T.G. Kalghatgi, *Jaina View of Life*, Jīvarāja Jaina Granthamālā 20 [Sholapur: Lalchand Hirachand Dhoshi, Jaina Saṃskṛti Saṃrakṣaka Saṃgha, 1969]: 177–78).

²⁸⁴ This has also been stressed by Cort, “Bhakti in the Early Jain Tradition”: 59–86.

It appears that Jaina divinities gained such an important role in temple rituals in the Digambara forms of medieval South India as they are more approachable than the fully enlightened and somewhat remote Jinas. By contrast, the gods and goddesses can be asked directly for support and guidance in times of difficulty.²⁸⁵ However, the divinities cannot assist believers on their path to reaching enlightenment.²⁸⁶ The deities are mortals and have first to be reborn as humans to reach enlightenment themselves.²⁸⁷

The origins of Jaina gods and goddesses lie in the cult of *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs*. While the earliest references to *yakṣas* are found in the *Ṛg Veda* (c. 1500–1000 BCE), their veneration appears to date back at least to the early centuries BCE, when they were associated with fertility cults, mother goddesses and subterranean treasures.²⁸⁸ In the sixth or fifth century BCE, both the historical Buddha and Mahāvīra are believed to have worshiped *yakṣas* on a daily basis, and to have stayed in *yakṣa* shrines.²⁸⁹ At the start of their evolution, *yakṣas*, general natural spirits, could be benevolent as well as harmful. However, in Jainism they only take on a positive and protective function.²⁹⁰ While the *yakṣa* and *yakṣī* cult in Buddhism did not develop beyond their being considered semi-divine natural spirits, they gained the status of full divinities in Jainism.

In North India, *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs* became firmly associated with the Jinas since roughly the sixth century CE.²⁹¹ Unlike in Hinduism, where goddesses are considered to be the spouses of male deities, in Jainism a *yakṣī* and her associated *yakṣa* together serve one of the Tīrthaṅkaras. As such, a male tutelary divinity (*yakṣa*) and his female associate (*yakṣī*) have acted as companions and protectors for the twenty-four Jinas

²⁸⁵ Cf. Kalghatgi, *Jaina View of Life*: 177.

²⁸⁶ See Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 251.

²⁸⁷ Zydenbos has commented on this situation (Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 161, 166).

²⁸⁸ Cf. Suresh, “Jaina Monuments”: 183, and Jaini, “Is There a Popular Jainism?”: 192.

²⁸⁹ See, for instance, Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 241.

²⁹⁰ This has been underlined by Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 151.

²⁹¹ On this, see Cort, who focusses more on northern India (Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 241–42).

already since the early medieval period. They are known as attendant or guardian deities, *śāsanadevatās*. Traditionally, the image of the *yakṣī* is found to the left and that of the *yakṣa* to the right of the Tirthankara. These can be integrated into the larger sculptural arrangement of a Jina statue (Plate 25), or depicted as individual icons. In the latter case, they are usually placed outside the main shrine, flanking its entrance (Plate 26). In Digambara Jainism in Karnataka, Sundaram dates their close connection with particular, named Jinas to the tenth or early eleventh century.²⁹² Initially, they played no independent role beyond their direct link with their associated Jina.²⁹³ The *yakṣa* and *yakṣī* were simply there to support their particular Jina in attaining enlightenment by sheltering him from external influences and, after his liberation, to flank him inside the teaching auditorium (*samavasaraṇa*) created by the gods for his first public teachings.²⁹⁴

This situation changed with the development of Tantric Jainism in middle and late medieval Karnataka. As part of this extended tradition, especially the female custodial divinities or *yakṣīs*, also known as *yakṣiṇīs*, *devīs* (goddesses) or *mātās* (mothers, mother goddesses), gained significant additional influence.²⁹⁵ Although Tantrism in India originated as early as the late fifth century CE, it only began to considerably influence Jaina practices in Karnataka from the seventh and more so from the

²⁹² Cf. Sundaram, “Elements of Jaina History”: 34.

²⁹³ On this, see Ram Bhusan Prasad Singh, “Jain Goddesses and Tantricism in Karnataka,” *Journal of Ancient Indian History* 6, no. 1–2 (1972–1973): 116, and Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 241.

²⁹⁴ For further details on these two points, refer to Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 148, 150, 165. On *samavasaraṇas*, refer to Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 146–49, and Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Meru, *Samavasaraṇa* and *Śiṃhāsana*: The Recurrence of Three-tiered Structures in Jaina Cosmology, Mythology and Ritual,” in *Kaḥār (White Water-Lily). Studies in Art, Iconography, Architecture and Archaeology of India and Bangladesh (Professor Enamul Haque Felicitation Volume)*, ed. Gouriswar Bhattacharya, Gerd J.R. Mevissen, Mallar Mitra and Sutapa Sinha (Delhi: Kaveri Books, 2007): 132–46.

²⁹⁵ It has been suggested that the Yāpaniyas were influential in establishing Tantrism and the *yakṣī* cult in Jainism (Parasher-Sen, “Jaina Women, Ritual Death”: 227). On goddesses and Tantrism, also see Kalghatgi, *Jaina View of Life*: 177.

eighth to tenth centuries CE.²⁹⁶ This rise in the status of the female as part of goddesses veneration, which is called Śāktism, occurred particularly between the eight and the tenth centuries CE. Both the number and the elevated status of the goddesses in the south of India at this time are unique.²⁹⁷ The only male *yakṣa* with a certain individual weight in Digambara Jaina ritual in Karnataka is Brahma or Brahmadeva.²⁹⁸ He is worshipped in shrines, where he can either take on human shape and is then often depicted riding a horse (Plate 27), or resemble the form of a snake. Open air representations of him or other Brahmadeva depictions housed inside small pavilions regularly crown the tip of free-standing pillars.²⁹⁹

In contrast to the Śvetāmbara understanding,³⁰⁰ in Digambara Jainism all twenty-four Jinas are male. As the prime position of sacredness in this form of Jainism was already taken by the male Jinas,³⁰¹ the *yakṣis* or mother goddesses in the south became the embodiment of the sacred feminine. They were believed to heal and to grant children and other worldly blessings. However, in addition to their gentle motherly side, the goddesses could also take the shape of ferocious warrioresses, then

²⁹⁶ It has been suggested that the goddess cult was introduced to Karnataka from Tamil Nadu (Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 162, 164). On goddesses in the Tamil region, see K.V. Raman, “Śakti Worship in Tamil Nadu—A Historical Perspective,” in *Temple Art, Icons and Culture of India and South-East Asia* (Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 2006): 190–99. However, to my mind it seems more likely that the cult of Śakti developed independently and concurrently in Karnataka.

²⁹⁷ In North India only the goddess Āmbikā Devī significantly gained in status amongst the Jainas.

²⁹⁸ Zydenbos has also remarked on this issue (Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 166).

²⁹⁹ For representations of Brahma *yakṣa* atop pillars in Karnataka, see Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Sacred Symbols, Enlightened Beings and Temple Guardians: The Display of Holy Elements on Pillars in Jaina Temple Complexes in Karnataka,” in *The Jaina Heritage: Distinction, Decline and Resilience*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald, Heidelberg Series in South Asian Studies (New Delhi: Samskriti Publishers, 2011): 134–60, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 404–6, 451–54.

³⁰⁰ According to Śvetāmbara Jainism, the nineteenth Jina, Mallinātha or Malli, is a woman, although her female nature is not really stressed in texts or iconographically shown in the statues of the Jinas, who basically all look the same. For further details on Mallinātha and representations of her, see Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 18, 81.

³⁰¹ Cf. Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 184–88, and Iyengar, “Jaina Goddesses”: 245.

represented with multiple arms bearing lethal weapons (Plate 28).³⁰² This is another element of Digambara Jaina iconography known to have appealed to the martial kings and their military classes.³⁰³ The holy mothers were believed to possess powers that enabled them to help and protect devotees in times of trouble, with countless legends and depictions attesting to their miraculous deeds.³⁰⁴

Inscriptional evidence from Karnataka suggests that from around the seventh or eighth centuries CE onwards many goddesses were venerated as somewhat more sovereign and independent deities. However, large temples were still primarily dedicated to the male Jinas. From the tenth century CE, however, the status of these goddesses further increased. This is reflected in temples that either bear two names, that of the Jina and the goddess, or only the name of the main *yakṣī* venerated in it. In these instances, the female deities are worshipped almost on equal terms with the Jinas. Examples are the Pārśvanātha and Padmāvatī Temple on the hill of Kanakagiri and the Jvālāmālīnī Devī Temple at Nittur (Niṭṭūr).³⁰⁵ Although Jinas still occupy the space inside the main shrine rooms in the latter examples, from this time onwards it became possible to build a large temple dedicated to a female deity only, enshrined inside the central sanctum as an autonomous divinity.³⁰⁶ This can be seen in the Jvālāmālīnī Devī Basadi at Narasimharajapura (Plate 29). This shift was viewed critically by some more conservative Digambara Jaina ascetics and lay practitioners. Others, such as the Digambara monk Kunthusāgara, defended the practice and reassured the critics that gods and goddesses would never match the position of the Jinas.³⁰⁷

³⁰² There is a twelve-armed statue of Cakreśvarī *yakṣī*, who is also known as Apraticakra, in the Pañcakūṭa Basadi at Markuli.

³⁰³ On this subject, see Iyengar, “Jaina Goddesses”: 245. Above, I referred to the heroically ascetic Tirthaṅkaras and Bāhubali appealing to them as well.

³⁰⁴ On this, refer to Iyengar, “Jaina Goddesses”: 246, 248. Such scenes have often been depicted on the walls of Jaina temples. See, for instance, Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 98, Plate 214.

³⁰⁵ Its alternative name is Śāntīśvara Basadi, although Jvālāmālīnī Devī Temple is the more common name used to refer to this temple.

³⁰⁶ Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 170, has written on this issue.

³⁰⁷ On this topic, see Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 165.

Three *yakṣis* in particular gained substantially in status as independent divinities at this time. This was chiefly Padmāvati, and additionally Jvālāmālīnī and Kuṣamāṇḍinī (Kuṣmāṇḍī, Kūṣmāṇḍinī).³⁰⁸

In Karnataka, the cult of Padmāvati goes back to between the seventh and ninth centuries CE.³⁰⁹ Locally, in the Kannada language, Padmāvati may also be referred to as Lokkiyabbe.³¹⁰ She is believed to have been the lineage goddess (*kuladevī*) of a number of prominent regional ruling Jaina families.³¹¹ Like her male companion Dhāraṇendra Yakṣa and the Jina Pārśvanātha, she is closely connected with serpent (*nāga*) veneration and is usually represented with a snake's hood behind her head.³¹² Padmāvati has her own centre of worship at Humcha in Shimoga District, which is a prominent *bhaṭṭāraka* seat in coastal Karnataka. Although she still shares a temple with Pārśvanātha there, her image is much larger and given significantly more importance in the rituals conducted by the pilgrims at Humcha (Plate 30).

The other two foremost *yakṣis* are also associated with active seats of *bhaṭṭārakas* in Karnataka. The sacred area (*kṣetra*) of Jvālāmālīnī is at Narasimharajapura in Chikmagalur District (Plate 29), although in the past she was associated with Gerusoppe (Gērusoppe) on the coast in the very north-west of Karnataka.³¹³ As an attendant divinity, Jvālāmālīnī is associated with the male *yakṣa* Śyāma, both of who attend to the eighth Tirthaṅkara, Candraprabhu.³¹⁴ As goddess of fire, Jvālāmālīnī is considered exceedingly powerful and is often depicted with eight arms,

³⁰⁸ For additional information on these *yakṣis*, see the entire articles by Zydenbos, "Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus" and Iyengar, "Jaina Goddesses," and in the latter one especially pp. 248–53. Also cf. Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 171–73, and Scholz, "Digambara Jainism in Karnataka": 249–58.

³⁰⁹ Cf. Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults*: 150–51; Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 55; Cort, "Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions": 244. Without providing reasons, Singh argues for a slightly later date in the tenth century CE (Singh, "Jain Goddesses": 119).

³¹⁰ See Singh, "Jain Goddesses": 119, and Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 55.

³¹¹ This has been indicated by Cort, "Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions": 243.

³¹² On Padmāvati and snakes see Zydenbos, "Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus": 174–75. Alternatively, the place is also known as Gerasoppe (Gērasoppe). For the story concerning her change in place, refer to Zydenbos, "Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus": 173.

³¹⁴ Amongst the Śvetāmbaras, Jvālāmālīnī is known as Bhṛkuṭī and Śyāma as Vijayā (Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 597).

holding destructive weapons.³¹⁵ From the middle of the ninth century CE, her cult seems to have expanded continuously and reached its peak during the tenth and eleventh centuries.³¹⁶

The third prominent *yakṣī*, Kuṣamāṇḍinī, is the presiding goddess of Shravanabelgola in Hassan District.³¹⁷ In the local language, she is also known as Jakkaḷamma, meaning Mother (*lamma*) Yakṣī (*jakka*). Śvetāmbara Jainas in the north of India call Kuṣamāṇḍinī by the name of Āmbikā, which also means “mother.”³¹⁸ As an attendant deity, she has been associated with the *yakṣa* Sarvāhana, and both serve the twenty-second Jina Neminātha.³¹⁹ Iconographically, Kuṣamāṇḍinī can be recognised by the fact that she rides on a lion as her animal mount (Plate 31). Some representations also show her carrying one or several children. Kuṣamāṇḍinī is said to have been regarded as an autonomous goddess already from the seventh century CE onwards, and to have substantially gained in importance during the course of the tenth century CE.³²⁰

All Digambara Jaina *yakṣīs* are customarily clad in exquisite garments and adorned with precious jewellery (Plates 26, 29, 30, 31).³²¹ In this way they distinguish themselves clearly from the naked and completely unadorned statues of the Tīrthankaras, whom Digambaras do not even decorate with flowers or colourful pastes, as would be common practice in a Śvetāmbara context.³²² A further clear difference is that the Jinas have ceased all activity and are shown completely still in meditation, while the deities with their multiple arms that carry weapons and other items are portrayed in motion, involved in a number of activities.

³¹⁵ See Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 53, and Singh, “Jain Goddesses”: 117. On depictions of the *yakṣīs* in Jainism, also see Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 94–100.

³¹⁶ Singh, “Jain Goddesses”: 118, has written on this.

³¹⁷ On this, refer to Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 150.

³¹⁸ Cf. Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 169.

³¹⁹ Śvetāmbaras refer to Sarvāhana as Gomedha (Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 597).

³²⁰ This date has been suggested by Singh, “Jain Goddesses”: 119.

³²¹ Male *yakṣas*, too, can be clad in cloth garments.

³²² On the adornment of icons with sandalwood and other pastes in a Śvetāmbara context, refer to Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 34.

In addition to the *yakṣīs*, there were other Digambara Jaina divinities who were gaining in influence in Karnataka at this time. Above, I briefly mentioned Sarasvatī,³²³ the goddess of learning. An image of her on the lower part of one of the pillars in the large front hall of the Bhaṇḍāra (Bhaṇḍari) Basadi at Shravanabelgola is especially venerated (Plate 32). Furthermore, the goddess Lakṣmī, also known as Śrī, plays a significance role in Jainism. This is particularly the case with the merchant communities, as she embodies good fortune and wealth. Other divinities have acted as protectors of Jaina temple complexes in the form of the *kṣetrapālas* since ancient times, or have been associated with the guarding of thresholds and doorways as *dvārapālas* (Plate 33). The goddesses of knowledge and learning (*vidyādevīs*), who in the form of figural brackets frequently adorn the domical ceilings of Jaina temples, also became very important.³²⁴ We will return to the *vidyādevīs* in the context of Jaina Tantrism below. Other Jaina temples have flat ceiling panels that are regularly decorated with depictions of the eight directional divinities (*aṣṭadikapālas*), and door lintels throughout India display representations of the nine planetary deities (*navagrahas*).

To sum up the section on Digambara Jaina deities, it is important to remember that although the *yakṣīs* and *yakṣas* had been there from the very beginnings, their significance increased strongly between the eighth to tenth centuries CE. It has been argued that the cult of goddesses was employed to defend the southern Digambara Jaina tradition against threats from competing Hindu sects and especially against the influence of the newly formed *bhakti* movements and the increased popularity of Tantrism—in Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Buddhism.³²⁵ These new alternative paths of *bhakti* and Tantrism (which included Śāktism) were also

³²³ See footnote 278 in this publication.

³²⁴ On Sarasvatī, the seven mothers (*saptamātṛkās*), the sixty-four *yoginīs* and the sixteen *vidyādevīs* in Jainism, see Iyengar, “Jaina Goddesses”: 245. For Lakṣmī, amongst Jaina traders in particular, refer to Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 237. On goddesses in ceiling arrangements, see Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 108–9.

³²⁵ Cf. Jaini, “Is There a Popular Jainism?”: 196; Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 61, and Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 258.

absorbed by Jainism and are believed to have strengthened the position of the religion by making it more devotional, and to have prevented Jainas from converting to more popular forms of alternative faiths.³²⁶

The goddess cult, as a reinforcement of an already existing earlier tradition, is a Digambara Jaina expression of a *bhakti* movement of its own in medieval Karnataka.³²⁷ At the same time, it is a manifestation of Śaktism, the veneration of the female principle, and of Śākta Tantrism, the Tantra of the power of the goddess, which emphasises the female principle in ritual acts. In the context of Tantric traditions, Digambara Jaina goddesses in particular were believed to confer magic powers onto Jaina priests, teacher monks and devotees.³²⁸

4.4.3 Tantric Digambara Jainism

As already mentioned above, Tantrism has its origins as early as the late fifth century CE. From around the seventh century CE, its ritual practices became accepted and widespread in virtually all Indic religions of the time.³²⁹ Although the Jainas do not have a separate category of scriptures called *Tantras*, as do Hindus and Buddhists, and as no Jaina text is entirely Tantric in nature, there are a number of Digambara texts that clearly include information on Tantric practices.³³⁰ Tantric ascetic

³²⁶ On this issue, see Kalghatgi, *Jaina View of Life*: 177–78; Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults*, and Qvarnström, “Stability and Adaptability”: 36–37. This is based on an earlier publication by Jaini with regard to developments in western India (Jaini, “Is There a Popular Jainism?”: 196). On the power of Tantric traditions, refer to Kalghatgi, *Jaina View of Life*: 177–78; Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 233, and Suresh, “Jaina Monuments”: 183.

³²⁷ Cf. Qvarnström, “Stability and Adaptability”: 37, and Cort, “Bhakti in the Early Jain Tradition”: 59–86 on this topic.

³²⁸ Cf. Iyengar, “Jaina Goddesses”: 246–47; Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 162–63, and Pinto, “Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire”: 89. Zydenbos describes the various cults of the *yakṣas* more generally as “occult practices” (Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 152, 173).

³²⁹ This influence has also been dated to a slightly earlier period. See David N. Lorenzen, “Śaivism: An Overview,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* 13, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987): 10, and Geen “Jainism and Hinduism”: 323.

³³⁰ On the subject of Jaina Tantric literature, refer to Ellen Gough, “Jain Tantric Literature,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Jainism*, ed. John E. Cort, Paul Dundas, Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristi L. Wiley, Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section Two: South Asia 34 (Leiden: Brill, 2020): 567–76.

exercises and magic techniques were utilised by Digambara Jaina monks to obtain spiritual as well as physical powers. In Digambara rituals in Karnataka, their use increased exponentially from the eighth century CE onwards, culminating around the tenth century.

Occult observances could be employed to achieve positive results, such as attaining religious ideals, healing and repairing. However, they could also be used to achieve negative outcomes, such as causing hostility, controlling, suppressing or destroying others.³³¹ The tenth-century CE Digambara *Jvālāmālinikālpa* by Indranandin, for instance, describes how control (*vaśyakara*) could be gained over a person by marking his or her forehead (*tilaka*) with certain substances.³³² At that time, Digambara Jaina monks were considered especially proficient in applying supernatural practices, and as a result they obtained a certain superiority over other religions.³³³ This is indicated by a number of inscriptions from Shravanabelgola, which are boastful of the Tantric skills of certain Digambara teachers.³³⁴ However, within Jaina practice in Karnataka, Tantrism never reached the importance it obtained in Buddhism at this time.³³⁵

More specifically, Tantric techniques employed by Digambara Jainas included invocations, either in the form of mystical syllables and single-world spells (*mantras*) or magical multi-word utterances (*vidyās*).³³⁶

³³¹ For additional information, refer to Singh, “Jain Goddesses”: 120–21, and Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 245–46.

³³² For further details on the Jaina *Jvālāmālinikālpa* see Gough, “Jain Tantric Literature”: 567–76.

³³³ See Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 173. According to Kalghatgi, the Jainas proclaimed themselves master Mantravadins, having the greatest control over spells (*mantravidyā*) (Kalghatgi, *Jaina View of Life*: 177).

³³⁴ On these inscriptions, referred to Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 163.

³³⁵ Cf. Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 239, and Olle Qvarnström, “Jainism and Buddhism,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Jainism*, ed. John E. Cort, Paul Dundas, Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristi L. Wiley, Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section Two: South Asia 34 (Leiden: Brill, 2020): 300.

³³⁶ For further details, refer to Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 237–38, and Geen “Jainism and Hinduism”: 324. There is a Digambara Jaina Tantric compilation of texts, known as the *Vidyānuśāsana*, meaning “Instructions on Spells.” It dates from between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries. On this, refer to Gough, “Jain Tantric Literature”: 567.

Although there is a technical distinction between *mantra* and *vidyā* (Prakrit: *vijjā*), both terms are usually translated as “spell” and treated almost synonymously. Other Tantric methods included drawing sacred diagrams (*yantras*) or circles (*maṇḍalas*) on paper or engraving them onto metal discs or stone surfaces. The same patterns were also embroidered onto or woven into textiles. More ephemeral versions of such holy diagrams can be laid out in colourful powders or foodstuffs, either in private or in more public Jaina temple contexts (Plate 34). Such permanent objects or temporary manifestations of Tantric charts, as well as compartments for fire offerings (*homa*),³³⁷ can be found in many Jaina temple complexes to the present day (Plate 35). Additionally, Jains employed amulets for protection, the positioning and movement of the fingers and hands (*mudrās*) as powerful means to influence events, and the placement of small icons of Jaina divinities onto specific parts of the human body (*nyāsa*) for healing.

In the medieval Digambara Jainism of Karnataka, it was believed that spells could be converted into goddesses or equated with them, who were then referred to as *vidyās* or *vidyā* goddesses, the *vidyādevīs*.³³⁸ We encountered them briefly in the section on Digambara Jaina divinities above. The immense powers of the *vidyādevīs* were visualised in their sculptural representations by multiple arms carrying dangerous weapons (Plate 36). Most of these statues are made of metal, mostly bronze. Through Tantric techniques, the practitioners would call upon, activate, identify with and embody a particular Tantric deity, usually a *yakṣī*.³³⁹ From the eighth century CE onwards, most texts name sixteen or even more *vidyādevīs*, then also referred to as *mahāvidyās* or *māṭṛkās* (mothers). This indicates the particular role played by groups of goddesses in the Tantric form of Digambara Jainism in Karnataka at this

³³⁷ On different Jaina Tantric practices, see Singh, “Jain Goddesses”: 120–24, and Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 56–60, 80. On the holy nature of fire in Jainism, refer to Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 297.

³³⁸ Cf. Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 239, and Geen, “Jainism and Hinduism”: 324.

³³⁹ See Singh, “Jain Goddesses”: 122–24.

time.³⁴⁰ As they were considered embodiments of magical spells, Digambara goddesses were invoked in Tantric rites and believed to bestow exceptional supernatural capacities on the practitioners and attendant devotees.³⁴¹ Considered as particularly powerful in Digambara Tantric procedures in medieval Karnataka was the veneration of the three main *yakṣīs* Padmāvatī, Jvālāmālīnī and Kuṣamāṇḍinī, discussed in the section above.³⁴²

This demonstrates a distinct development in the practices of the Jinas. While Digambara Jaina teachers had actively discouraged the employment of magic spells (*vidyā*) before the fourth or fifth century CE, as they were not considered helpful in attaining personal liberation,³⁴³ they gained radically in significance over time.

The development and evolution of Digambara Tantric traditions and the increase in Jaina *bhakti* with its particular form of Śāktism led to an enormous increase in acceptance, the number of converts and the general influence of Jainism in Karnataka, especially between the eighth and the tenth centuries CE. However, as in the context of other adaptations and additions to the faith, there were opposing views as well. Certain Jinas at the time were particularly concerned that the religion might lose its specific ascetic focus.³⁴⁴ While selected Digambara religious texts described rites for Tantric worship and associated them with positive and desirable mystical powers, others clearly disapproved of and outrightly condemned these.³⁴⁵ For instance, the twelfth-century Jaina

³⁴⁰ On this issue, see Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 239–40. In Śvetāmbara Jainism, there usually are eight or twelve *vidyādevīs*.

³⁴¹ Cf. Singh, “Jain Goddesses”: 120.

³⁴² Cort has written on this (Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 245–47).

³⁴³ On this issue, see Qvarnström, “Stability and Adaptability”: 37, and Gough “Jain Tantric Literature”: 568. On Jaina *vidyās* also refer to Cort, “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions”: 237–38.

³⁴⁴ These aspects are still viewed critically by some authors today. Singh wrote: “They [the Jinas] abandoned the original ethical principles, for the sake of mysterious yogic practices and magical spells.” (Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 56).

³⁴⁵ See Singh, “Jain Goddesses”: 120, and Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 56–57.

author Brahmasīva clearly rejected the expanded worship of divinities that had gained so much in power as part of Tantric rituals (Plate 37).³⁴⁶

It is questionable whether the changes and the new methods adopted in order to adapt Digambara Jainism in medieval Karnataka to current trends in religious thought were ultimately really successful. Despite these substantial modifications and alternative approaches offered to those practicing the faith, Jaina influence in Karnataka strongly declined from at least the early twelfth century onwards. However, in contrast to Buddhism, Jainism survived in India as an active and continuously evolving religious force, indicating a more effective response to the greatly changing religious circumstances at this time.

5 Danger from Rival Faith Groups

In addition to these internal changes to the social structure and the dogmatic and ritual practices of their religion, which the Digambara Jainas themselves undertook in Karnataka at this time, the arrival of a number of rival religious groups from surrounding areas also affected their position. This encounter with other faith communities had a largely negative outcome for the Jainas. As part of a strong Hindu revivalism, *bhakti* devotional Hindu sects were active in the area roughly from the sixth century CE onwards.³⁴⁷ In particular, the presence of Śrīvaiṣṇavas from the eleventh and of Vīraśaivas from the twelfth century, both of which were *bhakti* reform movements, upset the religious equilibrium in the area.³⁴⁸ Below, I shall outline the religious atmosphere of competing faith groups in the state at this critical time in Jaina history.

³⁴⁶ On Brahmasīva, refer to Zydenbos, “Jainism Endangered”: 182–83. Debating objections against the veneration of *yakṣīs*, Zydenbos shows that this was regarded as a superstitious practice and as “doctrinal aberrance” (*mithyātva*) by some (Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 156–66).

³⁴⁷ Cf. Jaini, “Disappearance of Buddhism and the Survival of Jainism”: 85; Dundas, *The Jains*: 99; Davis, “The Story of the Disappearing Jains”: 215, and Pinto, “Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire”: 81.

³⁴⁸ See Sundaram, “Elements of Jaina History”: 35, and Narasimha on classifications of the reasons for the downfall of the Jainas (Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 56).

5.1 From Equilibrium to Religious Competition

Literary texts and inscriptions convey the impression of a comparatively peaceful coexistence of Jainas, Buddhists, Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas in Karnataka until the eleventh or early twelfth century.³⁴⁹ When talking about these different contemporaneous groups, we need to remember that boundaries between religions were probably much more fluid and were not understood in the fixed terms they are today.³⁵⁰ However, with a sudden upsurge in the number of different faith groups, all of which were competing for the same limited pool of believers and financial supporters in the same limited area, the situation became critical.

In medieval Karnataka, royal and societal support for religious groups was frequently decided in public debates, where high-ranking representatives such as monks, priests and religious teachers engaged in verbal intellectual contests.³⁵¹ There is inscriptional evidence for many such open religious debating competitions,³⁵² at the end of which the winner was awarded a “certificate of victory” (*jayapatra*).³⁵³ As a result, the followers of the defeated contestant, who were often large communities such as entire villages, had to convert to the faith of the victor. In this context, Zydenbos refers to “mass conversions” which happened “often

³⁴⁹ Sundaram provides inscriptional evidence (Sundaram, “Elements of Jaina History”: 35), while Saleatore and Hegde have written on the “peaceful co-existence of all cults” in Balligave (Baḷligāme) (Saleatore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 49, 202–4, 285–86; Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 194).

³⁵⁰ On this, refer to the discussion by Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 232.

³⁵¹ For further information on this topic refer to David N. Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas. Two Lost Śaivite Sects* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1991 [1972]): 45–46; Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 91–93, and Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 261. See also Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 82. This is a practice which is still very publicly performed in many Tibetan Buddhist monasteries to the present day.

³⁵² On such contests between Jainas and Buddhists in the Deccan, refer to Subrahmanya Aiyar, “Origin and Decline”: 216, and on competitions between Jainas and Vaiṣṇavas, see Saleatore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 231–33, and Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 105. It appears that in the example mentioned in the latter source, Tantric practices were employed by the Jaina contestant (Singh, “Jain Goddesses”: 119).

³⁵³ Cf. Saleatore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 371.

under threats of violence.”³⁵⁴ This frequently led to the annexation or the destruction of the defeated religion’s local icons and sacred sites, as a clear visual expression of their newly acquired dependency. This instilled more fear in its followers, often leading to further conversions to avoid more severe forms of dependency.³⁵⁵

Traditionally, Digambara Jaina monks were considered to be highly scholarly, strong in learning, wisdom and logic and eloquent teachers.³⁵⁶ While they initially employed these skills to progress on their own path to salvation and to help lay disciples reach their spiritual goals, from the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries onwards it appears that they increasingly employed their proficiencies to compete with and subjugate contenders and opponents.³⁵⁷ This is reflected in Digambara Jaina writings of the period, which increasingly display Digambara feelings of supremacy over others and antagonism towards rival faith groups.³⁵⁸ Initially the highly educated Digambara ascetics appear to have been very keen to engage in such intellectual debates,³⁵⁹ but from the twelfth century onwards the disputants from various Śaiva groups increasingly came out triumphant. Especially well known is the challenge referred to as the “miracle contest” at Abalur in 1160 or 1162 CE.³⁶⁰ This competition, which ended so disadvantageously for the local Jaina community, will be discussed in more detail in section 6.2 “Persecution and Survival of the Jains in Karnataka.”

³⁵⁴ For these expressions, see Zydenbos, “Jainism Endangered”: 175, 287.

³⁵⁵ On this, see Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 73.

³⁵⁶ Cf. Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 397, and Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 31.

³⁵⁷ Jain has written on this change in the use of scholarly learning (Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 30).

³⁵⁸ Cf. Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 32.

³⁵⁹ See Phyllis Granoff, “Being in the Minority: Medieval Jain Reactions to other Religious Groups,” in *Jainism and Prakrit in Ancient and Medieval India: Essays for Prof. Jagdish Chandra Jain*, ed. N.N. Bhattacharyya (New Delhi: Manohar, 1994): 242.

³⁶⁰ For further details, see Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 262; Tiziana Lorenzetti, “Jainas and Viraśaivas: An Encounter in Mediaeval Karnataka,” in *Jaina Culture in Medieval Karnataka: Dominance, Dependency and Endurance*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald, *Dependency and Slavery Studies* 18 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025): 299–302, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 485–86. Refer also to Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: 45–46, 169; Hegde, “Temple-Hierarchy”: 239, and Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 54.

It is remarkable how rare inscriptions or textual references from a Jaina context are that record conversions, losses and defeats. As there are no official census records from the twelfth century, we have to rely largely on epigraphic and literary sources from other religions which mention these events. Even if we allow for some denominational pride and exaggeration on the part of then more powerful religions, these sources paint a grim picture and show the gradual process by which the Digambara Jainas of Karnataka were religiously and politically marginalised and slipped more and more into a position of severe asymmetrical dependency. There are only very few Jaina literary works from the twelfth, as well as from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that recount the discrimination and persecution suffered by the Digambara Jainas in the area, or accounts about the conversion of their sacred structures.³⁶¹ However, there are ample and very reliable physical records of destroyed and converted statues and Jaina temples that clearly indicate this loss of authority.³⁶² Digambara Jaina families living today in villages which were deprived of their main sites of worship at this time of struggle often still express an enormous sense of loss and mourning. This represents what Eng and Kazanjian in their study call “mourning what remains of lost histories,” or “histories of loss” more generally.³⁶³

An important reason for the neglect of the subject of their own waning influence in Karnataka during the Middle Ages can be found in Jaina religious doctrine. Like other Indic religions, the Jainas believe in *karma* and regard the situation into which an individual is born or which a group experiences as a reflection of their own deeds carried out in this and previous lives.³⁶⁴ Therefore times of hardship and persecution are

³⁶¹ One of the main authors on the subject is Brahmasiva (Zydenbos, “Jainism Endangered”: 177–78, 182).

³⁶² Cf. Lorenzetti, “Jainas and Viraśaivas”: 298–306. On the architectural and iconographical see Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 120–26, 156–66, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 468–511.

³⁶³ Cf. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, “Introduction: Mourning Remains,” in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003): 1.

³⁶⁴ See Klostermaier, *A Concise Encyclopedia*: 95; Werner, *A Popular Dictionary*: 86, and Iyengar, “Jaina Goddesses”: 244.

often concealed.³⁶⁵ However, the dramatic changes that can be observed in areas such as temple architecture and sacred statuary prove beyond doubt that radical religious changes did take place throughout the wider region from the early to mid-twelfth century onwards. These led to a disempowerment of the Jaina community in Karnataka and the south of India more generally, and a severe state of asymmetrical dependency after the fall of Digambara Jainism in Karnataka.³⁶⁶

In this fight for survival and hegemony in the region, old hostilities between Vedic and non-Vedic traditions appear to have reemerged during the medieval period. This can be deduced from *Brāhmaṇical* writings dating from these times.³⁶⁷ The Hindus, as followers of the *Vedas*, opposed the Jainas (and Buddhists) who rejected this core collection of Hindu texts and were considered to be heterodox (*nāstika*) and at times even enemies.³⁶⁸ Particularly powerful at this time were Śaiva and Śaiva-derived faith groups. As a result of their expansion and confrontations with the Digambara Jainas in Karnataka during the twelfth century in particular, roughly two thousand Jaina temples in the area of Karnataka alone are thought to have been severely damaged and many were entirely destroyed.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁵ This habit continues even today, as can be seen in the otherwise very helpful study by Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*, which does not make any references to the period of Jaina decline.

³⁶⁶ Regions of Karnataka which were less affected and where Jainism survived more strongly have been discussed by Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 218–25; Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 173–78, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 511–23.

³⁶⁷ See Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 202. On *Brāhmaṇical* writings, refer to Zydenbos, “Göttinnenverehrung im Jainismus”: 146, 162.

³⁶⁸ On the issue of “heterodox” and “orthodox” groups with regard to the earlier *Brāhmaṇical* tradition, refer to Davis, *Religions of Early India*: 147. Those who rejected the *Vedas* were known as *vedabāhya*, which also applied to the Pāśupatas and other groups (Audrey Truschke, “Dangerous Debates: Jain Responses to Theological Challenges at the Mughal Court,” *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 5 [2015]: 1331). These will be discussed below. On *nāstika*, refer to Elaine M. Fisher, “Public Philology: Constructing Sectarian Identities in Early Modern South India,” in *Hindu Pluralism: Religion and the Public Sphere in Early Modern South India* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 32, 35. See also Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 68.

³⁶⁹ Cf. Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 72.

5.2 Śaivism and Heterodox Śaiva *Bhakti* Tantric Groups

Śaivas and early heterodox groups derived from them in particular threatened the existence of the Digambaras in Karnataka during the later Middle Ages. There are many references to Jaina kings such as Mahendravarma, who changed their religion to becoming Śaivas.³⁷⁰ The form of Śaivism prevalent in the south of India from around the fifth century CE onwards was Śaiva Siddhānta. This encouraged direct union with Śiva and drew on the devotional hymns of the Tamil Śaiva saints known as the Tirumurai, who lived between the fifth and ninth centuries CE. Śaiva Siddhānta provided precise information on the expiatory rituals to be performed after conversion from Jainism or Vedānta to Śaivism.³⁷¹ These particular conversion rituals were known as *vratoddhāra* or *liṅgoddhāra*.³⁷² South Indian Śaivism, at least in the Siddhānta form, appears to have been quite heterogeneous and open to new converts and ideas. In this context, Davis argues that divisions between “orthodox” and “heterodox” *Brāhmaṇical* traditions were never so clear cut as to prevent internal debates or strategic borrowing.³⁷³ Below, I shall briefly introduce the main Śaiva and Śaiva-derivative sects which affected the Digambara Jains living in Karnataka at this time.

5.2.1 The Śaiva Revival

The revival of mainstream Śaivism, which gained strongly in popularity in Karnataka from the late eleventh century onwards, posed a particular threat to the Jains in this part of India.³⁷⁴ In the north of the State of Karnataka in particular, various forms of Śaivism gained in authority

³⁷⁰ Cf. Pranabananda Jash, “The Kapalikas—An Obscure Saiva Sub-Sect,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 34, no. 1 (1973): 153. For more details on King Mahendravarma I, refer to Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 141–42, 144.

³⁷¹ Vedānta is also known as Uttara Mīmāṃsā and is one of the six orthodox (*āstika*) schools of Hindu philosophy, based on the *Vedas*.

³⁷² On these conversion rituals, refer to Davis “The Story of the Disappearing Jains”: 221.

³⁷³ Cf. Davis, “The Story of the Disappearing Jains”: 221–22.

³⁷⁴ Cf. Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 397; Qvarnström, “Stability and Adaptability”: 44, and Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 73.

through the establishment of monastic institutions.³⁷⁵ This development had commenced already during the eighth century CE, probably as a direct result of the Jaina practice of setting up monasteries.³⁷⁶ From this time, the local Digambaras were not the only ones to reside in the community and provide medicine and education as charitable acts.³⁷⁷ The monastic tradition in Śaivism reached its peak between the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Evidence for Śaiva hostilities against the Digambaras can be deduced from a number of Śaiva epigraphic records that extol the victory of Śaivas over Jainas. Prominent examples come from Talikota (Tāḷikōte, Tāḷikoṭi) in Bijapur District³⁷⁸ and from Muddebihal (Muddebihāl) in Vijayanagara District, both inscriptions dating from 1184 CE.³⁷⁹ Although the latter record suggests that Śaivas attacked Jainas just as much as Buddhists, on the whole the formerly dominant Digambaras appear to have suffered more intensely at their hands. In addition, there are poems reflecting hatred eventually turning into outright violence, as can be seen in the works of Rāghavāṅka.³⁸⁰ There also are examples of former Jaina temples that were converted and are still in Śaiva hands today, indicating a continued dependency, such as the late twelfth-century Siddheśvara Temple at Haveri.³⁸¹

³⁷⁵ The Śaiva *maṭhas* were headed by managers, known as *heggaḍe* (*herggade*) or *maṭhādhipati*. See Hegde, “Temple-Hierarchy”: 234, 239, and Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 197.

³⁷⁶ On this, refer to Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults*: 77, and Davis, “The Story of the Disappearing Jains”: 221.

³⁷⁷ Hegde has written on the provision of food, education, medicines and remedies for “healing magic” by Śaiva *maṭhas* (Hegde, “Temple-Hierarchy”: 239). Saletore classifies these Hindu activities as a direct reaction and imitation of the Jaina charitable activities (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 269, 273).

³⁷⁸ See Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 397–400; Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 71; Nagarajaiah, “Attacks on Important Buddhist and Jaina Centres”: 55, and Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 261.

³⁷⁹ This has been published in Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 398–99.

³⁸⁰ On these, refer to Sundaram, “Elements of Jaina History”: 36.

³⁸¹ This has been discussed by Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 504.

5.2.2 The Pāśupatas and the Lakuliśas

We have seen that the Śaivas were strongly involved in the fight for hegemony in the region. However, even more intense and dangerous for the Jainas were the various interrelated but competing heterodox sects which arose from Śaivism. These were the Tantric ascetic groups of the Pāśupatas, the Lakuliśas,³⁸² the Kālāmukhas and the Kāpālikas.³⁸³ All are early Śiva-derived denominations, which originated roughly in the second century CE and today have all vanished.³⁸⁴ These groupings consisted largely of ascetics (*yatis*), were centred around monastic orders and their monastic headquarters, and were supported by associations of lay followers.³⁸⁵ All of them (and to a certain degree the later Viraśaivas too), were monotheistic *bhakti* movements.³⁸⁶ Unlike mainstream Śaivism, these early Śaiva-derivative orders rejected birth into a permanent caste and propagated social mobility, allowing for the possibility of moving up in terms of societal and religious status during one's lifetime.

The Pāśupatas, probably founded in the second century CE, are one of these early Śaiva *bhakti* orders of *tāntrikas*.³⁸⁷ They are thought to be older than the Kālāmukhas and the Kāpālikas.³⁸⁸ While the Pāśupatas are well documented as a clearly delineated faith group since the fourth century CE, they flourished especially in South India from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries.³⁸⁹ Their name derives from Śiva's epithet

³⁸² As the Lakuliśas are a school of the Pāśupatas, they are also known as Lakuliśa Pāśupatas.

³⁸³ For the relatedness of these sects, refer to *Epigraphia Carnatica* 2: lxxx and to Jash, "The Kapalikas."

³⁸⁴ On this, refer to Lorenzen, "Śaivism: An Overview": 7, and Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: xi.

³⁸⁵ For further details, refer to Lorenzen, "Śaivism: An Overview": 9, and Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: xi.

³⁸⁶ See Lorenzen, "Śaivism: An Overview": 10.

³⁸⁷ *Tāntrikas* are followers of Tantrism.

³⁸⁸ On this issue, consult Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: 173.

³⁸⁹ Cf. Lorenzen, "Śaivism: An Overview": 9, and Luke Whitmore, "Lord of Kedar," in *Mountain, Water, Rock, God: Understanding Kedarnath in the Twenty-First Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018): 62. Van Troy dates them to the period between 200 and 1900 (Joseph Van Troy, "The Radical Social Protest of the Pashupata

Pāśupati, “lord of the animals,” which is also one of the Vedic names of the Hindu god Rudra.³⁹⁰ A fierce minor Vedic divinity, Rudra served as a model for the later, more moderate, main god Śiva of later Classical Hinduism.³⁹¹ The members of the Pāśupata sect appear to have been solely *brāhmaṇ* men who have been described as world-renouncing ascetics, who showed extreme devotion to the god Rudra-Śiva.

As is typical of other early heterodox and Śaiva orders, members covered their bodies with sacred ash (*vibhūti*) as a sectarian marker.³⁹² The ash—associated with the polluting state of death—was also seen as a tool for cutting social and worldly connections, which they believed would lead directly to liberation.³⁹³ The Pāśupatas—as well as the Kāpālikas, who will be discussed below—are believed to have employed “transgressive behaviour,” including the handling of impure substances, to display their power and move beyond the worldly distinctions of pure and impure.³⁹⁴ In their provocative conduct, they copied the behaviour of Rudra-Śiva, who is repeatedly described as violating social laws in order then to rectify, reinstate and again confirm them, to establish a world governed by order and purity.³⁹⁵

One subgroup of the Pāśupata school were the Lakuliśas or Lākulas, founded by Lakuliśa (Lakuliśvara) in the second century CE, who is considered the founder of the entire Pāśupata system.³⁹⁶ The

Ascetics,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 36 [1975]: lxx). However, they appear to have disbanded earlier.

³⁹⁰ See Whitmore, “Lord of Kedar”: 62.

³⁹¹ This has been argued by Lorenzen, “Śaivism: An Overview”: 7, and Whitmore, “Lord of Kedar”: 62.

³⁹² The outward appearance and behaviour of the Pāśupata saints—which also applies to the other early Śiva groups to be discussed below—closely resemble those of Śiva and his ascetic followers in mainstream Śaiva traditions. Examples include their general yogic behaviour, smearing their bodies with ashes, tying their matted locks into a topknot and wearing animal skins. See the description of Śiva in Lorenzen, “Śaivism: An Overview”: 7.

³⁹³ Fisher, “Public Philology”: 133, has written on this issue.

³⁹⁴ On this issue, refer to Whitmore, “Lord of Kedar”: 63, 70.

³⁹⁵ This has been argued by Hugh B. Urban, “The Remnants of Desire: Sacrificial Violence and Sexual Transgression in the Cult of the Kāpālikas and in the Writings of Georges Bataille,” *Religion* 25 (1995): 70, 72–73.

³⁹⁶ Cf. Lorenzen, “Śaivism: An Overview”: 9–10, and Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: 175. In Sanskrit, Lakuliśa means “the lord with a club” (Lorenzen, *The*

Lakuliśa Pāśupatas were also known as the Kāḷāmukhas (Kālāmukhas, Kālamukhas), or the latter were considered a branch or further development of the Lakuliśa Pāśupatas.³⁹⁷ This shows how closely intertwined these early sects were, which grew out of Śaivism at this time and displayed antinomian behaviour.³⁹⁸

5.2.3 The Dominance of the Kāḷāmukhas

In Karnataka, the Kāḷāmukhas almost entirely replaced the Pāśupatas by the ninth century CE, and became one of the most dominant faith groups in the area.³⁹⁹ They remained in power from the ninth to the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries.⁴⁰⁰ The Kāḷāmukhas, too, are a heterodox Tantric *bhakti* Śaiva order, focussing on the veneration of the god Bhairava and the goddess Kālī. Their name, Kāḷāmukha, means the “dark” or “black-faced ones,”⁴⁰¹ which relates to the black line they carried on their fore-

Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas: 177; Whitmore, “Lord of Kedar”: 62–63). On the Lakuliśas, also refer to Judit Törzsök, “Why Are the Skull-Bearers (Kāpālikas) Called Soma?” in *Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions: Essays in Honour of Alexis G.J.S. Sanderson*, ed. Dominic Goodall, Shaman Hatley, Harunaga Isaacson and Srilata Raman (Leiden: Brill, 2020): 33.

³⁹⁷ “Kāḷāmukha” is the spelling employed in Karnataka (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 49) and used throughout this publication. Cf. David N. Lorenzen, “The Kālāmukha Background to Viraśaivism,” in *Studies in Orientalology: Essays in Memory of Prof. A.L. Basha*, ed. S.K. Maity, Upendra Thakur and A.K. Narain (Shahganj: Y.K. Publishers, 1988): 278; Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: xii, 173; Hegde, “Temple-Hierarchy”: 238; Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 195, and Whitmore, “Lord of Kedar”: 63, 70. In the same publication on page 69, Whitmore points to a connection of the Pāśupatas and Kāpālikas to the later yogic Śaiva group of the Nāths, Siddhas or Nāth-Siddhas, who emphasise an inner “serpent power,” known as *kuṇḍalīnī*. On this, also refer to Lorenzen, “Śaivism: An Overview”: 10.

³⁹⁸ ‘Anti’ means against and ‘nomos’ law. In this sense, I use the term here to refer to behaviour that goes against ordinary accepted rules of societal and religious conduct.

³⁹⁹ See Hegde, “Temple-Hierarchy”: 236, 240. On page 238 he argues that this was mainly due to the organisation of the Kāḷāmukhas around *maṭhas*. Ishwaran stresses the fact that Kāḷāmukhas and Kāpālikas used supernatural techniques such as sacred syllables (*mantras*) and magical Tantric practices as deception to convert the people (Ishwaran, *Speaking of Basava*: 47).

⁴⁰⁰ For a prevalence until the thirteenth century see Lorenzen, “The Kālāmukha Background”: 278, for the fourteenth century see Whitmore, “Lord of Kedar”: 63.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. Whitmore, “Lord of Kedar”: 63. Lorenzen questions their heterodoxy (Lorenzen, “The Kālāmukha Background”: 278–79).

heads.⁴⁰² Bhairava, who has been associated with Śiva since the fifth or the seventh century CE,⁴⁰³ is a protector divinity, a demon lord and the commander of Śiva's troops (*gaṇas*), who are described as residing in cremation grounds.⁴⁰⁴ However, Bhairava is also considered to be a wrathful form of the god Śiva himself, in fact Bhairava is considered to be a personification of Śiva's anger.⁴⁰⁵

The Kālāmukha priests were ascetics, known as *yogins* or *jaṅgamas*, itinerant ("moving") monks.⁴⁰⁶ Their religious group was strongly influenced by Tantric thought and practices, and portrayed by outsiders as lacking self-control and engaging in permissive sexual practices.⁴⁰⁷ Regrettably, none of the original religious texts of the Kālāmukha *tāntrikas* have survived.⁴⁰⁸ For that reason, our understanding of them is heavily based on descriptions by their rivals and antagonists,⁴⁰⁹ with many accounts in fact coming from Digambara Jaina literary works.⁴¹⁰

The growing influence of the Kālāmukhas from the ninth century CE onwards appears to have been due primarily to their organisation around *maṭhas*.⁴¹¹ Inscriptional evidence from the eleventh and twelfth centuries indicates that by the eleventh century, their power base had expanded

⁴⁰² See David N. Lorenzen, "The Kālāmukhas of the Śakti-Pariṣad," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 52, no. 1/4 (1971): 97.

⁴⁰³ On this, refer to Whitmore, "Lord of Kedar": 64.

⁴⁰⁴ Additional information can be obtained from Whitmore, "Lord of Kedar": 64.

⁴⁰⁵ Whitmore, "Lord of Kedar": 64, has discussed this.

⁴⁰⁶ On the issues, refer to Lorenzen, "The Kālāmukhas of the Śakti-Pariṣad": 98, and Leslie, "Understanding Basava": 236. The term *jaṅgama* for itinerant ascetics is also used by Virāṣaivas. On this, see Lorenzetti, "Jainas and Virāṣaivas": 282.

⁴⁰⁷ On these, refer to D. Dennis Hudson, "Violent and Fanatic Devotion Among the Nāyanārs: A Study in the *Periya Purāṇam* of Cēkkillār," in *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees: Essays on the Guardians of Popular Hinduism*, ed. Alf Hiltebeitel (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989): 391. On Tantric influences, see Lorenzen, "The Kālāmukha Background": 278.

⁴⁰⁸ The same is true for the Kāpālikas.

⁴⁰⁹ Lorenzen has commented on this situation. Only a small number of inscriptions regarding the Kāpālikas have been preserved (Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: xi–xii).

⁴¹⁰ Zydembos refers to such a twelfth-century Jaina literary work (Zydembos, "Jainism Endangered": 179). Although the present publication focuses on material remains as the main sources of evidence, the significance of literary sources in particular for the reconstruction of Jaina history in Karnataka should not be underestimated.

⁴¹¹ Cf. Hegde, "Temple-Hierarchy": 238.

so much that they massively increased the number of their religious centres, temples and monasteries throughout South India, primarily by absorbing other local cults.⁴¹² Amongst these were Vaiṣṇavas as well as followers of various goddess cults, the Śāktas.⁴¹³ Statues sacred to different religious sects which have been preserved in local shrines attest to such assimilation processes. The eleventh-century former Jaina temple at Naregal, Gadag District, which today is known as the Narendra Gudi or Vir Nārāyaṇa Gudi, for instance, houses a symbolic representation of the god Śiva in the form of a *liṅga*, an icon of Viṣṇu as Nārāyaṇa and one of Brahmā, indicating multiple, probably subsequent, denominational foci.⁴¹⁴ This illustrates that it was not only the Jainas who slipped into positions of extreme asymmetrical dependency at this time.

As was the case with mainstream Śaiva sites, there was also a particularly large number of places associated with the Kālāmukhas found in the north of Karnataka, especially in Dharwar District.⁴¹⁵ The Kālāmukhas adopted a rigorously sectarian strategy in order to push back other religious groups and expand their own area of influence.⁴¹⁶ The Digambara Jainas lost many of their former places of veneration, especially in northern Karnataka, to the Kālāmukhas.⁴¹⁷ Such conversions of sites are indicative of the particularly unstable and precarious religious climate in Karnataka during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, during which new asymmetrical dependencies were established.

Initially, the Kālāmukhas appear to have profited from this volatility and increased their influence, particularly during the period between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, with a significant climax during

⁴¹² Cf. Ishwaran, *Speaking of Basava*: 47; Lorenzen, “The Kālāmukhas of the Śakti-Pariṣad”: 97, and Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: xii.

⁴¹³ On this, refer to Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 198–200, and to Lorenzen, “The Kālāmukha Background”: 281.

⁴¹⁴ For additional information on Naregal, see P.M. Joseph, *Jainism in South India* (Thiruvananthapuram: The International School of Dravidian Linguistics, 1997): 31–32. All Jaina iconographic markers were removed from the temple to obscure its appropriation from Jainism. The form of Nārāyaṇa shows the god Viṣṇu between two creation cycles, floating on the cosmic ocean supported on the coils of a snake.

⁴¹⁵ Lorenzen, “The Kālāmukha Background”: 283, has written on this.

⁴¹⁶ This has been argued by Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 198.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. Ishwaran, *Speaking of Basava*: 46. Other places were lost to other rival faith groups. See Lorenzen, “The Kālāmukhas of the Śakti-Pariṣad”: 99.

the twelfth century.⁴¹⁸ In spite of this, probably due to declining royal support from the Western Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa, the Kaḷacuris and the Seuṇas, their power suddenly decreased from the end of the thirteenth century,⁴¹⁹ not long after the loss in authority of the Jainas in the region. In the fifteenth century, the Kālāmukhas, their shrines and their powerful *maṭhas* were taken over by the newly emerging and steadily increasing cult of the Vīraśaivas, which will be discussed below in section 5.3 “Vīraśaivism as a New Developing Faith.”⁴²⁰

5.2.4 The Kāpālikas or Mahāvratin Sect

Lastly, I now turn to the Kāpālikas, who are another cult displaying antinomian behaviour who were also focused on Bhairava, the angry manifestation of Śiva, as their central deity. The heterodox south Indian Kāpālikas are also known as the Kāpāla or Mahāvratin sect. In Sanskrit, *kapāla* means “skull” and Kāpālika “skull-bearers.” This makes reference to one of the five heads of the Hindu god Brahmā, which either Śiva or Bhairava are said to have cut off. The severed head or skull stuck to his hand, making him “someone who carries a skull.” The alternative name Mahāvratin also relates to this legend. A *mahāvratā* is a great vow and refers to the pledge (which in most narratives) Śiva is said to have made following his sacrilegious act.⁴²¹ His offence was only obliterated twelve years later at Varanasi, which in consequence developed into a major

⁴¹⁸ On this subject, refer to Lorenzen, “The Kālāmukhas of the Śakti-Pariṣad”: 97; Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: 97, and Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 70.

⁴¹⁹ For further information, see Lorenzen, “The Kālāmukha Background”: 278.

⁴²⁰ Cf. Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: 99, 170, 167–72; Lorenzen, “The Kālāmukha Background”; Hegewald, “Introduction: The Jaina Heritage”: 23; Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 51, and Whitmore, “Lord of Kedar”: 70. The most detailed discussion can be found in Lorenzen, “The Kālāmukha Background”. Also refer to Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 235–36, 238, for arguments for and against this continuity. Fisher refers to Vīraśaivas absorbing the Pāśupatas and to being absorbed themselves by the Vīraśaivas (Elaine M. Fisher, “Hindu Sectarianism: Difference in Unity,” in *Hindu Pluralism: Religion and the Public Sphere in Early Modern South India* [Oakland: University of California Press, 2017]: 43).

⁴²¹ Lorenzen has written on this (Lorenzen, “Śaivism: An Overview”: 9, and Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: 73–82).

centre of Śaivism.⁴²² Kāpālika followers were known as *kapālins*,⁴²³ also meaning “skull-bearers,” a name which is first attested between the second and fourth centuries CE.⁴²⁴ Kāpālins are believed to have carried human skulls (*kapāla*) as their alms bowls from which they ate their food.⁴²⁵

Like the other early heterodox Śaiva-derived schools discussed so far, the Kāpālikas were also a *bhakti* sect, concentrating on Bhairava as a personal god and aspiring to attaining spiritual union with Śiva.⁴²⁶ Believed to have been founded during the early centuries CE,⁴²⁷ their cult thrived in Karnataka especially between the seventh and the fifteenth centuries.⁴²⁸

Both of these highly ascetic cults, Kālāmukhas and Kāpālikas, focused on violent transgressions of mainstream rules of religious behaviour, which they used as tools for spiritual progress.⁴²⁹ The Kāpālikas are usually classified as the most extreme of all the early heterodox Śaiva sects.⁴³⁰ The ascetics are said to have lived on cremation grounds where they conducted rituals involving polluting substances, and to have engaged in sexual and in murderous acts.⁴³¹ The references to sexual behaviour are unusual, as ascetics belonging to the other early Śiva-deduced *bhakti* cults were expected to be celibate.⁴³² In other ways

⁴²² On this, see Whitmore, “Lord of Kedar”: 64–65; Lorenzen, “Śaivism: An Overview”: 9; Urban, “The Remnants of Desire”: 69–70, and Törzsök, “Why Are the Skull-Bearers”: 33, 35–36.

⁴²³ On this, see Jash, “The Kapalikas”: 153; Lorenzen, “Śaivism: An Overview”: 9, and Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, “Interrogating ‘Unity in Diversity’: Voices from India’s Ancient Texts,” *Social Scientist* 43, no. 9/10 (2015): 15.

⁴²⁴ Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: 13, has written on this.

⁴²⁵ Cf. Törzsök, “Why Are the Skull-Bearers”: 33.

⁴²⁶ Cf. Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: 83–95.

⁴²⁷ For further information on their origin and early textual references to them, see Urban, “The Remnants of Desire”: 69. On later textual sources, refer to Jash, “The Kapalikas”: 152, 154.

⁴²⁸ On this, refer to Urban, “The Remnants of Desire”: 69.

⁴²⁹ See Urban, “The Remnants of Desire”: 67, and Whitmore, “Lord of Kedar”: 64, 70.

⁴³⁰ This has been discussed by Jash, “The Kapalikas,” and Törzsök, “Why Are the Skull-Bearers”: 33.

⁴³¹ Cf. Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: 98; Jash, “The Kapalikas”: 153; Urban, “The Remnants of Desire”: 67; Whitmore, “Lord of Kedar”: 67, and Törzsök, “Why Are the Skull-Bearers”: 33, 42.

⁴³² On this issue, refer to Törzsök, “Why Are the Skull-Bearers”: 34.

the Kāpālikas' transgressive and violent behaviour was typical of all the early heterodox Tantric Śaiva sects.⁴³³ By disregarding the concepts of purity and pollution, which are of central importance to mainstream Hinduism, the Kāpālika *tāntrika* practitioners hoped to accomplish a state of spiritual distance or detachment from the world. In addition, they sought to harness the transgressive force which can be reaped at the border between social order and its contravention in order to obtain liberation.⁴³⁴ Like the Pāśupatas, the Kāpālikas reproduced the initially transgressive and then corrective conduct of Rudra-Śiva.⁴³⁵

In addition, the Kāpālikas are also thought to have performed highly ascetic acts of renunciation and penance. In addition to Śiva, either in the form of the abstract *liṅga* or as Rudra, they also worshipped the fierce goddess Cāmuṇḍā. She is a Tantric *yoginī*, a mother goddess and an embodiment of the sacred feminine force. Cāmuṇḍā is also believed to reside on cremation grounds and is closely associated with two other ferocious Hindu goddesses, Kālī and Durgā.⁴³⁶

During the sixth and seventh centuries CE, the cult of the Kāpālikas spread throughout India as far north as the Punjab. However, the south Indian *kapālin* ascetics appear to have been particularly unorthodox, rejecting all *Brāhmaṇical* customs.⁴³⁷ In Karnataka, temples of the Kāpālikas were mainly found in Mysore state.⁴³⁸ Similar to the fate of the Kālāmukhas, the cult of the Kāpālikas was absorbed by other Śaiva groups in the fifteenth century.⁴³⁹

The early faith groups derived from Śaivism which I discussed above were all non-*Brāhmaṇical*, as they rejected the central collection of texts

⁴³³ For further details on this transgressive behaviour, refer to Hegewald, "Questions and Conclusions": 104–5.

⁴³⁴ See Urban for these two readings of Kāpālika behaviour (Urban, "The Remnants of Desire": 67).

⁴³⁵ Cf. Urban, "The Remnants of Desire": 73.

⁴³⁶ The associated violence and unrestrained sexual energy connected with these goddesses has been discussed by Urban, "The Remnants of Desire": 70.

⁴³⁷ Jash, describes two main Kāpālika groups in India, the *Brāhmaṇical* and the non-*Brāhmaṇical* (Jash, "The Kapalikas": 154).

⁴³⁸ On this, refer to Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: xii.

⁴³⁹ Cf. Urban, "The Remnants of Desire": 69.

of majority Hinduism, the *Vedas*. As non- or even anti-Vedic cults that employed what were considered impure practices, they were criticised by what one might overall refer to as “mainstream,” conventional, śāstric or *Purāṇic* Śaivism. This was a period in which anti-*Brāhmaṇical* groups, including the Jains and Buddhist, gained strong support. However, as all of these antinomian, Hindu-derived groups, above all the Kālāmukhas, absorbed local belief systems and still focused on some form of Śiva, they actively contributed to the proliferation of Śaiva or at least Śaiva-derived groups and the worship of Śiva as supreme lord throughout the region. Ultimately, these somewhat rebellious, unorthodox sects were themselves absorbed, Sanskritised and *brāhmaṇised*.⁴⁴⁰ This shows the complex nature and astonishing diversity of south Indian Hinduism and of its Śaiva traditions in particular.⁴⁴¹

5.3 Vīraśaivism as a New Developing Faith

Most of the above-mentioned heterodox early Śaiva groups were taken into the fold of the newly founded and very powerful Vīraśaiva sect.⁴⁴² Like the other faith groups discussed above, Vīraśaivism originated in Karnataka itself and as such was a local adversarial force which the Jains had to face. In fact, Vīraśaivism turned out to be the greatest antagonist of the Digambaras in Karnataka from the twelfth century onwards. Although Vīraśaivism has been referred to as a form of “neo-Śaivism,”⁴⁴³ it is in actual fact anti-Hindu and a distinct religion.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴⁰ See Hegde, “Temple-Hierarchy”: 238, and Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 193.

⁴⁴¹ Hegde has written on this topic (Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 199).

⁴⁴² See Robert J. Zydenbos, “Līṅgāyata,” in *Encyclopedia of Indian Religions*. Hinduism and Tribal Religions, ed. Jeffery D. Long, Rita D. Sherma, Pankaj Jain and Madhu Khanna (Dordrecht: Springer, 2022): 846.

⁴⁴³ On this issue, refer to *Epigraphia Carnatica* 2: lxxx, to McCormack who considers Līṅgāyats to be Hindus (McCormack, “On Lingayat Culture”: 175), and to Leslie, who describes the phenomenon, although she does not share this view (Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 229).

⁴⁴⁴ Cf. Ishwaran, *Speaking of Basava*: 1, and his entire chapter 5, entitled “Not an Off-Shoot of Hinduism, but a New Religion” (Ishwaran, *Speaking of Basava*: 87–110).

This is based on its rejection of the core dogmatic elements of Śaivism and Hinduism more generally, which include the concept of *karma*, the centrality of the sacred *Vedas*, the caste system, religious sacrifices, the concepts of purity and pollution and the veneration of multiple gods. In addition, Viraśaivas do not cremate but bury their dead.⁴⁴⁵ The funerary sites of their *gurus*, where the ascetic wooden sandals of the deceased are exhibited (Plate 38), are especially venerated.⁴⁴⁶ The alternative terms Liṅgāyat for Viraśaiva and Liṅgāyatism for Viraśaivism are largely used synonymously.⁴⁴⁷ The name Liṅgāyat can be translated as “worshipper,” “wearer” or “bearer of the *liṅga*.”⁴⁴⁸ In this publication, I use the terms Viraśaiva and Viraśaivism throughout.

A local Kannadiga man known as Basava, Basavaṇṇa or Basavēśvara (Basaveśvara) is considered the founder of Viraśaivism. In the Kannada language, “*basava*” means “bull” (Sanskrit: *vṛṣabha*) and is an epithet of Nandī (Nandin), Śiva’s mount, who can however also be regarded as a manifestation of Śiva himself.⁴⁴⁹ Due to his importance for the new faith, most Viraśaiva temples have a statue of Nandī facing the *liṅga* in their main shrine (Plate 39). Basava was born into a prominent Śaiva *brāhmaṇ* family in Bagevadi (Bāgēvāḍi) at the beginning of the twelfth century. As with most Indian religious founders, the dates of his life are quite unclear.⁴⁵⁰ However, the most commonly cited dates are 1105 or

⁴⁴⁵ For a more detailed discussion, refer to Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 111–12. On the burial practices, see Padoux, “Viraśaivas”: 12.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. Hegewald, “Foot Stones and Footprints”: 45–46, and Tiziana Lorenzetti, “The Cult of Feet and Footwear in the Liṅgāyat Tradition: Symbolology and Peculiarities,” in *In the Footsteps of the Masters: Footprints, Feet and Shoes as Objects of Veneration in Asia, Islamic and Mediterranean Art*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald, Studies in South Asian Culture (SAAC) 7 (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2020): 339–56.

⁴⁴⁷ For a discussion of the different terms, refer to Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 108–10.

⁴⁴⁸ See Ishwaran, *Speaking of Basava*: 2, and Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 229. According to Zydenbos, Liṅgāyat translates as “one who has accepted the *liṅga*” (Zydenbos, “Liṅgāyata”: 846).

⁴⁴⁹ On this, refer to Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 239–40.

⁴⁵⁰ The same applies, for instance, to the life dates of the historical Buddha or the Jina Mahāvira.

1106 for his birth and 1167 or 1168 for his death.⁴⁵¹ In Karnataka at this time, Vaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇs* were considered to be of higher religious status than Śāivas.⁴⁵² In this context, the new formation of Viraśaivism appears, at least partially, to have been a countermovement provoked by the strong Vaiṣṇava and Jaina presence in the area.⁴⁵³ However, instead of creating a completely new faith, it is more likely that Basava reformed an earlier cult.⁴⁵⁴

Regardless of whether Viraśaivism was a completely new or a reformed version of an earlier cult, Basava created a powerful socio-religious reform movement.⁴⁵⁵ He outlined his reformist thoughts, combined with devotional *bhakti* and Tantric ideas that were popular at the time, in his main literary work, known as the *Vacanas* (“sayings”). In contrast to *Brāhmaṇical* texts, which to a large extent were written in Sanskrit, Basava preferred the local vernacular Kannada language as his medium of transmission.⁴⁵⁶ In accordance with his religious and social

⁴⁵¹ For various combinations of these dates, see A.K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva* (London: Penguin, 1973): 61; Padoux, “Viraśaivas”: 12; Ishwaran, *Speaking of Basava*: frontispiece, and Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 228. Other authors date Basava’s life later: Zydenbos suggests 1134 to 1196 CE (Robert J. Zydenbos, “Viraśaivism,” in *Encyclopedia of Indian Religions. Hinduism and Tribal Religions*, ed. Jeffery D. Long, Rita D. Sherma, Pankaj Jain and Madhu Khanna [Dordrecht: Springer, 2022]: 1748). Lorenzen even gives a birth date of 1150 (Lorenzen, “Saivism: An Overview”: 10) and Nandimath of 1160 (S.C. Nandimath, *A Handbook of Viraśaivism* [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979]: 17). On the general vagueness of the dates associated with Basava, refer to Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva*: 61.

⁴⁵² Cf. Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 239.

⁴⁵³ According to Leslie, the Jainas had dominated in the region already since the second century BCE, which I consider too early (Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 232). I would argue that the Jainas played an important role in the region from about the fourth or fifth century CE, but controlled religion and politics only from around the seventh or eighth century CE.

⁴⁵⁴ On the origins of Viraśaivism, refer to Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 235–37. See also William McCormack, “Lingayats as a Sect,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 93, no. 1 (1963): 59. Interestingly, we have a similar situation in Jainism. Mahāvira is said to have reformulated an earlier path outlined already by Pārśvanātha (Hegewald, *Jaina Temple Architecture in India*: 8).

⁴⁵⁵ On this issue, see *Epigraphia Carnatica* 2: lxxx. Davis describes the period in which Basava was active as one of “dramatic social change and intellectual ferment” (Davis, “The Story of the Disappearing Jains”: 222). On these ideas, also refer to Padoux, “Viraśaivas”: 12, and Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 230.

⁴⁵⁶ For further details, refer to McCormack, “Lingayats as a Sect”: 59, and Padoux, “Viraśaivas”: 12.

reformist ideas, and in contradistinction to Śaiva practice, the Viraśaiva converts rejected social inequalities such as those enshrined in the caste system, eliminated the practice of child marriage and permitted widows to remarry. Basava's rejection of the caste system can be viewed as a direct replication of earlier Jaina practices to counter their strong influence in South India.⁴⁵⁷ It was only later that the Digambaras in Karnataka had accepted castes. Similarly to the Yāpanīyas in particular, the Viraśaivas gave women a more equal position and believed in their ability to attain enlightenment.⁴⁵⁸ Through the various social and societal reforms which the Viraśaivas implemented in the twelfth and following centuries, the new faith became especially appealing to women and to lower-caste members of society. Regardless of the many differences, Viraśaivas have preserved strong links with Śaiva traditions.⁴⁵⁹

Viraśaivas worship the aniconic symbol of the *liṅga*, as *iṣṭaliṅga*, the divine principle.⁴⁶⁰ Orthodox followers do not support temples with static (*sthāvara*) *liṅgas* but favour moving or *jaṅgama liṅgas*.⁴⁶¹ These are private, small, portable *liṅgas*, just a few centimetres in size, which have been made of slate and coated with a lacquer-like black paste. These miniature object of worship are carried by devotees in small containers

⁴⁵⁷ Saletore has argued along these lines (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 273).

⁴⁵⁸ This expresses the idea of equality of all Viraśaiva believers (Lorenzetti, "Jainas and Viraśaivas": 284).

⁴⁵⁹ Zydenbos emphasised that "a radical break with *Brāhmaṇical* Śaiva Hinduism never took place" (Zydenbos, "Liṅgāyata": 847). Others have argued that Viraśaivism represents a rejection of Hindu practice of the time and a return to its true core values, similar to the sixteenth-century German Protestant movement (Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva*: 33; R. Blake Michael, "Work as Worship in Viraśaiva Tradition," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, no. 4 [1982]: 605, 607–8). Leslie has written on these issues as well (Leslie, "Understanding Basava": 232, 258).

⁴⁶⁰ This is normally done at least twice a day (Padoux, "Viraśaivas": 12; Leslie, "Understanding Basava": 229).

⁴⁶¹ On this issue, refer to Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva*: 20; Leslie, "Understanding Basava": 232, and Whitmore, "Lord of Kedar": 71. Temples are not forbidden, and the Viraśaivas maintain shrines, but they are not central to the attainment of *nirvāṇa* (Zydenbos, "Liṅgāyata": 847). Temple worship as well as pilgrimage are considered to be of no benefit, and religious rituals are denounced (Padoux, "Viraśaivas": 12). See also the section entitled "The Rejection of the Temple System" in Ishwaran, *Speaking of Basava*: 74–75.

tied to a thread around their neck, arm or chest (Plate 40). There also are more elaborate necklaces made of strung *rudrākṣa* berries with a larger central ornamented box that contains the sacred object.⁴⁶² The small personal *liṅga* is given to each Viraśaiva follower, male or female, by their spiritual teacher (*guru*) during their initiation (*dikṣā*) ceremony.⁴⁶³ Followers of Viraśaivism—therefore also known as Liṅgāyatism—are identifiable by the *liṅga* they carry and by a white dot of ash painted on their foreheads.⁴⁶⁴ This dot is been combined with the mainstream sectarian Śaiva marker, usually three white horizontal lines of ash, also applied to the foreheads of devotees (Plate 41).

Carrying the *liṅga* figuratively transforms the body into a temple,⁴⁶⁵ and in fact the body of the believer and the *liṅga* are supposed to fuse, to create a nondual reality that transcends the binary opposites of devotee and deity, who become one.⁴⁶⁶ It is a Tantric method to locate the redemptive power within oneself.⁴⁶⁷ Due to this essential unity, Viraśaivas propagate *ekāntavāda*, the primacy of one principle with regard to divine origin and existence as a whole.⁴⁶⁸ This contrasts sharply with Jaina thinking, which supports *anekāntavāda*, the philosophy of many principles or multiple viewpoints.⁴⁶⁹

The term *jaṅgamana*, which we encountered in the context of moving or *jaṅgamana liṅgas*, is also applied to the hereditary priests of the

⁴⁶² *Rudrākṣa* seed beads, considered to be the eyes of Śiva, are sacred to Viraśaivas and Śaivas alike. See McCormack, “On Lingayat Culture”: 184.

⁴⁶³ This ritual is performed by the family priest (*guru*), usually on the day of a child’s birth (Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 229, 230). See also Padoux, “Viraśaivas”: 12.

⁴⁶⁴ For further information, see Padoux, “Viraśaivas”: 12, and Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 229.

⁴⁶⁵ This is underlined by Ramanujan in the section entitled “The Temple and the Body,” in which he expands on the fact that all Indian temples are “traditionally built in the image of the human body” (Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva*: 19–22). This is also true of Hindu temples.

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. Whitmore, “Lord of Kedar”: 71, 82. Van Troy outlines a similar concept in the context of the Pāśupatas (Van Troy, “The Radical Social Protest”: lxx).

⁴⁶⁷ Tantric practices and the embodiment of the divine will be discussed in section 5.5 “The Power of *Bhakti* and Tantrism.”

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 54; Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 26, and Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 217.

⁴⁶⁹ This is related to the “many-sided doctrine” of *syādvāda*. On this, see also Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 31.

Viraśaivas. These possessionless wandering mendicants are also referred to as *jaṅgamas*.⁴⁷⁰ Despite the originally itinerant nature of the Viraśaiva *jaṅgamanas*, their faith also established monastery-like establishments, known as *maṭhas*, to further propagate the religion.⁴⁷¹ Each *maṭha* was—and still is today—managed by a head, known either as *maṭhādhipati* (lord of the *maṭha*), *maṭhapati* or a *jagadguru* (Plate 41).⁴⁷² Traditionally, there were five main Viraśaiva *maṭhas*, the *pañcapīṭhas* (five seats).⁴⁷³

Initially, there appear to have been mainly individual conversions from Jainism to Basava's new faith. We have literary references to ordinary Digambara *śrāvakas* and high-ranking *ācāryas* who changed religion by adopting Viraśaivism at this time. This may have been due to the sustained and marked pressure on the local Jainas at this time of rivalry, opposition and open conflict,⁴⁷⁴ and perhaps expressed a wish to avoid persecution and other forms of extreme dependency. Furthermore, Digambara Jaina landowners in medieval Karnataka, whether lay householders or monastic leaders, had grown used to a certain prosperity and status in society, which they may have wished to maintain.⁴⁷⁵ Therefore, the upper levels of society as well as owners of land and property frequently accepted Viraśaivism as their new faith. Later, after Viras-
haivas had become firmly established in Karnataka, there were more group conversions of entire villages or regional castes.⁴⁷⁶ Similar to the local Jainas, this unintentionally reintroduced the element of caste and *brāhmaṇised* certain parts of the Viraśaiva community.⁴⁷⁷ According to

⁴⁷⁰ On this issue, refer to Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva*: 20–21; Padoux, “Viraśaivas”: 12; Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: 171; Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 230, and Lorenzetti, “Jainas and Viraśaivas”: 282.

⁴⁷¹ Pinto has written about this in relation to the west coast of Karnataka (Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 225).

⁴⁷² For *maṭhādhipati*, refer to Zydenbos (Zydenbos, “Līṅgāyata”: 848; Zydenbos, “Viraśaivism”: 1752), and for *jagadguru* or *jagatguru* to Whitmore, “Lord of Kedar”: 70.

⁴⁷³ For additional information on the Viraśaiva *maṭha* tradition, see Padoux, “Viraśaivas”: 12; Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 230, and Zydenbos, “Līṅgāyata”: 848.

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 69.

⁴⁷⁵ See Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 58.

⁴⁷⁶ Cf. Zydenbos, “Jainism Endangered”: 175.

⁴⁷⁷ On this, see Padoux, “Viraśaivas”: 12; Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 230, and Zydenbos, “Līṅgāyata”: 847.

references in Kannada literature, there were also enforced and mass conversions under threat of violence.⁴⁷⁸ This may be related to situations in which after the conversion of the ruling classes the population aligned themselves with the rulers' newly adopted faith.⁴⁷⁹ Often, the entire populations of villages and all their sacred places of worship were changed over to Viraśaivism.⁴⁸⁰ Not only Jainas and their places of worship were converted at this time, but Hindu temples were also absorbed and adapted to Viraśaiva usage (Plate 42).

To a large extent, the triumph of the Viraśaiva movement at this time was due to their success in promoting their tradition both to the upper levels of society and amongst the ordinary population. This they achieved mainly through their quite simple and direct form of religiosity, welcoming converts from all levels of society, giving a relatively equal position to women, allowing widows to remarry, and proposing independence from mediating priests and costly rituals.⁴⁸¹ The faith prospered particularly during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when it also spread to the south of Karnataka and into the neighbouring region of Andhra Pradesh. Viraśaivas still comprise the religious majority in the modern state of Karnataka today.⁴⁸²

During this time of flowering, however, the Viraśaivas appear gradually to have moved away from some aspects of Basava's original doctrine of simplicity and homelessness. This is similar to the developments I outlined for the local form of Digambara Jainism in the Middle Ages in Karnataka. The Viraśaiva priests also founded *maṭhas*, settled down and

⁴⁷⁸ On medieval records which allude to mass conversions, some even under threat of violence, cf. Zydenbos, "Jainism Endangered": 175, and Sundaram, "Elements of Jaina History": 36.

⁴⁷⁹ See Pinto, "Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire": 82. This fact has also been highlighted by Lorenzetti, "Jainas and Viraśaivas": 314–15. Sundaram relates the case of the poet Brahmaśiva, a Jaina, who converted to Śaivism and then back to Jainism (Sundaram, "Elements of Jaina History": 35).

⁴⁸⁰ Sundaram refers to group conversions from Jainism to Viraśaivism (Sundaram, "Elements of Jaina History": 36).

⁴⁸¹ Narasimha Murthy, "History of Jainism in Karnataka": 53, has written on this.

⁴⁸² Cf. Zydenbos, "Jainism Endangered": 177, and Leslie, "Understanding Basava": 229. There are roughly six million followers of Viraśaivism in India, of whom most are settled in Karnataka (Padoux, "Viraśaivas": 12).

increased their ritual activities, which initially only involved the veneration of the small portable *liṅga* carried on their own bodies. Over time, abandoned and forcibly appropriated temples were annexed and even new Viraśaiva shrines erected.⁴⁸³ Inside the shrines often multiple *liṅgas* were—and still are today—displayed, some even with faces to make them look more iconic (Plate 43). Alternatively, images of historically important teachers, the *gurus*, are also venerated by devotees (Plate 44). Similar to the Digambara Jainas in Karnataka, the development of the Viraśaivas also shows a departure from minimalism and modesty to a more ritualistic and institutionalised form of their faith.

To conclude this double section on early Śaiva, heterodox Śaiva-deduced Tantric *bhakti* groups (5.2) and on Viraśaivism (5.3), it is striking to note that already from the early centuries CE, but even more so from the late eleventh century onwards, various Śaiva and Śaiva-derived orders in particular, established their supremacy over the other religious cults of the region. This was achieved through institutionalisation in the form of large numbers of newly established monasteries and temples. Later, *brāhmaṇisation* played an important role as well, by absorbing smaller, even anti-*Brāhmaṇical* cults.⁴⁸⁴ This led to a massive Śaiva revival in south India during the twelfth century, as well as to the creation of Viraśaivism.⁴⁸⁵ Jainism as a non-Vedic, *śramaṇa* tradition, trying to cling very hard to its distinct identity, could not be as easily absorbed by Śaivas or Viraśaivas.⁴⁸⁶ As a result, the Digambara Jainas became the primary victims of Śaiva and Viraśaiva aggression in later medieval Karnataka, descended into positions of strong asymmetrical dependencies, were persecuted and by the twelfth century started to become a religious minority in Karnataka. In addition to this largely local religious rivalry, worshippers of devotional Vaiṣṇavism also entered the region. As will be

⁴⁸³ Lorenzetti, “Jainas and Viraśaivas”: 336–44, has written on this.

⁴⁸⁴ On this subject, refer to Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 201.

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. Zydenbos, “Jainism Endangered”: 175, and Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 73.

⁴⁸⁶ Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 202, has written on this issue.

discussed below, this was part of a more general renewal of *Brāhmaṇical* faiths in the south.

5.4 Vaiṣṇavism and its *Bhakti* Form of Śrīvaiṣṇavism

While the revival of south Indian Śaiva and the various heterodox denominations that descended from Śaivism, including the more independent form of Viraśaivism, appear to have been most detrimental to the priority position of the Digambara Jainas in medieval Karnataka, Vaiṣṇavism also left its mark. In Karnataka, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava followers fought for the hegemony of their own groups during this time of conflict and challenge, particularly in the twelfth century.⁴⁸⁷ Aspects which reinvigorated the Vaiṣṇava sects in the south in particular were the emergence of the early Vaiṣṇava saints, the sixth-century CE Ālvārs (Ālvārs, Ālvārs),⁴⁸⁸ and the arrival and presence of Śaṅkarācārya in Karnataka during the eighth and ninth centuries CE, followed by Rāmānuja's Śrīvaiṣṇavism in the eleventh century.⁴⁸⁹ Overall, these various Vaiṣṇava movements also presented strongly competitive and occasionally openly aggressive forces against the local Digambara Jainas in Karnataka.⁴⁹⁰

Followers of the *bhakti* form of Vaiṣṇavism known as Śrīvaiṣṇavism, which had entered Karnataka from Tamil Nadu in the eleventh century, became dominant especially in the south of the state. Śrīvaiṣṇavism is also known as the Viśiṣṭādvaita School of Rāmānuja,⁴⁹¹ referring to the

⁴⁸⁷ According to Singh, both Viraśaivas and Vaiṣṇava reform movements posed real threats to Jainism in Karnataka at this time (Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 6).

⁴⁸⁸ Cf. Ishwaran, *Speaking of Basava*: 117, and Ranjeeta Dutta, "Texts, Tradition and Community Identity: The Srivaisnavas of South India," *Social Scientist* 35, no. 9/10 (2007): 23. In Karnataka, Ālvār temples are widespread in Vijayanagara. See also Valerie Stoker, "Allies or Rivals? Vyāsātīrtha's Material, Social and Ritual Interactions with the Śrīvaiṣṇavas," in *Polemics and Patronage in the City of Victory: Vyāsātīrtha, Hindu Sectarism, and the Sixteenth-Century Vijayanagara Court* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016): 76 and map 5.

⁴⁸⁹ See, for instance, Misra, "The Jains in an Urban Setting": 7.

⁴⁹⁰ This has also been observed by Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 81.

⁴⁹¹ See *Epigraphia Carnatica* 2: lxxx

Hindu philosopher saint Rāmānuja or Rāmānujācārya (c. 1017–1137 CE).⁴⁹² Having fled the persecution of Kulōttuṅga Coḷa, Rāmānuja sought refuge in Karnataka and received support from the predominantly Jain Hoysaḷa rulers.⁴⁹³ Due to his powerful teachings, great parts of the population also changed over to Śrīvaiṣṇavism at this time, at least in the Hoysaḷa realm.⁴⁹⁴

Among these converts was the influential Hoysaḷa King Viṣṇuvardhana (c. 1104–1141 CE), who initially had been a Digambara Jaina. After having adopted Śrīvaiṣṇavism in around 1116, the king called himself Bittideva, Bittiga Deva or Bitti of Dvārasamudra.⁴⁹⁵ “Bitti” is a variant of Viṭṭhala, one of the names of Viṣṇu.⁴⁹⁶ Regardless of his own change of faith, Viṣṇuvardhana’s principal wife, Queen Śāntalā Devī,⁴⁹⁷ as well as many of his highest officials and military commanders, remained Digambara Jainas,⁴⁹⁸ reflecting the king’s continued tolerance towards other religions.

Landowning and farming Jainas in Karnataka, in particular, seem to have converted to Śrīvaiṣṇavism at this time.⁴⁹⁹ There appear to have been mass conversions, even under intimidation, and the religion appears to have gained new supporters after the twelfth century in particular.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹² Cf. Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 114; Lorenzen, “The Kālāmukhas of the Śakti-Pariṣad”: 97, and Singh, *Jainism in Early Medieval Karnataka*: 6. Although a lifespan of 120 years is debatable, these are the dates normally given for Rāmānuja.

⁴⁹³ Cf. *Epigraphia Carnatica* 2: lxxx, and Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 55. This appears to be a reference to Kulōttuṅga I (1070–1122 CE) (Hudson, “Violent and Fanatic Devotion”: 374).

⁴⁹⁴ On this, refer to Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 55, 57.

⁴⁹⁵ See Subrahmanya Aiyar, “Origin and Decline”: 218, and Mugali, *The Heritage of Karnataka*: 99.

⁴⁹⁶ For this refer to Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 215. In Karnataka and Maharashtra, Viṭṭhala is also known as Viṭhōbā (Misra, “The Jains in an Urban Setting”: 8).

⁴⁹⁷ We have encountered Śāntalā Devī already in section 2.3.3 “Female Benefactors” as a great benefactress of Jaina temples, especially at Shravanabelgola.

⁴⁹⁸ According to Saletore, eight Jaina generals served under King Viṣṇuvardhana (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 114). Probably best known is his general Gaṅgarāya, a patron of Jaina religious art (Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 43). On the Jaina support of Bittideva’s associates, see William Coelho, *The Hoysala Vamsa* (Bombay: Indian Historical Research Institute, 1950): 109.

⁴⁹⁹ For further details, refer to Zydenbos, “Jainism Endangered”: 175, 177.

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 195.

Although Rāmānuja established the first religious headquarters and his main *maṭha* at Melkote (Mēlkōṭe), Hassan District, Śrīvaiṣṇavism flourished exceptionally at the Hindu court of Vijayanagara during the sixteenth century.⁵⁰¹

As they represented a rival creed, competing for followers, patronage and royal recognition, the Śrīvaiṣṇavas sought to suppress the former Jaina authority in the state.⁵⁰² Many literary texts express the fervent anti-Jaina attitudes prevalent during this period.⁵⁰³ References from the fourteenth century describe Jaina persecutions at the hands of Vaiṣṇavas in the Digambara centre of Kalya.⁵⁰⁴ Indicative of this severe imbalance of power is the destruction or forceful conversion of Jaina temples and sacred icons.⁵⁰⁵ Examples of the latter approach are the two former Jaina temples at Naregal in Gadag District and at Guttal in Haveri District, converted under Bīṭṭideva.⁵⁰⁶ In fact, both temples are under Śaiva control today, suggesting a further change in association, which is symptomatic of the unstable nature of these politically and religiously turbulent times.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰¹ On Melkote refer to Misra, “The Jains in an Urban Setting”: 7; and for further information on the faiths at Vijayanagara, see Stoker, “Allies or Rivals?”: 73, 74.

⁵⁰² Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 55–57, has written on this subject.

⁵⁰³ On this, see Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 68.

⁵⁰⁴ This is in the area of Bangalore. Cf. Nagarajaiah, “Attacks on Important Buddhist and Jaina Centres”: 55.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 220, who bases his argument on a publication in Kannada language by M. Chidananda Murthy, *Kannada Sasana-gala Samskritika Adhyayana 450 A.D.–1150 A.D.* (Bangalore: Sapna Book House, 2002): 235–37. Refer also to Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 289, 292.

⁵⁰⁶ Despite these legends, it is difficult to verify these conversions, as the foundation date of 1207 CE on the temple at Guttal, for instance, would normally be after Bīṭṭideva’s time. Here again, the life dates of important figures and often also the dating of temples are highly contested.

⁵⁰⁷ On conversions of Vaiṣṇava temples to Śaiva usage, refer to Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 200. A rare incident of mediation between Śrīvaiṣṇavas and Jains, who had been assaulted by the former, is the settlement brought about by Bukka Rāya I in 1398 CE (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 288–89; *Epigraphia Carnatica* 2: lxxx, 285–86, inscription No. 475; Jagadeesh Kivudanavar, “Jaina Generals in Vijayanagara Court,” *Jain Journal* 35, no. 1 [2000]: 23; Stoker, “Allies or Rivals?”: 75, and Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 218).

Vaiṣṇavism and its particular south Indian *bhakti* form of Śrīvaiṣṇavism were powerful religious movements that clearly threatened the formerly preeminent position of the Digambara Jainas in Karnataka. Whilst Viraśaivism appear to have posed the greatest danger to this weakening faith, Vaiṣṇava persecution came second.⁵⁰⁸ As such, the negative influence of Vaiṣṇavas and Śrīvaiṣṇavas on Digambara power in the region appears to have been severe but probably not decisive for their decline.

5.5 The Power of Hindu *Bhakti* and Tantrism

The early heterodox Śaiva-derived groups as well as the later forms of Viraśaivism and Śrīvaiṣṇavism were all *bhakti* and Tantric movements. Both components appear to have been important and very much in evidence during the middle and the beginning of the latter part of the medieval period.

The Hindu *bhakti* advance began in Tamil Nadu in the sixth or seventh century CE and soon spread to Karnataka, where it came to dominate religious life at least during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁵⁰⁹ The movement was next carried to North India, where it blossomed largely during the fifteenth and later centuries.

The *bhakti* path generally is one of social change, opposing the caste system of discrimination and welcoming all converts regardless of their birth or gender. At the start, during the early centuries CE, Digambara Jainism in Karnataka had also offered this inclusivity to its followers. However, with large numbers of people changing their religion from Hinduism to Jainism during the fourth and fifth centuries CE, castes were accepted by the Digambaras roughly from the eighth century CE,

⁵⁰⁸ According to Dibbad, the Vaiṣṇavas were as harmful for the Jainas as was Viraśaivism (Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 69), but this does not reflect my own understanding of the situation, which is based on the number of Jaina temples that were converted to Viraśaiva usage, which is much larger.

⁵⁰⁹ There were Jaina *bhakti* activities in Karnataka from the seventh or eighth centuries CE onwards (Suresh, “Jaina Monuments”: 183). Only from the tenth to twelfth centuries, however, was their influence felt more strongly.

too. In order to be more all-embracing, the followers of the early *bhakti* cults, the Bhaktas, rejected such discrimination as well as the use of Sanskrit as a high-caste language in their sacred writings and ritual practices, and instead employed the local vernacular to also reach ordinary people.

Probably in reaction to the strongly expanded ritual proceedings of most Hindu sects, but also in response to the local Jainas, who from around the tenth century CE also expanded their religious ceremonies, the *bhakti* path offered a more reduced and simpler, more direct form of divine experience. As part of this, devotees usually expressed their love to a single personal god (*iṣṭadevatā*). Instead of large temple establishments and expensive rituals conducted on their behalf by priests, people were drawn to the ideals of humble devotees and poor wandering mendicants (*jaṇīgamas*), who themselves had become one with the divinity and whose bodies replaced the necessity of stone-built temples and the dependency on priests as ritual mediators with the sacred.⁵¹⁰

In the context of the *bhakti* movements, it should be remembered that, then as now, Jainism also offered a strongly devotional path, and that the veneration of living and deceased teachers has always formed a substantial part of its ritual practices. This long-standing approach was further strengthened through the development of the cult of the goddesses in medieval Karnataka, which only intensified an already existent *bhakti* path in Jainism.⁵¹¹ Although *bhakti* in Hinduism at times reached more ecstatic levels of personal devotion and expressions of love towards the divine, devotion or *bhakti* itself cannot have been the primary or sole reason for conversions away from Jainism.

As we saw above, Tantrism was another important driving religious force during the Indian Middle Ages in Karnataka. Tantric methods can be found in the practices of most Hindu and in heterodox groups derived

⁵¹⁰ For further details, see Hegde, “Dynamics of Sectarian Formations”: 197.

⁵¹¹ For an in-depth discussion of *bhakti* in Jainism, also refer to Anne Valleley, “Jain Bhakti,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Jainism*, ed. John E. Cort, Paul Dundas, Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristi L. Wiley, Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section Two: South Asia 34 (Leiden: Brill, 2020): 597–610.

from Hinduism, as well as in various Buddhist groups, and it equally affected the local form of Jainism at this time. From the seventh century CE onwards, explicit Tantric elements emerged in Digambara Jainism, which between the eighth and the tenth centuries CE markedly modified their religious practices. At this time, the presence of goddesses, who were believed to assist devotees with worldly difficulties but who were also regarded as embodiments of Tantric powers, strongly gained in influence. In addition, powerful spells, magical diagrams, protective amulets, fire offerings, potent sacred hand gestures and other ritual elements significantly increased the scope of Digambara Jaina ritual throughout the area of Karnataka.

The aim was to use these alternative means and techniques to substantially abbreviate the long and extremely hard Jaina path to salvation, which otherwise can only be mastered through severe austerity and harsh ascetic practices. As part of this alternative Tantric route, the Digambara Jainas emphasised already existing elements, such as the importance of goddesses and sacred syllables and prayers, but also absorbed new ritual methods such as diagrams and fire offerings, to provide a shorter and easier Tantric approach to salvation. In fact, by the tenth century CE Tantric elements had become part of conventional Jaina ritual to such an extent that there does not appear to have been a need to convert to the Tantric paths of other religious groups.

In the brief summary above on *bhakti* and Tantric elements prevalent at the time, I have shown that conversions from Digambara Jainism to other religions in Karnataka appear not to have been primarily about religious issues, such as a desire for more *bhakti* or Tantric approaches. At this time of preference for alternative paths, the Digambaras themselves integrated these complementary methods so well into their own religious fabric that they should have prevented conversions for their sake alone. I therefore suggest that social and economic reasons must have played more important roles in this pronounced process of withdrawing support from the Digambara form of Jainism and converting to different religious groups in medieval Karnataka.

5.6 The Arrival and Impact of Islam in the Region

In addition to the religions discussed so far, which emerged from Hindu or *Brāhmaṇical*-derived groups and affected the fortunes of the Digambara society in medieval Karnataka, Muslim groups from the north also arrived in the area from the late thirteenth century onwards, weakening the Jaina position. Muslim culture was established gradually, particularly in the northern districts of Bidar, Gulbarga, Bijapur, Raichur, Belary and Dharwar, as Islam expanded its area of influence and became permanently and more prominently established in South India.⁵¹² The once prospering Digambara Jaina community of northern Karnataka, in particular, was compelled to withdraw to the southern areas of the state and to the coastal region.⁵¹³

Although the Islamic military campaigns from the north to the south represented a new force entering the region, Islam had in fact been present in Karnataka at least from the eighth century CE onwards.⁵¹⁴ The purpose of this earlier migration had been primarily commercial.⁵¹⁵ This illustrates the two main varieties of Islam in South Asia, the more commercial Sunnī, who were stronger in the south, and the more warlike Shī‘a, who were more pronounced in the north.⁵¹⁶ Ultimately, these two groups fused on the Deccan plateau.

⁵¹² On this subject, see Deo, “The Expansion of Jainism”: 33; Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 69, and Jackie Assayag, *At the Confluence of Two Rivers: Muslims and Hindus in South India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004): 30–34.

⁵¹³ On this, refer to Qvarnström, “Stability and Adaptability”: 44.

⁵¹⁴ This has been stressed by Julia Lauer and Sabine Scholz, “Of Flourishing Economic Exchanges and Political Stereotypes: The Complex Relationship Between Jainas and Muslims in Karnataka—Then and Now,” in *Jaina Culture in Medieval Karnataka: Dominance, Dependency and Endurance*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald, Dependency and Slavery Studies 18 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025): 538. On this dating, also refer to Kamta Prasad Jain, “Jainism Under the Muslim Rule,” *New Indian Antiquary* 1 (1938–1939): 516.

⁵¹⁵ For further details, particularly on the Navayat community, see Assayag, *At the Confluence of Two Rivers*: 36–37, and Audrey Truschke, “Jains and Muslims,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Jainism*, ed. John E. Cort, Paul Dundas, Knut A. Jacobsen and Kristi L. Wiley, Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section Two: South Asia 34 (Leiden: Brill, 2020): 330.

⁵¹⁶ This has been advocated by Assayag, *At the Confluence of Two Rivers*: 36, 38. On motivations for Islamic invasions in the north, also see Meenakshi Jain, *Flight of Deities and*

Islam established itself in the north of India at the end of the twelfth century and soon took on a more organised shape in the form of the Delhi Sultanate, which existed from around 1206 to 1526. The *sultāns* of the early Khiljī (1290–1320) and Ṭughlāq (1320–1414) dynasties already took their armies on looting campaigns and sought to expand their territory. The southwards move of Muslim power also negatively affected the position of the Digambara Jainas in Karnataka.⁵¹⁷ At least from the last quarter of the thirteenth century onwards, we have inscriptions and local narratives that recount the violation of Jaina statues and the demolition of their temples at the hands of Muslims who at least temporarily entered into their areas.⁵¹⁸

In 1311, Malik Kafur,⁵¹⁹ the general of Sultān ‘Alau’d-Dīn Khiljī of Delhi (r. 1296–1316), invaded the Hoysala kingdom and for one week held its capital city of Dvarasamudra (Dvārasamudra), today known as Halebid (Halebid),⁵²⁰ while Vīra Ballāla III (1291–1342) was on a voyage away from home.⁵²¹ In consequence, the king had to surrender and his capital was plundered. The city and its Jaina and Hindu temples required substantial rebuilding campaigns and Malik Kafur (Raj al-Dīn Izz al-Dawla), locally referred to as “Mallikaphar,” proceeded further south into Tamil Nadu on his campaign of plunder.⁵²² However, Halebid was not the only site in Karnataka that Malik Kafur attacked.⁵²³ What

Rebirth of Temples: Episodes from Indian History (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2019): 245.

⁵¹⁷ In addition to the Jainas, Hindu culture was also threatened by the Muslim presence (Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 55).

⁵¹⁸ For further information, see Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 287. On two seventeenth-century inscriptions from Abalur that record Muslim attacks on Jaina temples, refer to Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 148.

⁵¹⁹ Malik Kafur, who died in 1316 and who was an important general during the Slave Dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1290), is also known as Raj al-Dīn Izz al-Dawla. Outside India, the Slave Dynasty is better known as the Mamluk Dynasty.

⁵²⁰ Further alternative spellings for Halebid are Haḷēbiḍ, Haḷēbiḍu and Haḷeyabiḍu.

⁵²¹ Cf. Krishna Murthy, “Development of Jaina Temple Architecture”: 114, and Jain, *Flight of Deities and Rebirth of Temples*: 245.

⁵²² On this, refer to Jain, *Flight of Deities and Rebirth of Temples*: 246.

⁵²³ See, for instance, Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 133, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 487. According to Jain, ‘Alau’d-Dīn Khiljī sent Malik Kafur “on a campaign of pillage and plunder to the south.” Jain, *Flight of Deities and Rebirth of Temples*: 243.

is today known as the Ādinātha Basadi or the Śrīraṅgapaṭṭaṇa Svāmī Temple in Shrīraṅgapatna (Śrīraṅgapaṭṭaṇa) was also attacked by this Muslim general's troops. The temple was rebuilt in 1589 and all the icons on worship inside it today were brought there from obliterated Jaina sites in the surrounding area, which had also been attacked by Malik Kafur (Plate 45).⁵²⁴ In the following years, similar destructions of sacred sites in Karnataka were carried out by Ghiyās-ud-dīn Ṭughlāq (r. 1320–1325) and his son Ulugh Khan.⁵²⁵ The primary reason for the attention paid to religious sites, both Hindu and Jaina, was that they were centres of art and wealth, and therefore interested the new, powerful rulers from the north.

All the same, we do not have the impression that the destruction of Jaina holy sites by Muslims in later medieval Karnataka took place on a massive and truly annihilating scale. At least in the north of Karnataka, the position of the Digambara Jains and their places of worship had by this time already been severely reduced by attacks from indigenous faith groups as has been discussed in the previous sections.⁵²⁶

While it is often hard in retrospect to determine with confidence who ransacked a site, in others we have inscriptions that give further details. The sixteenth-century inscription from Mulgund (Mulgund), for instance, recounts the devastation of the Pārśvanātha Temple and the killing of

⁵²⁴ For further details on the images and their origins, refer to Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 486–87.

⁵²⁵ Cf. Jain, *Flight of Deities and Rebirth of Temples*: 248–49.

⁵²⁶ Somewhat unusually, Narasimha Murthy and Mugali disagree with this view. Instead, they reinforce an interpretation widely propagated these days as part of Indian national politics (Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 57, and Mugali, *The Heritage of Karnataka*: 55). However, this approach is viewed critically as a misrepresentation of the Muslims by many academics today. Refer, for instance, to Jain, “Jainism Under the Muslim Rule”: 518, and Assayag, *At the Confluence of Two Rivers*, and James Laidlaw, *Riches and Renunciation: Religion, Economy, and Society Among the Jains*, Oxford Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995): 105. See also the discussion in Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 257; Romila Thapar, *Cultural Transactions in Early India: Tradition and Patronage* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987): 15, and Paul Dundas, “Jain Perceptions of Islam in the Early Modern Period,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 42 (1999): 35–46. Also significant in this context is the play called *Taledaṇḍa* by Girish from 1990 and its 1993 English version, entitled *Talé-Daṇḍa: A Play*.

the local Digambara Jaina *ācārya* by Muslim forces (Plate 46).⁵²⁷ In addition to looting and outright destruction, iconoclastic tendencies towards figural representations also adversely affected Jaina sacred sites throughout the region. This led to the mutilation of statues,⁵²⁸ but also motivated the Jainas more generally to favour more aniconic forms of representation, such as representations of foot images, the *pādukās*.⁵²⁹

By itself, the impact of destruction wrought by Muslims might not have been felt very strongly. However, it was added to the force of various Śaiva and heterodox Śaiva-derived denominations and the all-powerful Vīraśaiva movement, which like Islamic power was mostly dominant in northern Karnataka. Hindu, heterodox *Brāhmaṇical* and Muslim forces in conjunction decimated the Digambara Jaina community and its political and religious influence strongly and lastingly in this area. As a result, Digambara Jainism today is still more prevalent and active in the southern and western regions of Karnataka.

I focused above on temporary Muslim incursions into Karnataka from the north. However, over time, organised Muslim dynasties also settled in the south. Historically, the first independent Muslim kingdom established in South India was the Baḥmanid Sultanate (1347–1527), estab-

⁵²⁷ For the inscription, see Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 148; P.B. Desai, ed., *South-Indian Inscriptions*, vol. 15, *Bombay-Karnataka Inscriptions*, vol. 2 (Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1964): 433, inscription no. 695; K.R. Srinivasan, “Monuments & Sculpture A.D. 1300 To 1800: The Deccan,” in *Jaina Art and Architecture*, vol. 2, ed. A. Ghosh (New Delhi: Bharatiya Jnanpith, 1975): 365; Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 133; Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 360, 428–29, 469, 481, 485; Lauer and Scholz, “Of Flourishing Economic Exchanges”: 535–65, and Scholz, “Digambara Jainism in Karnataka”: 544–45.

⁵²⁸ On Muslim iconoclastic approaches, see Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 134, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 471–82.

⁵²⁹ Cf. Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Domes, Tombs and Minarets: Islamic Influences on Jaina Architecture,” in *The Temple in South Asia*, vol. 2 of the Proceedings of the 18th Conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists, London 2005, ed. Adam Hardy (London: British Association for South Asian Studies and the British Academy, 2007): 183, 188, and Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Foot Stones and Footprints (*Pādukās*): Multivariate Symbols in Jaina Religious Practice in India,” in *In the Footsteps of the Masters: Footprints, Feet and Shoes as Objects of Veneration in Asian, Islamic and Mediterranean Art*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald, Studies in Asian Art and Culture (SAAC) 7 (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2020): 411–13. On the creation of non-image-worshipping Jaina groups such as the Sthānakvāsīs, see Deo, “The Expansion of Jainism”: 34.

lished by the Turkish governor ‘Alau’-d-Dīn Bahman Shāh in 1347.⁵³⁰ For strategic reasons, the capital was moved from Gulbarga to Bidar (Bīdar) in 1425. However, at this time, competition within Muslim society and the aristocracy caused the Bahmanid Sultanate to break apart,⁵³¹ resulting in the creation of five independent kingdoms known as the Deccan Sultanates.⁵³² Of particular relevance for the region of Karnataka were the Adil Shāhis of Bijapur and the Barid Shāhis of Bidar, with the small Bidar Sultanate being absorbed by the Bījāpur Sultanate in 1619. Under Adil Shāhi rule, the capital of Bijapur developed into a significant multicultural city, attracting scholars and Sufis⁵³³ from the north of India as well as from what are now Iran, Iraq and Turkey. In the context of our discussion of the *bhakti* movements above, we need to remember that Sufism is also a *bhakti* form of Islam and that it was this form in particular that allowed the faith to spread throughout the region. Despite their relative openness and cosmopolitan nature, however, the Adil Shāhis also engaged in conquest and destroyed a large number of Hindu and Jaina temples throughout the wider area of Karnataka.

Despite the comparatively long and stable rule of the Bījāpur Sultanate, it came to an end in 1686 when it was taken over by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (Ālamgīr). Even though the south of the state was less impacted by Islamic rule, in the eighteenth century Haider Ali and then his son Tipu Sultān controlled the region around Mysore. When the British defeated Tipu in the battle at Shrīrangapatna (Śrīrangapaṭṭaṇa) in 1799, Islamic rule in Karnataka terminated.

To summarise, following a swift expansion of its religious influence, political authority and dominance in all areas of the arts between the eighth and the twelfth centuries, Digambara Jainism reached its pinnacle

⁵³⁰ See Assayag, *At the Confluence of Two Rivers*: 38.

⁵³¹ Cf. Lauer and Scholz, “Of Flourishing Economic Exchanges”: 539–40.

⁵³² These were the sultanates of Bidar, Golkonda, Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Khandesh (Assayag, *At the Confluence of Two Rivers*: 39).

⁵³³ On the influence of a number of Sufi orders in Bijapur and throughout the sultanate between the fourteenth and the late seventeenth centuries, see Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 135.

of power in Karnataka roughly in the twelfth century.⁵³⁴ However, at the peak of its control Jainism already had to defend itself against internal challenges and external threats from competing religious groups. From the late eleventh or early twelfth century onwards, the authority of the local Jainas in the wider area of Karnataka began steadily to decline.⁵³⁵ During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, verbal intimidations, economical hazards and political neglect turned into open physical persecution, pointing towards severe asymmetrical power relations.⁵³⁶

These changes become visible in the writings of the Digambara Jainas, such as poetry and literature, which initially had been essential in spreading the faith, but from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries onwards were employed to defend the position of the religion.⁵³⁷ Much of later Jaina literature in Karnataka deals with the religious conflicts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁵³⁸ More than portraying themselves as victims, the Digambaras formulated narratives of religious survival, resistance and an implied superiority of their faith, which of course no longer manifested itself in their real lives. While the Digambaras had fought for their king and country as part of the official royal armed forces of previous Jaina emperors, now, under Hindu and Muslim rule, in accordance with the religious tenet of *ahimsā*, they no longer actively defended their faith and status in society through combat.

⁵³⁴ On this issue, refer to Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 53; Pinto, “Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire”: 78, and Suresh, “Jaina Monuments”: 180.

⁵³⁵ On this weakening of Jaina influence in the region, see also Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 401, and Pinto, “Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire”: 78. At the same time, Jainism was also pushed back and severely decimated in the areas of Andhra Pradesh (Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 146–51), Tamil Nadu (Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 141–46) and West Bengal (Amiya Kumar Banerji, “Decline and Fall of Jainism in Western Bengal,” *Jain Journal* 18, no. 4 [1984]: 149–51).

⁵³⁶ Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 287, 292, has written on this. On different levels of intimidation, see Zydenbos, “Jainism Endangered”: 174. Qvarnström notes that from this time onwards, the Jainas were also no longer able to proselytise (Qvarnström, “Stability and Adaptability”: 44).

⁵³⁷ Sundaram, “Elements of Jaina History”: 34, has written on this issue.

⁵³⁸ Cf. Zydenbos, “Jainism Endangered”: 174–86, and Sundaram, “Elements of Jaina History”: 35.

6 Discrimination and Economic Collapse of the Digambara Jainas

The arrival of rival religious groups, public religious debating competitions, the waning of royal support and the loss in influence over trade in the region, which at this time was usurped by the Vīraśaivas, all played important roles in the disempowerment of the Digambara community in medieval Karnataka. In the section below, I shall examine in particular the sudden loss in economic influence of the local Jainas.

6.1 Losing Command Over Trade to the Vīraśaivas

In section 2.3.1 (“Support from Traders”), I emphasised how important the merchant classes were for the initial rise and prospering of Digambara Jainism in medieval Karnataka. Following the swift conversion of prominent Jaina families, landowners and heads of trade guilds to the new Vīraśaiva creed from the twelfth century onwards, the merchants again backed the newest and most influential societal group and converted as well. Their role in trade and commerce appears to have been an equally decisive and accelerating factor for the rise of Vīraśaivism as it once had been for the establishment of Jainism in the region.⁵³⁹

A critical issue in the Vīraśaiva’s intense interest in trade seems to have been their view of work, including trade, as a religious and social service (*kāyaka*) and an offering to god.⁵⁴⁰ As part of the Vīraśaiva concept of *kāyaka*, a section of a person’s total earnings was used to support the community and especially those who were less well off. This was

⁵³⁹ In fact, Pinto goes as far as to state that “Vīraśaivism percolated into the region only through trade” (Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 224). He also stresses that it had been the merchant clans who had brought economic success to the Jaina community, and who now offered this support to the Vīraśaivas (Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 226–27). Refer also to Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 281–82; Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 58, and Pinto, “Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire”: 82.

⁵⁴⁰ On this, see Michael, “Work as Worship”: 608–9, and Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 243.

known as the *vīra bāṇajiga dharma*, the “law of the noble merchants.”⁵⁴¹ During the twelfth century, in an aggressive struggle for control the Vīraśaivas assumed almost complete command over trade in the region. Owing to the ensuing dominance of Vīraśaiva merchants in commerce, Indian traders in general were often referred to as Bāṇajiga merchants from this time.⁵⁴²

Following the example of the influential merchant communities, prosperous Digambara landowners who wished to retain their elevated position in society as well as other members of high and influential levels of society also appear to have converted to Vīraśaivism and financially supported that faith from then onwards.⁵⁴³

This had dire consequences for the local Digambara Jain community. Only with the support of the wealthy traders and other leading members of high society had they been able to establish and to maintain their numerous and often lavish temple buildings and fund newly established costly ceremonies.⁵⁴⁴ Religious rivalry and commercial competition were interconnected, as various opposing faith groups fought for the support of the wealthiest and most influential communities, primarily the members of trade guilds. Consequently, the Digambara Jainas in Karnataka lost large numbers of followers and were plunged into a situation of suppression and severe asymmetrical dependency in a state they had formerly controlled for almost a thousand years.

6.2 Persecution and Survival of the Jainas in Karnataka

The loss of commercial influence sealed the fate of the Digambara Jainas in South India. From the mid-twelfth century, there appears to have

⁵⁴¹ There is also the alternative spelling *vīra bāṇjiga dharma*.

⁵⁴² Alternative spellings are Bāṇjiga, Baṇajiga, Bāṇia, Bāṇiya or Bāṇija. On them, see McCormack, “Lingayats as a Sect”: 59; Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 73, and Lorenzetti, “Jainas and Vīraśaivas”: 295.

⁵⁴³ On conversions from Jainism to Vīraśaivism, see Sundaram, “Elements of Jain History”: 35–36.

⁵⁴⁴ On this, refer to the chapter by Narasimha Murthy, “History of Jainism in Karnataka”: 38–62.

been mutual opposition between Viraśaivas and Jainas, although other religious groups were involved in this fight for hegemony in the region as well.⁵⁴⁵ Many verses from the Viraśaiva *Basava Purāṇa*, an epic poem composed in the thirteenth-century, refer to anti-Jaina as well as anti-Vaiṣṇava sentiments.⁵⁴⁶ *Brāhmaṇical* shrines were also demolished by the Viraśaivas during this time.⁵⁴⁷ However, it seems that the Digambara Jainas suffered the worst violence at their hands, as they had been most powerful in recent history⁵⁴⁸ and could not be as easily absorbed as heterodox Hindu groups. A further reason for this antipathy may have been that Viraśaivas, with their desire for simplicity and the rejection of temples, priests and complex rituals, reacted especially strongly to the prosperous landowning Digambara Jaina elite who put up countless shrines, large monasteries and other religious and charitable establishments.⁵⁴⁹

Under Basava's leadership, Viraśaivism developed into a dominant, in many ways military, religious organisation, which is indicated by the term "*vīra*" (hero) as part of its name.⁵⁵⁰ The Viraśaivas are the "heroic" or "militant" Śaivas, which—at least during the early phase in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—was related to their antagonistic attitude and military approach in support of their developing faith. Early Viraśaivas in particular have been described as aggressive and militant.⁵⁵¹ According to Lorenzetti, the term "heroic" may alternatively refer to the "strength of their devotional experience,"⁵⁵² although she also emphasises that the five regulating Viraśaiva principles of conduct (*pañcācāra*) include

⁵⁴⁵ On this subject, refer to Leslie, "Understanding Basava": 232. Saletore compares the influence of Viraśaivism with the influence of the *bhakti* Śaiva Nāyaṇārs (Nāyaṇmārs) on the Jainas in Tamil Nadu (Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 280). On this, also see Hegewald, "Questions and Conclusions": 143.

⁵⁴⁶ Cf. Leslie, "Understanding Basava": 257.

⁵⁴⁷ Narasimha Murthy, "History of Jainism in Karnataka": 54, has written on this issue.

⁵⁴⁸ For further details, see Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 401–2; Zydenbos, "Jainism Endangered": 175, and Narasimha Murthy, "History of Jainism in Karnataka": 54.

⁵⁴⁹ Leslie, "Understanding Basava": 232, has written on the issues.

⁵⁵⁰ This is the same as in the name of the twenty-fourth Jina, Mahāvīra, which means "the great hero."

⁵⁵¹ On this, refer to Pinto, "An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka": 220, 226.

⁵⁵² For this expression, see Lorenzetti, "Jainas and Viraśaivas": 272.

the aspects of working, serving and fighting to defend one's community (*gaṇācāra*).⁵⁵³

For the dissemination of their own expanding faith, Viraśaiva rulers and saints are believed to have turned combative. Medieval inscriptions contain the names of a number of militant Viraśaiva leaders who fought against the local Jainas. Particularly recurrent are references to Viraśaiva defenders named Ekānta or Ekāntada Rāmayya,⁵⁵⁴ Viruparasa,⁵⁵⁵ Goggidēva⁵⁵⁶ and Ekāntada Basavēśvara.⁵⁵⁷ Digambara Jaina followers and their places of worship, which were sacred centres as well as establishments for social and economic exchange and learning, were attacked.⁵⁵⁸ Due to their multidimensional importance for the Jaina community,⁵⁵⁹ the temples were often targeted first in this fight for religious control and supremacy in the region (Plate 47).⁵⁶⁰

Numerous records eulogise the conversion of Jainas and their temples to other creeds.⁵⁶¹ The loss of sacred places of worship is a strong

⁵⁵³ Cf. Nandimath, *A Handbook of Viraśaivism*: 48, and Lorenzetti, "Jainas and Viraśaivas": 279.

⁵⁵⁴ Alternatively, his name has been spelled Śaiva Ēkāntada Rāmayya. He also is simply known as Ekāntada, Ekānta or only as Rāmayya. See, for instance, Leslie, "Understanding Basava": 237.

⁵⁵⁵ This name also is known as Tribhuvanamalla Vira or Vira Someśvara Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara Viruparasa.

⁵⁵⁶ Goggidēva is known as Vira Goggidēva or Vira Goggidēvarasa as well.

⁵⁵⁷ For additional information, refer to *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. 2: lxxx; Ishwaran, *Speaking of Basava*: 46; Narasimha Murthy, "History of Jainism in Karnataka": 54–55; Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 397, and Dibbad, "Construction, Destruction and Renovation": 69–72.

⁵⁵⁸ Raman has written on the religious, economic, social, cultural and educational significance of temples (K.V. Raman, "The Role of Temple in the Socio-Economic Life of the People," in *Temple Art, Icons and Culture of India and South-East Asia* [Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 2006]: 11–18).

⁵⁵⁹ On this, also refer to Suresh, "Jaina Monuments": 178.

⁵⁶⁰ Due to the precious objects enshrined inside them, temples more generally have been primary targets during times of conflicts in South Asia (Dibbad, "The Construction, Destruction and Renovation": 73).

⁵⁶¹ For Viraśaiva conversions of former Jaina temples, see Julia A.B. Hegewald and Subrata K. Mitra, "Jagannatha Compared: The Politics of Appropriation, Re-Use and Regional State Traditions in India," *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics (HPSACP)*, no. 36 (2008): 1–37 and 22–29 in particular; Julia A.B. Hegewald and Subrata K. Mitra, "The Past in the Present: Temple Conversions in Karnataka and Appropriation and Re-Use in Orissa," in *Re-Use: The Art and Politics of Integration and Anxiety*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald and Subrata K. Mitra (New Delhi: Sage Publishers,

indicator of a position of severe asymmetrical dependency, from which the Jainas were not able to liberate themselves. Shrines were re-used and adapted to the ritual requirements of other faiths.⁵⁶² In rarer instances, figural statues and representations of foot images were also absorbed and rededicated (Plate 48).⁵⁶³ As various Śaiva and Śaiva-derived denominations evolved gradually and some absorbed others in the process, the faith of those involved in the fight against the Digambara Jainas is not always entirely clear. Ekāntada Rāmayya, for instance, has been described as a Viraśaiva and a Kālāmukha,⁵⁶⁴ which is not surprising as the Viraśaivas eventually absorbed the Kālāmukhas.

Numerous inscriptions from the twelfth century document Viraśaiva attacks on Jaina followers and religious sites. Many record intense verbal debates and public contests between the two communities. These did not involve words only but also observable deeds, as the contestants often had to produce tangible evidence for the superiority of their faith, with one party ultimately being subjugated. This visible and tangible evidence in the competitions contrasts clearly with the much less concrete and physical promise of salvation as the religious goal of Jainism.⁵⁶⁵ Being quite pragmatic, people chose the religion that seemed most powerful and capable of improving their lives. With a clearly grow-

2012): 55–85, and Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Viraśaiva and Jaina Rivalries in Medieval South India: Creating and Overcoming Structures of Dependency,” in *Control, Coercion, and Constraint: The Role of Religion in Overcoming and Creating Structures of Dependency*, ed. Wolfram Kinzig and Barbara Loose (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024): 169–70. See also the Viraśaiva conversion of the former Digambara Jaina Mallinātha Temple, now the Virabhadreśvara Temple (Iranna Deva Gudi) at Haveri in Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 122, Plate 1.36.

⁵⁶² On the theory of re-use, refer to Julia A.B. Hegewald, “Towards a Theory of Re-Use: Ruin, Retro and Fake Versus Improvement, Innovation and Integration,” in *Re-Use: The Art and Politics of Integration and Anxiety*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald and Subrata K. Mitra (New Delhi: Sage Publishers, 2012): 30–54.

⁵⁶³ For Viraśaiva re-use of a Jina statue, of icons of *kṣetrapālas* and another example of Jaina *pādukās*, refer to Hegewald, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 505–11.

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 70.

⁵⁶⁵ I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this issue.

ing following and large numbers of talented and highly articulate saints, it was increasingly the Viraśaiva who won such contests.⁵⁶⁶

A particularly famous Kannada inscription which mentions one of these public challenges dates from 1162, during the reign of Bijjala (1162–1167 CE).⁵⁶⁷ It can be found on the walls of the Somanātha Temple at Abalur (Ablūr) in Haveri District.⁵⁶⁸ The opponents of the local Jainas are referred to as Māheśvaras or Vira Māheśvaras, who are militant Viraśaivas.⁵⁶⁹ The priest who acted as their spokesman in the dispute with the Digambara Jainas is the above-mentioned Ekāntada Rāmayya. The element *ekānta* in his name, which means “one” or “absolute,” identifies him as a follower of a monistic faith and a doctrine that propagates only one reality and truth. This stands in clear opposition to the multi-perspectival approach of the Jainas which I outlined in section 3.2 (“General Tolerance and the Accommodation of Converts”). In this particular inscription, Ekāntada Rāmayya is described as an Ugra Māheśvara, an “ear evoking” or “terrifying” Śaiva.⁵⁷⁰ According to the inscription, the local Jainas loudly sang praise to the Jinas and hindered Rāmayya from worshipping Śiva in the temple.⁵⁷¹ Rāmayya requested the Digambara Jainas to stop their actions and to also worship Śiva. The Jainas refused and asked Rāmayya to bring proof of his own devoutness to Śiva and of the powers of this god. The Digambaras suggested that Ekāntada Rāmayya sever his own head and let Śiva restore him to life again a week later. If he was able to do this, the Jainas said, they would

⁵⁶⁶ See Saletore, *Mediaeval Jainism*: 311–13, and Pinto, “Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire”: 81, 86.

⁵⁶⁷ Lorenzen gives the date of 1200 for this inscription (Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: 169).

⁵⁶⁸ Alternatively, the place is also spelled with a double “b” as Abbalur (Abbalūr, Abbalūru).

⁵⁶⁹ Cf. Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 69.

⁵⁷⁰ On this, refer to Subrahmanya Aiyar, “Origin and Decline”: 218; Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 148, and Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 69. In an inscription from Annigeri (Aṇṇigeri, Aṇṇigēri, Aṇṇigere) in Dharwad District from 1184, the same epithet, Ugra Māheśvara, is applied to a Viraśaiva by the name of Goggidēva, who also destroyed Jain sites.

⁵⁷¹ This has been pointed out by Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 25.

convert to Viraśaivism and replace their statues of the Jinas with those of Śiva.⁵⁷²

According to the legend, Ekāntada Rāmayya miraculously accomplished what had been asked of him, but even so the local Digambaras still refused to venerate the *liṅga*. Following this, the furious Ekāntada Rāmayya smashed the Tirthaṅkara statue the Jainas worshipped. Distraught, they asked Kaḷacuri King Bijjaḷa for help, but were advised by the emperor to enter into an even more challenging competition, offering the destruction of all their sacred places in case they were again defeated. However, the local Digambara Jainas lacked the courage, and the king awarded the Viraśaivas the certificate of victory, the *jayapatra*, and gave them land.⁵⁷³ Even though the Jainas did not enter into a second contest, Ekāntada Rāmayya is said to have demolished around eight hundred Jaina temples throughout Karnataka in order to express their dependency and submission.⁵⁷⁴

According to an alternative account in the *Basava Purāṇa*, Basava himself was present at this particular challenge. Although in this version the beaten Jainas are described as bowing before the *liṅga* and agreeing to bear Viraśaiva markings on their foreheads, the victorious Viraśaivas are still said to have destroyed all the Digambara temples of the area. The text says that they “broke the heads of the Jina idols [...] and harassed and killed every known Jain[a] and smashed them all into the ground.”⁵⁷⁵ Such deeds were regarded as religious “purifications” (*pavāḍas*).⁵⁷⁶ Similar anti-Jaina sentiments are expressed in many other verses of the *Basava Purāṇa*, which recount Jainas being beaten to death,

⁵⁷² This demonstrates a fascinating change from a purely philosophical and intellectual debate to one including the physical level, such as the dissection of someone’s body. Cf. Nagarajaiah, “Attacks on Important Buddhist and Jaina Centres”: 58.

⁵⁷³ See Nandimath, *A Handbook of Viraśaivism*: 14; Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: 45–46, 169; Jain, “Loquacious Warriors”: 26, and Lorenzetti, “Jainas and Viraśaivas”: 299–302. Leslie has written in detail about the inscription relating this story (Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 237–38).

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. Nandimath, *A Handbook of Viraśaivism*: 14, and Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 69–70.

⁵⁷⁵ Quoted in Leslie, “Understanding Basava”: 238. There is another version in the *Can-nabasava* or *Cennabasava Purāṇa* (Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas*: 169).

⁵⁷⁶ Cf. Dibbad, “Construction, Destruction and Renovation”: 70. *Pavāḍa* by itself in Kan-nada means “a miracle.”

blinded, beheaded and impaled on hot iron spears or staves. Even if such stories are only half true, they expose shocking outbursts of brutality.⁵⁷⁷

The story of Basava's involvement in the persecution of the local Jaina community provided the historical plot for a well-known Kannada play by playwright Girish Karnad. The original Kannada version, *Taledaṇḍa* ("Death by Beheading"), dates from 1990, while an English translation with the title *Talé-Daṇḍa: A Play*, appeared in 1993.⁵⁷⁸

In the Abalur inscription, we saw that the Viraśaivas were also known as the Vira Māheśvaras. Alternative names are the Vira Māheśvara Niṣṭha or simply the Niṣṭhā. These terms described Viraśaiva armed divisions called *gaṇa*, who were prepared to kill for their faith and sacrifice their own lives.⁵⁷⁹ This is also suggested in an inscription from the historic Digambara Jaina centre of Kalya (Kalya or Kalyāṇa Pura), which explicitly refers to Viraśaivas killing Jainas.⁵⁸⁰ In addition to epigraphic records, Viraśaiva literature is also full of descriptions of the demolition of Jaina temples and the smashing of their icons.⁵⁸¹ The mid-eleventh-century poet-saint Devara Dāsimayya appears to have passionately championed the cause of Viraśaivism in words and fighting deeds, and to have subdued the Jainas and established Viraśaiva control in large swathes of Karnataka.⁵⁸² There appear to have been organised attempts to suppress, drive the Jainas out of the region of Karnataka

⁵⁷⁷ For references to other sections from the *Basava Purāṇa*, refer to Leslie, "Understanding Basava": 238–39.

⁵⁷⁸ For further details on this play, see Leslie, "Understanding Basava": 244–58. She is particularly interested in the parallels which Karnad sets up between the twelfth-century situation in Karnataka and the modern-day political and social state of affairs in India more generally (see especially pp. 228, 252–53), and in Karnad's questioning of a general Hindu tolerance towards all other religions (pp. 257–58).

⁵⁷⁹ On this issue, refer to Dibbad, "Construction, Destruction and Renovation": 72, and Desai, *Jainism in South India*: 108.

⁵⁸⁰ For further details, see Pinto, "Jainism in the Vijayanagara Empire": 84.

⁵⁸¹ Nagarajaiah, "Attacks on Important Buddhist and Jaina Centres": 59–61, gives many such examples.

⁵⁸² For further information on his deeds, see Dibbad, "Construction, Destruction and Renovation": 70–71. Nagarajaiah mentions a number of other fierce anti-Jaina Viraśaivas, such as Ādayya of Puligere (modern Lakṣmeśvara), Bommayya of Kovūru, Devara Dāsimayya, Candrabhuṣaṇa Paṇḍita of Jājuru, or Viruparasa of Hagaratāgenādu (Nagarajaiah, "Attacks on Important Buddhist and Jaina Centres": 57). On Ādayya, see also Lorenzetti, "Jainas and Viraśaivas": 312–13.

and to kill them, by riots and group violence.⁵⁸³ Such descriptions of the destruction of sacred Jaina statues and edifices are directly corroborated by material remains found throughout the region.⁵⁸⁴ These represent tangible evidence that, at least during the late medieval period, the Digambara Jaina community of Karnataka lived in a condition of severe asymmetrical dependency.

Despite the obvious decline of Digambara Jainism and Jaina influence, and the terrible destructions of their icons and sites of worship in the later medieval period in Karnataka, there have also been continuities. Although it was severely weakened, Jainism was never completely eradicated from the wider region of Karnataka. In the royal centre of Vijayanagara, for instance, Digambara Jainism continued to receive support and to flourish into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Plate 49).⁵⁸⁵ The prominent pilgrimage centre of Shravanabelgola as well as the surrounding region also continued to provide a home for Jains, who continued to contribute to the sacredness of the most important Digambara Jaina pilgrimage site in the south of India and neighbouring places for centuries.⁵⁸⁶ Other traditional Digambara Jaina sacred sites, such as Kanakagiri and Sthavanidi, also continued to flourish.⁵⁸⁷ Jaina continuities to the present day can be studied particularly well in the provincial region of coastal Karnataka (Plate 50).⁵⁸⁸ Jaini points out that among the various non-Vedic, *śramaṇa* groups that were established in ancient

⁵⁸³ Brass has written on collective violence worldwide and in South Asian history (Paul R. Brass, *The Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence*, Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, History [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997]: 11–20).

⁵⁸⁴ I have written in detail on such remains (Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 156–73, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 468–511).

⁵⁸⁵ See the discussion by Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 174; Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 512–16.

⁵⁸⁶ Continuities at Shravanabelgola have been discussed in Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 175, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 516–17.

⁵⁸⁷ See Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 517.

⁵⁸⁸ Information on such continuities have been discussed in Pinto, “An Overview of Jaina History in Karnataka”: 218–25; Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 173–78, and Hegewald, “Development and Destruction, Conversion and Continuity”: 511–26.

India, only the Jaina tradition has survived, despite serious threats and a very mixed and eventful history, indicating times of flowering and hegemony as well as of decline and severe asymmetrical dependency.⁵⁸⁹

7 Concluding Remarks

The history of Karnataka is closely linked to the spread, establishment and prospering of the Jaina community. The faith appears to have been introduced to the area in the second century CE, to have risen to prominence between the fifth and seventh centuries CE, and to have flourished especially from the eighth century CE onwards. Particularly during the eighth to tenth centuries, non-Vedic religions such as Jainism (and Buddhism), posed real challenges to Hindu orthodoxy. This phase of the flourishing of the Digambara Jainas in Karnataka lasted at least until the eleventh and in many areas of the state right into the twelfth century. During this period, Jainism had permeated all layers of civilian, agricultural, commercial, military, aristocratic and royal society and exerted strong influence on all these areas, with many converts and supporters working for its cause. Leading Jaina saints are believed to have supported the instalment of two major royal dynasties, the Gaṅgās and the Hoysaḷas, both of which ruled over extensive and powerful kingdoms. However, from the thirteenth and in some regions from the fourteenth century onwards, Jainism almost completely lost its influence in central and northern Karnataka and became a severely dependent and disenfranchised minority religion. Hinduism had reacted to the non-Vedic threat by developing new, often more devotional *bhakti* and Tantric forms of its faiths, which successfully attracted followers as well as the support of influential rulers.

The initial success of the Digambara Jainas in Karnataka was, as I have argued, in many respects due to the openness, flexibility, innova-

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*: 274. On the fact that Buddhism practically died out in the whole of India at this time, see the discussion by Jaini, “The Disappearance of Buddhism and the Survival of Jainism”: 81–89, Verardi, *Hardships and Downfall of Buddhism*, and Hegewald, “Questions and Conclusions”: 151–56.

tion and internal diversity of the faith, as well as to the ability of the early Jainas in the area to further develop already existing religious elements and concepts, but also to absorb new ones, and to adapt to quickly changing circumstances. Foremost amongst these issues were compelling *bhakti* and Tantric elements, and in particular the incorporation of Śāktism in the form of goddess worship into Digambara Jainism. The local Jainas opened up and absorbed new aspects without losing their own inner core values.

Unfortunately, some of the aspects, which initially clearly supported and aided the spread of Jainism in medieval Karnataka, later endangered the religion's position. Among these aspects are the internal fragmentation of the Digambara lay community into castes and of the ascetic community into different, internally competing subgroups, such as the Yāpanīyas. The fact that monks and nuns started to settle in the community and institute *bhaṭṭāra*kas, which brought about many positive outcomes, was also questioned and viewed critically by many Jainas themselves. They argued that these changes illustrated a certain neglect of the Jaina core religious tenets of homelessness and the rejection of all belongings. While the veneration of the Jinās and certain divinities had been part of Jaina worship from the outset, an increase in *bhakti* devotionism, Tantric methods and *yakṣī* Śāktism may to a certain extent have blurred the initially clearer boundaries between Jainism and other religious groups in India. Although these aspects made the Digambara form of Jainism prevalent in Karnataka at the time and rendered it more attractive and approachable to some, it could be argued that they also somewhat diminished its distinctive uniqueness. Finally, from around the twelfth century, the Digambara Jainas appear also to have lacked strong leaders who were able to defend their faith community in public debates, which often resulted in large-scale conversions away from Jainism. These are all internal factors within Jainism itself, which appear to have contributed to a certain weakening of the faith roughly from the eleventh century.

In addition, external reasons also contributed to the demise of Digambara Jainism from the wider area of Karnataka in medieval times. Fore-

most amongst these was the loss in royal support, which had granted the local Jainas physical protection, social status, political and religious influence and economic support. From the end of the tenth century, this political and financial backing started to wane, leaving the religious community unable to continue funding costly ceremonies, festivals, monastic and temple employees and the upkeep of large numbers of religious, social, educational and medical facilities. With the loss of central royal support, local feudatories, the aristocracy and other influential sections of society including military and state officials and the merchant classes, followed the royal example and also discontinued generous benefactions.

One of the most important external factors that made the Digambara Jainas in medieval Karnataka fall from their exalted position appears to have been the growth of local and the arrival of new rival religious groups in the area. Collectively, these faith groups and religious movements pushed Jainism to the fringes of society. The process appears to have started with the rise of the Tantric movement in Karnataka from around the eighth century CE, followed by a general Hindu resurgence in the south of India from the ninth century CE. This was succeeded by the powerful *bhakti* path which affected the state roughly from the tenth century CE, and the Śaiva revival from the late eleventh to around the mid-twelfth centuries, which also led to the emergence of Viraśaivism. Finally, the arrival of Śrīvaiṣṇavism and Islam in the region caused further irreparable damage to the position of the Digambaras in medieval Karnataka. These newly emerged or recently arrived groups exhibited aggressive and often violent behaviour towards the members of the Jaina community and openly persecuted them. The Jainas may not have seen the approaching danger posed by the upsurge of new religious groups in the wider area, but even if they had, what could they have done?

We may conclude that the Digambara Jainas, who by the twelfth century had been in power in Karnataka for almost a thousand years, had to a certain extent at least, become accustomed to a position of strength and lost at least some of the dynamism of a new, emerging faith, so that they could not adapt quickly to changing circumstances and fight for their survival on all levels. In the early centuries of the Common Era,

they had managed this. The Jainas had got accustomed to administering their own wealth, to landed properties and power, and may have been too preoccupied with organising rituals and festivities. They seem not to have understood many of their own internal changes as problematic, or the arrival of rival creeds as a severe risk. On the other hand, from the eighth to the tenth centuries CE in particular, Digambara Jaina ascetics engaged particularly intensely with the laity and involved them actively in smaller and large-scale ritual activities and festivals, such as the Mahāmastakābhiṣeka. This illustrates the complex nature of the manifold internal and external changes taking place within and affecting the Jaina religion from the early to the later Middle Ages. While some of these changes only strengthened the faith, others reinforced but at the same time weakened it, with certain external factors having adverse effects only and simply threatening their position.

The decline in influence and state of severe asymmetrical dependency, which affected the Digambara Jaina community roughly from the late eleventh century in Karnataka, and which increased over the following three centuries, manifested itself in a number of ways. It appears that from the late Middle Ages, the Jainas were no longer raised into influential positions of power in the royal and local administration or the military, which had so strongly aided their initial rise to power. Jainas at this time felt very strongly the financial dependencies they had entered into in previous centuries for the upkeep of their temples and monastic establishments, which they were no longer able to maintain from that time. This led to the closing of many of their central religious and charitable institutions, through which the Jainas had been present and active in the local community, leading to the loss of the political and social influence the Digambara Jainas had enjoyed for centuries, and their control over local and state affairs. Digambara icons and temple buildings were either completely destroyed or taken over by newly dominant groups and reused for their own ritual purposes. There remained little money to expand or found new shrines, fund the restoration and copying of sacred texts or the carving and casting of sacred icons. The impact of Jaina thought and forms of expression in the arts went into a severe decline,

and master artisans, literary figures and logicians lost their employment. Due to external pressure and coercive measures, but also in order to avoid even stronger persecution, many Digambara Jainas converted to Hinduism or Virāśaivism. This illustrates a situation in which the choice of personal religion, even in medieval India, where this was a less individual affair than it is today, was to a large extent dictated by the dominant ruler. There was no way in which those who did not change religion but remained as Digambara Jainas could free themselves from this suppression and position of severe dependency.

The rise of Jaina power to prominence in Karnataka took many centuries. But their fall from this exalted position was swift. If we place the period of Digambara Jaina dominance and hegemony as starting from the eighth or from the tenth centuries CE, then within just two to four hundred years the faith had sunk from one of the foremost religions of Karnataka to the status of one of the least influential religious groups in the area. It came under severe threat and took on a position of extreme asymmetrical dependency. I have shown that both the rise and the loss of power were due not to one single reason, but to a chain or network of manifold and very diverse, interrelated religious, political, economic and social factors. In their demise, the Jainas were first simply marginalised but later also actively and aggressively persecuted.

The local Digambara Jaina community in Karnataka had influenced the course of a wide-ranging literary, artistic, architectural, religious, social and political transformation and renewal in the region from the second at least to the twelfth century, and in certain areas of the state even for longer. Among the latter sites of Jaina continuity are the royal centres of Vijayanagara, where Digambara Jainism flourished at least until the fourteenth century, a number of sacred pilgrimage sites, foremost amongst them Shravanabelgola, which still continue to evolve to the present day, and a large number of religious hubs along the west coast of India, where the Digambaras prospered beyond the sixteenth century and which still maintain a strong and very lively religious presence today.

Although Digambara Jainism in Karnataka came under severe threat of extinction and became highly dependent on other religious, economic and dynastic groups during the later medieval period, the faith managed to survive on a smaller and less influential scale. This difficult period in the faith's history did not represent the total eclipse of Jainism in South India. Although the Jainas have played a less important local political role since this time, the many active sites of worship found throughout the state indicate that the faith and its highly evolved artistic and ritual culture in particular have endured, and that Jainism is again flourishing in many areas of Karnataka today.

Glossary

<i>ācārya</i>	religious teacher or preceptor
<i>ahimsā</i>	Jaina religious tenet of non-violence
<i>anekāntavāda</i>	Jaina doctrine stating that reality is manifold, complex, multi-perspectival
Bāhubali	son of Ādinātha, brother of Bharata, and a model of the ideal Jaina ascetic
<i>basadi (basti)</i>	Jaina temple (in Karnataka)
<i>bhakti</i>	devotional path
<i>bhaṭṭāraka</i>	administrative manager of a Jaina monastery in central and south India
<i>brāhmaṇ</i>	priestly caste, highest caste of the Hindu caste system
<i>Brāhmaṇical</i>	Hindu
<i>cakravartin</i>	universal emperor, worldly and/or religious ruler
<i>guru</i>	spiritual teacher
Jina (victor)	one of the twenty-four enlightened saints of Jainism (also Tirthaṅkara)
<i>kṣatriya</i>	warrior caste, second highest caste of the Hindu caste system
<i>liṅga</i>	in Viraśaivism: the divine principle; in Śaivism: aniconic symbol of the god Śiva
<i>maṭha</i>	monastery, seat of a <i>bhaṭṭāraka</i>
<i>niśidhi</i>	memorial stone/pavilion at a site where death rituals (<i>sallekhanā</i>) have been performed
<i>pādukā</i>	foot image, footprint
Śaktism	cult of the goddess
<i>sallekhanā</i>	death ritual by starving oneself to death under strict religious supervision
<i>saṃsāra</i>	cycle of rebirth
<i>saṅgha</i>	(religious) community
<i>śramaṇa</i>	non-Vedic, non-Hindu
<i>śrāvaka</i>	lay man
<i>śrāvikā</i>	lay woman
Tirthaṅkara	(fordmaker) one of the twenty-four enlightened saints of Jainism (also Jina)

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Plates and Captions



Plate 1: A naked Digambara monk, carrying a broom and a water pot, and a white-robed Jain nun collecting boiled water at a major Jain festival.



Plate 2: A structural portico has been added at the front of the natural cave in which the saint Bhadrabāhu is believed to have attained enlightenment on Candragiri at Shrivani Belgola.



Plate 3: The Jaina cave at Sittanavasal in Tamil Nadu, with inscriptions and carved stone beds, is one of the earliest preserved Jaina caves, dating from the second century BCE.



Plate 4: The tall monolithic statue of Bāhubali on Vinḍhyagiri at Shravanabelgola was commissioned around 981 CE by the famous Jain general Cāvunḍarāya.



Plate 5: The Cāvūṇḍarāya Basadi, constructed between 982 and 995 CE on Candragiri, is one of the largest and most ornate Gaṅgā structures and was commissioned by Cāvūṇḍarāya.



Plate 6: Jainism flourished under the royal protection and patronage of the Hoysālas, when the elaborate Pārśvanātha Temple was erected in 1133 in their capital of Halebid.



Plate 7: The implementation of large-scale artificial irrigation projects effectively increased the productivity of agriculture, such as rice cultivation, in Karnataka.



Plate 8: The small but intricately carved Akkaṇṇa Basadi in Shravanabelgola was the gift of Aciyakka (Acaladevī), a female donor, in 1181.



Plate 9: At the climax of Jain influence in Karnataka, lavish and highly-decorated temple constructions such as the Śāntiśvara Basadi at Jinanathapura were accomplished.



Plate 10: The Antarāla Pārśvanātha Basadi on Candragiri is a late Hoysala construction, the front hall of which illustrates a tendency towards a return to greater simplicity in later structures.



Plate 11: On Candragiri, a number of open-air carved footprints and stele housed inside pavilions mark sites where religious death rituals (*sallekhanā*) were performed.



Plate 12: A Jain mother has taken her children to their local temple in Hassan and shows them how to perform the daily ritual routine of venerating statues.



Plate 13: A large group of white-clad Digambara nuns with their brooms, singing *bhajans* and offering sacred readings to the public on a festival day at Varur.



Plate 14: Jaina lay men obtaining religious instruction and guidance from a prominent Dimabara monk, who is temporarily interrupting his journey at Varur.



Plate 15: Since the Middle Ages, Jain lay people have become strongly involved in carrying out religious rituals, as here supported by a priest at Shravanabelgola.



Plate 16: Digambara Jain ascetics are only permitted to own a water pot (*kamaṇḍalu*) and a brush of peacock feathers (*piñchi*), which they carry with them as here at Venur.



Plate 17: View into the main public area of the *matha* at Mudabidri, which has been furnished with wall paintings, the seat of the administrator and a shrine.



Plate 18: Lavishly decorated entrance gateway to the Jaina *maṭha* at Shravanabelgola with the entrance to the main shrine visible in the background.



Plate 19: The orange-robed *bhattāraka* administrators, as this one from the Jain *maṭha* at Kambadhalli, were in charge of monasteries, the surrounding land and the temples.

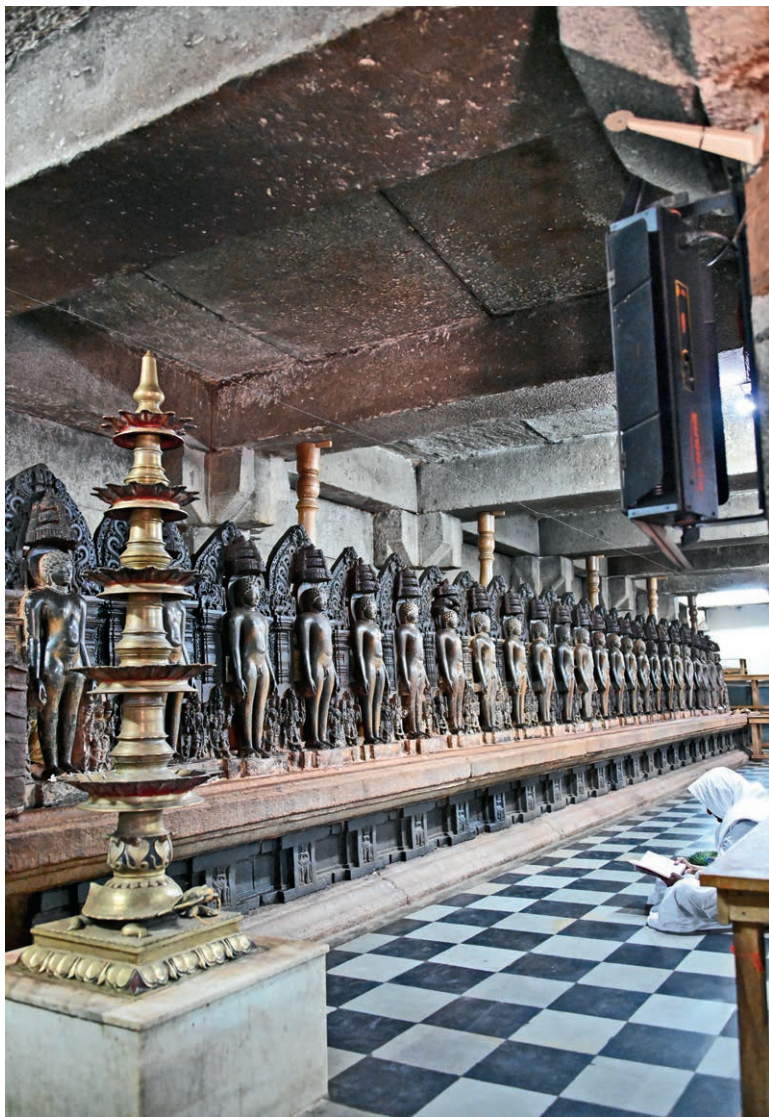


Plate 20: The elongated shrine room of the Hoysāḷa-period Bhaṇḍāra Basadi in Shravanabelgola displays standing icons of all the twenty-four Jinas (*caturviṃśati*).



Plate 21: Every morning, a priest carries out the obligatory bathing ceremony on the feet of the tall standing Bāhubali monolith (1432 CE) found at Karkal.



Plate 22: Ablution rituals (*abhiseka*) and food offerings are carried out on all icons housed inside Jain temples, as here in the Pañcakūṭa Basadi at Kambadhalli.



Plate 23: The great Mahāmastakābhiṣeka Festival, involving ablutions with different colourful substances meant to ritually cleanse it, is performed every twelve years at Shravanabelgola.



Plate 24: Tall decorated wooden chariots (*ratha*) are employed in processions, as part of *jināratha* festivals, as here at the Baḍaga Basadi at Mudabidri.

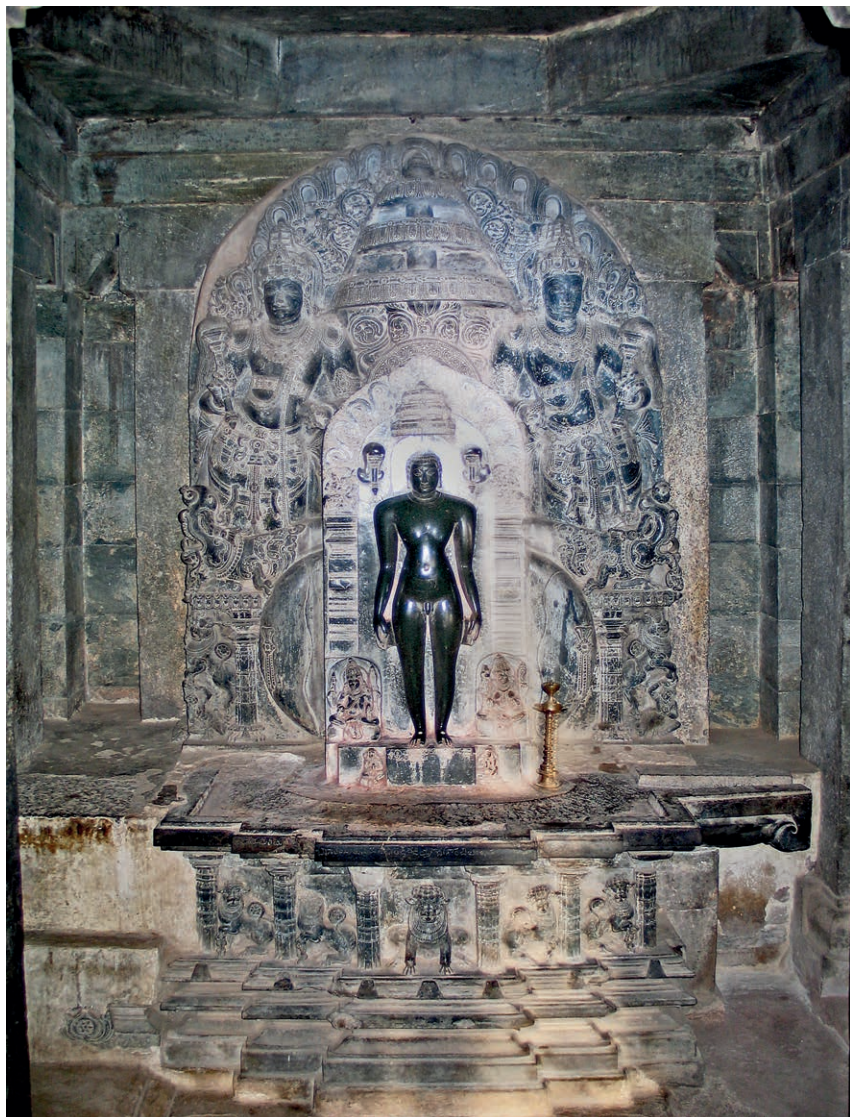


Plate 25: Standing Jina icon with a complex image frame, from the Brahma Jinālaya at Lakkundi, integrating representations of the *yakṣa* and *yakṣi* flanking its feet.



Plate 26: Individual stone statues of an undressed *yakṣa* and a *yakṣi* dressed in a *sāri*, flank the doorway to the Neminātha shrine of the Pañcakūṭa Basadi at Kambadhalli.



Plate 27: When shown in human shape, the *yakṣa* Brahma or Brahmadeva is usually depicted with a horse, as here in this representation from Kanakagiri.



Plate 28: The particular powers of the *yākṣīs* are often visualised in their many arms bearing multiple weapons, such as in this four-armed *Cakreśvarī* from the *Pañca Basadi* at Humcha.

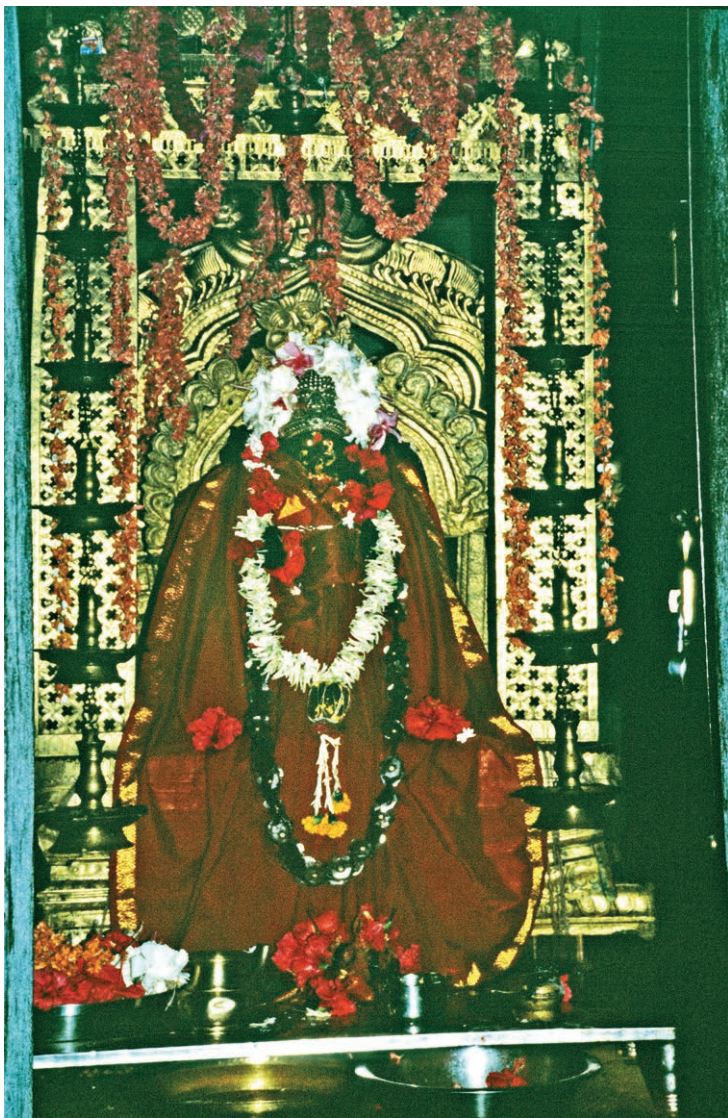


Plate 29: In the Jvālāmālīnī Devī Basadi at Narasimharajapura, the statue of the *yākṣī* represents the main object of veneration, illustrating a significant shift in Jaina practice.

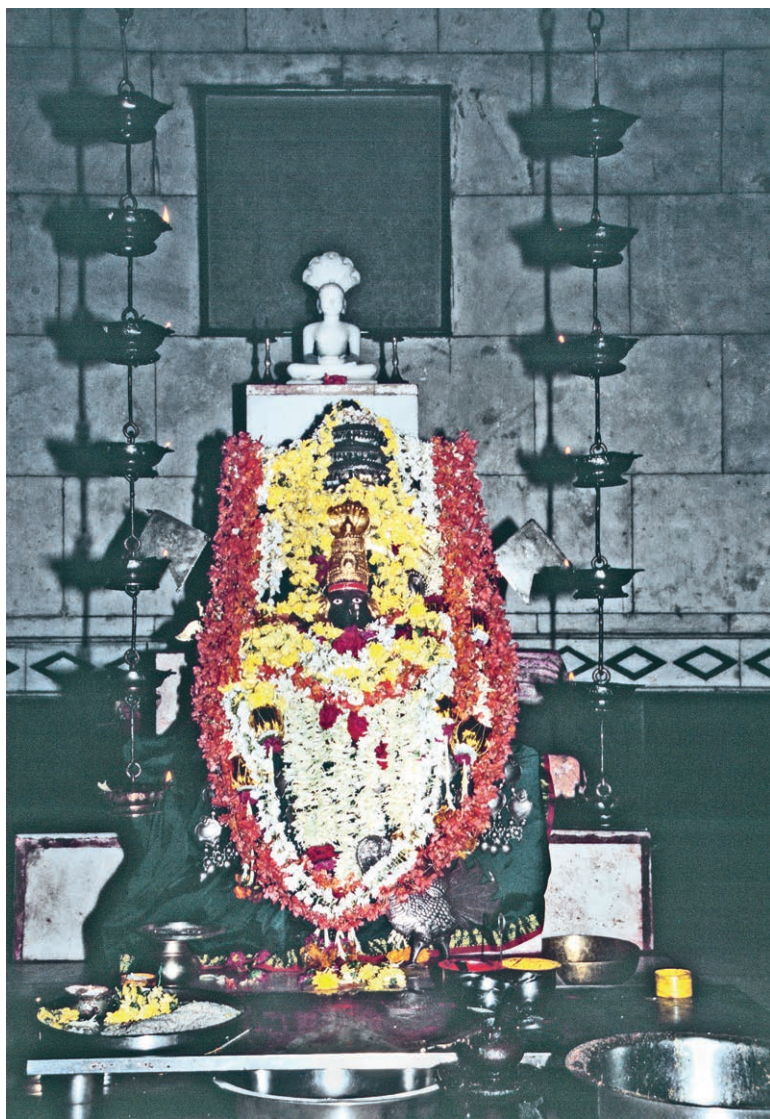


Plate 30: The large statue of Padmāvatī in the foreground almost overshadows the importance of the small seated white Pārśvanātha behind, housed in the main temple at Humcha.



Plate 31: This icon of Kuṣamāṇḍinī Yakṣī, who is the reigning divinity of Shravanabelgola, is housed in the local *maṭha* and depicts her with a prominent lion below.



Plate 32: A depiction of Sarasvatī, the goddess of wisdom and learning, in the pillared hall of the Bhaṇḍāra Basadi at Shravanabelgola has been given particular ritual importance.



Plate 33: A pair of oversized and abundantly ornate Hoysala-style door keepers (*dvārapālas*) guard the threshold to the main shrine area of the Pañca Basadi at Humcha.



Plate 34: As part of Jain Tantric practices, it became common practice to lay out *yantra* and *maṇḍala* diagrams in colourful powders inside Jain temples for veneration.



Plate 35: Geometrically shaped compartments employed for fire oblations (*homa*) are still in use in many Jain temples throughout Karnataka today, as here at Karkal.



Plate 36: Jaina Tantric goddesses, known as *vidyādevīs*, as here at Kanakagiri, have a large number of arms and are considered to be embodiments of magic sacred spells.



Plate 37: From the eighth century CE, the number of venerated depictions of Jinas, deities and Tantric diagrams exponentially increased, as can be seen in the Pārśvanātha Temple at Venur.



Plate 38: At the Gavisiddheśvara Maṭha at Koppala, the wooden sandals of the deceased Viraśaiva teacher, the *guru*, have been displayed in his memory.



Plate 39: A stone representation of the bull, Nandi, usually faces the aniconic *linga* in Viraśaiva temples, as here in the Mahāliṅgeśvara Temple at Konnur.



Plate 40: Young Viraśaiva man at Koppala, carrying his private, portable *liṅga* in a small silver container with two *rudrākṣa* berries on a thread around his neck.



Plate 41: The *mathadhhipati* of the Koppala Virasaiva *matha* as well as the *gurus* on the posters behind him wear a dot and three white horizontal lines of ash on their forehead.



Plate 42: Old Hindu snakestones and icons which have been absorbed and furnished with a new iconic Viraśaiva *liṅga* (very left of photo) in the compound of the Mahāliṅgeśvara Temple at Konnur.



Plate 43: Multiple Viraśaiva *lingas*, some of which have been provided with faces (on the alter behind) are worshipped inside the shrine of the Mahālingeśvara Temple at Konnur.



Plate 44: The veneration of departed teachers, also in the form of figural representations of the *gurus*, are widespread at many Viraśaiva sites, as here at Koppala.



Plate 45: The Ādinātha Basadi at Shrirangapatna was ruined in Islamic assaults, later rebuilt and today contains multiple Jain icons from destroyed temples from the wider area.



Plate 46: Debris of shattered statues and demolished temple buildings have been preserved and put on display at the obliterated Jain site of Mulgund.



Plate 47: Mutilated Jina statue preserved at the twelfth century Anantanātha Basadi at Lakshmeshvar, a site which was heavily targeted in religiously motivated attacks.



Plate 48: The foot images (*pādukās*) of a Jina, which have been re-used and absorbed into Virāṣaiva sacred practices at the Basavēśvara Temple at Shedbal.



Plate 49: The Pārśvanātha Basadi in Pānsupāri Bazar, constructed in 1426 CE, illustrates Jain continuity beyond these times of persecution in the city of Vijayanagara.



Plate 50: In the coastal belt of Karnataka, Jaina temples continued to be built into the fifteenth century and beyond, as the Neminātha Temple at Varanga demonstrates.

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This study examines the rise and decline of Jaina influence in the South Indian state of Karnataka. From roughly the second century CE, Jaina authority rose steadily, so that between around the eighth and the early twelfth centuries CE, the Jainas clearly dominated in the fields of politics, religion, philosophy and the arts.

This gain in influence led the Jainas to undertake a number of changes to their own religious self-understanding and ritual practice. Some ascetic groups started to settle down in monasteries. The receipt of donations turned the community into a dominant landowning class, which diversified into a number of ascetic subgroups and lay castes. The Tantric and *bhakti* movements at the time also had a marked effect on Jaina sacred practices.

From the twelfth century, a withdrawal of royal support, the fragmentation of the community and the arrival of rival religious groups in the area led to a sudden decline. In this publication, the process of the ascent and weakening of this major religious faith is examined through the lens of its religious art and architecture. In these areas, it becomes apparent that despite a clear loss in political and economic power, Jainism and many of its pilgrimage sites survived and are still flourishing in Karnataka today.

THE AUTHOR

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