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R. Umamaheshwari

Reading History with the Tamil Jainas

A Study on Identity, Memory and
Marginalisation



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*For appaji, Rajamani, and amma, Ramani
(In loving memory)*

Foreword

This book is the first of its kind on a work that seeks to write the history of a minority community of the Tamil Jinas. It is heavily based on ethnographic material and hitherto uncovered aspects of the Tamil Jaina community's idea of its own historical past and a present state of being hidden from most mainstream accounts on Tamil history. That there is a community called the Tamil Jinas is known to very few people, in general, and historians, in particular. Only recently, a few scholars have begun to explore Tamil Nadu and the Jinas therein. This work will add volume to this small creed.

Umamaheshwari sets the tone and tenor for the book by starting with Kundera's words on memory and forgetting. It is important for history not to forget some communities and sections of people and some regions that have existed in oblivion for various reasons, social and economic and political. She seeks to understand the Tamil Jaina social history from the present backwards, and that leads her away from the mainstream narratives of history writing. She avoids heavy dependence on inscriptional records, descriptive narratives of Jaina iconography, temple and architecture, and while there is an entire chapter in her book that does deal with epigraphs, she suitably alters the reading of epigraphs by adding people's accounts of their pasts within the same, thereby creating new avenues for understanding the past, as being something that constantly dialogues with the present. The community accounts in the same chapter focus on stories of villages, on the place of the village in the larger Tamil Jaina history and on everyday practices of people as retold to her during her field study.

Having gone through her doctoral dissertation on the same subject many years ago, I know that what comes forth in this book, is a lot of new material, which include the highlighting of a few developments in the community's assertion of its identity, through ideas such as the Green/Ahimsa walk; the 'north'- 'south' understanding of what it means to be a Jaina, ritual practices, for instance; and references to works of scholars who have, in recent years, brought into focus the Digambara tradition of South India, thereby filling a major lacuna in Jaina studies all these years. Some of the community stories of persecution and memories of it would be relatively new for many readers.

There is yet another fascinating element in the book, which would also add some newness to the understanding of the Tamil Jainas, and that is the detailed sociological and historical analysis and discussion on the Tamil language. Here, she excels in producing some aspects based on both conversations with community members and a critique of some of the historiography which has relegated the Jaina (as well as Buddhist) contribution to Tamil language and literature to the background, successfully over the last many decades. She makes a note of the relatively better understanding of the same in the Tamil books and scholarship, when compared to the English works that have been published in recent years. It is fascinating to find the past and present juxtaposed even here when Santhakumar, the *Cintamani Navalar*, the orator of the text, and his story, occur alongside that of U. V. Swaminatha Aiyer's own connection with the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, which he edited and printed in the nineteenth century. The important connection is made between reading a text 'outside' the community and reading it 'with' or 'within', which is a case in point, which U. Ve. Ca's story, as Umamaheshwari rightly points out, brings forth for us. U. Ve. Ca's understanding of this text would not be complete without the involvement of the Tamil Jainas of his time, who supported him, and helped in the printing and publication of the same. And his story comes to the author through a Tamil Jaina of the present, Santhakumar.

There are several layers to this book, and each one is important in itself, as a standalone account, and I am sure the work will be a useful volume to adorn the shelves of studies not just on Jainism but also on understanding minorities and marginalisation. Not to forget, the photographs themselves are fascinating as they give one a glimpse into the everyday lives of a community as well as the ancient monumental glory of a tradition that has managed to survive in the face of extreme persecution and suppression, while the Buddhist could not.

There are, happily, an increasing number of scholars working on Jainism in Tamil Nadu, but there is hardly someone I know of who has held on to the subject and the issue for so many years, which urges me to give the book its due credit as a pioneering work.

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Padmanabh S. Jaini

Preface

My prefatory comments have to do with the people and experiences that have helped me reach a stage to be able to share this, my truly long-term engagement, with the world.

I dedicate this work to my parents. *Appaji* supported me throughout with a rare excitement of a child and genuine interest in whatever I ever did towards the subject of my choice, history, travelling with me on field and library visits during my MPhil days, copying notes from inscriptional records he had never seen in life before. Seeing me complete my PhD was a desire he cherished but never lived to see, not even my synopsis, which got confirmed just days before he passed on. And *amma* became my ‘rock support’ after he passed away, not just following up on the interest in my work, but reading voraciously all the books the Tamil Jainas gave me to read, even before I laid hands on them and hand-writing for me entire books (in Tamil, borrowed from people) in trying times. Besides being my mother, she was my reader (of all the Tamil books and inscriptions at a time when I was only learning the language), translator and fellow seeker (of her own accord) into the world of Tamil Jainism, in particular, and Indian history and the world of stories, in general. She, too, did not live to see my PhD thesis, and following her demise, it had taken a true rollercoaster ride between my completing the thesis, submission and being awarded a doctorate. This book is based, to a large extent, on my PhD thesis, and I am glad it took so long before I found it worthwhile to let it get a book shape.

So I acknowledge the people who had been with me and whose support made my PhD happen, without which, obviously, this book would not have been. But before that I must say that even during the period of my PhD, life took me (or I took myself) through various places and in fact to half quitting it all—through the mountains of Kumaun, villages in the Deccan, deaths and pain at home and outside, the Tsunami-hit villages in Tamil Nadu, the river Godavari in Andhra Pradesh-Telangana, etc. Each of these experiences enriched and helped me frame the questions that I did and to understand diverse ways in which people look at themselves and their pasts and the ways they engage with religion. I am thankful for those experiences. Finally, this work found fruition in the mountains of Himachal Pradesh and Shimla.

In the course of my journalism and looking for support for the Tamil Jaina work, I found a small advertisement in the *Economic and Political Weekly* many years ago from the Sunya Foundation in Ahmedabad, to which I applied and whose support helped me resume work on my PhD research on the Tamil Jaina history. I thank the Sunya Foundation for the grant (which was truly big for me at that point) with which I got my first ever desktop PC in life and the much-needed financial support for fieldwork in the Tamil Jaina villages and library work elsewhere, not to mention the support for my livelihood as freelance journalist. I thank Mr. Sivakumar of the Sunya Foundation (though so many years have passed since), who used to correspond with me in those days. Imagine the twist of fate that the first grant to work on the Jaina research came from a ‘Sunya’!

A temporary teaching position at Stella Maris College for Women, Chennai, was in no small ways helpful, since I met a student (who later became a friend), Radha Kumar, and, through her, the family of Mr. Jinadas (Tindivanam), whose daughter Viji in Chennai directed me to some names in the Tamil Jaina villages. Sometimes, diverse roads lead to one destination. Wherever she may be today, Ms. Jyothi Nambiar (who was then a PhD research scholar at the University of Madras) deserves thanks for having written down for me the names of Tamil Jaina villages in South Arcot, when I was just beginning to explore.

I sincerely thank Prof. Padmanabh Jaini, Dr. Peter Flugel and Prof. Rajan Gurukulal, for their encouragement always and positive feedback at different times. Prof. Paul Dundas and Dr. Palaniappan have given very valuable suggestions on previous drafts of this work which I have tried to incorporate, wherever possible.

I thank everybody at Springer and their associates (including the editorial and production teams and Shinjini and Priya), for being exacting, and also truly patient and for having sent the draft of my manuscript through an excellent review process which has truly helped.

I thank all the following individuals and institutions with whose support (direct and indirect) I managed to find unique sources to work with: Iravatham Mahadevan; Theodore Bhaskaran; the Roja Muthiah Research Library; the Indian Council of Historical Research; Sahitya Akademi Library, Delhi; Jawaharlal Nehru University Library (especially Mr. Mullick); the staff of the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library in Chennai, including Dr. Sundara Pandian (who had helped me with reading some of the material and helped me access them, back in 2003); the staff of the Archaeological Survey of India (Fort St. George); International Institute of Tamil Studies (Taramani); the staff of the U. V. Swaminatha Aiyer Library, Adyar, Chennai; the Madras Institute of Development Studies (Chennai); the National Institute of Prakrit Studies and Research, Shravanabelgola; the Nehru Memorial Trust for the Indian Collections at the Victoria and Albert Museum (New Delhi), especially Mr. Piplani (then Secretary); the V&A Museum (Asia Collections), London, especially, Rosemary Crill, Beth Mckillop, Nick Barnard and Melissa Appel. Prof. Romila Thapar was somewhere responsible for my getting the Jain Art Fund UK Visiting Fellowship at the V&A Museum (2008-09). I am grateful for that.

In the past, Prof. Suvira Jaiswal gave me inputs to strengthen my arguments. I also thank Prof. B. D. Chattopadhyaya and his wife, who stayed at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla, during my tenure as a Fellow.

I express my deep sense of gratitude to all the Tamil Jainas I met in the villages and towns of Tamil Nadu, who housed me, talked to me and told me stories after stories giving me so much of their time. Though I cannot name all of them here, I would still like to mention a few people who encouraged me with gifts of books and articles (in that true Jaina *sastra dana* tradition) and gave my research a direction as well. I thank the *Mathatipati* of Jinakanci *matham* at Cittamur, Svasti Sri Lakshmi Sena Bhattacharya Bhattacharya *avarkal*, Mr. Appandai Nainar-Sunanda (Karandai both passed away in year 2017), Mr. Aruhakirti (Tiruppanamur), Mr. Jayankondan, Mr. S. Bahubali (Tiruppanamur-Kanchipuram), Mr. Vijayabalan, the late Mr. Santhakumar Jain ‘Cintamani Navalar’, Mr. Jinadas (Tindivanam), Sripall (former DGP, Chennai), Mr. V. C. Sreepalan (Chennai), Anantharaj Jain (Vandavasi/Kottayam), Mr. Aravazhi (Vandavasi) and the Madurai Jain Heritage Centre, Mr. Samudravijayan, the late Gandharvai paati, Priya, Rani, Sundari, Sukumara Panditar (among others at Cittamur), the late Vrushabha Das, Viji, Mr. Jaya Vijayan (at Chennai), Vijaya ‘teacher’ (Arani), Sri Dhavalakirti (Tirumalai), Siva Adinath (Ponnurmalai), Prof. Devadatta (Chennai), the late Agastiappa Nayinar, Neelakesi and Sentamarai ammal (Kanchipuram), Mekala-Kumar (Cenji), A. Chinnathurai (Madurai Jain Heritage Centre), Parsuvanathan (and his father at Tiruparuttikunram) and Kosapalayam Chandravadani paati, among a host of others. In essence, I thank all the Tamil Jainas in all the places that I visited, some of which were Vembakkam, Tiruparuttikkunram, Tindivanam, Cenji, Melcittamur, Perumpukai, Vilukkam, Peramandur, Kiledaiyalam, Arani, Mottur, Tirupparambur-Karandai, Kancipuram, Vandavasi, Salukkai, Jambai, Tirumalai, Arpakkam, Chennai, Tirunarungondai and Mamandur, among others.

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I now come to the institution which has supported not just me but an entire range of scholars across generations since its inception (conception) in 1965: the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. For an independent scholar such as me, Fellowship at an institution such as this has been of great help in terms of both resources and a space of freedom to read, write, think or simply just walk around in peace taking in the mountain air, hear the birds sing and learn to accept the ways of the wild *langurs* and monkeys.

I thank all my Fellow colleagues (and contemporaries and those who joined later), Visiting Scholars and Associates at the institute for lively conversations, many laughs and shared meals, besides interjections at seminars. But I must specially thank a few—Sushila-Malem N. Meitei and little Wokhaloi, K. Rajeev, Prof. Bettina Bäumer, Deepa Sharma, Prof. Achyuthan, Tadd Fernée, Sunera Thobani and

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I am grateful to IIAS also for giving space to me and Malli, my forever companion, with whose help one learnt of a different kind of love in the world of animals (with her friends, Bruny, Pilloo, Sheru, Munni, etc.). Shimla and the extended campus of IIAS have also shown me what it is to allow space for these souls also to thrive in the midst of humanity, with street dogs adopted and cared for by the community (not an individual alone) and given names, love and food. Incidentally, within the context of Jaina ethics, perhaps, love of these kinds are not just understood but encouraged.

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Sometimes, the unexpected happens, as it did to us. Completing this book took us back to this old haunt, which was a very different experience than the first: a little reality, and many realisations. In this second coming, I need to thank a few more (besides few of the people I have already mentioned, who helped this time around, too): Jaywanti Dimri (former Fellow, IAS), Dr. Dorje (archaeologist and Fellow at IAS), Prof. Vijay Varma and Terry, Martin Kämpchen, Prof. Sumanyu Satpathy, Dr. Pradeep Naik, Prof. Amba Kulkarni, Pritam Thakur-Lajja, Shokiji-Anita, Amar Singhji, Saleemji, Lina Chauhan, Shivam, Sunil (Siddharth Vihar) and Tulsi. And Malli’s old canine friends (Bruny, Munni) never ever forgot to love us! I thank also Shikha and Dr. Salil for their kindnesses.

A little of all of these has helped me ‘read’ and write the Tamil Jaina history. And for Malli and me, the overall experience of bringing to book form a work from a very long engagement at the IAS and Shimla will be cherished for a lifetime. Finally, I thank the Institut d’études avancées de Nantes, France (home for the moment), for the fellowship, and space for free sharing of ideas from across cultures, continents and disciplines.

Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, India

R. Umamaheshwari

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Guide to the Transliteration Marks Used

Tamil

அ	ஆ	இ	ஈ	உ	ஊ
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū
எ	ஏ	ஐ	ஒ	ஓ	ஔ
e	ē	ai	o	ō	au
க	ங	ச	ஞ	ட	ண
ka	ṅa	ca	ñā	ṭa	ṇa
த	ந	ப	ம	ய	ர
ta	na	pa	ma	ya	ra
ல	வ	ழ	ள	ற	ன
la	va	ḷa	ḷa	ra	ṇa

Sanskrit Consonants

ज	ष	स	ह	क्ष	स
ja	ṣa	sa	ha	kṣa	ś

Note: I have followed modern forms for names of modern-day villages in Tamil Nadu, and I do not prefer using transliteration marks for names of scholars and historians (especially Tamil scholars, historians, etc.). For instance, I would use ‘Swaminatha Aiyer’ or ‘Iyer’.

Chapter 1

On Reading History, and a Community

The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.

Milan Kundera (The Book of Laughter and Forgetting)

Abstract This chapter introduces the idea and meaning of ‘Reading History with the Tamil Jainas’. Many works on Jainism in South India or Tamilnadu had hitherto focussed on the inscriptional records as ‘evidence’ to establish the presence, flourishing and ‘decline’ of Jainism in the south and in Tamilnadu in particular. But there has not been a single comprehensive account that speaks of the Tamil Jainas as ‘present’ and a very much living tradition in the agrarian pockets of Tamilnadu. This chapter introduces the theme of the book and the reasons thereof, apart from elucidating the reasons for a particular format that this book wrote itself into. The idea is to stress on the multiple narratives (rather than a singular, monolithic past)—set in different regional contexts, than a pan-Indian one—that are possible for reading histories of marginalised, minority communities, if we approach them as ‘present’ among and amidst us, and seek to retrieve their pasts (as lived histories, with memories of persecution still strong) from their own perspectives of histories.

Keywords Synchronic • Diachronic • Naiṇār • Forgetting • Identity • Marginalisation • *Longue durée* • Social memory • Speech community

So, in order to remember, and not to forget, or to remember *not to* forget some locales, some people, some traditions that did—and do—exist and which struggle against the attempts to make a uniform, singular and monolithic past (supposed to have been ‘tolerant’ or ‘all-inclusive’, but which may not really have been so), I write of one particular instance in the history of Tamil Nadu through the story of a community. I try to recover some moments of their pasts on aspects that have not been recovered, or chronicled before, in this manner. What I say for one instance, or for one community, may be applicable to other instances, and other communities,

similarly marginalised (or marginalised in a different manner), similarly silenced or made to live a near-hidden existence, unless they asserted their agency in the collective history of a nation or a region or a state, or even the world, for that matter.

In general, the popular understanding of Jainas has been a limited one, based on stereotypes about Jainas across the country: their being affluent people, influential media barons or jewellers or industrialists. There is, in general, no understanding of the differentiation between the various sects within Jainism and definitely no knowledge of South Indian and, more specifically, Tamil Jainas. And I speak of the Tamil Jainas, in particular, a community that does not fit into these stereotypes. I speak of how a community remembers and looks at its past. The Tamil Jainas are today a miniscule minority in terms of numbers and in other manners and forms.

I give an instance of their perception of themselves from *within*:

We are Tamil speaking Jainas. We number around 30,000 in Tamil Nadu. Most of us are agriculturists. Some are self-employed, a few employed in small positions in shops and some other vocations. Some are in government jobs. Inscriptions from the 5th century BC onwards that have come to light in Tamil Nadu, are mostly those associated with the samanam (Jainas). Our forefathers have given more than their share to Tamil literary and textual tradition. While the population of Tamil Nadu is around 6 crores, we count as the minority of minorities in terms of numbers. Yet, we have not been accorded minority status. We can literally count on our fingers the number of people from our community who have managed government employment. Thiru V.K. Appandairajan in the IAS, Thiru. S. Sripall in IPS, Thiru T. Vardhamanan in Banking sector... Hence we request the government to include us, Tamil speaking Samanar (Jainas), citizens of Tamil Nadu, in the Minorities List. Thanking you, A.P. Aravazhi.

Cited above was a requisition submitted to the Tamil Nadu government which was printed in the Tamil Jaina community journal, *Mukkudai*.¹ The letter is signed by the President of the forum, which is called Samanar Pēroli Iyakkam. In year 2003, the population figures were 32,700, as per the census of the Jaina Youth Forum shared with me then by Mr. Aravazhi.

Now, of course, the pan-Indian Jaina community has been granted minority status, as in the year 2014:

The Union Cabinet on Monday agreed to grant the Jain community—followers of an ancient faith often confused to be a sect of Hinduism—the status of a “national minority”. This fulfills a long-standing demand by the 7-million-strong community that has sought to maintain its religious and cultural identity. As a religious minority, Jains will qualify for constitutional safeguards and special policy attention alongside five other such religious minority groups: Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis... Jains, *an otherwise affluent minority*, were fighting for “national minority” status mainly to protect and promote Jainism as a distinct faith and culture. Along with Hinduism and Buddhism, it is one of the three most ancient religious faiths in the subcontinent. “A national minority status allows us to enjoy fundamental rights under Article 25 and Articles 26 to propagate our religion and also freedom to manage our religious affairs. Without this, our identity was eroding,” said Sanjeev Jain, an advocate of the cause. (*Hindustan Times*, 21 January 2014)²

¹Issue No. 29, November 2002, pp.21–22.

²<http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/upa-gives-jain-community-minority-status/story-.html>. Emphasis added, to substantiate my earlier point about the stereotypes.

One of the prominent Tamil Jaina scholar-activists of the twentieth century, ‘Jeevabandhu’ T. S. Sripal writes,

Research on the Jaina community must begin from Tamil Nadu [with] the Pudukkōṭṭai Sittanavāsai inscriptions dating to 3rd century BC. And many of the oldest Brāhmi inscriptions of the Tamil country (are associated with the Jaina faith).... (Sripal 1996, p. 18)

And he says,

Ādi Agattiyar, Tolkāppiyar, Āvināyaṇār, Tirukkuraḷ author (Kundakundācārya), Sāmanta Bhadrācārya, Jinasenācārya, Akaḷaṇkatēvar, Koṇkuvēlar... Vajranandi, Pavanandi... were all Tamil Jaina scholars and ācāryas of the Tamil country. (Ibid, p. 10)

In today’s patterns, forms and content lies a past. But even in reading that past, we are in the present; and what happens around us today, in the present context—political, economic, social or cultural—informs, and has to inform, the way we choose to look at the early periods, or at any past. How does one look at/study the history of a living community, especially one, which has suffered major upheavals in the face of religious conflict and persecution and has had to negotiate its space in various ways, through historical time? How does one study a community such as this, which has sent many requisitions to the governments in power to grant them the status of minority and not club them under one universal (and incorrect) category of ‘Hindu’? Especially when history shows the level and extent of their prominence and popularity from the Caṅkam period, through the times of the three major dynasties, the intervening period of persecution notwithstanding? When one used the term Tamil Jaina, it almost invariably attracted curious, questioning glances and questions from people. The term itself seemed rather intriguing, interesting and new, to many. Jains in Tamil Nadu—or Chennai, for that matter—would mean, to most people, the rich Marwari business people settled in certain pockets. These would also be the more ‘visible’ lot, rendering themselves to class and community stereotypes in popular psyche. One could also use the term Tamil-speaking Jains (as has been done in the requisition to the state quoted earlier, but that would be done for an official reason), but then again, these mercantile, later migrants (many from Rajasthan) to Tamil Nadu—Chennai, mostly—Śvetāmbara (mainly Mūrtipujak) Jains who also speak Tamil, to interact with the general populace. It is not *their* ‘tongue’ but an acquired one. The Tamil Jains, on the other hand, trace their lineage from the earliest adherents of the Jaina doctrine—most of them agriculturists³—and part and parcel of the Tamil historical-cultural landscape, people ‘of the soil’, to use that cliché.

The Digambara Tamil Jaina community has come a long way from having prided itself over a history as old as the second and third century BCE—as the earliest lithic records, the Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions—have shown. The Tamil Jains today

³In fact, this is one reality that seems amazing to people, in general—including the academic community—who assume Jains to be synonymous with trading. The Tamil Jains in fact distinguish themselves from the Śvetāmbara (northern) Jains (settlers, across Tamil Nadu) whom they refer to as *seṭh*.

mostly live in the North and South Arcot districts,⁴ Chengalpattu, Tiruvannamalai and Thanjavur districts. These are places they are concentrated in, but some are scattered across Tamil Nadu (few settled in Chennai) on account of employment-related migration. While agriculture has been their mainstay, a few among them have entered into miscellaneous professions such as tour services, real-estate business, education and a small minority in bureaucracy. As per the 1981 government census, Madras City, Chengalpattu and North and South Arcot accounted for 90% of the Jains in Tamil Nadu, with the rural population being 11,829 and urban 37,735.⁵ In the 2011 census of the Tamil Nadu government, the total Jain population was 89,265. Out of this, the rural population was 10,084 and urban 79,181.⁶ But the census does not make any distinction as to whether they are Tamil Jains or the migrant settler Jains. The Tamil Jains refer to themselves as '*naiṇār*' [or use the suffix Nayinar with their names⁷], and many of them use the titles Mudaliyar, Chettiyar, etc., an aspect I shall touch upon in one of the chapters here.

Speaking of a community that has to locate itself within—or is born into—a 'larger' identity in terms of the religious doctrine it follows and a parallel, but very crucial, identity in terms of the linguistic tradition and cultural idioms is not an easy task. One cannot make any conclusive, deterministic statement on such a community, which is marginal in terms of both numbers and by virtue of being 'hidden' by an overwhelming mainstream religious idiom which, to a large extent, has come to be 'Hindu'. One locates—relocates—these apparently parallel identities of the Tamil Jains today inhabiting pockets of northern Tamilnadu in small numbers in cluster settlements in the villages or in pockets of the smaller towns and bigger cities of Tamilnadu. I have sought to find out as to which identity they now relate to, built as it is, over centuries.

In a sense, their history has to be located within both diachronic and synchronic processes, in terms of the larger developments at different times which affect the community's own state of being and in terms of the very direct, or particular, aspect of the language Tamil and identity as bound to both the Tamil language and to the history of their contribution to it, in respective 'present' times. Also, the layers of their remembrances occur over the geographic space of the villages they inhabit with stories you will hear of the same kind across these spaces, at one level, or stories of different time-periods in history occurring in some villages alone. And then there is the level of remembering stories of several events, across time, similarly. In these respects, one can perceive the sense of 'community identity' in the Tamil Jains. Within the pan-Digambara Jain context, too, one needs to locate the difference between the Digambara Jains in the north and the ones in Tamilnadu. So far as I have observed (and based on several conversations with the Tamil Jains), it

⁴I am using certain district names as they were in use over a long time (many of them are still in use, though officially their names and contours have been altered several times over last many years) in order to avoid confusion. The terms, 'North Arcot' and 'South Arcot' in fact, are almost part of the Tamil cultural-linguistic context.

⁵Population Census, 1991, (Dist Census Handbook) Part XII A.

⁶2011 Census of Tamilnadu. www.censusindia.gov.in

⁷Which some of them have discontinued in the last several years.

seems that the people from the north are more interested in the temples and pilgrimage, without any engagement with the history or specific context of Tamil history, and Jainism within that history. Back in 2003, a group of Tamil Jainas were making all efforts to collect and preserve palm leaf manuscripts that were lying unread in homes and in some temples and even at the monastery at Melcittamur and seeking funds for the same. Their idea was to digitise these for the sake of future researches. But they did not find any rich Digambara Jaina from the north to support this activity. At around the same time, one of the richer members of the community from the north was funding the construction of a marble temple complex near Ponnurmalai. The group of Tamil Jainas who I am talking about showed this to me as the nature of difference in perspective among members of their community. Sometimes, it seemed like the history of Tamil Jainas as a community was going on a parallel, unconnected, track when compared with those in the north. During my tenure as a Nehru scholar at the V&A Museum, London, too, I met a wealthy Jaina who was helping support the digitisation of the collections of manuscripts at the V&A. It so happens that the collections there too seemed to show, relatively speaking (at least at that point), a bent towards the northern (Rajasthan, Gujarat, etc.) and Śvetāmbara traditions. There wasn't much representation, in those collections, of the Tamil Jaina context.⁸ This is also because of the vast difference between the political and economic contexts of regions and communities. Some things are changing now, as it seemed to me, after a recent visit. There is a new heritage centre set up by the same group of Tamil Jainas who had been working at preserving historical records of the community. It is at its nascent stage yet.

My framework looks at the context of Tamilnadu to say that the trajectory of the Tamil Jainas needs to be located within the Tamil country rather than within a pan-Indian Jaina context (the latter is not written off, but it does not occupy my attention), for there is a lot within the Tamil country's history that gives enough material to *problematise* (or to use the other cliché, 'discourse') the Tamil Jaina community history. The Tamil context is important, not just in terms of a Tamil cultural-geographical space but also the Tamil speech community and history of the Tamil language. Here, one is looking at the past backwards from the present, from among the Tamil Jainas, to see where it gets us, instead of writing their history down for them from a distance, removed from them, in a separate world of archives and temples and monuments, without people. I also found, in the course of my field-based research, that prominent Tamil Jainas of the time had located themselves within the Dravidian and anti-brāhmin movements, as much as with the movement for Tamil language and culture, as against Sanskritic brāhminism.

⁸Perhaps the reason is also to be seen in the manner of travels that brought some of the Jainas from the north across the oceans. Perhaps it is also to do with the fact that the Tamil Jaina manuscripts remained within their homes and temples and being a settled agrarian community, there was not much that would really 'go out' from these contexts. Which explains how relatively more is recorded of them in the British colonial context by Mackenzie and Thurston, during their surveys in South India, than what is available in the British library in London. Meanwhile, I thank Prof. Chetan Singh for bringing up the idea of locating my work within the ideas of 'synchronic' and 'diachronic' processes; my own personal academic interest, until then, had been on an overarching 'long-term'.

There are questions I have sought to explore: how do you chronicle a community or the identity of one, whose history—read from traditional accounts—seemed to be encapsulated within two moments of its being: rise and fall/decline? Especially a living community? What of the moments *in between* or moments ‘otherwise’? Of lived history? For my part, I saw in the Tamil Jainas and in their present status, a past that had been, perhaps, ‘inflicted’ on them, just as a ‘present’ has been imposed on the Buddhists, who are not ‘present’ anymore in this part of the subcontinent (I am not referring to the neo-Buddhists here). For that matter, minorities (as they are referred to, and this could include tribal communities and other dalits in a different context, of course), for most part, are continually living the past (and thereby present) that was forced upon them, their present being the ‘present’ of centuries prior. Their present is a continuation of their history, in many senses. If we can make sense of why their present is the way it is—a persistent question for me—and if we can engage with the continuing relation between the past and present, and vice versa, we may be able to understand as to why some communities constantly refer back in time. The past then becomes a matter of continued reality in the present.

At the broadest level, the followers or adherents of the Jina doctrine (or the Jainas) organise themselves in two main components: the monks and nuns and the *śrāvakas* (the householders/laity)⁹; the history of this sect, then, in its most general sense, is the history of the ‘preachers’ and the ‘preached’, each component having its own, separate, natures of travails and its own moorings on the question of ‘being’, ‘having been’ and ‘becoming’. In the past, substantial scholarship was focussed on the Jaina inscriptional records in South India; on the Jaina adherents among important dynasties that have ruled over various regional divisions and the perpetual question of ‘rise’ and ‘decline’. The *śrāvaka* history, the narratives of the householders, their histories and collective memories were missing in these. More recent writings in the history of Jaina communities in the north have been dealing with questions of traditional hermeneutics and interpretations of texts, performance of rituals, the ‘oral’ aspects of scripture and so on. For a community that has always laid great emphasis on the possession and preservation (as well as the act of giving, or *śāstra dāna*) of manuscripts, and its ‘sacred’ literature, this aspect—of the dialogue between the doctrine and the practice—has been addressed by a few scholars in the last decade or so. But these scholars, again, focussed on the Jaina sects in the north—mostly Gujarat and Rajasthan—and did not contribute, to the southern Indian Jaina context, to any significant extent. Of course, a few scholars, such as Leslie Orr, James Ryan, Anne Monius and Christoph Emmrich, are bringing the focus to the Southern Indian context. Yet, the Tamil Jainas of the villages in Tamil Nadu are yet to receive their comprehensive chronicler, in a sense.

The Tamil Jainas have contributed to more than half of the entire Tamil classical literary corpus (which includes the Caṅkam literary corpus, dated from the third century BCE to the fifth century CE) with works such as *Cilappatikāram*,

⁹Though the *bhaṭṭārakas* came in at some point as well, but their duty was also to keep these two components functioning at the level of the Digambara Jaina community, as a whole.

Cīvakacintāmaṇi, Tamil grammar *Naṇṇūl*, *Tirukkuraḷ*, *Valayāpati*, *Nāḷaiyār*, *Nīlakeci*, etc.

Iravatham Mahadevan writes that there was,

[An] enormous contribution made by the Jainas to the growth of Tamil literature from the earliest times up to about the 16th century AD...[and to] the development of a script for the language, leading to literacy and the later efflorescence of Caṅkam literature in early centuries AD. (Mahadevan 2003, p. 139)

The earliest Jaina vestiges include around 26 rock-cut caves and natural caverns with Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions (second/third century BCE); around 140 stone beds for monks and nuns at places in Madurai-Ramanathapuram, Erode, North and South Arcot districts; the famed paintings of Sittanavasal; and so on. I have sought to understand if the Jaina religion in the early Tamil country was a movement of the Jina's doctrine from 'marginal' (in its earliest phase, choosing for itself the seclusion of hillocks and rock shelters, and just 'being', alongside the tribes of the forest dwellers and hill dwellers), supported by agriculturists and merchants, to becoming the universal 'mainstream' of activity centring around royalty, land grants (some with exclusive rights), monasteries and educational institutions (called *paḷḷi*) gaining more adherents and coming in direct confrontation/contestation with the Buddhists (with whom they entered into many polemical debates, as the Buddhist and Jaina texts show) and later with the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava religious ideologies, with the latter finally marginalising the Jainas. I locate the 'mainstream' or 'universal' within the context of expansion of agrarianism, an overwhelming agrarian rhythm of life, with the brāhminical religion being able to cleverly combine mythology with patterns of rural life—the temple lore, *sthalapurāṇas*, etc.—bringing in concepts of rooted sacredness of a river, a tank, a pond or a lake and with festivals corresponding with the agricultural seasons, etc. Of course, the Tamil Jainas, too, being an agrarian society have some of their festivals (such as *Pongal*) coinciding with the agrarian cycles. In their traditions, the Jainas believe that Ṛṣabha, their first tīrthankara, created the vocation of agriculture, among other vocations. In the Tamil context, many of the earliest rock-cut cave/natural cavern inscriptions confirm the agrarian context of the Jainas. And early support for Jainism did come from agricultural communities, as it did from merchants and merchant guilds. Hence, unlike what scholars believed (about Jainism having the largest followers from among traders and merchants), in the case of early Tamil country, this is not borne out by evidence, as the early, medieval and later inscriptions—besides the existence of a living agricultural community—prove. Moreover, two important components—the monks and laity—being dependent on each other meant that there was a system in place, comprising a laity making the rock shelters available, causing the rock beds to be carved out for the monks and nuns who visited and stayed during the *cāturmās*, the months of dwelling at one place, which usually coincided with the monsoons. But there was a 'movement' in the sense that one finds numerous inscriptions from the medieval period that show that the Jaina establishments—*paḷḷis*, temples, etc.—gain patronage from the community and royalty. Gradually, the Jaina 'maṭham' comes into the picture. It is interesting to perceive the elements of

continuity in the history of the Jaina community, despite extraneous pressures on them to be absorbed, become part of, the mainstream and adopt all the idioms that were once antithetical (at a theoretical and philosophical level) to the doctrine of the Jina.

It must be qualified, however, that in the agrarian context, the Tamil Jaina history may not necessarily have been one of 'tillers' of the soil but perhaps owners of agricultural land and living within an agrarian economy, not an economy of trade. It is possible that those with limited means, over a period of time, started tilling their own lands, as many of them informed me, owing to changes in the overall agrarian context post-independence. However, one of the prominent Tamil Jainas I had met in Chennai in the course of my doctoral research, V. C. Sripalan, had told me that:

dharmic principles within the Jaina religion stood in the way of agriculture as a profession, over time; hence, the people started employing others to labour on their fields, and gradually lost touch with agriculture. The idea of not ploughing for profit and minimum *himsā* (violence) were also dilemmas the community faced. Till 1960s, the community was into agriculture as a profession and very few took to other professions (teaching, for instance). In the 1970s and 80s, many changes occurred. By 1990s, 50 per cent gave up active agriculture and took up different kinds of employment.¹⁰

But it was not clear (from what he told me at that point, before I had met the farming classes among them) as to how he would account for the mention of agriculture as a vocation initiated by Rṣabha, which the community also believes in.

Chapter 1 is divided into two sub-sections—(i) Jaina 'Entry' into the Tamil Country and Early Jaina Epigraphic Records: A Historical Overview and (ii) Colonial and Oriental 'Discovery' of the Jainas; 'Recovery' of the Self. The first section gives an overview of early and modern-day scholarship on the 'entry' of Jainism in Tamilnadu and some of the early Tamil Brāhmi records. The second section discusses the interest of oriental and colonial scholars in the Jaina religion and community, as to how they perceived them and in what context Jainas became important for them. In the early works, Jainism was seen in relation to, or contradistinction to, Buddhism. Buddhist studies may have sparked the interest in a doctrine that was almost similar when it came to the idea of non-violence. I found a 'movement' from nineteenth century and early twentieth century's 'discovery' by 'others' to the modern period in Tamil Jaina history and a 'recovery' of self by the Tamil Jainas seeing themselves through people like Bishop Caldwell and others. A. Chakravarti, the Tamil Jaina professor of philosophy, in his books would compare Western science, philosophy (and political philosophy) and Jainism, for instance. But there are also others who provide 'text' for Jainas to seek their 'selves' in scholars such as U. V. Swaminatha Aiyer (U.Ve.Ca), whose search, collation, editing and compilation of palm leaf manuscripts were instrumental in the recovery of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* for the Tamil audience. I engage with this moment of discovery of the text in some detail (in the second part) for, in this story there are layers about the 'ownership' of manuscripts (intrinsic to history and identity of a community) as

¹⁰ 10 December, 2002. Personal communication.

also about the nature of preserving a text that remained alive in the community memory on account of its oral recitation.

Language is important to the Tamil Jaina community history. The Jaina attachment to Tamil, thus, has an antiquity that is interesting as it is significant, for in the modern period of Tamil nationalist movement, the Tamil Jainas were deeply engaged in a discourse to ascertain their Tamil linguistic heritage. The language Tamil was not something they ‘discovered’ as theirs *via* the European discourse on Tamil as a language of the Dravidian culture, distinct from the north (of India); it has to do with their earliest involvement with Tamil in the early centuries BCE. The modern-day movements and discourses, in that sense, only always ‘revived’ their sense of connection to Tamil and its literary heritage. Chapter 4—‘Retrieving’, Seeking, the Tamil Jaina Self: The Politics of Memory, Identity and Tamil Language—underscores some of these aspects, which have been missing in most scholarship on Jainism in Tamilnadu.

Here, I recount Max Weber’s point that, ‘Asiatic culture lacked a ‘speech community’, and that cultural language was a sacred one, or a speech of the literary; Sanskrit in the territory of the distinguished India, and Chinese Mandarin speech in China, Korea and Japan’ (Weber 1992, p. 341). In case of the Tamil Jainas, there did exist a ‘speech community’ as also a ‘cultural language’, and both happened to be Tamil. Yet, Tamil never seemed to have been overshadowed by Sanskrit, perhaps due to a longer linguistic culture having developed in the Tamil country from early on (starting from early Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions, which were meant to reach out to a Tamil linguistic community). The Jainas had an enormous output in Tamil textual (sacred and secular) tradition through the centuries. The *Kural* was subject to a fairly long and interesting debate (situated in the social histories of other communities, as well) in Tamilnadu on questions of its authorship, a point that I dwell at length upon, in the same chapter, especially where it converges with the Tamil Jaina questions of identity and language.

I believe that instead of reducing it all to a question of rise and decline of Jainism in Tamilnadu, one must question the deeper nature of cultural hegemony that prevailed, and the absorption into the overwhelming and universalised (in the Tamil context, brāhminical Hinduism), in terms of adoption of cults, practices, idioms and cultural symbols to survive amidst the louder and the dominant. And from all this, something that is most crucial, and as yet difficult to come to terms with, is the question of memories of persecution. It was possible to retrieve some of these memories in narratives from the Tamil Jaina community. I have sought to explore the idea of the ‘absorption’ (some call it assimilation) as an uneasy (yet inevitable) compromise in the contentious struggle among communities for being different (a social-historical-political template within which many marginalisations can yet be understood). Yet, in many ways there have been occasions when the Tamil Jaina community has consistently asserted its difference and distinctness as a community with its place in Tamil history.

1.1 Why, and How Come, Tamil Jainas?

How did my association with the Tamil Jainas come about? The starting point was my MPhil research on the Tamil god Murukaṇ and the visit/ 'research pilgrimage' to the six sacred centres of Murukaṇ worship in the Tamil country, called the Arupaṭaivīṭu.¹¹ My journey through these centres gave rise, initially, to curiosity, and then, the question as to how most of these centres had some kind of prior Jaina association. Many were situated near, and by the rock shelters, natural caverns which had, at one point, housed Jaina monks/teachers as epigraphic evidence from these places show. Many of these places still preserved vestiges of the Jaina history. Perhaps, many were still held sacred. But where were the Jainas; where was the community? What happened to the Jaina religion? What of its adherents? Were there still people who came to offer respects at these sacred sites? Many of the Jaina sites did not seem to attract too many people, when compared to the ones Murukaṇ attracted. Or, maybe they did. Where are these Jainas today? I was aware of the literary works attributed to Jainas, such as the *Cilappatikāram*. But the idea that there still could be Tamil Jainas did not strike me, initially. Initially, I was more intrigued by the hiddenness of this community. Did Jainism flourish and dissolve? Were there survivals? Where? In the course of research on Murukaṇ, I did make mention of the universalised brāhminical hegemony that affected numerous local cults and excluded faiths such as the Buddhist and Jaina, and under this hegemony, temples were converted, or re-configured, to fit into āgamic temple paradigms with universal Sanskritic, Purāṇic gods and goddesses. But the silence about (to me, at least) a community that was persecuted was too intriguing and challenging to let go of. I had started my PhD research with reading of Jaina philosophy and a general history of the Jaina religion. During this period of contemplation, a chance mention by a student¹² that her friend was a Tamil Jaina made me renew my interest in the community aspect of Tamil Jainism. That also decided the course; I had already travelled through the sacred centres of Murukaṇ worship and had marvelled at how little attention the Jaina centres evoked from people. The questions asked then about the Jainas, Jainism in *Tamiḷakam*, returned to my mind. I decided to seek the Tamil Jainas, adherents of a faith that had, at one point, dominated the entire Madurai-Ramanathapuram region, with its numerous rock-cut caves and caverns for the Jaina monks and nuns. Most scholarship on Jainism in Tamilnadu used sources such as inscriptions, lithic records, literature and architectural heritage to build a linear, straightforward history of entry, spread, prosperity and decline. Even the inscriptional evidences are used more to reiterate the state patronage to Jainism. Persecution of the Jainas is mentioned, of course, but again, limited to the period of

¹¹ My MPhil dissertation (unpublished) was titled, *Many Images of Murukaṇ: Perceptions of a Popular Deity and the Arupaṭaivīṭu in the Tirumukārrupaṭai*, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

¹² At Stella Maris College in Chennai, who later became a friend, Radha Kumar, whose introduction to me of her Tamil Jaina friend (Anusha and her family) gave a fresh lease of life to my query about the community, which I found.

the seventh to ninth centuries CE. The *community* remains unexplored in all this. There is no mention, nor analysis, of the Jainas in the context of agrarian culture, despite the consistent and well-researched monographs produced on Jainism in Tamil Nadu, even if the community they talk about is present, in their very midst, since centuries, nor is there any mention of how the Jainas addressed the caste system. It is possible perhaps to initiate a discussion on how caste may have played a role in the ‘negotiated’ survival of the Jainas. It is also perhaps easier for the Tamil Jainas to pass off as an upper ‘caste’ rather than as a separate religious group. How the Tamil Jainas conceive of the brāhmins, as also being responsible for their persecution and present condition, may not be something of a common knowledge.

Unfortunately, the records and ‘evidences’ depict a fossilised period, a fossilised community that ‘was’, no matter if it ‘still is’ and ‘has been’! It should be a fascinating exercise to ask as to what kind of time becomes suitably the ‘past’, so as to ‘keep it in the past’ as it were? The changes wrought in the way the community behaves, subsequently, which is a contribution of that past, seem irrelevant, and sadly so. But it is these changes and negotiations for survival that reveal a past more evocatively than any record of state patronage ever can/could. The very fact that a community that received generous donations and was steeped in Tamil literary tradition is today almost inconsequential suggests whether the past should be where it has been left by previous scholarship on Jainism or should it be brought further down to the very present, in order to retrieve facets of communal (in terms of religious communalism/sectarianism) moments of the past of Tamil Nadu, rather than a ‘golden’ era of a non-problematised ‘Tamil culture’. Even ‘golden eras’ are questions for the historian and the sociologist in terms of the exclusions they are built upon. And what is golden for one may not be so for the other. The marginal numbers of the Tamil Jainas today and the dominance of certain religious idioms and cultural traits need to be seen together and not distinctly. The Tamil Jainas’ stories of ‘*nīr pūci nayiṇārs*’,¹³ the converts to Śaiva faith, and other stories now part of their mythology (that of the *yakṣi* Dharumadevi who was cheated into marrying a Buddhist, or a brāhmin, in different versions) cannot be assigned a ‘time’, or ‘date’ exactly, but they are still evoked, as they may have been in the past, when they were written, with some meaning. Surely, these are equally important to ascertain the nature of sustained conflict between community and identity. There are also lithic records that reveal the Śaivite animosity towards the Jainas. One such example is the inscriptional record, A. R. 559 of 1902 (Kulōttuṅga Chōla, at the Nataraja temple at Chidambaram), which asserts that the violator of the grant will be committing as great a sin as betraying Śiva (*Śivattu-rōkiyum āy*), eating beef (*kō-mānsattai...*) and shall carry the pitcher of the *śamaṇars* [*śamaṇar-kku kuṇṭikkai eṭuppan*]¹⁴ (SII, 1937: No. 150, lines 5–6). In general, though, the verses of the Śaiva bards, Appar and Jñāna Sambandar are cited as evidence of the kind of persecution of the Jainas. I have focussed on the manner in which the ‘persecuted’ narrate the instances

¹³ The Tamil Jainas call the Śaiva veḷḷālas *nīr pūci veḷḷālar* also, at times. I record the term, *nīr pūci*, exactly as it is rendered in the colloquial.

¹⁴ I thank Dr. S. Palaniappan for pointing this source out to me.

of hatred towards their community, as I find that an important source to document, instead of merely speaking of the ‘rise’ and ‘decline’ of Jaina community in Tamilnadu, based on the number of inscriptional records assigned to temples of the Jainas, which is also important enough to document, but mine is not—and does not claim to be—purely a study of epigraphs.

So, I went in search of a community, seeking to record history from its own perspectives of its past. I came back with several histories and several aspects of the community’s own understanding of its present and past. But a common thread seemed to string their narratives together. I also came back with notes on the history of the politics of Tamil language and literature, as to who ‘owns’ a language and, thereby, the idea of a place. I came back with some level of understanding of marginalisations in history and historiography. Marginalisations, I realised, happened in many forms: either through non-representation of a community’s history and ideas in mainstream discourses (political, economic and social) or the dénouement of seeing the destruction of ancient monuments, either through overt destruction or through conversion of temples. I also realised the existence of a community that has been making sustained efforts to maintain its distinct identity of not simply being seen as Jaina or *samaṇar* but also Tamil and Drāvīda, so the cultural-geographical space of the Tamiḻakam as well as the political space of Tamilnadu (through participation in the anti-brāhmin¹⁵ discourse or the Self-Respect Movement) both become important. It is to be noted that when I speak of ‘marginalisation’ with respect to the Tamil Jainas, it is not to be treated on par with the marginalisation of dalits and tribal communities in the Indian context, the trajectory and politics of which are entirely different. I mention this because I have been often criticised by people at spaces where I have spoken about the Tamil Jaina community and raised the question of marginalisation, because for them the Jainas (who they also perceive within the paradigm of the stereotypical Jainas of northern and western India, wealthy and hence influential) are hardly ‘marginals’ of the system. When I use marginalisation, it is in terms of the Tamil Jainas having lost their presence in the overall historical process of the Tamil country. Their marginalisation is from its history and in terms of their own hiddenness and also in terms of the apathy shown for their role in Tamil history. In terms of caste status, though, their being vellāḷars would also add to the ‘blurring’ of identity with their non-Jaina caste counterparts. So, one is qualifying their marginalisation, which is from a dominant Hindu, brāhminical tradition and a mainstream construct which obviates the presence of Buddhists and Jainas in Tamil history.

There is yet another related factor to be kept in mind. The historical trajectory of the Tamil Jainas in Tamil Nadu is distinct from that of Jainas of other regions in the

¹⁵I must make a note of my use of small case for the terms brāhmin and vellāḷa. I only capitalise religious groups—Jaina, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Muslim, etc., and caste titles of Mudaliyar, Chettiar, etc. (since one is distinguishing those as official titles used in proper names). I prefer to use the terms brāhmin and vellāḷa as cultural (and political) categories (with implications for the social). It is a matter to be pondered upon that in general, the ‘non-use’ of caps for ‘dalit’ and ‘adivasi’ does not seem to evoke any question. But non-use of caps for the terms ‘brāhmin’ and ‘vellāḷa’ does. But that is not an argument I wish to enter into here.

Indian subcontinent; hence, there should not be a universalised account of their pan-Indian Jaina identity, unless there are occasions when that pan-Indian Jaina identity becomes the expressed assertion in legal, constitutional matters (of asserting that they are not ‘Hindu’, or in asserting the right to practice *sallēkhana*, or right of their naked Digambara monks to pass through peacefully during their long walks across the country, and so on), or in their pan-Indian pilgrimage circuit, which remains common for the Jinas, with the places of *nirvāṇa* of their tīrthankaras being common. But there are local (culturally and geographically) village-based pilgrimage circuits, as well, which have little to do with the pan-Jaina circulatory spaces. However, one must make note of the recent trend visible here, as well, that of the northern Indian Jinas (Digambaras, usually) making extended pilgrimages to temples in South India. Large groups of Digambaras make trips to southern Jaina temples in tour buses and vans. This also follows the trend of Digambara monks and nuns making extended visits to the Tamil Jaina villages, more so in the last two decades. So, one has to account for the increase in the north-south interaction at the religious level.

At another level, in the current politics of the Indian nation, too, trends seem to have changed, with some religious leaders and spokespersons of non-Hindu religions (including Jaina and Buddhist, in recent times) becoming closer to the religious and political right. This might be seen as an act of negotiation for seeking political favours. I did not start with this observation when I began to interact with the Tamil Jinas, whose affinity seemed to lie, generally, with the Dravidian movement and its legacy in the newer formations of the Dravidian parties, such as the DMK (more often) and the AIADMK.¹⁶ But it would be an interesting study in the present context, as it would also help us reconstruct the pasts of communities who have had to negotiate with the political powers for their immediate survival and economic favours. However, I reserve further discussion on this subject in this book, while still making a case for understanding the local religious-historical contexts through studies at that (local) level, rather than at a universal level. For, the historical accounts and processes vary between the regions in the north, west and south so far as the Digambara Jinas are concerned, and this is visible also in the choice of politics and political ideology.¹⁷ It is important for a historian documenting Tamil Jaina history to be conscious of this.

Speaking of scholarship on the inscriptional records, and agrarian history in Tamil Nadu, again, Jinas (and Buddhists) appear as interesting ‘interludes’ or aberration and, more often than not, are mentioned as merchants, traders patronised by the state, later persecuted, leading to their downfall. The two sects, Buddhists and Jinas again, in these studies, seem mute, non-actors in the large socio-economic

¹⁶ Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, respectively

¹⁷ Definitely not (as in, year 2015) the Right-leaning parties, because there is a deeper assertion of the fact that the Jaina Religion has nothing to do with the Hindu, and hence, the events in Tamil history where the community was persecuted by the Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite Bhakti and brāhminical religious paradigm are a good reason to stay away from parties that suggest the imposition of a universal ‘Hindu’ idiom.

and political history of Tamiḷakam, disinterested, as if, in the mundane affairs of land, administration, royal patronage and resource mobilisation, true to their religious doctrine of *aparigraha*. What of the land grants to the Jainas? And the agrarian community thus surviving, built over a period of centuries? Was there never serious contestation? What about the conflict between the Buddhists and Jainas? And the Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava movement? Were these all merely motivated by religious differences? Did the Jaina community *not* have any worldly linkages/concerns/ambitions? The very fact they survived, while the Buddhists simply vanished, says a lot for their ability to survive with certain kinds of negotiations and other means. And that needs to be reviewed, relocated. It shows that a community needs to be reviewed/reformulated within historiography as a historically placed community, as an *agent* of history. A constant interplay of social, economic and political forces persuades changes in a community's own sense of identity and addresses the question of hegemony and dominance. To *not* address the community in terms of their very 'real' historical exchanges—violent or subtle—with other communities/interest groups would mean to indirectly accept the universal as given, as *a priori*.

Persecution, too, is seen differently in my study. There have been many times when they were persecuted, not just during the bhakti period. The Tamil Jainas speak of other similar efforts of persecution, even during the late fifteenth century CE. Similarly, at various points in history, the Tamil Jainas have made conscious efforts to proclaim their distinct identity and the importance of this distinctness. In fact, one of the earliest stories of the 'negotiations' of the Jainas is found in their tradition, which involves their acceptance of agriculture as a profession, which involves at least some amount of violence. The story points out as to how Rṣabha, the first tīrthankara, introduced four occupations, of which agriculture was one. There are also different kinds, natures of violence and injunctions as to what kind of violence (or how much) is allowed for the householder.

John Cort has pointed out as to how 'a fuller understanding of the Jains' own understandings of history is essential if scholars are to gain a better understanding of the Jain tradition as a whole' (Cort 1995).

Thus, what one tries to do is to try and understand the Tamil Jain history as they perceive the same, as much as possible, and place it in the historical context of the Tamil country. As a historian, it is essential not to disregard multiplicities of identities. Many of these contexts shaped some of our understanding of history and society, as much as they made us reinstate some of our beliefs while redefining some others. Conflict and contestation was not new to the history of Tamiḷnadu. While in some cases it was obvious and visible, there were, and are, subtle 'negotiations' for communities to survive amidst what becomes dominant and hegemonic in a particular time and context. My movement, meanwhile, had to happen from *arupaṭaivīṭu* to the Tamil Jainas to retrieve those subtle negotiations and 'survivals'. How far have I succeeded is, of course, a question.

I have also discussed a construct of 'sites of memory' as *pain sites* for the Tamil Jainas, whose constant evoking of the persecution stories is also a means/a 'weapon', if you may, to constantly remind the others *not* to forget. At the same time,

developments on the outside, in their environs, also act as constant reminders of their own ‘pain’ and any site of destruction of their identity becomes, again, their ‘pain site’ and a constant reminder of their having become dispensable to the overall history of the Tamil country. The mainstream that was constructed seemed to have been quite heady, bhakti, temple and Carnatic music, all of these completing a fine repertoire. I use the term ‘mainstream’ as critically of the mainstream as possible, not as a spokesperson for it. What I mean here, about Carnatic music, is the manner in which it seems to have become representative (forcibly) of the ‘mainstream’, with even the state advertising the annual December (*Mārgaḷi*) music festival as a tourist attraction, which it has become. Many scholars and even a few artists and musicians have, at different points, critiqued the mainstreaming of Carnatic music and a dance form such as Bharatanatyam. There is also a misconception about *veḷḷāḷas* having had nothing to do with music, even if there is an entire community of *isai veḷḷāḷars*, a comprehensive socio-political history of whom may also throw light on the inclusions and exclusions in the classical music arena. I do not dwell on music, or dance, in Tamil history. But if you ask the Tamil Jainas, they would say that they were forcibly removed from the Tamil music tradition precisely because of this forced mainstreaming, which became the preserve of the brāhmiṇs, even though most of the percussionists—*mridaṅgam vidwāns*, *thaviḷ vidwāns*, *nāgaswaram/nādaswaram vidwāns*—came from non-brāhmiṇ communities. And many of them have charted a different history for their own achievements by going solo in performances. Among Carnatic vocalists, M. S. Subbulakshmi, M. L. Vasanthakumari and Veena Dhanammal hailed from *isai veḷḷāḷar* community. Among dancers, there was the dancer of world renown, Bala Saraswathi, from the *Devadāsi* tradition. Their respective struggle to attain the stature they did has been well documented. When one talks of mainstream, one is suggesting the manner in which something becomes the dominant and the only visible paradigm there seems to be.¹⁸ Lakshmi Subramanian has noted that, ‘A distinguishing feature of the musical tradition in South India was its organisation along lines of caste and gender’ (Subramanian 2004, p. 70). She further points out that:

The Brāhmiṇ elite represented in academies and associations, such as the Madras Music Academy, seemed to have the upper hand. The domain of classical culture remained very much with them, a convergence that was fraught with implications for the art form as well as for some of its traditional practitioners... The discovery of music as a new source of aesthetic pleasure coincided with the growing middle class interest in relocating the tradition within a new social and intellectual context... (Ibid, p. 72).

[And] for the Brahmin community, consumption of classical music became an integral element in its self-definition, a marker of status and taste, and a cementing agent for a collective identity and presence that had no longer the same visibility in active political life. (Ibid, p. 88)

¹⁸ Just as the global market defines the mainstream in today’s context or the manner in which the Hindi cinema industry (popularly referred to as Bollywood, which then gives space to terms such as ‘Kollywood’, ‘Mollywood’ and so on) becomes the mainstream.

The present *maṭhātīpati* at the Melcittamur Jaina *maṭham*, once in a casual conversation, mentioned how the Tamil Jainas have contributed to the Tamil music tradition, but this is a tradition that has also become distant for the Tamil Jainas themselves, over time. Perhaps there is some truth in it which needs to be probed further. Lewis Rowell writes, for instance,

Most of what is known about the musical system of the Tamils comes from their most cherished literary treasure, the *Cilappatikāram* [The Story of an Anklet], and its two principal commentaries... The *Cilappatikāram* consists of 5,730 lines in the standard meter of Tamil epic poetry (*ācīriyam*), with occasional excursions into other meters and a few prose passages. It is divided into twenty-five cantos and five song cycles, distributed into three books that represent “the three distinct phases through which the narrative moves—the erotic, the mythic, and the heroic... Some of the passages on music contain extremely detailed information... The *Cilappatikāram*, like other major epics of the ancient world, existed as a flexible oral text long before it was edited and set down in the form in which we have received it. We do not know the age of the musical system whose details it records. The most that can be said is that the Tamil system apparently arose as an independent tradition... It is generally assumed that the musical system described in the *Cilappatikāram* and its commentaries evolved directly into the Carnatic musical tradition of modern South India, but that process is no clearer than is the similar process by which the ancient system recorded in early Sanskrit music treatises evolved into today's *rāgas* and *rāga* systems... The musical references in the main text and the two commentaries are few and far between, but they are remarkably explicit.... (Rowell 2000, pp. 138–139)

However, even while Rowell says this, there is an assumption (even here) that there was a ‘friction between indigenous Dravidian musical concepts and the Sanskrit system brought in by the new settlers’ (Ibid, p. 135).

Whatever the case may be, in general perception, neither the Buddhists nor the Jainas are invoked when it comes to discussions on contribution to the southern music tradition.

I also engage with the concept of *bhakti*, purely in the context of the Tamil region. And it needs to be situated as such; the northern context is quite at variance. And I am not looking at that history. It would be important to not universalise *bhakti* either, as many scholars have done and continue to do. For the Tamil Jaina community, it seemed to me, it was easier to remember, than to forget. Rather, it is easier to consciously remember than to consciously forget, or to consciously memorise (or build upon) than to consciously erase memories. I was to learn of the Appar and Nānacampantar stories¹⁹ from the Tamil Jainas. Meeting the Tamil Jainas led me to discover an already ongoing, and important, discourse regarding the Tamil Śaivite revivalist politics and Tamil language. *Suya Mariyatai Iyakkam* (of E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker ‘Periyar’) also had a different kind of importance for the Tamil Jainas I met, which I discuss in the book. This part of Jainism in Tamilnadu was unknown to me until I met these people in the villages.

¹⁹ I knew their names, of course, and I had read scholars write about them, and I did read historians and other scholars write about the *bhakti* poetry, but there are some very specific life stories associated with these two, in their hagiographies, vis-à-vis the Jainas. These stories were not part of my growing up, as I did, outside Tamilnadu.

1.2 Ways of Seeing, and the Title of This Book

With due apology to A. K. Ramanujan's 'Indian way of thinking'

- (a) *Reading* history with the Tamil Jainas
- (b) Reading *history* with the Tamil Jainas
- (c) Reading history *with* the Tamil Jainas
- (d) *Reading history*—with the Tamil Jainas

By *reading* history, I mean, history that I am reading at the same time that I am writing. It is more in reading it in a particular way that you get the kinds of meanings that writing history without reading it you do not.

Reading *history* with the Tamil Jainas is obvious; it is history that is the focus.

Reading history *with* the Tamil Jainas would mean to engage with the community and their memories and perspectives on their past or past in general in which they are actors and agents.

Reading history would be important, be it with Tamil Jainas or any other social group or community.

So one can deal with this book through any of the above lens and see if it fits any or all or none of these. The effort is to try to fit it into all of these paradigms.

This is not a book on Jaina philosophy or its spread in Tamil Nadu. There are other works that have dealt with it in the past. In terms of community, the Tamil Jainas relate to the Dravidian identity strongly. There are also occasions when they distinguish the *vaṭa* (northern) in terms of habits *paḷakkam*, while comparing how strict the people from the north are in practising Jaina tenets, and so on. They are different from the southern counterparts, though they are Jaina. So, there is a definite sense of separation between the north and the south.

1.3 Locating Oneself

Where do I locate myself? Firstly, since this question has been asked of me before where I shared parts of this research (and since sometimes it makes a difference), I am not a Jaina by birth. But I speak from having had the access to their memories narrated to me as well as from written archives; from their sense of their past and their place in Tamil culture and history. Having walked out of State archives pouring into inscriptional records (which one is expected to), into their homes, helped me understand how minorities get constructed over time and how they look at, and at times, internalise this minoritisation. How they negotiate their spaces and resist possibilities of complete disappearance from all discourse, including history. This they do *via* memory and constant identification with their pasts; through acts of remembering. Narrating, almost like a performance, their past, of their location and dislocation. Sometimes they hand over pamphlets, booklets, newspaper reports of every

Brāhmi inscription discovered with a Jaina connection to ‘prove’ their antiquity, itself being significant to their self-perception. It is through conversations that I accessed a Tamil (not just Jaina, but also Tamil) past I never knew of in mainstream accounts.

I also locate myself in a contemporary period, where history or histories (more so, the former, as in a singular ‘history’ or historical narrative for an entire nation, nation itself being a modern concept) have become contested spaces. One has grown up seeing attempts at different times (including at present) to club identities such as Jaina and Buddhist too, with the ‘Hindu’ merely on account of these religions being ‘old’ and ‘endemic’ to India. Or, on the other hand, there have been attempts to wipe out memories through conscious acts of destruction—of sites and in other ways. But religious persecution and violent suppression were not new in the Tamil Jaina context. They had faced the worst between the seventh and ninth centuries CE from the *nāyaṇmārs* and *alivārs* (more so, the former) who are deified in temples today. Even in modern times, the impalement of Jaina monks was symbolically celebrated in street processions in Madurai, which the Tamil Jainas protested against through petitions to the government. In the colonial period records, we find mention of this:

For the following account...I am indebted to Mr. K.V. Subramani Aiyar. Sri Gnana Sambandar Svami who was an incarnation of Subramanya, the son of Siva...was sent into the world by Siva to put down the growing prevalence of the Jain heresy, and to re-establish the Saivite faith in Southern India...At the time a certain Kun Pandya (hunchback) Pandyan was ruling the Madura country, where as elsewhere Jainism had asserted its influence...The Queen and the prime minister were Saivite, invited Gnana Sambandar (to extirpate the Jains). He came with thousands of followers and took abode in a mutt on the north side of Vaigai river...Jain priests, 8000 in number, found this out...set fire to his residence. But disciples extinguished the flames...Sambandar made flames take the form of a virulent fever to affect one side of the King's body, which he cured...The king became beautiful and was called Sundarapandya thenceforth...Books of Saivites travelled upstream and Jains' books perished; [Post these trials, etc] many converted to Saivites. The number [of those who converted] was so great that the available supply of sacred ashes was exhausted. [Those who could not be converted] were impaled on stakes resembling sula or trident...The events [are]...gone through at 5 of the 12 annual festivals at Madura temple. On these occasions an image representing a Jain impaled on a stake is carried in procession. (Thurston 1909, pp. 435–8)²⁰

The nature of conflict that led to the marginalisation of Tamil Jainas was severe, aided as it was by political patronage and brāhminical hegemony.

Then there was the sectarian context in the Tamil country within which we need to locate the textual tradition of the Buddhists and Jainas. What the Tamil Jainas, as a habit, almost, told me—regarding their texts being appropriated by other sects and castes—is a facet that a few scholars have noted. For instance,

Charles E. Gover wrote in 1871...[that] “The Brāhmins corrupted what they could not destroy. The editing of all the books gradually fell to them, because they alone had the leisure and knowledge that literary labour required... This process continued until it was impossible to discover the original... The only copies that I have been able to purchase are as obscure and overloaded with purāṇic superstition as the legend of any pagoda. And the

²⁰ Emphasis mine. Note that his ‘source for the story’ is a brāhmin.

same thing has occurred with all the best Dravidian poetry...” William Taylor in 1835 speaks about Siddha works being “uniformly destroyed” by “the ascetics of the Śaiva class” and adds that they are, by consequence, rather scarce and chiefly preserved by native Christians. When the books could not be destroyed, they—a so-called Dherma Sabha in Madras—“caused to be printed an interpolated and greatly corrupted version, as the genuine work of an author, but maintaining just the reverse as his real opinions”...The whole problem, of willful destruction, ideological interpolations, interference and ‘corruption’ of ancient Tamil texts is a matter which certainly needs further independent investigation (Zvelebil 1992, pp. 46–47)

I also look at marginalisation in terms of significance attached to land grants to brāhmins in historical writing (even when it is critical of it) making the temple paradigm so overwhelming to the Tamil historical past as to negate other counter discourses. These predominant works play out also in contemporary politics. For instance, contemporary government tourist brochures and maps (Tamilnadu) continue to focus more on the Śaivite, Vaiṣṇavite temples than Buddhist and Jaina ones. There are more works on the bhakti bards, and on each of the bigger temples of Tamil Nadu (such as the ones in Thanjavur and Madurai districts), than there are on either the Buddhists or Jainas or their sacred sites. It almost works towards making the official historical memory wipe out some communities, by refusing them subjective agency in the creation of this collective history.

How do the Tamil Jainas construct their identity through the language Tamil? In the early twentieth century they were bringing out Tamil books, even those engaging with Dravidian movement streams and with radical political thinker Periyar, presenting their case of alienation from Tamil history as counter to the history of the dominant community intellectuals. Efforts were on to recover or retrieve Jaina Tamil literature from conscious efforts of appropriation by other communities. Even scholars who have dealt with the discourse of language and ideas of the written or speech community have tended to treat of the language of the region as a category only in contradistinction to brāhminised or brāhminical Sanskrit. For instance, Sudipta Kaviraj has noted that the ‘origin of vernacular languages appears to be intimately linked to an internal conceptual rebellion within classical Brāhminical Hinduism...’ (Kaviraj 2010, p.140) He makes this statement in connection with the emergence of the ‘language of transparency and nearness’ exemplified by bhakti Hinduism, as he calls it (Ibid, p. 140). This would convey that there were no discursive processes within linguistic traditions totally outside of the brāhminical, or bhakti, for that matter. The Tamil Jaina community and the language Tamil, in fact, emerged in a totally non-god or non-deity-bhakta relationship discourse. That is to say that the entire discourse happened outside of the frame of the ‘distance’ of the ‘inaccessible Sanskrit’ or the ‘semiotic of nearness and informality’ that Kaviraj has spoken about (Ibid, p. 140). The idiom, the meter and the tone here, in the case of Tamil, and the communities identifying themselves with the language were entirely of a different construct, which must be understood in its depth.

At another level the entire idea of ‘vernacular’ as a concept arising as a rebellion against the classical brāhminical Hinduism seems to give a kind of primordality or

primogeniture to both Sanskrit as well as the brāhminical conception of things which then make the other linguistic literary or speech traditions always seem like a response to that 'original' which somehow became esoteric and distanced. In case of Tamil, it was the nationalist discourse of building on an illusionary national speech community which converged with the sense of alienation in a caste-based speech and written tradition, Sanskrit of the brāhmins, of an original Tamil speech community that made the insistence on Tamil and, in connection with it, the denouncing of the brāhmin seem like a 'response to'. But prior to the nationalist discourse, even in earlier moments, Tamil was always the basic framework of expressing ideas that were both esoteric and distanced (to some communities, such as the tribal communities, with their own traditions) and near and accessible in case of those who had been consciously distanced in the process of creation of a hegemony of the temple and brāhmin-centered ethos.

The inscriptions of the rock-cut caves and natural caverns, as one found in conversations with the present-day Tamil Jainas, are important to the community only in establishing its antiquity and identity related to the language Tamil—their '*tāi-moli*' (mother language/mother tongue)—and the temple inscriptions only figure in their narratives when it comes to establishing the nature of 'big-time' support for their doctrine and subsequent changes therein. And it is also true that most of the ancient sites of the Brāhmi inscriptions and places around these are not settled by the Tamil Jainas now. In that sense, there is a deep sense of having been forcibly 'de-linked' from their antiquity in Tamil history, which is as much their deep sense of feeling persecuted. The de-linking is from the past of the Tamil Brāhmi records of their past popularity to an existence of relative oblivion in later periods, and the present. The Tamil Jainas do not take lightly the attempts to wipe off their antiquity. A case in point was a petition in the Madurai court by the Tamil Jainas against stone quarrying of Pudukkottai with Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions of the second century BCE. Of course, the stone quarrying companies didn't stop the activity for very long. How limited, or limiting, at times, is the study of inscriptions when used as the main, or the only, source of writing history of some living traditions and communities? But without touching these records, one is not considered historian enough, especially of early periods in history, though that trend has changed considerably over the years.

How should a historian look at communities and histories of the marginalised? At least in the case of the Tamil Jainas, there are numerous inscriptional records to delve into, and a lot of them have been already documented and written about; but what about those communities who have no such written records?

Even if you speak of the Tamil Jainas, having documented all the inscriptional records to affirm their antiquity, what do you do thereafter? Similarly, what do you do with the Buddhist records (the few that are left) and sites (the few remaining, if they are not already converted everywhere, as they have mostly been)? What would these tell you about the people? What about that history which is no longer seen? Or community narratives or history records at homes (where history is) preserved almost with doggedness, lest these get lost, too? Interestingly, the struggle to save

the rock-cut caves and natural caverns by the Tamil Jainas has a lot to do with the Tamil Brāhmi script and, by extension, the language Tamil.

The peculiarity of the Tamil Jainas rests on the fact that they are by and large economically, politically and socially on the margins. What one says for them should work for the Tamil Buddhists of a continuous living tradition, if at all someday someone finds them in one of the villages in Tamil Nadu. How did the entire community disappear from Tamil history? Did the entire community of Tamil Buddhists convert, all of them, unlike some of the Jainas who stuck to their religious order? Would someday some chronicler seek out at least a single family of Tamil Buddhists of the ancient lineage? Did all of them leave, *en masse*, to Sri Lanka? Where did they go? One wonders as to whether these questions bothered anybody? Were they just happy to write about the episodes of persecution and leave it at that, in case of the Tamil Buddhists? When I say Tamil Buddhists, I mean the ones who have had a long history from the early Caṅkam period, and not those who accepted the Buddhist faith as a matter of political choice in the present era.

1.4 Two Roads

There is one road, where monuments, literary works and inscriptions are scattered around. If you take this one, you are awestruck at the beauty of the reliefs on stones and cave beds of an era long gone, and you see temples with beautiful architecture which are equally fascinating. On this road, the historical trajectory is usually (as it has been so far) one of origins, rise and decline/fall. But there is another road, where you meet people and living villages with their own agricultural seasons and everyday lives across historical time. What do you get here? Not just a reiteration of the antiquity that you saw on the other road (but of a different kind) but an amazing range of material: a photocopy of a government order issued from Fort St. George by the British government ordering destruction of one HMV record which abuses Jainas, handwritten letters from a certain Kamil Zvelebil written to a prominent Tamil Jaina (T. S. Sripal), some bits about an article called *Purāṇa Āpācam* contributed to E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker Periyar's *Kuṭi Aracu* in one of its earliest issues and some interesting information about the Tamil Jaina engagement with the Self-Respect Movement. You get to see an image of Kundakundācārya on a gold coin, an image that never existed in your mind before and you hear a story of Ellis and his tryst with the *Tirukkuraḷ* and that the *Kuraḷ* was authored by a Jaina. You also find a Tamil Jaina *Tiruvempāvai* composed to a tīrthankara which has been printed from a palm leaf manuscript version found at the Jaina *maṭham* at Melcittamur; you get songs, pamphlets and several kinds of information that open up new dimensions of engagement with community history and understanding marginalisation of a different kind. It's like this road leads you to a house with many doors within doors; a house that was never opened before. And you also find all that is happening in the process of a community seeking to preserve its memory or the historical memory or the history of the memory of its being, having been or continuing to be; its

minority-ness (in numbers and in expressions of universality that envelope it) and marginal existence, it seems pegged on. Its *minority-ness* and marginalisation today reminding it of how far it has traversed and what all transpired, to fling it to this state of being. In the present, as you seek to understand the past, of any minority marginalised community, you see glimpses otherwise lost to the idea of having a 'rounded-up', 'comprehensive' history.

Reading history with the Tamil Jainas is also about how a community is actually preserving its history and reading its history to its own members and constantly telling it to the world, lest they forget. Some communities, and their histories, are constantly facing challenges.²¹ In the Tamil Jaina case, there is a constant threat to their rock-cut caves and caverns with Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions from the business of stone quarrying, and recently, underground explorations and mining for electricity generation. The people involved in these businesses are powerful and politically influential and that makes it a tough proposition for the small numbers of Tamil Jainas to keep up the struggle to protect their heritage sites which are their sites of memory. For a while, if the activities have been stopped, these may resume in another time. Here is a community that is extremely particular not only about its antiquity in Tamil history but also the *historicity* of its antiquity in Tamil history. And historicity, here, may be taken to mean sources of history that are tangible, visible and can be 'proven' (which the community asserts time and again, like the traditional historian would, regarding 'evidence' and data). In a different world, though, when you look for those 'hard', stonewalled or documented or scripted evidence of a community's past, would you be rendering all those without those hard, visible, scripted records *ahistorical*? Well, this question is for another time.

The idea of discussing the Tamil language question came to me from conversations with the Tamil Jainas in their villages. This was not initially part of my study. Their conversations almost always meandered towards Tamil language and literature which was part of their identity. This aspect has been left largely un-explored in earlier studies, especially the place of the Tamil Jainas within the discourse on Tamil language, nation, printing of books, etc. I cannot find the exact reason for this, but it seems to me that this bit within this overall history could only happen through interaction with the community and through their narratives, from homes in the villages where these discussions happen in the present time, also because of their sense of loss and memory associated with the aspect of Tamil literature and language. One also needs to acknowledge that this comes vectored through all the movements (anti-caste, anti-brāhmin, etc.) in the history of Tamil Nadu that the community has been both witness to and participant in. This also comes from 'reading history' 'with' (the contemporary) Tamil Jainas, a far more critical engagement and more

²¹ If not by the unleashing of communal violence on them, then by prevalent universalist ideas of economy and progress, and some histories can well be demolished, for they are inconsequential to these ideas. One can locate demolition of several tribal settlements in the ongoing economic development paradigm, either for dams or for mines in this context. Reserved forests were the older paradigm of un-settling tribal communities in the colonial period. Displacement is not just of the communities, but also their histories and historical location.

interesting than a mere perusal of archival records *sans* community. Why is it important, the idea of language and ‘authorship’ over a linguistic culture—literacy canons, etc.? To understand this part, no inscriptional records help. They do not bring alive this aspect of language and identity questions; the Tamil Jaina community narratives do. And these are not strictly ‘oral’ in the sense of being simply told and retold over generations. Yes, they are told and retold over generations, but the tellings are about a written culture, a script, a language tradition they feel they own as much as any other community does in Tamil Nadu (they never ever said they were the sole proprietors of that Tamil linguistic tradition, in any of their narratives, unlike the Śaivite counterparts who claimed primogeniture over Tamil and their antiquity in Tamil land, unlike the brāhminical hold over the Vedas either). They hand you out Tamil books, pamphlets, articles and newspaper reports, which are equally part of an organic history.

Emmrich makes a point about the manner in which the Tamil Jainas are perceived:

On all sides, the Jains are those who are historically not Tamil although they had an impact on the Tamils, whether bad or good, whether negligible or enormous, and have, although one might disagree as to what degree, made them and their literature what we now know. The perception of their foreignness may be meaningfully connected to three attitudes: (1) since the Jains are non-Tamils, they were good for Tamil literature because they educated, beautified, and improved what the Tamils, by themselves, were unable to do; (2) they were bad for Tamil literature because, by imposing themselves, they temporarily kept the Tamils from preserving their Tamilness; or (3) they are irrelevant for Tamil literature because if we are dealing with things Tamil, like Śaivism, the Dravidian or the Tamil language, we do not need to refer to them. The past tense of the first two attitudes and, above all, the timelessness of the third brings us to the...role, or rather non-role, attributed to the Jains, over which the same kind of pervasive consensus rules as with their non-Tamilness: the Jain as absent. Such a role may be already seen as prefigured in those readings that play down the presence of Jains in Tamil literature throughout its history. (Emmrich 2011, p. 621)

When you read history with the community (via chronicling their perspectives of their past), you begin to ask questions you never asked before. How is a ‘minority’ constructed, or, rather, how is majority constructed over time, which minoritises? Who, or what, is over-visible and who/what is hidden, and why? There is a problem when you hear that Buddhism could not survive in the country of its origin. But it surely thrives in the Himalayan region and in parts of the north-east of India as a living tradition. But the idea of its ‘non-survival’ comes from a majoritarian viewpoint of history, where the largest numbers seem to be the only touchstone for declaring something as ‘true’, and as ‘a (or, the only) way of life’.

My PhD thesis was titled *Identities in Conflict: Jainism in early Tamiḷakam*.²² There was a reason for that title. Because I found several moments in history of Tamil Nadu when different identities were in conflict rather than living in peaceful happy co-existence. They may be individually leading happy, peaceful lives, useful lives, etc., but as communities—with a conscious sense of belonging to a distinct group, which gets asserted at different points of time, for different reasons—many

²² Doctoral thesis, JNU, New Delhi (2009).

have layers in their historical consciousness which remind them of their distinct identity which led to violence and ruptures in the past and could lead to the same in the present, as well. Back in the seventh century CE in Tamil Nadu, the Buddhists and Jainas became the ‘outsiders’ who had to be ‘taught a lesson’. Scholars of certain religious persuasions writing on the bhakti even in present times have written about the Buddhists and Jainas as outsiders who corrupted the ancient Tamil culture and language. And some scholars continue to equate the ‘efflorescence’ of Tamil with the bhakti movement and mention bhakti as having ushered in the ‘vernacular’ (in this case Tamil), which was not the case. Some call it a ‘democratic’ movement. Was it truly one? Perhaps there is a need to re-evaluate some theories which have been taken as a ‘given’ and to work on hidden, and relatively silent, aspects instead of the loud and most visible?

1.5 On ‘Community’

For the purposes of this book, I use the term ‘community’ in a political sense, or in terms of the politics of the socio-cultural context. Where members evoke the idea of ‘community’ from a common social history, from a shared historical lineage, shared language and a *shared history of the language* and their place within it (in terms of their contribution to the language and the linguistic tradition). There is also in the term ‘community’ a sense of difference and distinction from the ‘other’, where the sense of community comes to the fore in times of crises, conflicts, etc., in order to seek ‘citizenship’ (in modern context of constitution and democracy). While I have not dwelt on the idea of ‘community’ in a single chapter or section, I felt the need to let that idea of the sense of community that the Tamil Jainas relate to come forth in the chapters where I dwell on the language Tamil, discourses on the politics of belonging in a Tamil tradition, the idea of history as shared by the community and memory. They seek recognition as a historical subject and agent, which they feel they have not been given. Their collective memory is that of a people wronged by history.

The sense of community or the identity question works at different levels: in memory (collective memory), textual tradition, history and everyday practices. I am hoping that all these justify the use of the term community for the Tamil Jainas:

Memory, then, of both the explicit, intentional variety and the involuntary or implicit sort makes possible identity as the persistence of the subject (whether individual or group). *And in turn that persistence, the enduring character of the community, is part of the ground of an array of duties to remember and not to forget.* Memory helps to make possible that persistence (*is a core part of that persistence*), which is the basis of duties across time, including duties to remember. (Booth 2008, p. 248)²³

Another crucial aspect about the subject of this book is the ‘region’ itself, the Tamil country, or Tamiḻakam or Tamil Nadu—each of these terms having its own historical meaning. The latter would be the region carved out after breaking up of Madras

²³ Emphasis on longer sentence, mine.

Presidency into Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu based on linguistic lines. It is important to recognise, also, that they inhabit a geographical space which is historically one where several groups have asserted a 'community' sense, many times fiercely, vis-à-vis the others. It is difficult to imagine a Tamil land without identity conflicts, and assertions, across centuries. It is not about merely how the self is perceived but the self in relation to or in contrast to or with respect to the other, which is significant in the Tamil Jaina case. One would place the stories of persecution within this. They are conscious of their being Jaina as well as Tamil, and each of these categories can be the community: a religious community and a speech/language/linguistic community. In case of Tamil, many times the linguistic category—which is intertwined with the geo-cultural space in an *akam* sense of it, that is, the eco-space becoming the interior space of language and cultural traditions—overrides categories of caste, class and religion. The most recent example would be the agitation and discourse on 'Tamil culture' resulting from the ban on *jallikaṭṭu*, the bull race, which was later revoked. The discourse began as an issue of animal rights and cruelty to animals, which began to be interpreted as an attempt to destroy what was considered an essentially *Tamil* cultural symbol. Here, then, Tamil culture became the prime factor, subsuming various other identities such as caste, class, religion, etc. Of course, there was also a discussion on whether the *jallikaṭṭu* discourse really mattered to, or took into consideration, the dalits. This overarching *Tamil culture* is also evoked by the Tamil Jains. Here the Jaina identity is closely intertwined with the Tamil (*drāviḍa*) identity. This book attempts to dwell on the Tamil culture and language discourse in some detail.

It is in Tamil that a regional Jaina identity can be said to have been forged. The development and consolidation of a regional identity itself is an interesting phenomenon. Speaking of the 'regional', Kunal Chakrabarti has pointed out, in the context of the Bengal *Purāṇas*, that:

An important criterion for the formation of regional identity is the development of the literary language of a region. Adherence to a particular language by a group of people is unmistakably a cultural statement, and it is in language that 'perceived cultural space and instituted political space coincide'...The evolution of a literary language and a corpus of literature particular to a region must have contributed to a heightened awareness of cultural homogeneity among the people of (a) region. (Chakrabarti 2001, p. 297)

About the development/use of the language of the region by Jaina teachers, Jaini says:

Kannada was the most important of the vernacular languages for Jaina Purāṇic composition, and in turn Jaina authors were instrumental in the development of Kannada as a literary language. The "Three Gems" of Kannada literature, Pampa, Ponna and Ranna were all Jains who wrote less than a century after the great Karnataka Sanskrit author Jinasenā. But whereas Jinasenā and his disciple Guṇabhadra were both mendicants, the Kannada authors were householders. The development of Jaina literature in the vernacular seems to have been a process similar to the development of Hindu literature in vernaculars such as Bengal, Hindi, Oriya, and Telugu. In both cases, educated laity wrote in a language accessible to the broader populace, in reaction to the elite, non-mother languages used by the religious professionals. (Jaini 1993, p.281)

There can be other ways of looking at 'region' and community identity, as well. For instance:

Geographers commonly recognise that, in terms of the basis for their recognition, all regions may be classified as instituted, denoted, or naively given. Instituted regions are “instituted by human agency as distinctive and discrete units limiting the areal extent of operation of certain functions” (Hartshorne 1965:619), and are generally administrative in nature. Denoted regions are created primarily for the purpose of organising and analysing information, while the naively given region is “recognised as a meaningful territorial entity by the people who live there and/or by other people to whom it is of some concern” (Schwartzberg 1967:89–90)...naively given regions...have their origins in people’s perceptions, in their mental ordering of the world around them...(and) may be considered subjective. (Lodrick, in Schomer, et.al 1994, p.3)

In the Tamil Jaina case, being in Tamilakam, or Tamil Nadu, is a given, a priori, while their perception of themselves as a community could be conceptually understood within the framework of a ‘naively given region’. This would give one the scope of comprehending the live dynamics of a community’s relationship with the environment it lives in and engages with, rather than study just one aspect of the community, namely, Jainism (as the only marker, in the universal Jain-ism sense) in Tamilnadu, this modern notion of the state, then being the ‘instituted’ idea. In the latter case, there is no concern with what happens within the community, but only concern with what others (royalty, bhakti bards, etc.) did to the community.

However, there might be a third angle to it whereby the community perceives of itself in both the ‘instituted’ when it came to their village and its place in Tamil Jaina history. For the purposes of a historian looking at these concepts (‘instituted’, ‘denoted’, ‘naively given’ regions) inscriptional records, for instance, in this case, would not point to these dynamics and live interactions. But stories, narratives and changes within those might. In this context one is reminded of a point made by Obeyesekere in his study of the cult of the goddess Pattini. He says:

Historiography that relies exclusively on well-documented and incontrovertible historical evidence such as from inscriptions must surely be wrong since it assumes that the recorded data must be the significant data shaping history, transforming institutions of people. (Obeyesekere 1984, p. 605)

But of course, like Lodrick later points out:

Conceptualisation of regions and the emergence of regional identities reflect processes involving complex historical, cultural and social forces working in a particular geographic setting over lengthy periods of time.... (Lodrick 1994, p. 34)

The larger ‘Tamil’ mythic corpus, or cultural paradigm, needs to be seen (and never seen in scholarship so far) as not necessarily or essentially the merger of brahminical folk but as one with several (many) underlying layers of interactions with such systems as Buddhist and Jaina hitherto mostly considered of ‘non-sensual’ orientation and therefore disenchanted by the popular rituals and traditions necessarily oriented towards the sensual and intimate god/deity/supernatural-human relationships (referring here, particularly to the bhakti concept). In the last case, one must mention an effort made in this direction in the brilliant monograph on the Pattini cult (written not recently but till date used as an excellent document on Sinhala Buddhism) and Buddhism in Sri Lanka by Gananath Obeyesekere (1984). Here Buddhism is shown as using the popular (‘folk’) Pattini cult (Pattini, deified in

Tamil folk tradition even before she 'moved' to Sri Lanka²⁴) making her an 'eligible' candidate, so to speak, for Buddhahood. Obeyesekere's intention is to look at institutionalisation of the cult. And importantly, the goddess Pattini is both a 'Hindu' and a 'Buddhist' deity in Sri Lanka and both have added to the mythic corpus of this cult, with a central shrine in the Sabaragamuwa province at Navagamuva. The cult is supposed to have diffused into Sri Lanka and operated in a cultural context of the Sinhala. In the Buddhist context she is an aspirant for Buddhahood.

However, in the Sri Lankan context, which Obeyesekere analysed in his work, Buddhism is the overwhelming paradigm, and the Buddhist tradition takes a character like Pattini, already by then deified in popular religion, to give her a Buddhist dimension. In this sense, if we look at Nīlakeci (where there is certainly no ritual dimension or religious compulsion involved, most likely), the author creates a whole new character out of an infamous one, giving the character an entirely new dimension. The difference is, however, that unlike Kaṇṇaki, who became Pattini (the goddess), Nīlakeci remains a character bound within a text and does not assume deified status in the Jaina religious system. The intriguing question here (which one is not inclined or qualified enough, yet, to answer/resolve) is 'why'?

What is important here is that Buddhist and Jaina traditions too had been open to influence (and were also influencing) the popular, non-brāhminical traditions prevalent in their time, and it is necessary to recognise these in order to move away from the 'plot' (if one may use the term) of brahminisation altogether. For what are referred to as 'dominant' and 'marginal' (which one also tends to use) traditions, inasmuch as there are historical processes that create them, are also created and reiterated in historical writing and reconstruction—highlighting them at a sustained level to the exclusion of others.²⁵

There are, of course, many identities a person relates to at different points: vocational groups, class, caste, religion, gender, etc. That is a given. But for the purposes of this book, the focus is on a religious community within its linguistic historical paradigm and a regional context (Tamilnadu). Caste, gender and vocation are also addressed, contextually, within the region, the Tamil country. It is important to take into account the regional history or regional context of the religious community in order to avoid the pitfalls of making for a universal history or a monolithic, linear history that nationalistic ideologies have a penchant for. What applies for the Digambara Jains in Tamilnadu may not for those in other parts of the country; there are regional codes of behaviour, too, and idioms, that need to be accounted for.

²⁴After fifth, before the sixth century CE (Obeyesekere 1984, p.363).

²⁵This point is meant as a general observation of the larger trend in most (not all) writing on religion and religious processes. There is no denying the fact that this larger trend has in its own ways sharpened the points of debate and discourse on brāhminical and Purāṇic religious processes. One wishes there were (and there is not) a similar intensity of debate and discourse on Buddhist and Jaina religious processes (within these religions, which are usually seen as fossilised) so far as work on religion in the Tamil country (and these religions) is concerned.

1.6 Method of Enquiry and Structure of This Book

Methodologically speaking, I have sought to read the history of a living community through engagement with the Tamil Jaina people living marginal, and to a large extent hidden lives, with their pasts many times not making it to the mainstream discourse, on account (perhaps) of the overwhelming idioms of social and political culture in Tamilnadu, in spite of its history of having fought those very idioms in the not so distant past. Mine is an effort to shine a torch on the darker corners of history, rendered dark because they have been pushed to corners inaccessible, or difficult to access. There are many such dark corners, and this is not the only one, nor is that being suggested. For the present study, I have chosen this particular corner. Though I have had the urge to let go several times, since the completion of my PhD thesis, some developments in the present times have made me turn back and not let it go without telling this one story for it has not been told before in this manner.

When I initiated a study of the Tamil Jainas as a community in the course of my doctoral research, there weren't works that addressed this living community historically, from the present, backwards. There is a reason for the form this book has taken. It is meant to evoke a sense of taking a walk down memory lane, documenting the people—of the present—living their history. Each person I met, urged me to walk back into the past of the community that he/she wished should be recorded, literally. This sense of people's history has come to me even from other contexts (where I was not even chronicling community social histories). There seems to be an urgency on part of marginalised (economically, culturally, socially or politically, or in every way possible) people to have their voices heard, recorded, represented or, at least, presented. One could have chosen to simply enlist the names of the villages inhabited by the Tamil Jainas and the inscriptions found there, the temples there, to 'prove' their presence or to prove their historically *having been*, as well as my being 'historian enough' (in the course of my doctoral research), but it was important for me to record my movement as a chronicler, past these villages, meeting people with names and faces (which, in a future time, will become 'history')—some of whom have already become the 'past' today, having died in the meantime—which gives credence to the idea of reading history with a community.²⁶

I did not go expecting what I ended up receiving and recording. I went, as others would have, perhaps, to 'see' the Tamil Jaina villages, also seeking monuments, the 'hard' 'evidence' of history of their having been there, in the past. I did 'see' the monuments, of course, and inscriptional records inscribed on those, and I saw the rocks and boulders with similar 'hard evidence' (literally). I had also gone to see if the stories of persecution of the Jainas in the past were 'true', if they remembered them at all. But, as it happens, I did not ask the first person I met in those villages anything about persecution. I was struck by the fact that there were, indeed, Tamil Jainas still living these memories, in their consciousness, much after the 'last words' (*as if*) had been written about their downfall and they had been written off as a past.

²⁶At the same time, there should not be a singular manual of writing a book of history. I have sought to attempt an engaged, sincere and serious tone in a format that may not necessarily fit into a particular genre of writing history.

The pasts, however, were in their minds, which they seemed to constantly evoke: reliving moments of glory as well as betrayals, suppressions. The grand donations inscribed on temple walls or rocks did not mean too much for their present state of near-hidden existence. The history that they led me to, actually, were also written in Tamil pamphlets, books, booklets, newsletters, English newspaper clippings, books, letters, photographs, testimonials, etc. There was no other format that would do justice to this manner of my finding these pasts (outside of those I had found in archives and libraries and monuments) than to approach it as a journey through each of the villages as a present site, a living site, with people whose histories span several centuries and several generations. This *longue durée* was not something I expected to present itself to me this way. So, the Chap. (3)—Community Narratives, Inscriptional Records: A Chronicle of Journeys through Tamil Jaina Villages—is of the present, juxtaposed with the past; sometimes the present there does not dialogue with the past at all, and sometimes it does. Many a times, the people were not interested in *grand narratives*. They were not mythologising their pasts. Their pasts had to have a definite historicity, for which they would produce ‘evidence’: sometimes the monumental ones and at others the written records of various kinds. I wished to understand if the people related to the inscriptional records at all. Juxtaposing inscriptional histories with conversations and community narratives gave a variegated historical account. Sometimes the histories they related to was that of their own village or surrounding villages as a circulatory space. Sometimes it was about an iconic figure in their midst, such as someone who had taken the *sallēkhana vratam* (fast unto death), in the last 50–60 years, just as the ones commemorated on the Tirunatharkunru rock near Gingee (Cenji). There was more than one narrative of persecution, not just the better-known bhakti period one. Sometimes there was no ‘history’ in what they spoke, for they spoke of what it meant to be a Jaina²⁷: eating before dark, being vegetarian, or doing certain rituals, etc. It was about the present state of being ‘different’ from others for these reasons and also about the present state of economic distress some of them are in. There are several communities in our midst, in general, whose official or state histories are at variance with what they speak of as their histories. These come forth in their narratives and everyday conversations. Going in their midst as a journalist or a historian is not the central point. Recording what they said—which a journalist, as well as a historian can do—should be the case in point.

Journalism had taught me to listen to people. People have many things to say. Sieving through it all, one comes to a common thread, sometimes, of the issue at hand: be it poverty, displacement, or dislocated histories. Listening to a lot of people wanting someone to write for them, about them, isn’t as simple as pouring through records in an archive or library, where one is alone with that material. On the ground, sometimes, many people speak at once, the same thing or different things; they agree and disagree. They tell some of the same stories in different versions, or the same versions, in different places, village after village. They tell different stories, too. There one goes without expecting to listen to what one is about to hear, though one does go with questions. In an archive, or library, while one does go seeking a specific record in mind, or an idea of it, one encounters something totally unexpected,

²⁷ But of course there is a historical element in there, too: what the tradition says a ‘true’ Jaina is and what it has become today.

as well, which is equally fascinating. Encountering a massive, unfrequented rock-cut cave is equally fascinating. There, just the silence speaks to you. But the archival material—the rock—remains in that very place (at least these days, with spaces becoming public assets, like a library or a building), for us to pick up at a later date, unless, in face of an impossible eventuality, it is demolished, and lost to us forever, like the strange case of the palm-leaf manuscript of Valayāpati, here now, and gone next, much to the chagrin of U. Ve. Ca. People do not always remain there to tell you the same story the next time you visit them; sometimes they themselves become part of the history they narrated the last time. So that moment of recording the story (commonly told by many in other places) also becomes history; they too become archives. The moment of recording changes. Spaces change. But in the midst of these changes, some stories remain, narrated all over again like the last time they were.²⁸

As for memories and recording these:

Social memory is a form of relational practice, which is located, disparate, and often dissonant in nature. Social memories are composed of the fragmented stories that surround specific places and events; that are passed around within and between generations. . . . It is a realm of controversy, where people actively engage with the past in the present, mobilising memory to interpret present events and relationships and to inform the production of identity and place. As such it has a powerful hold on people's conception of themselves and their place in the world. (Jones, Russell 2012, p.271)

In the Tamil Jaina case, all their monuments and written records and their textual tradition did not prevent their being rendered invisible to mainstream history, what to say of those communities without written records or monuments? Sometimes, monuments are the memories that communities possess of their past, of course layers added and deleted. Yet they are there. It was to make sense of how history is perceived through these that I chose a format that might represent this fluidity and the constant tussle of the present with the past. But not everybody talks of the past. They also speak of mundane things, always making a point about doing things the 'Jaina' way or the right way to be Jaina.

Chapters 3 and 4 ('Retrieving' and Seeking the Tamil Jaina Self: The Politics of Memory, Identity and Tamil Language) must be read in conjunction with each other, or perhaps as a long sequence of history itself.

Images are an important dimension in my work. In order for them tell their own stories, they follow some of the chapters in the book where they seem representatively relevant, preceded by the explanatory notes given at the end of the chapters. But where relevant, I have given reference to the page numbers which the image could be—if a reader wished—seen in conjunction with. That way, the images and what I narrate in the book, may have their own separate (connected to each other or not) 'moorings', as it were. The images in this book 'respond to' the two main com-

²⁸What I have to say is that it is better to be an engaged journalist, sensitive to multiple histories, multiple communities and pasts in the everyday world, multiple lived realities than an archival historian removed from the real world inhabited by people in real locations, where histories are not just lived but challenged and questioned and sometimes wiped out as an everyday event; one fine day, the religion you are writing about is a mere shadow of what you thought it was; monuments may remain, but may not remain, too.

ponents of this book: community narratives and inscriptions and; memory, Tamil language and identity. They are meant to evoke their own meanings as visuals of a community and culture hardly ‘seen’ in the mainstream. Some of the information in the ‘Annexures’ help to locate the region and identify Tamil Jaina settlements and sites, some of which was gathered, over the years, by the members of the community, in their own efforts to document their history.

This book, while being largely based on my doctoral dissertation, has taken more time—of dwelling within—than usual²⁹ and further questions, theoretical in nature about its relevance, and retracing my steps back to the Tamil Jaina villages that I visited the first time, besides finding a new one, or two, in the process. The book seeks to engage with the hiddenness of a community, on its marginality to the history and politics of a region, or nation, keeping in mind some fundamental theoretical questions. It might be possible to place any other minority, marginalised community in the place of the Tamil Jains (while being sensitive to the differences in cultural, political and social contexts in each case) to understand the nature and form of universalising tendencies. I am conscious of the fact that taking ‘by-lanes’, rather than ‘national highways’, is far more revealing of important chapters in several people’s histories.

1.7 Maps: Mainstream and ‘Tamil Jaina’

The figures in the following pages are representative of the following, respectively: locating old and new Tamil Jaina settlements on a modern state map (Fig. 1.1); cartography of a hegemonic tradition and places (Fig. 1.2); and a community’s own cartography of its old, historical space (though within one modern district, in this case, Tiruvannamalai (Fig. 1.3).

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²⁹I admit that in my case, an issue I was engaged in, at that moment, seemed far more immediate and crucial to write about: the immediate displacement of over three hundred thousand tribal people and several dalits to a dam seemed far too ‘at once’ than the subtle and overt marginalisation (and dislocation, too, in some senses) from history of a minority community in another part of the country. And hence, I stuck to the idea that the book documenting the former narratives would be my first, because of the immediacy of the issue. Would I have thought differently today? I am not sure. Maybe. Perhaps I could have seen the two as different contexts, each relevant in their own ways historically. But another reason to not publish my thesis immediately was also to do with questions of whether it deserved publication. Today, I have that rare advantage of having followed up on—directly and indirectly, from closer-up and from a distance—a community for nearly a decade; it remains as marginal to mainstream Tamil history as it did when I began work on it. And some of my earlier arguments made in my PhD thesis seem to need no major alteration, based on work done thereafter. If they require it, even then, it is important to let even a ‘dated’ text (if it is indeed one) see light of the day.

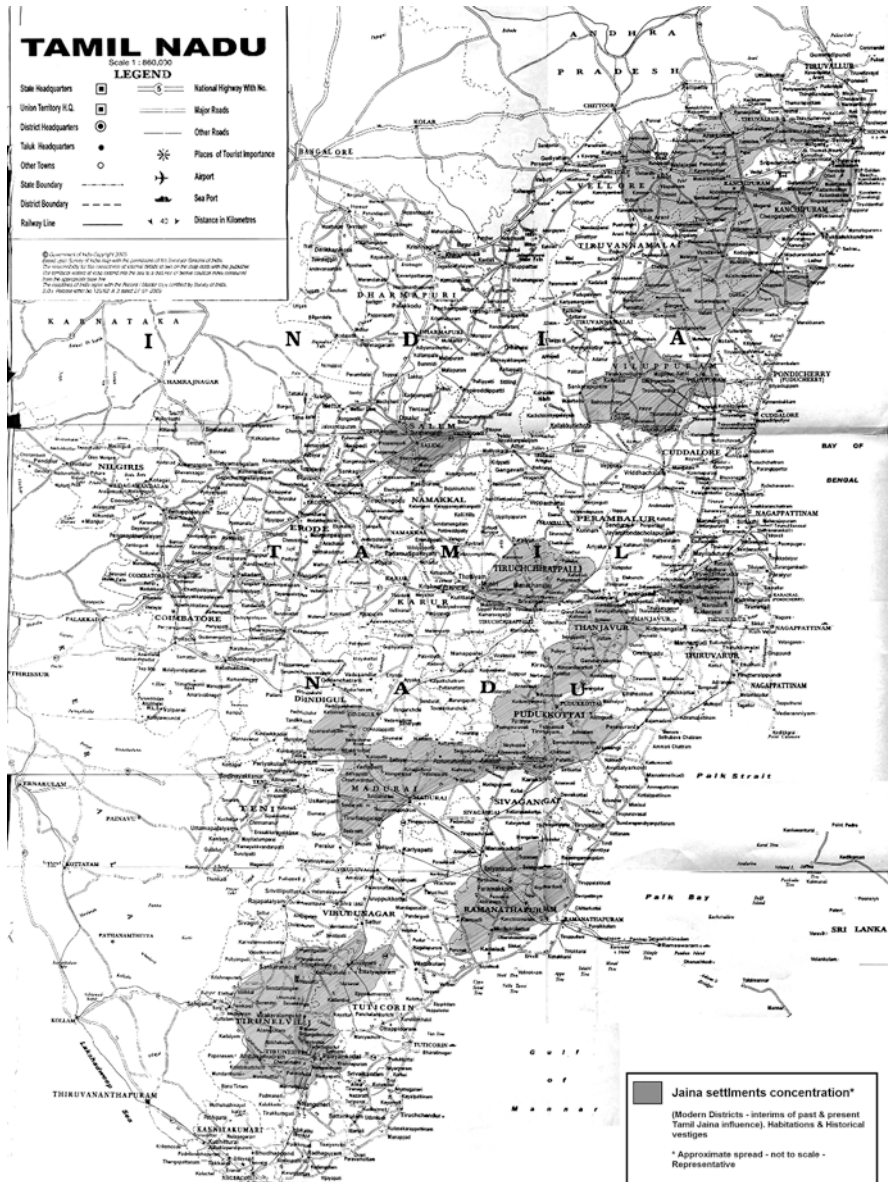
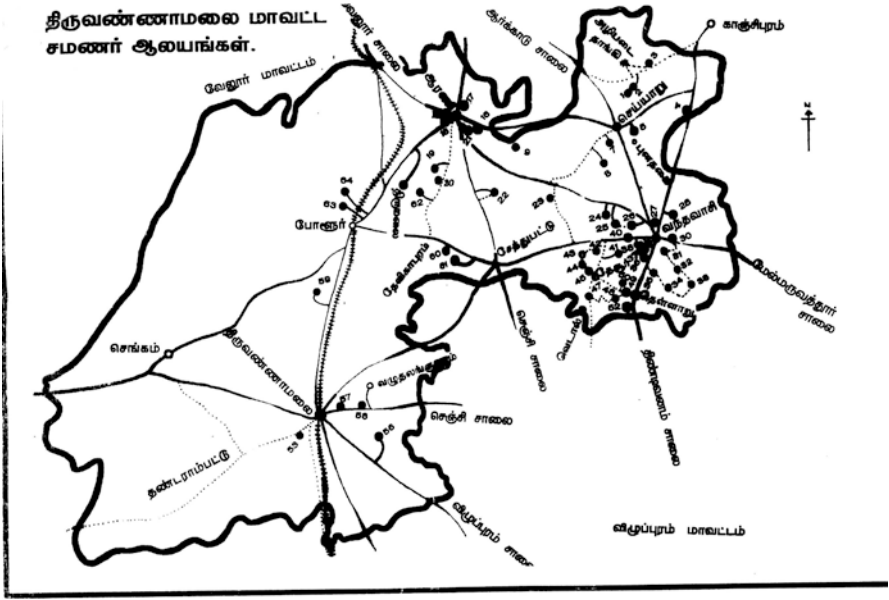


Fig. 1.1 A map showing the Tamil Jaina settlements (*shaded areas*) corresponding to present-day districts in Tamil Nadu, where the inscriptions record their presence. I thank Dr. Parth R. Chauhan, at IISER-Mohali, for helping me with digitising (as a last-minute request—in early 2016) my map of old and new Tamil Jaina settlements

திருவண்ணாமலை மாவட்ட சமணர் ஆலயங்கள்.



1. கரந்தை
2. திருப்பறம்பூர்
3. வெம்பாக்கம்
4. கூழமத்தல்
5. வேளியத்தலூர்
6. செய்யாறு
7. வெள்ளை
8. தாவல்
9. கோவிலாம்புண்டி
10. ஆரணி (திருமலை சமுத்திரம்)

11. ஆரணி பாளையம் (புதியது)
12. ஆரணி பாளையம் (பழையது)
13. ஆரணி புதுகாமுர்
14. ஆரணி அனந்தபுரம்
15. சேலூர்
16. நெத்தப்பாக்கம்
17. பூண்டி
18. முள்ளிப்பட்டு
19. சதுப்பேரி பாளையம்
20. தச்சூர்

21. மோட்டூர்
22. பெரிய கொழப்பலூர்
23. பெரணமல்லூர்
24. ஆயலவாடி
25. னும்பூர்
26. தென்சேந்தமங்கலம்
27. வென்குன்றம்
28. சனக்கை
29. வந்தவாசி
30. பிருதுர்

31. சேதராங்குப்பம்
32. கீழ்விலைவலம்
33. தெல்லியங்குளம்
34. நல்லூர்
35. முதலூர்
36. இளங்காடு
37. பொன்னூர்
38. வங்காரம்
39. கீழ்சாத்தமங்கலம்
40. பொன்னூர்மலை

51. தெள்ளாறு
52. கூடலூர்
53. தல்லவன்பாளையம்
54. திருவண்ணாமலை (ஸ்வேதாம்பரம்)
55. திருவண்ணாமலை (திக்கம்பரம்)
56. காட்டுமலையனூர்
57. மலப்பாம்பாடி
58. சோமாளிபாடி
59. காப்பலூர்
60. தச்சாம்பாடி

41. திருகோல்
42. சோலை அருகாலூர்
43. இசாகுனத்தூர்
44. தென்னாத்தூர்
45. மஞ்சப்பட்டு
46. தேஞ்சூர்
47. சித்தருகாலூர்
48. கொரக்கோட்டை
49. அகரக்கோரக்கோட்டை
50. கூனம்பாடி

61. பரிகல்பட்டு
62. ஒதலவாடி
63. இரண்டேரிபட்டு
64. குன்னத்தூர்
65. திருமலை

திருவண்ணாமலை மாவட்ட சமண வரலாறு - ஆர். விஜயன்

Fig. 1.3 Tiruvannamalai district Jain Sites (Source: R. Vijayan, Tiruvannamalai Samanar Varalāru, Neminatha Patipakkam, Jain Math, Tirumalai, 2011. The book gives a 'Jaina history' of Tiruvannamalai district. The present-day Tamil Jinas use this map as a ready reference for their Ahimsai Naḍai [Also see pp. 90–91]). Names mentioned in the map, in the order of their occurrence (number-wise): Karandai, Tirupparambur, Vembakkam, Culamantal, Velliyanallur, Ceyyar, Vellai, Naval, Kovilampundi, Arani (Tirumalaicamuttiram), Arani Palaiyam (New), Arani Palaiyam (old),

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Fig. 1.3 (continued) Arani Putukamur, Cevur, Nettareppakam, Pundi, Mullippattu, Catupperi Palaiyam, Tachur, Mottur, Periya Kolappalur, Peranamallur, Ayalvadi, Erumbur, Tencentamangalam, Venkunram, Calakkai, Vandavasi, Birudur, Cetarankuppam, Kilvillivalam, Nelliyanakulam, Nallur, Mudalur, Ilankadu, Ponnur, Vankaram, Kilsattamangalam, Ponnurmalai, Tirakkol, Colai Arukavur, Isakulattur, Tennattur, Manjappattu, Desur, Cittarukavur, Korakkottai, Akarakkottai, Cunampati, Tellaru, Gudalur, Nallavanpalaiyam, Tiruvannamalai (Svetambarar), Tiruvannamalai (Digambarar), Kattumalaiyanur, Malappampadi, Somasipadi, Koppalur, Tacchampadi, Parikalpattu, Odalavadi, Iranderippattu, Kunnattur, Tirumalai

[Note: Transliteration avoided for modern place-names, which these are]

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Chapter 2

Jaina Studies: A Historical Overview

Abstract This chapter is in two sections. *Section i* gives an overview of the scholarly perspectives on Jaina ‘entry’ into the Tamil country in the early centuries BCE, through a perusal of the early inscriptions (Tamil Brāhmi) found at various places across Tamilnadu. *Section ii* looks at the ‘discovery’ of the Jainas through colonial and oriental writings. A related section looks at the ‘recovery’ of the self through works of Tamil Jainas (such as A. Chakravarti) writing about their own histories and, more importantly, the need to distinguish the Digambaras from Śvetāmbaras and the important work of scholars such as ‘U.Ve.Ca’ who bring palm leaf manuscripts of the Jaina classics into print form. The early nineteenth century and twentieth century seem to be a busy period in establishing records, the Jainas as a distinct sect. There is a slightly detailed dwelling on the Mackenzie manuscripts in relation to the Jainas. The chapter argues that there was already an awareness of Jainism in the southern and, specifically, Tamil context, through works of Orientalists and the colonial officials. The colonial state, of course, centralises the records and, thereby, community histories, in a sense. The *Tirukkural* was translated, and Caldwell had identified the Dravidian culture as being a distinct and evolved one, with a specific mention of the Jaina contribution to the Tamil language and literature. Ellis, Beschi and others are names the Tamil Jainas even today remember with respect. The Jainas remember Beschi as Vīramāmuniṇar. Then, of course, there is a brief detail about the Jaina community asserting their distinct identity (against being clubbed as ‘Hindu’) in law courts, during the colonial period and thereafter.

Keywords Brāhmi • Vaṭṭeḷuttu • Mackenzie • *Tirukkural* • Beschi • Ellis • Caldwell

2.1 Jaina ‘Entry’ into the Tamil Country and Early Jaina Epigraphic Records

Early Jaina vestiges in the Tamil country comprise of about 26 rock-cut caves or natural caverns and 140 stone beds at the following places: Anaimalai, Alagarmalai, Arittapatti, Muttupatti and Tirupparankunram (Madurai district) as also in

Vikkiramangalam, Karungalakudi, Kilavalavu, Kongarpuliyangulam, Tiruvatavur and Varichiyur.¹

Early Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions have been recorded at Marugaltalai (in Chevalapperi taluk, Tirunelveli district), Anaimalai, Kalugumalai, Tirupparankunram, Arittapatti, Kilavalavu, Karungalakudi, Muttupatti (also called Samanar Malai), Kongar-puliyangulam and Alagarmalai (all in Madurai district), as well as in Sittannaval (Tiruchirappalli district), Arachalur (Erode taluk, Coimbatore), Mamandur (Cheyyar taluk, North Arcot), Tirunatharkunru (South Arcot), Pugalur (Karur taluk, Tiruchirappalli), Tiruchirappalli golden rock and Pillayarpatti (Ramanathapuram). Apart from these, Tamil Jaina inscriptions have been recorded in temples dedicated to the fīrthankaras and numerous grants to monastic institutions. Some of these are found in Karandai (Cheyyar taluk, 11 inscriptions), Tirumalai (Polur taluk, around 9 inscriptions), Pancapandavarmalai (Walajapet taluk, 2 inscriptions), Vilapakkam (Walajapet taluk, 2 inscriptions) and Vallimalai (Vandavasi taluk, 5 inscriptions), all from North Arcot district, as well as in Anaimalai (Madurai taluk, 10 inscriptions) and Kilavalavu (Madurai taluk and district, 2 inscriptions).

Thirty natural caverns with stone beds—no Brāhmi inscriptions—have been discovered at Pudukkottai, Sittannaval (of the famous paintings on Jaina themes), and in other places in South and North Arcot districts. However, there are later period inscriptions and sculptures also in the last two mentioned, dating to eighth-ninth centuries CE. Jambai, Parayanpattu and Tirunatharkunru in South Arcot district have caves which were apparently occupied by Jaina monks. Two early Jaina centres with cave beds and Brāhmī records have also been found at Kurralam and Marugaltalai in Tirunelveli district. This being so, the famous Jaina institution, the *paḷḷi*,² was also scattered across the districts Tiruchirappalli (named after the famous *paḷḷi* there) with three *paḷḷis* in Pugalur, Sivayam and Trichy rock fort and Pudukkottai, North Arcot, Pasumpon and Periyar districts having one *paḷḷi* each and lithic records.

Quoting from the *Digambara Darśana*, a Jaina religious text, Ayyangar had pointed out that in 526 Vikrama Śāka (AD 470), a Drāvidasangha was formed at southern Madurai by Vajranandi (in inscriptions noted as Vaccananti), a disciple of Pūjyapāda, and also that the sangha was an association of the Digambara Jains who migrated south with a view to spread Jainism. Ayyangar, taking cue from this information, believes this to have occurred by the end of the fifth century AD. Further, he says that the Caṅkam works indicate that Jainism had not entered the extreme south of India during the days of Tolkāppiyar (350 BC) and they must have colonised and permanently settled in these parts during and before first century AD (Ayyangar 1922, p. 57).³

Early scholars also took the evidence from *Mahāvamsa*, the Buddhist chronicle (on Buddhism in Ceylon at the time of its introduction) which speaks of Tissa—Devanāmpiya Tissa—second son of Muṭṭisiva, and the two chief priests, Mahinda and Aritta, who expressed the desire to spread the tenets of Buddhism in other countries, for which they were granted permission. It is assumed that the Pāṇḍya country should have been one of those they visited. The Pāṇḍya country and Sri Lanka are

¹ I have avoided using transliteration marks for modern-day place names.

² In course of time, the term came to mean a school, in Tamil, and also, interestingly, mosque.

³ Cited in the Journal of the Bombay Royal Asiatic Society, vol. XVII, p. 74

believed to have had close relations, considering another mention in the *Mahāvamsa*, whereby Vijaya, the son of Sihabāhu, ruler of Lāṭa in Gujarat, is supposed to have wedded the daughter of a Pāṇḍyan king. The caverns in Marugaltalai (Tirunelveli districts) with Brāhmī inscriptions and similar ones at Madurai (dated third century BCE)—at Anaimalai, Alagarmalai, and Kongarpuliyangulam—are believed to suggest their occupation by Buddhist monks in an earlier period and later by Jainas after being abandoned by the former (Subramanya Ayyar 1911).

Ekambaranathan says that Jainism in Tamil Nadu must date prior to the second century BCE. The *Paṭirrupattu* (a Caṅkam work, eulogising chieftains of the line of Cēra kings) 2:42–56, mentioning the Īrumporai kings (a collateral branch)—also mentioned in Brāhmī records—also talks about Jaina monks (Ekambaranathan 1989, p. 31).

Two Brāhmī records from Pugalur (Tiruchirappalli district) give the genealogical list of these kings. Among these are ḷamkaduṇko at whose anointment to the throne, an abode was built for the Jaina monk Senkayappar of Yarrur (Ibid, p. 31).⁴

Mahadevan, through his longest research on Tamil (and Brāhmī) inscriptions, notes that:

The Tamil Brāhmī cave inscriptions [are] now known to be the earliest Jaina records in South India...The paleography of the cave inscriptions is consistent with borrowing from Magadha in ca. 3rd century BC during the Mauryan age...Out of the 30 sites with 89 Tamil Brāhmī cave inscriptions [which he included in the Corpus] 28 sites with 84 inscriptions are Jaina and the remaining 2 sites with 5 inscriptions are secular, that is, having no apparent religious significance...[So far as the Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscriptions are concerned⁵] out of 12 sites, with 21 inscriptions, only 4 sites with 12 inscriptions are Jaina.... (Mahadevan 2003, p. 128)

Indra—the important deity of the Jainas, as well as Buddhists—is also frequently mentioned in the Caṅkam anthologies (Hart 1975, p. 69). *Puranānūru* and *Īlappatikāram* both make reference to *vaṭakkiruttal* (*sallekhana* or fast unto death), practised in the Jaina tradition.

Purananuru, the collection of poetry refers to the practice of fasting unto death. Vadakkiruthal is the terminology used for the practice. A poet named Kazha athalaiyar (Purananuru – 65) [writes about it]. The great Chera emperor Cheraman Peruncheralathan and the Chola emperor Karikal Peruvalathan went to war against each other at a place called Venniparanthalai. The Chera emperor was wounded by a spear that pierced his body from front to back....[This was] considered...a humiliation and the Chera emperor undertook fasting to death (Vadakkiruthal)... A poet named Kazha athalaiyar documented it... [The] Chola king, Koperunjcholan, ruling from Uraiyur declared war on his sons who had revolted against him. He was pacified by poet Eyitriyanar and made to realise the sinful act of waging war against own children. The Chola ruler abandoned his throne and undertook fasting unto death by “vadakkiruthal” tradition. On hearing this, his friend and poet, Pisirandaiyar also commenced the performance of “vadakkiruthal”. (Purananuru – 212 to 223). Koperunjcholan who was also adept in poetry expressed his emotions reflecting Jaina thoughts.

[Those] who do not have the right faith without blemishes of doubt and without a strong mind, start performing the meritorious deeds. Those who aim for elephant will find it, those who aim for small bird may go empty handed!

⁴ See AR 342 of 1927–1928. Transliteration marks as mentioned in Ekambaranathan.

⁵ He is referring to the ones he included in his Corpus (2003).

...Silappadigaram, the Tamil epic of post Sangam period (2 CE) has a reference to the practice of Sallekhana. Kavundi Adigal, a Jain sadhvi, observed Sallekhana and left her mortal body on hearing about the tragic death of Kovalan... Earlier she had accompanied Kovalan and Kannagi in their epic journey from Chola country to the Pandya country... There is a tradition of performing annual Nischadi Puja to Acharya Akalanka at Munigiri Karanthai Jain temple near Kanchipuram.... It is believed that Acharya Akalanka observed sallekhana at Munigiri Karanthai. (Rajendran 2016)⁶

Hinting at a possible Jaina influence in early Tamiḻakam, Hart writes:

In *Puṛaṇāṇūru* 214, Kopperuñcōḷaṇ, who is about to commit suicide by ritually starving himself to death, speaks of “an outlook stained by impurities” and says that dying with a body free of evil is important, an attitude that suggests influence of Jainism. (Hart 1975, p. 70.)

Further, he notes that:

In *Puṛaṇāṇūru*, 214, he [Kopperuñcōḷaṇ] addresses his comrades, evidently to persuade them to join him. His words indicate he was influenced by Jainism... “If more men with lofty aims receive reward for a portion of their good acts, they may experience delight in the eternal world. If they do not experience delight in that world, they may not have to be born again. And if they are not born again, it is crucial that they die with bodies devoid of evil, establishing their fame like a Himalayan peak”. (Ibid, p. 89)

The tribes and communities—that the early Jaina teachers or monks and nuns might perhaps have interacted with in the initial periods—as are mentioned in the Caṅkam anthologies and their correlates at present in these regions are noted to have been, variously, the weaver, pastoral-nomadic, basket-weaving, hill-dwelling tribes surrounding Tirunelveli, Kongu, Madurai, North and South Arcot regions. The Maravans, Yerukulas or Koravas (the tribe Vaḷḷi, Murukaṇ’s lover, is said to have belonged to), Agamudayar, Muduvar, Valluvar, etc. were tribes propitiating deities such as Murukaṇ (Subramanya), Korravai, Māl and so on. There aren’t, to one’s knowledge, many studies on the early interaction of these tribes with the Jaina monks who preached in regions of these communities, whose deities were gradually assimilated into the Purāṇic, brāhminical fold. It may be a question to ask if these tribal groups accepted a religion that stressed on non-killing, especially when their own deities were happy if propitiated with animal sacrifices, now and then, and with a god concept of possessing, divination and other rituals, so antithetical to the Jina doctrine.

Speaking of the influence of Jainism on the Tamil social milieu, Palaniappan writes:

That Jains included among the Caṇḍālas people who were not untouchables in the Tamil society ca. 9th century CE is indicated by the earliest Tamil lexicon, Tivākaram (ca. 9th century CE) authored by Tivākara, a Jain, who includes *kavuṇṭar* along with *pulaiṇar* among Caṇḍālas. Today, the caste title Kavunṭar (also spelled as Gounder) is used by many dominant upper caste groups that include Vēṭṭuva Kavunṭar who, as indicated by their name, must have been hunters originally. This indicates the basis on which Jains considered a group to be ‘base’. The lifestyle of a hunter which involves killing of animals is anathema

⁶Quoted verbatim (including certain spellings used in the original article); original has no transliteration marks. No page numbers in the original. This was a paper presented at a conference in Chennai in 2016, on Death and Dying. Interestingly, there has been a lot of debate in mainstream media on the Jaina practice of *sallekhana* in the recent times, with the Jainas urging that it not be equated with the other legal discourse (in India) on euthanasia and its ethics.

to Jains for whom non-injury to other living beings is a cardinal principle. So it is not surprising that the Jain perspective would include a *pulaiyaṇ/pulaiñāṇ*, who sacrifices animals, in the category of the Caṇḍāla too... There is no reason to suppose untouchability or caste practices existed in the ancient Tamil society. That Brāhmins in ancient Tamil country would not hesitate to take up funerary priesthood involving cutting of the bodies or priestly ritual for the leather drum indicates there was no occupational pollution associated with it by the Tamils... An important finding resulting from the lack of notions of occupational pollution or untouchability in the Classical Tamil society is that it also affirms the lack of the notion of caste in that society. (Palaniappan 2008, pp. 31–32)

Incidentally, Gounder is also among the caste titles (Mudaliyar, Chettiar, being some of the others) that Tamil Jainas have, as I have been informed by them. I mention this point in later sections.

Based on his study using 'Tamil philology, epigraphy, Jaina texts, anthropology,⁷ and Dravidian linguistics' (p. 53) Palaniappan concludes that:

In the Tamil country of the early centuries CE, Vedic Brahmins acted as funerary priests for warriors cutting the corpse before its burial. They also most probably served as priests worshipping the battle drum made of leather. If there was any notion of ritual pollution associated with these activities in the Tamil society, Brahmins would not have chosen to perform them. So, there is no evidence of any indigenous Tamil notion of occupational ritual pollution at the time. Jain mendicants considered a Tamil priest (*pulaiyaṇ*) to be a base person destined to go to hell in his next birth and called him '*īlipirappiṇḍṇ*'. They also considered a hunter to be destined to go to hell and called him '*īlipirappālaṇ*'. Thus '*īlipirappiṇḍṇ*' and '*īlipirappālaṇ*' referred to future births resulting from the karma of killing other life forms according to Jain beliefs. They did not signify low caste status in this life. The Dravidian linguistic phenomenon of 'o' > 'u' alternation led to a folk etymology attributing 'baseness' to '*pulaiyar*' (<**pol*-) instead of 'auspiciousness.' At least as far as South India is concerned, through the folk etymology of *pulai* < **pul*-, 'to be base, mean', the non-violence (*ahimsā*) principle of Jainism seems to have contributed to the attribution of baseness to *pulaiyar* from ca. 5th century CE onwards. Mainly due to the impact of Jainism, in the post-classical period some Brahmins and non-Brahmins too seem to have adopted negative attitudes towards early Tamil religious ceremonies. They ascribed low social status to the *pulaiyar* probably facilitated by a misinterpretation of the term '*īlipirappālaṇ*'. '*īliciṇaṇ*' which, till now, has been considered to be derived from *īli*-, 'to descend, dismount, fall, drop down, be reduced in circumstances, be inferior' is to be derived from *īluku* 'to rub, smear'. The lack of any association of ritual pollution with '*pulai*' suggests untouchability could not have been indigenous to the speakers of Tamil and other Dravidian languages. When there is no purity/pollution difference between Brahmins and *pulaiyaṇ* as portrayed in the Classical Tamil texts, there is no reason to assume the presence of a caste system in the Classical Tamil society. In other words, there were no despised low castes or untouchables in the ancient Tamil society...The Dravidian speakers as a whole should have had no indigenous notion of untouchability or a caste system. (Palaniappan 2008, pp. 53–54)

While I dwell on the issue of caste in later sections here, I would like to point out that in this understanding, brāhminical Hinduism seems to be 'absolved' of the very idea of exclusion that it introduced not just in the Tamil country but other regions over centuries. Jainism and Buddhism arose as a counter to all that was practised and preached in Vedic ritualistic Hinduism, at least initially, while giving centrality to the idea of individual consciousness, effort and ability to attain salvation. Of

⁷Though one does not get a sense of anthropological fieldwork as a basis for this article

course, as many studies have shown, both these religions willy-nilly incorporated caste or ideas of exclusion. But there is yet another aspect that I wish to bring to light here. It is doubtful indeed that brāhmins, in the period Palaniappan speaks of, as he believes, would have associated themselves with occupations of beating the leather drum or cutting up corpses, considering that these occupations (in their ritual texts) were always considered polluting (and continue to be treated so, till date). Jainism would not have ‘introduced’ the idea of purity and pollution into an otherwise equal Tamil society but could be said to have been influenced by the brāhminical attitudes. At the same time, what accounts for the vehement denouncing of the very system—caste and ‘lowness’ of birth—in an early Tamil Jaina text, *Nīlakeci*? I dwell a bit on this text too, later on. The text is dated around the fifth century CE (though some scholars date it to the tenth century CE) and the protagonist *Nīlakeci* enters into an argument with the Vedic teacher on the issue of caste. There is also the context of the Jainas being anti-brāhmin in other ways. For instance:

Caldwell also observed: “The Jainas of the old Panda country were animated by a national and anti-Brahminical feeling of peculiar strength; and it is chiefly to them that Tamil is indebted for its higher culture and its comparative independence from Sanscrit. The Saiva and Vaishnava writers of a later period, especially the Saivas, imbibed much of the enthusiasm for Tamil purity and literary independence, by which the Jainas were distinguished in consequence of which, Tamil is the only vernacular literature in India which has not been content with imitating Sanscrit but has honourably attempted to emulate it and outshine it”. (Comparative Grammar, p. 84) (Vaitheespara 1999, fn. 114, p. 79)

Perhaps one needs to look at the processual shifts within the two religions (Buddhism and Jainism) on matters pertaining to the social order and their own changing attitudes across times and regions.

Jha, too, pointed out that:

It is important to consider how the heterodox sects of Buddhism and Jainism responded to the development of caste and untouchability. Surely their approach differed from orthodox Brahmanism in several respects. Their religious orders admitted people without considerations of wealth, rank or social origins and permitted them to rise to the highest position on the basis of virtue and knowledge alone... Both Buddhism and Jainism accepted the reality of four hierarchical varnas and several jatis as well as untouchability as an integral and inalienable part of the complex socio-economic formation in the post-Vedic phase and shied away from attempting any structural changes in the existing social order... The distinction between the affluent and the destitute, the high (*ukkattā*) and the low (*hina*), is pronounced and explicit, and is applied to jatis (castes), kulas (families), kammās (occupations) and sippas (crafts) in both Buddhism and Jainism. The occupation of the flower-sweeper, the crafts of the basket-maker, leather-worker, weaver, potter and barber are designated as low, and the Chandalas, Nesadas, Pukkusas, Venas and Rathakaras are stigmatized as despised castes (*hina jatis*) in the Pali Canon. The Chandalas, who are also known as Matangas and Panas, and the Sovagas are equally despised in the Jain texts... The emphasis that both Buddhism and Jainism laid on non-violence evidently coloured their attitude and perception towards many of these castes which were obliged by their wretched material condition and needs of subsistence and livelihood to engage in activities involving violence. In the case of the Chandalas the primitive dread of dead human bodies which they handled aggravated the degree of pollution... That Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism ideologically contributed to the irreversible process of the development of caste and untouchability instead of resisting it has to be acknowledged. (Jha 1997, pp. 24–25)⁸

⁸No transliteration in the original text. Quoted verbatim

But Palaniappan's analysis interestingly seeks a holistic understanding of caste in the Tamil society using interdisciplinary approaches and delving deep on the linguistic shifts occurring over time to explain social categories.

Meanwhile, continuing with the history of early Jaina settlements, between the third and first century BCE, numerous Tamil Brāhmi records have been found at various caverns, with beds cut out and rock-cut caves spread across Madurai, Pudukkottai and Tirunelveli districts of Tamilnadu. Who are the donors and donees of these records? It is interesting that after the Brāhmi records, the most numerous epigraphs, mostly donative, mentioning Jaina teachers, monks and nuns, occur between the sixth and thirteenth (also fourteenth century) CE in Tamilnadu. In the early Brāhmi records, we find mention of persons responsible for causing the cave beds in rock-cut caves and natural caverns to be made, donations to monks, which include merchants and other householders. According to Mahadevan, the early Tamil Brāhmi period dates between the third century BCE and first century CE, the late Tamil Brāhmi period between the second and fourth centuries CE and the early Vaṭṭeḷuttu period between the fifth and sixth centuries CE (Mahadevan 2003, p. 95).

He notes that:

The expression *kaṇi* 'a senior Jain monk' the head of a *gaṇa*, occurs four times in Mangulam (ca. 2nd century BC) and twice at Alagarmalai (ca. 1st century BC). While many terms like *ācārya*, etc are common to the Brāhminical, Buddhists and Jain religions, the expression *gaṇin* is peculiar to Jaina hierarchy. Thus the occurrence of this term in Early Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions is conclusive evidence of the occupation of the caves by monks of the Jaina faith. We learn from the Mangulam inscriptions that Kaṇi Nanta-siri (Gaṇi Nanda-śrī) was the senior Jaina monk who received the endowments of three hermitages from the kinsmen, vassals or officers of Netuñceliyaṇ, the reigning Pāṇṭiya king. The inscriptions bear testimony to the support that the Jaina faith received from the Pāṇṭiya king, his court and the local merchant guild (*nikama* < *niḡama*) at this early period. *The given name of clan name of the senior Jain monk was Kuvan, revealing his Tamil origin. This is a significant fact. For if a native ascetic could have risen in the Jaina monastic hierarchy to occupy the position of a gaṇi (head of a gaṇa) at this time, then Jainism must have taken root in the Tamil country much earlier, that is not later than the earlier half of the 3rd century BC.* (Ibid, p. 129)⁹

A sociological fact about Jainism which the Tamil Jinas point out is that *turavar* (that is renouncers, monks and nuns) cannot and do not exist without the *illarattār* (householders/*śrāvakas*), and thence, the fact that recorded history of these caves itself puts the date to the second or third century BCE (as above stated), there must have existed the community even earlier, for these caves to be made for the ascetics. An established order of laity is essential to both Buddhist and Jaina concept of the *sangha*.

Vedachalam writes:

There is evidence for the Jaina religion having its presence in and around Madurai from the 2nd century BC. There are rock-cut caves and *pallis* where Jaina monks stayed, in Tirupparankunram, Samanarmalai, Kongarpuliyangulam, Vikkiramangalam, Anaipatti,

⁹Emphasis mine.

Anaimalai, Meenatchipuram (Mangulam), Arittappatti, Alagarmalai, Karungalakkudi, Kilavalavu, Tiruvadavur, Kunnattur (Varicchiyur) and Tirumalai. A record of 2nd century BC shows one Udayan made facilities for a Jaina monk named Attiran in Cittarmalai (near Anaippatti). Here the Jaina monk is referred to as *amaṇaṇ* (for *samaṇar*). The Caṅkam works, *Narriṇai* (141), *Akanāṇūru* (132), *Kaḷittokai* (28), etc mention *samaṇa* monks staying in the rock-cut cave *paḷḷis*. They are described there as *nirgrantha* (naked), observing fasts and in later Caṅkam works, they are described as doing hard penance. During the 7th century AD, with the Śaiva-Jaina conflict, the caves of Madurai were abandoned. And re-occupied between 8th and 14th century AD by the Jaina monks. Post-7th century AD, some rock-cut cave *paḷḷis* were newly established and these include Kupalnattam (Tirumangalam), Putturmala (Ucilampatti), Uttamapalaiyam (Theni). (Vedachalam 2000, pp. 2-3)

Mahadevan also notes—while not totally denying the entry of Jainism from Karnataka into the Tamil country—that:

It is also likely that the Tamil Brāhmi script was adapted from the Mauryan Brāhmi in the Jaina monasteries (*paḷḷi*) of the Madurai region some time before the end of the 3rd century BC as the earliest cave inscriptions are dated to about the beginning of the 2nd century BC. It appears from the absence of reference to sects that the early lithic records in the Tamil caves belong to the period before the schism between the Digambara and Śvetāmbara sects. *It is arguable from palaeographic evidence that the Early Tamil Brāhmi cave inscriptions are the earliest lithic records of the Jaina faith in India, as the Mangulam inscriptions of the time of Netuñceḷiyaṇ appear to be earlier than the Jaina Prakrit inscriptions at Mathura and those of Kharavela of Kalinga.* (Mahadevan 2003, p. 135)¹⁰

By and large, the inscriptions mention teachers/*ācāryas* and not *tīrthankaras* (except when invoking, at the beginning of the record). Apart from the Brāhmi records, an early inscription from the Tirunatharkunru rock (Gingee taluk, South Arcot) of the sixth century CE records the *sallēkhana* (fast into death/release) of the *ācārya* named Candiranandi, after 57 days of fasting. Some of the *paḷḷis* mentioned in the inscriptions are Kandarāditya *perumpaḷḷi* (the ‘big’ *paḷḷi*) of Neminātha at Jambai village in South Arcot district,¹¹ Kavirāja *perumpaḷḷi* at Campukesavar temple in Trichy district,¹² Tiruvenṇāyil Ainnūruva *perumpaḷḷi* at Tirutalamadam temple Thanjavur,¹³ Cetikulamāṇikkapperumpaḷḷi (Sundara *perumpaḷḷi*) in the inscription found at Maruttuvakuṭiśiva temple in Thanjavur district¹⁴ and Jinagiripaḷḷi at Ānandamaṅgalam (Chingleput district). Big monasteries were also situated at Tirunarungondai (*Nārpatteṇṇāyiraperumpaḷḷi*), Tondur (Vaḷuvamoḷi *perumpaḷḷi*), Seruvakkam (Śrīkāraṇapaḷḷi), Chettipatti (Vīrasēkhara *perumpaḷḷi*), Sadayapparai (Perunarkillī Chola *perumpaḷḷi*) and Vijayamangalam (Vīrasankaṭa *perumpaḷḷi*). These were spread across Pudukkottai, Tinnevely and Madurai-Ramanathapuram districts.

It may be noted that like the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples, Jaina temples also held lands in absolute ownership (*tirunāmattukkaṇi*) and enjoyed lands made over for festivals (*tiruvilāppuram*, *cuṇkaippuram*, etc.) and for specific services (*tirupaḷḷi*

¹⁰ Emphasis mine.

¹¹ *Annual report on Epigraphs* (henceforth ARE/AR) 448 of 1937–1938.

¹² ARE 32 of 1937–1938.

¹³ *South Indian Inscriptions* (henceforth SII), IV, no.443.

¹⁴ ARE 392 of 1907.

eḷuchchi—dawn ritual of the deity). The *palliccantam* lands were demarcated by stones with triple umbrella carved on them (*tirumukkuḍaikkal*) and, occasionally, a monk's pitcher (Ayyar, 1957–1958, p. 28).

Among other things, the Jaina inscriptions refer to teachers, some of whom more often mentioned than others, perhaps as a result of their popularity/eminence. They are Ajjanandi (Accananti in records), Aṣṭōpavāsi, Guṇasenā, Nāganandi, Guṇavīra and others. One inscription at Tiruppanmalai, North Arcot, has the image of Nāganandi. Ariṣṭanēmi, a pupil of Paravādimalla, lived in Tiruppanmalai, where one of his pupils, the nun Pattinikkuraṭṭi, opened a celebrated sisterhood of nuns. One of the Tamil-*vaṭṭeluttu* records in the reign of 'Vikramāditya' Varaguṇa Pāṇḍya records the gift of gold to the *paṭṭāriyar* (nun) of this place by a woman disciple of Ariṣṭanēmi, Kuṇatāṅki Kuraṭṭikaḷ; there is a record of Ajjanandi, where the sculpture was caused to be made by Varaguṇai, disciple of Pattini *paṭṭāriyar* of this hill and one mentioning the teacher Vīranandiaṭikaḷ of Melaipalḷi monastery at Tirunarungondai. P. B. Desai dates these records between the ninth and tenth century CE (Desai 1957, pp. 68–69).

An interesting feature of the inscriptions mentioning the teachers is that teachers from two or more places (other monasteries) are mentioned either as causing sculptures to be made, or merely by virtue of having been part of the 'lineage' of the teachers mentioned. It may be noted that these sites became part of the Tamil Jaina sacred 'circulatory' space. Among the teachers, Ajjanandi is mentioned in inscriptions in Melur, Periyakulam, Palani and Madura (Madurai district). Mention is made of his mother Kuṇamaṭiyār in one of these (Ayyar, Indian Antiquary, vol. XL, p. 215. Reference here is to No. 64 of *Madras Epigraphical Collection*, 1910).

Inscriptions 61, 62 and 68 of Madras Epigraphical Collection, 1910, of the Pāṇḍya country, mention Kuraṇṭi-Aṣṭōpavāsi, a famous Jaina priest who had for his disciples, Kanakanandi, Guṇasenā, Nāganandi and Ariṣṭanēmi. Three generations of pupils of Kanakanandi are noticed in a Kilakkudi inscription (No 63 of Madras Epigraphical Collection), namely, Abhinandana Bhaṭṭāra I, Arimaṇṭala Paṭṭāra and Abhinandana Bhaṭṭāra II (Ibid, p. 215).

Ajjanandi was responsible for the carving of sculptures on the rocks of hills at Vallimalai (South Arcot), Anaimalai, Aivarmalai, Alagarmalai, Karungalakudi, Uttamapalaiyam and at the natural cavern (Irattipottai rock) at Eruvadi in Tinnevely district (AR 1916, p. 112).

Kundakunda (first century CE?) founded the lineage named after him, Kundakundāṇvaya. Among his successors was Umāsvāti, who compiled the philosophical treatise, *Tattvārthasūtra*. Sāmantabhadra is another teacher who 'moved' in his aim to establish the Jina faith. Simhanandi, as is popularly believed, helped Konkuṇivarman (c. 400 CE) in founding the Ganga Kingdom. Ramachandran writes:

The spread of Jainism and the dissemination of Jaina ideals in the Tamil Country received sufficient impetus on the advent of Kundakundācārya; evident by a Dravidian of the first in almost all genealogies of the southern Jinas.... (Ramachandran 1934, p. 4)

Tirupparuttikunram (also known as *Jinakāñci*) Vardhamana shrine has had a continuous and long period of Jaina occupation, and Pallavas, Cōlas and the Vijayanagar rulers have patronised this centre near Kanchipuram and the inscriptions here continue from the twelfth to the sixteenth century CE (about 25 inscriptions). A single (significant) bilingual (Sanskrit and Tamil written in Pallava Grantha characters) copper plate charter was found at Pallankoil of Pallava Simhavarman III (ninth century). Jaina settlements are referred to in the inscriptions at Madurai, Vellarai (Tirunelveli), Tondi, Ponnai, Potalai, Nelveli, Valliyur, Karur, Yarrur (Arrur), Pakanur and Kunrattur. Jaina settlements also existed in places such as Arpakkam, Magaral and Aryaperumbakkam.

Royal patronage as well as patronage of the well-endowed commoners was not lacking for the Jaina *paḷlis* as some of the inscriptions show:

The earliest allusion to paḷliccandam, which is an endowment to a Jaina institution, is to be traced in a record of the Pallava king Vijaya Kampavarman... Mārāñcaṭaiyaṇ, an early king of the Pandya family, figures in two inscriptions at Kaḷugumalai. Varaguṇaṇ, a disciple of Paṭṭini paṭṭāra of the Sacred Hill of the Chāraṇas, who was responsible for the carving of a Jaina image at the place, was probably a member of the Pāṇḍya royal family... We come across references, in the Cōla regime to villages which were inhabited by the followers of the Jaina creed and were entirely under their management... The rights and privileges of these Jaina settlements were duly protected by the royal orders.... Kundavai, elder sister of Rājārāja I actively contributed to the glory of the Jaina religion by erecting more than one Jaina temple in different parts of the kingdom.... (Desai 1957, p. 78)

Again:

In the records of the Cōla regime and also the later Pāṇḍya rulers, roughly covering the period of 9th to 13th centuries AD, paḷliccandam grants figure frequently in a considerable number in almost all parts of the Tamil country... Besides these paḷliccandam grants of Jaina ownership, there were in existence other specific endowments which appear to have been the exclusive property belonging to the community of the heads of the Jaina ascetic orders (*gaṇis*). They were known as Gaṇimuruttu or Kaṇimuruttu and are met with in records of the Cōla rulers. (Ibid, pp. 79-80)

The interesting aspect is that despite patronage from royalty—though inscriptions from later medieval times show more grants made by laity than kings and their kin—the Jaina community settlements through the time kept decreasing. In this case, do inscriptional records run a parallel ‘life’ of their own, disconnected with the Jaina householders? In which case, then, the grants are made to institutions and not to a group of Jainas (unlike a group of brāhmins settled in a village), which these inscriptions seem to attest; this would mean that at some point the history of the Jaina monastic institutions and that of the *śrāvakas* had each different natures of development. The Buddhist and Jaina monastic institutions were well in place in the early centuries BCE, as the inscriptional evidence suggests and also because both Buddhism and Jainism followed the structure of the dual component of monkhood and sisterhood of monks and nuns, the sangha/caṅkam and the householders. And this was their structure from the time these religions were founded and developed. Whether, prior to the bhakti bards,¹⁵ the Śaivites imagined themselves to be a *com-*

¹⁵ I use, throughout, the term ‘bards’/bard for the bhakti poets. In the sense that their poetry is bardic/versified. And I do not use the generally used term ‘saint’.

munity in the sociological sense is a moot question; perhaps, one needs to probe deeper, whether it was (the sense of being a community) a conscious construct, which developed over time and managed to *otherise* the Buddhists and Jainas, as not being indigenous to the Tamil soil.

Incidentally, while the Jainas believe that after the *maṭham* at Tiruparuttikunram was shifted, it moved to Cittamur, in the eleventh-twelfth century, there seems to have existed a *maṭham* in Tirunarungondai as well (in between these two periods) according to Ekambaranathan. This would mean that while in the social, everyday sphere, there continued, well up to the twentieth century, conflict and tension between the Jaina community and others, perhaps in the same time period, this did not affect the Jaina institutions, which began to have its own moorings with history, with its own pontiffs and their sphere of influence. Padmanabh Jaini and other scholars have pointed out that this structure was a later innovation and not part of the original doctrinal Jainism. In the early medieval periods, and later, the number of donations and grants made by individuals and members of a village (*ūrār*) are more numerous than grants directly issued by the kings, or feudatories or chieftains, although the grants are issued the 'regnal year' of 'such-and-such' a king. Perhaps a closer scrutiny would reveal that calling them grants made by the rulers directly would be inappropriate. Around this period, Jaina temples were also being converted. But did it affect the *paḷḷis*?

Vilapakkam has an inscription dated 945 CE (in the 38th regnal year of Cōḷa Parāntaka I) on a slab lying in front of the Nāganāthēśvara temple which:

records sinking of a well by Paṭṭinikuraṭṭikaḷ, the female disciple of Ariṭṭanēmiṭaṭār of Tiruppānmalai (i.e. Pañcapāṇḍavamalai) the preceptor of the local Jains. Mention is made that the 'twentyfour of the village' [sic] undertook to protect the endowment. Viḷāpākkam is said to be a village in Peruntimirināḍu, a sub-division of Paḍavūrkōṭṭam... The 'twenty-four of the village' means probably a committee consisting of twentyfour [sic] people of the village. A similar term also occurs in the Kaṟuppankunru (Chengalpattu district) inscription. (Ekambaranathan and Sivaprakasam 1987, p. 291)

Elsewhere, an inscription from Avarani, Nagapattinam taluk, Thanjavur district (Chittiralekai *perumpalḷi*) dated before 1193 AD (in the 15th year of Cōḷa Kuḷōṭṭuṇka III), 'refers to this Jain establishment in the course of a land transaction in which the lands of this paḷḷi and a Śiva temple were exchanged' (K. G. Krishnan 1975, p. 103).¹⁶

There is yet another aspect to inscriptions recording donations. In most cases, grants, donations, etc. were being made by individuals or a community and not the royalty. In later records, the format of identifying a king's regnal year in which the record was inscribed becomes important to gain sanction of the ruling system, perhaps. But those who use these inscriptional sources more often than not attach more importance to the regnal year of the king (which is important) to the exclusion, almost, to the context of those making the grant, of money or land, or sheep, and so forth. Many merchants, for instance, were donors of the early cave dwellings of the Jaina monks/nuns.

¹⁶Also ARE 487 of 1922

Merchants trading in various commodities figure as donors in the inscriptions at Alagarmalai (ca. 1st century BC) and Pugalur (rock-cut caves, for Jaina monks/nuns). (Mahadevan 2003, p. 141)

Between the first and third centuries CE (which is called the ‘Middle Period’ by Mahadevan):

There is a sharp fall of cave inscriptions... The centre of Jainism in the Tamil country appears to have shifted from the Pāṇṭiya to Cēra region... and the equally sharp rise in their number in the Cēra country during this period... The earliest literary evidence of Jainism in the Tamil country belongs to this period, e.g. *uṇṇāmaiṇ uyaṅkiya maruṅkiṇ ātā-p-paṭivattu āṇrōr pōla*, ‘like the (Jaina) monks whose bodies are emaciated by fasting and not bathed’. (*Akanāṇūru*: 123). There is also literary evidence from Caṅkam poems that Jaina monasteries (*paḷḷi*) existed in cities like Kāviri-p-pūmpaṭṭiṇam and Madurai even during the early centuries A.D. (Mahadevan 2003, p. 135)

In the ‘Later Period’ (fourth to sixth centuries CE):

The era of natural cave shelters came to an end... The Early Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscriptions at Sittannaval – B and Tiruchirapalli – B (ca. 5th century AD) are the last of the Jaina cave shelters in the earlier traditions. A new type of Jaina monuments appears in the Tamil country in the 6th century A.D. in the form of the *nicīṭikai* inscriptions at Paraiyanpattu and Tirunatharkunru. These are epigraphs engraved on the bare summit at boulders commemorating the places where Jaina ascetics fasted unto death.... (Ibid, pp. 135–136)

And then:

The earliest epigraphic evidence for the construction of temples and monasteries in brick and mortar is found in the Pulankurichi inscription of king Cētan Kūṛraṇ (ca. 500 AD). There is now a general consensus that he was a Kalabhra ruler as the name Kūṛraṇ does not occur in the Pāṇṭiya dynasty.... (Ibid, p. 136)

He marks a period of ‘re-occupation’ of some of the Jaina caves later between eighth and tenth centuries CE. He says:

Jainism declined steeply in Tamil country from about the end of the 6th century A.D. when there was a tremendous upsurge of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sects revitalised by the Bhakti movement led by the Nāyaṁmārs and Āḷvārs. The Tamil Jains were persecuted during this period. However, the persecution, uncharacteristic of Indian polity, did not last too long and the rulers resumed grants to the Jaina monasteries (*paḷḷi*) from about the end of the 8th century A.D. as attested by epigraphical evidence from the Pallava and Pāṇṭiya regions. It was during this period of revival that many of the earlier cave shelters with stone beds and Tamil Brāhmi and/or Early Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscriptions were re-occupied by the Jains who marked their renewed presence with relief sculptures and inscriptions in the Vaṭṭeḷuttu script of the period. Among the sites that were reoccupied were Alagarmalai, Anaimalai, Arittapatti... Sittannaval, Tirunatharkunru, Tirupparankunram, etc. (Ibid, p. 137)

However, one point needs to be made here (besides being circumspect about the point Mahadevan makes about persecution being ‘uncharacteristic of Indian polity’, in a general sense) that merely inscriptional evidence may not be sufficient to attest to the decline and ‘revival’; that is a limited angle to comprehend contestation. On the question of re-occupation of cave sites, he mentions the interesting fact is that Tamil Jaina laity by this period is found in places other than these cave sites. For instance, Alagarmalai, Sittannaval, etc. do not show any evidence of the presence

of a large Jaina population (as they say these were Jaina settlements) in this period, and instead there are more inscriptions from northern Tamilnadu and even Tamil Jaina settlements in these areas in this period.

Further, Mahadevan says:

There was a marked revival of Jainism led by illustrious monks like Accananti. Among these sites the most famous was at Kuṛaṇṭi Kāṭāmpaḷḷi of which no trace remains at present.... (Ibid, p. 139)

Vedachalam notes that:

It was an important *paḷḷi* of 7th-8th century CE, in the time of the Pāṇḍyan ruler Mārāṇṇaṭaiyaṇ. This *paḷḷi* later became the site of a Śiva temple called the Kālanātha temple. (Vedachalam 2000, p. 149)

Mahadevan writes:

Other Jaina centres that came in this period include those at Samanarmalai, Settippodavu and Peccipallam in the Madurai region, Kalugumalai (Tirunelveli), Tirumalai (North Arcot district) and Vedal. Samanarmalai in the Pāṇṭiya region in the south and Jina Kāñci (near Kanchipuram) in the Pallava region in the north flourished as great centres of Jaina learning till about the end of 12th century A.D after which Jainism went into a steady decline in the Tamil country. (Mahadevan 2003, p. 139)

And one chooses to differ at this point on the usage of terminology and concept of 'decline'. Instead of 'decline' (which suggests a downward spiral—into an 'unknown sphere', so to speak), there is need to note the survivals and that too, with negotiations and compromises that the community living in places, not mentioned above, have made. What happens between these two phases, 'decline' and 'revival', is equally important, if one considers the literary output of the Jainas in this period. Would the concept of decline thus, be in exclusion to expressions of a community and its history? There is perhaps need/space for a study evaluating the very concept of 'decline' setting in context a comparative analysis of Jaina engagement with Tamil language and literature as against epigraphical evidence in the same centuries might be something for scholars to look into.

2.2 Colonial and Oriental 'Discovery' of the Jainas: 'Recovery' of the Self

Col. Mackenzie, who came to India in 1782 as a cadet of Engineers of the East India Company for Madras, had collected a large number of manuscripts, coins and inscriptions and had compiled maps. He had collected a valuable amount of information until his death in 1821, by which time he had been appointed the Surveyor General of India, in which position he moved to Calcutta in 1818 and kept on adding to his collections. His wife sold the collections after his death in 1821 to the East India Company. These collections are available at the India Office Library in London and some of them in Kolkata and at the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library in Chennai.

Nicholas Dirks writes:

By the time of his death in 1821, Mackenzie had amassed a collection that still contains the largest set of sources for the study of the early modern historical anthropology of southern India. Mackenzie's collection also represents colonial Britain's most extensive engagement with Indian history, a monument to this day of a kind of historical energy and interest that disappeared almost as soon as the concerns of colonial conquest gave way to the preoccupations of colonial rule. (Dirks 2004, p. 82).

Mackenzie had met a brāhmin, named Cavally Venkata Boriah in 1796 in Mysore, who then enlisted for him the assistance of nine Telugu pandits for the job of collecting manuscripts across the Madras Presidency. Between 1800 and 1804, Mackenzie had collected as many as 434 volumes of Telugu paper manuscripts. Subsequently, he collected 274 Tamil manuscripts as Surveyor General in Madras by 1815. C. P Brown copied them in the Local Records volumes. Gustav Oppert prepared a catalogue of the Mss in 32 volumes and this was published in 1878. H. H. Wilson wrote a descriptive catalogue on Mackenzie Manuscripts (Mss) printed in 1828 at Calcutta and brought out in two volumes, *A Catalogue of Mackenzie Collections*. W. Taylor's Catalogue of Mackenzie Manuscripts (in three volumes) came out in 1862, in Madras (S. Sundarapandian, Acc. No. E6711).

A letter addressed by Col. Mackenzie to Sir Alexander Johnston in 1817 conveys an authentic view of the motives which led him to form the Collection, and the means which enabled him to prosecute his researches with success. He wrote:

The first thirteen years of my life in India, may be fairly considered as of little moment to the objects pursued latterly in collecting observations and notices of Hindoo manners, of Geography, and of History; with every attachment to this pursuit, to which my attention was directed before I left England; and not devoid of opportunities in India; yet the circumscribed means of a Subaltern Officer, a limited knowledge of men in power of office, and the necessity of prompt attention to military and professional duties, could not admit of that undeviating attention, which is so necessary to the success of any pursuit, at all times, much more so to what must be extracted from the various languages, dialects and characters of the Peninsula of India... In particular, a knowledge of the native languages, so essentially requisite could never be regularly cultivated in consequence of the frequent changes and removals from province to province... Those encouragements to study the languages of the vast countries that have come under our domination, since my arrival in India, were reserved for more happy times and for those, who are more fortunate in having leisure for their cultivation; *from the evils of famine, penury, and war, the land was then slowly emerging; and long struggling under the miseries of bad management, before the immediate administration of the South came under the benign influence of the British Government...* The connexion then formed with one person, native and a Bramin ("C. V. Boria") was the first steep of my introduction into the portal of Indian knowledge; devoid of any knowledge of the languages myself, I owe to the happy genius of this individual the encouragement and the means of obtaining what I so long sought.¹⁷

Further:

¹⁷ Memoir of Col. Mackenzie, Introduction. Acc. No. C118 at the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Chennai, pp. 1–2. Date of publication missing in this copy at the library. Emphasis, wherever, mine

...After the reduction of Mysore in 1799 and in the arrangements that followed I was employed in assisting the Commissioners with geographical information, to promote the arrangement and a knowledge of the limits of the subject of the partition. On my return to Madras the Governor General, the Earl of Mornington, being justly of opinion, *that a more complete knowledge of these countries was indispensably necessary for the information of Government*, was pleased in the handsomest manner, without solicitation on any personal knowledge to appoint me to survey Mysore, assisted by an establishment suited rather to an economic scale of expenditure... Much of the materials collected on this occasion were transmitted home in 7 folio volumes with general and provincial Maps... It is also proper to notice that in the course of these investigations and notwithstanding the embarrassments of this work, *the first lights were thrown on the history of the country below the Ghats*, which have been since enlarged by materials constantly increasing; and confirming the information acquired in the upper country. Among various interesting subjects may be mentioned,

1. *The discovery of the Jain religion and philosophy and its distinction from that of the Boudh.*
2. *The ancient different sects of religion in this country and their subdivisions, the Lingavunt (Lingayat), the Saivam, Pandarum, Mutts, &c. &c.*
3. *The nature and use of the Sassanum and inscriptions on stone and copper; and their utility in throwing light on the important subject of Hindoo tenures; confirmed by upwards of 3,000 authentic inscriptions, collected since 1800...*

Of these, *the papers relating to the Jains were the most novel and important, and first brought to notice the existence of a Sect, which is very extensively dispersed throughout India, and includes a considerable portion of its most respectable and opulent natives.*¹⁸

It was important to give some space to these points that Mackenzie made in his letter, reflecting on his collections 3 years before his death. Some aspects to this communication need to be noted, namely:

- (a) That in between the wars, conquests and conspiracies, Mackenzie was documenting (which he would leave for future historians to make sense of) aspects of a populace for purposes of governing the 'natives' 'better'; there was already a sense of the 'benign influence of the British Government' (as noted earlier).
- (b) There may have been little concern of documenting these details for historical purposes. By leaving these manuscripts, in some senses, the colonial rulers also left for the generations that followed them (especially in history writing) a whole methodology of reconstructing India through these records, through the eyes of the coloniser. If not contextualised, these records, taken on their face value, may present a certain aspect of the conditions then prevailing.

To take a simple example, we know that Mackenzie took the assistance of Telugu (brāhmiṇ) *paṇḍits* in collecting these manuscripts. This, in itself shouldn't be conceived as a non-problematic starting point. What they were recording was certainly coloured by their perspectives. I do mention, later on, Thurston recording a story from a *sthalapurāṇam*, where his informant was another brāhmiṇ and one can see where the story 'leans' towards.

Dirks has pointed out that:

Having never learned an Indian language, Mackenzie was specifically not an Orientalist. He had the peculiar advantage of being interested in sheer collection rather than interpretation and translation, tasks that could never be dissociated from colonial and missionary projects of control and conversion. (Dirks 2004, p. 82)

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 5–8

And, in an overall colonial context, he says:

Mackenzie had a much clearer sense of the politics of knowledge than most of his colonial compatriots in southern India because he was deeply involved in the actual collection of historical information, in particular through his close relations with his assistants and his use of survey work to facilitate collection. Mackenzie was also unique to the extent to which he believed that local texts, however embellished with unintelligible fables, would afford considerable historical information if read in context, along with as many other local documents as could be found, with some attention to matters of genre, style, and rhetorical strategy.... (Ibid, p. 89)

Certain local histories got left out in the process of collecting, as most of his assistants were brāhmins.

Appavoo, one of Mackenzie's Christian assistants, was at times forthcoming about attempts by Brahmans to suppress certain kinds of local traditions: 'Here by the Brahmans, the history of the Jaina and Cooroombers are much concealed... Their written histories are very rare...'. (Ibid, p. 103)

Yet in Mackenzie's manuscripts, one can still find some of the local Tamil Jaina stories, though most of his assistants were brāhmin (and there was perhaps one Jaina assistant); the records acknowledge the presence of a local Jaina community in Tamilnadu, not viewing them merely in terms of a pan-Indian category. These records were not merely focussing on the Śvetāmbara tradition as some of the Orientalists did. In the Tamil Jaina people's memory, the names of Ellis and the Italian missionary, Beschi figure prominently. The former, in his capacity as an officer in the administration, translated the *Kural* into English.¹⁹

The Tamils hailed Beschi as Vīramāmuṇivar and acknowledged with reverence his contribution to the Tamil language and literature. There is yet another aspect to it, which is the role of the colonial state and massive centralisation of records. From the 'secular', community domain, 'History' (of the Indian communities) as an agenda, or even a discipline, seems to have gone into the hands of the state; Thus, the palm leaf manuscripts that were collected from homes reached the offices of the state. The individual and family historical records (especially in communities where there was a generational aspect to it, as among the Tamil Jainas, for instance, who safely preserved these *ōlaiccuvaṭi* / *ēṭṭuccuvaṭi* for generations) were now part of the state, with 'ownership rights', as well, and entered a whole system of British bureaucracy which essentially 'delinked' the communities from their familial historical records. It may be interesting to reconstruct—even for purposes of imagination—the manner in which the powerful 'empire' approached families (from various sects) to hand over their manuscripts to the colonial officers. The fact that Mackenzie admits to not knowing the language brings in an added dimension, along with the fact that his assistants were brāhmins. It would have meant collecting what they felt was important and leaving out the rest; and recording it in the manner they felt was right.

This brings me to a problem connected to my study of the Tamil Jaina community and the story of the 'Gingee' rājā, which has been recorded by Mackenzie (or

¹⁹ I discuss Ellis and the *Kural* in some detail in later sections.

his assistants) and also recorded by Thurston. And also narrated to me in each of the Tamil Jaina villages I visited. Had it not been 'recorded' ('written') would this story lose its meaning and significance? That the colonial powers recorded this story (or someone saying, it has 'also been mentioned by Thurston, or Mackenzie also writes about this story') seems to give this narrative a certain sanction, as a piece of history. We only know from these records—Mackenzie and Thurston—that the king in question in the Jaina stories was Venkatapaty (Kistnappa/Dupala/Tubakki Krishnappa) Nayaka. Only Thurston mentions his caste as 'kavarai'. There is no other record available to corroborate if this indeed was the ruler that the stories refer to. For, even in the narratives of the community, depending on the 'benevolent', 'generous'/ tolerant rule of the time, the name of the ruler also changes. It is the Nawab of Arcot in some cases, or just a petty ruler of Gingee in some others, or 'cakkili rājā' in some others. The name varies in relation to the memory of 'good times' for the Tamil Jains. One would like to resolve this puzzle, though it needs some more work. But it just brings home the point that what was being committed to the 'official records' of the 'empire' would become, for a long time, the history of the country and its sects and the way in which to write history, as well. It was around this time too, that, as Mackenzie mentions, the '*śāsanam*' inscriptions were being recorded and several volumes of Annual Reports of Epigraphy were thereafter published. Which one continues to use, although through different lenses and with several edited versions of the records now available for cross reference. But again, the assumption of a moment in history being 'history', if validated by these charters/*śāsanams*, still remains.

Another important point to take note of, is the 'Discovery of the Jains', as he mentions in his letter, and that it happened 'south of the Ghats', in a sense, and that there exists a sect of the Jains, which is distinct perhaps came to light from Karnataka and Tamil regions. Prior to Mackenzie's collection of the records from the Tamil country, F. W. Ellis was already familiar with the Jaina Tamil literature and well-versed in Tamil. Caldwell, too, had made a point about Tamil's independent origins from Sanskrit. Both of them were aware of a Jaina community and its association with Tamil.

In fact, as Vaitheespara points out:

Caldwell even used the word "nationalism" in his descriptions of Dravidian civilization and culture. In a section entitled "Priority of the Literary Cultivation of Tamil", he privileged "Shen Tamil" (pure/high) of ancient times over contemporary colloquial Tamil... Throughout the work, Caldwell privileged earlier periods of Tamil history as periods that were relatively free from Sanskrit and Brahmanism when "nationalistic" currents were ascendant: "The period of the pre-dominance of the Jains (a predominance in intellect and learning-rarely a predominance in political power) was the Augustan age of Tamil literature, the period when the Madura College, a celebrated literary association, flourished, and when the Kural, the Chintamani, and the classical vocabularies and grammars were written. Through the intense Tamilic nationalism of the adherents of this school, and their jealousy of Brahminical influence, the Sanscrit derivatives which are employed in their writings are very considerably altered." It was through the use of such examples of anti-Brahmin and anti-Sanskrit ideologies that could be traced to early Tamil literature that Caldwell sought to convey his own message of anti-Brahmin "Tamilic nationalism". (Vaitheespara 1999, pp. 78–79. Quoting from Caldwell's *Comparative Grammar*, p. 56)

Vaitheespara further quotes Caldwell as remarking that:

The Jains of the old Panda country were animated by a national and anti-Brahminical feeling of peculiar strength; and it is chiefly to them that Tamil is indebted for its higher culture and its comparative independence from Sanscrit. The Saiva and Vaishnava writers of a later period, especially the Saivas, imbibed much of the enthusiasm for Tamil purity and literary independence, by which the Jains were distinguished: in consequence of which,...it is the only vernacular literature in India which has not been content with imitating Sanscrit but has honourably attempted to emulate it and outshine it. (Vaitheespara 1997, p. 84, *fn*.114)

Mackenzie's realisation of the sect of Jains and the site of his 'discovery' of the Jains was here—in the Tamil region, largely. At the end of it, the aim of committing to record all information available, as has been noted earlier, of course was to learn all there was to learn about the 'natives': 'to extract what must be extracted' from the Peninsular India in terms of languages, customs, etc. And in this process of extraction, a whole system of history writing/recording (at the same time, records on tribes, castes and the whole official system of Survey of India) was set in place by colonialists. Coming back to the Jains, the Imperial Gazetteer of India makes the following points of 'discovery':

Jainism is the second of the 'heretical' movements which led to the establishment of the non Brahmanic orders, organised as a protest against the exclusion of all but Brahmans from the ascetic fraternities. Like Buddhism, it had its rise in Magadha, and its founder, like Gautama was drawn from the warrior class. The two teachers were contemporaries the life of Vardhamana extending from about 599 to 527 BC....The natural inference is that Vardhamana, who on the establishment of his order gained the name of Mahavira, 'the great hero' was only the reformer of a sect which had its origin in a still earlier protest against Brahman monopoly of the ascetic order. The title, which he afterwards assumed, Jina, 'the victorious', gave a name to the order which he founded. The resemblances between Jainism and Buddhism are due, not to imitation, but to the fact that the basis of both was the same. In both the goal is Nirvana, but the term has a somewhat different connotation in the two beliefs. With the Buddhist it implies extinction; with the Jain, escape from the body, not from existence....*The Jain is more careful of animal life even than is the Buddhist and to him are due those curious institutions, known as Pinjrapols, or animal hospitals, in which creatures of all kinds, even vermin, are protected and fed. Buddha...laid no stress on asceticism, while among the Jains it survives in a repulsive form*'. (Imperial Gazetteer of India: The Indian Empire, vol. I, 1900, p. 414)²⁰

The *Gazette of South Arcot* speaks of the Jains settled there:

The south Arcot Jains all belong to the Digambara sect and the images in their temples of the 24 tirthankaras are accordingly without clothing. These temples (the chief of them are those at Tirunarunkonrai and Sittamur) are not markedly different in external appearance from Hindu shrines, but within them are images of some of the tirthankaras made of stone or of painted clay...The Jain rites of worship much resemble those of the Brahmans: there is the same bathing of the god with sacred oblations; sandal and so on; the same lighting and waving of the lamps and burning of camphor; and the same breaking of coconuts²¹ playing of music and reciting of sacred verses. These ceremonies are performed by the members of the archakas or priest class...The daily private worship in the houses is done by the laymen

²⁰ Emphasis mine. Note the qualification for Jaina (in this case Digambara) asceticism.

²¹ Some of the Tamil Jains informed that breaking of coconuts is not allowed in their temples. But perhaps in some cases they did follow these practices?

themselves before a small image of one of the tirthankaras and daily ceremonies resembling those of the brahmins – such as those of pronouncing of the sacred mantram at day break and the recital of forms of prayer thrice daily – are observed. (*Gazette of South Arcot* 1906, pp. 78–79)

So, here is an instance of the colonial state looking for the 'brāhminical' in each community that it is seeing. The brāhmins become the 'yardstick' in a sense for them to evaluate other sects, communities with. Hence, even in the case of the Jainas and Buddhists, it was important for them to make a point about these two sects coming out in opposition to the brāhmins, as has been noted earlier. Further the Gazette notes that:

The Jains believe in the doctrine of rebirths and hold that the end of all is nirvana. They keep the Sivaratri and Dipavali feasts, but say they do so not for the reasons which lead Hindus to revere these dates, but because on them the first and last of the 24 tirthankaras attained beatitude. Similarly they observe Pongal and Ayudha puja day....The vedakkarars (shikari caste) trade on these scruples by catching small birds, bringing them to the Jain houses and demanding money to spare their lives. The Jain have four social sect divisions; namely, the ordinary laymen and their priestly classes of the latter, the most numerous are the Archakas (or vadyars). They worship in the temples. An ordinary layman cannot become an Archaka; it is a class apart. An archaka can however rise to the next higher of the priestly classes and become what is called an Annam or Annuvriti, a kind of monk who is allowed to marry but has to live according to certain special rules of conduct. These Annams can again rise to the highest of the three classes and become Nirvanis or munis, monks who lead a celibate life apart from the world. There is also a sisterhood of nuns, called aryanganais, who are sometimes maidens and sometimes women who have left their husbands but must in that case take a vow of chastity. (Ibid, p. 79)²²

The colonial state or other scholars looking for brāhminical hierarchy or parallels in Jaina society and mention the class of *arcakas* whom they consider brāhmins among the Jainas, as the 'highest'. It was the other way. The other Jainas do not marry into *arcaka* families. *Arcakas* have to marry among their own. As mentioned below:

The laymen among Jains will not intermarry, though they will dine with the Archakas and these latter consequently have the great trouble in procuring brides for their sons and often pay Rs. 20000 or Rs. 300 to secure a suitable match. Otherwise there are no marriage subdivisions among the community, all Jains south of Madras freely intermarry...Widows are not allowed to remarry but are required to shave their heads until they are middle aged. The dead are burnt and the death pollution lasts for 12 days after which pollution is performed and the parties must go to the temple. Jains will not eat with Hindus...A curious difference is that though the girls never wear the thread they are taught the thread wearing mantram, amid all the ceremonies usual in the case of boys, when they are about 8 years old. (Ibid, p. 80)

²² Emphasis added. Again, there is no such rule that the *arcakas* can take to the next higher form of the *nirgrantha muṇis*. According to the Jainas, any one from the laity may take *dīkṣā* as a monk/nun. There is no linear movement from *arcaka* to a 'higher' class of 'Annam' as has been noted here. Here, one can clearly see that the *arcaka* class is being perceived through brāhminical categories of hierarchy. The priestly class here is not seen as higher than the class of laity.

One finds Thurston busy enumerating the castes composition among the Jainas and expressing surprise that barring a few many returned their caste as ‘Jaina’.²³ It is important that Thurston also mentions that many of them take titles such as Mutaliyars, etc. but he was not interested then in how these caste titles came about and why in some places they returned their caste suffix as Jainas and in some cases had other vellāḷa titles. It is important for us to see in this the Jaina community asserting its identity based on the context that urged for it to do so. While they retained their caste titles (that was usual for them to do) among themselves, so far as the colonial state was concerned, there was need for them to assert the Jaina identity, to distinguish themselves from the ‘Hindu’/brāhmiṇs. In the various accounts of the Jaina community and Jaina religion in the works of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Orientalists—Jacobi, Burgess, Princep, H. H. Wilson, Stevenson and others—a common element seems to run through their works. It was their interest in the Buddhists and a seemingly similar tradition of heretics that got them interested in the study of Jainism. Thus, we have most of them talking of similarity/dissimilarity between the two traditions, that of Gautama and Vardhamāna. They mainly looked at Jaina textual tradition as a single, homogeneous entity, being the same (in terms of significance, sacrality) for Jainas all over the subcontinent.

Late-nineteenth-century Tamilnadu also had the Tamil scholar, U. V. Swaminatha Iyer, busy collecting manuscripts and documents of antiquity, which have today become an enormous collection. In one of the papers of the ‘Mackenzie’s collection’ (as it came to be known later when H. H. Wilson compiled them), Mackenzie mentions the Gummidipundi and Ponneri Parsvanatha temple (Tirupalaivanam). Published as the ‘Accounts of the Jains’ in volume IX of the journal, Asiatic Researches in 1807, these form some of the earliest reports on the Jaina community and Jainism; and this included some of his diary notes of 1797 on the same when he was serving as Lt. Colonel F. Buchanan²⁴ added to this biography with his account of the Jainas in the southern part of the subcontinent. About the Jainas in Malabar,²⁵ he says that the Tuluva country was once occupied by Jaina chiefs and the Jaina family of Byrasudaiyar was particularly powerful. This family underwent disruption at the hands of Sivappanāyakar of Ikkeri who, after dividing the country into petty districts, placed a ‘rājā’ over each, and a Jaina rājā, at that. But, Buchanan notes later, Tippu Sultan hanged the last king who held such a title. The Tuluva Jaina kings and their descendants “degenerated” into cultivators, with time. One of them became a pensioner of the East India Company (Ramaswamy Ayyangar 1982, p. 75).

In Karnataka, Mackenzie was apparently assisted (in his investigations on the Jainas) by a Jaina scholar Devachandra, reputed author of *Rājāvalikathe* (a compen-

²³ This, I explain later.

²⁴ *A journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, London, 1807; second edition, Madras 1817

²⁵ *Buchanan’s Travels*, Vol. 3, ch XIV, p. 9

dium of Jaina history, compiled at Meleyur for a lady of the Mysore Royal family) (Ibid, p. 20, below).

At about the same time, Asiatic Researches²⁶ published Lt. Wilfred's 'An account of Jainas and their religion'. Following this came H.T. Colebrooke's 'Observations on the sects of Jains'.²⁷ The missionary J. Dubois' memoirs had much to say on Jaina community (1825). The *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. I, 1827, published essays on the Jainas too. One of these was by Dr. Francis Buchanan Hamilton ('On the Srāwacs or Jains, pp. 531–536) and another by Major Delamaine (with the same title, pp. 413–438).

In 1827, Franklin published his *Researches on the Tenets of Jeynes and Boodhists*. Around this time, another monumental compilation was in progress, J. Todd's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, with the help of a Jaina scholar Yati Gyānachandra, on the role of the Jainas in polity and society. Up to mid-nineteenth century, translated 'sacred' texts of the Jainas came out, such as Wilson's and Stevenson's translations of *Kalpasūtra* and *Nava-Tattva*; thus canonical Prākṛit was the point of interest of these European scholars. Many others—Ferguson, Princep, Lassen and Hoernle—contributed variously to studies on the Jain community and religion. Among works of epigraphy, mention may be made to Ludders' *List of Brāhmi Inscriptions from the Earliest Times till about 400 AD*²⁸ which contains inscriptional allusions to grants of Jaina laity to the monks.

While some scholars believe that most European scholars writing in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century were making use of a single, monolithic or let's say, 'universal' textual (canonical) tradition to compile facts about the Jainas and were not familiar about the regional traditions of the Jainas, it would be a question as to where to place the records of Mackenzie, Ellis, Caldwell or even missionaries such as Pope in the south. In general, it was a period of identifying communities and customs. Thus, Herman Jacobi, in his introduction to the *Ācārāṅga Sūtra*, notes that the Jainas preserved their original texts, like the Jews and Parsis (Ayyangar 1982, p. 9).²⁹

The comparison, here, is of significance. There is an effort, at this time, to identify points of difference and exclusivity of communities inhabiting the subcontinent and an effort also to record different textual traditions and collecting manuscripts of the colonised. At the end of it all, these writings and records have proven enormously useful in research on the Jainas and Buddhists even if the questions and issues and perceptions or points of focus have progressed, since. One shall now review these very questions, points that have concerned scholars on Jainism in South India and Tamilnadu. In this regard, one may refer to the involvement of Rev. Pope who translated the *Kuraḷ* of Valluvar. Of course, one of his concerns was to see

²⁶ *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. II, p. 51

²⁷ Printed in Colebrooke's *Miscellaneous Essays*, 2nd edition, 1872, Vol. II, pp. 191–224; originally, in *Asiatic Researches*, IX, 1809, p. 186

²⁸ *Epigraphia Indica*, 10, App. L.C.1912

²⁹ Below, citing Jacobi's *Introduction to the Ācārāṅga Sūtra*: 36

points of similarity between this work and Christian ethic. But he had also noted, in his Preface (to the first edition) written on 1 September, 1886:

That this publication may be useful in promoting the real study of Tamil, and so help those who go to South India as officers of government, or as missionaries, better to understand the mind of the people among whom they live and work, is my desire in sending it forth. (*Tirukkural* 1979, p. xv)³⁰

Speaking of Western scholarship on the Jaina community, Jaini remarks:

With few notable exceptions, such as Jacobi and Stevenson, most western scholars of Jainism have had no contact with the Jaina community in India. As for their contact with the indigenous Jaina scholarship, it has been restricted to what was available to them, in the English writings of a few notable Jainologists, like Jagmenderlal Jaini, Hiralal Jain and the late Prof. A. N. Upadhye.... (Jaini 2000, p. 24)

Regarding this statement, especially the first half of it, there might be a question as to whether the same could be said about Tamil Jainas vis-à-vis the Western scholars or others with an express interest in things Jaina. According to the Tamil Jainas—and reiterated by scholars such as Iravatham Mahadevan—the image cast on gold of the *Kural* author in the nineteenth century is that of a Jaina monk. Closest to what they perceive the author to have been. And Ellis' perception of the author of the *Kural* was as much based on his own research and work on it, as it was on interaction with the Tamil Jainas of his time. Most of the present day Tamil Jainas seem to remember Ellis, for the one contribution he 'almost' made, namely, his work on the *Kural* (he died before his translation of the *Kural* could be completed). But, of course, Jaini speaks of the larger 'pan-Jaina' community when he makes that statement. He says:

The majority of western works about Jainas were originally written in German, a much smaller number in English. The history of Jaina studies may be said to begin with the edition and translation of Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra* by Windisch, published in Leipzig in 1874...followed by Weber's (1883)... Hoernle (1885)... Jacobi's major work, the *Jaina Sūtras* (Sacred Books of the East, 1882 and 1884) placed Jaina studies on a firm foundation, and established the antiquity of Jainism over Buddhism. His translation of the *Tattvārtha Sūtra* (1906) laid the basis for a systematic study of Jaina Śāstras and their vast non canonical literature in Sanskrit.... (Jaini 2000, p. 24)

However, Jaini does make note of the fact that there was lack of attention to the Digambara sect and almost complete focus on the Śvetāmbara as also to lack of attention to the study of Jaina community as such. Thus, 'the sociology of Jainism, which in comparison with even the most minor of the Indian religions and cults, has not been studied to any sufficient extent' (which he attributes to Jacobi, who he believes to be 'largely responsible for the western acceptance of Śvetāmbara claims to authenticity and for the consequent neglect of the Digambaras...') (Ibid, pp. 26–27).

³⁰ Translated into English by G. U. Pope, W.H. Drew, John Lazarus and F.W. Ellis, published by the South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, Madras

He further opines that:

Western scholarship has been essentially Śvetāmbara scholarship...Western scholars have favoured this school not only by translating canonical texts, which are by definition Śvetāmbara, but also by their translation of non-canonical works – eg. Hemacandra's *Triṣaṣṭi-śālāka-puruṣacarita*, translated by Johnson....In contrast, the Digambara authors like Kundakunda, Sāmantabhadra, Pūjyapada, Jinasenā, Akaṣanka, Vidyānandi, Somadeva, and Śrīdhara, to mention only the most eminent, have been totally ignored. Virtually none of the works of these ācāryas have been translated in the West, and the few notices one gets of Kundakunda in the works of Frauwallner or Schubring cannot be considered adequate given the vast amount of commentarial material on his works...In Europe (and in India, too, I fear) little is known of the ancient Digambaras. (Ibid, pp. 28-29)

But there were the late-nineteenth-century translations of the *Kuraḷ* by Rev. Pope, Rev. Lazarus and Francis Ellis. This shows perhaps how little is known in general of the works in Tamil and of Tamil Jaina tradition, per se.

Bühler's brief essay *Über der Indische Secte der Jaina* (1887) translated into English by Burgess as *On the Indian Sect of the Jainas* (1903) remains even to this day the best introduction to the Jain religion. It established the independence of Jainism from Buddhism and gave fresh hopes for finding what Bühler calls, "the boundaries of originality between the different systems". (Ibid, p. 24)

Ellis was one of the early company officials whose proximity to the Tamil Jains also meant there was some interest in Tamil literature and the Jainas. Thus, this statement of Jaini may be true for rest of India, but not so for the Tamil country. They were "discovering" the Jains here, through their textual tradition and Tamil. But of course, it is a matter of concern that no substantial work on Tamil Jaina community ever evolved—looking at the community in historical context—even among Indian scholars who had worked on Jainism in Tamilnadu. If one accepts Jaini's perception, "Western scholars" were focussed more on Buddhism and Vedic Sanskritism than on Jainism. Later, a constant comparison of Jainism to Buddhist thought was seen. As noted above, it came as a surprise to the colonial administrators that Jainism existed as a separate sect, quite different from the Buddhism. And in this realisation, the Tamil Jainas (or Jainas settled in the southern parts of the country) played their part. Mackenzie did recognise a Jaina *localised* tradition as evidenced from his collection with assistance from local people (Telugu pandits, who then got him in touch with a few Jainas and other community assistants, as he notes). He was aware of the community in Tamilnadu and did not view them within the larger Indian Jaina category, or from within the Śvetāmbara tradition. Similarly, Ellis seems to have supported the Jain claims to authorship of the *Kuraḷ*, and this happened much before the Dravidian movement picked up the already prevalent contentious issue. He apparently issued a gold coin with the image of Vaḷḷuvar/Kuntakuntācārya in the nineteenth century. In the Tamil context, U. V. Swaminatha Aiyer was busy collecting palm leaf manuscripts from across Tamil Nadu and bringing out edited volumes of these. *Cīvakaśintāmaṇi*, *Nīlakeci* and *Cilappatikāram* were among the other Jaina works that he was responsible in bringing out printed editions of. Hence, a tradition of scholarship with interest in Jainas (in one, or the

other way) already existed in the nineteenth century which perceived Jainas as local people of Tamilnadu.

A period of enumerating and recording the socio-cultural landscapes of a region and also a certain sense of intellectual (perhaps spiritual: Pope, other missionaries) curiosity also happened in this period. In the context of Tamil language, the Tamil country has had a long and continuous textual tradition. Literacy and textual tradition form an important aspect of Tamil history and construction of the past. In this context too, the Jainas became important, since many of the Tamil texts were authored by them. Scholars such as Mahadevan have shown that the Jainas were instrumental in establishing literacy in the Tamil country to an extent that was not previously known since the time of the Brāhmī inscriptions. Speaking of the pan-Jaina tradition, Jyoti Prasad Jain writes that there was:

[A] movement for printing and publishing old manuscripts (in) the last quarter of the 19th century. As early as AD 1850, the first Jaina work, *Sādhuvandanā* of Banarsidas (c. AD 1640) was published from Agra...At this time Oriental scholars (had) access to bhandaras...The reports prepared by Bhandarkar, Perterson, Hiralal and others contained such a rich harvest of new material. (Jyoti Prasad Jain 1964, p. 8)

Being Jaina, ‘Legally’

For a long time, and in many circumstances, the Jainas were clubbed under the category ‘Hindu’. As to how this category was applied in legal matters, Duncan Derrett had pointed out:

For the purposes of the application of the codified parts of the personal law, a Hindu is one who is not a Muslim, Parsi, Christian or Jew! The earlier case law held a person to be a ‘Hindu’ for the purpose of application of Hindu Law even if he renounced all religion, renounced idols, renounced the Brahminical trinity of gods... Sikhs and Jainas, whatever they themselves think of their relationship to Hindus, are ‘Hindus’ for legal purposes... Section 2 (C) of the Hindu Marriage Act applies to (besides other categories) any person who is a convert or revert to the Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina or Sikh religion. (Derrett, 1999, p. 52)

The Jainas have been contending with this legal history that affects their sense of identity as a community distinct from the ‘Hindu’ since many years. It is amazing that these demands to be seen as a distinct community had persisted since colonial times. For instance, M. C. Jain wrote:

As Jains came to the law courts, commissions were issued from time to time all over the country to take evidence and ascertain Jain law and usage as it existed in Jain Sastras and was prevalent in practice. The first such attempt was in 1833 when *Maharaja v. Govindnath Ray Gulabchand and others* (5 select representatives, SDA Calcutta 276) Mr. Walpole of the Presidency Saddar Court directed the Murshidabad judge to obtain an exposition of the Jain shastras on certain points from some important Yatis (priests). This decision of the Presidency Court recognised the broad distinction between the tenets and usages of the members of the Jain sect and the rest of the Hindu community and the right of the former

to an adjudication of matters in dispute regarding questions of inheritance by their own shastas... But they found a real difficulty in discovering Jain Law and laboured under an incorrect notion that the Jains were Hindu dissenters that in the absence of special customs being proved to the contrary the principles of Hindu Law applied to them... The courts had to fall back on the return of commissions, and the method of commissions was necessarily imperfect and inadequate commissions were issued as cases came to court... In 1899, in the Harnath Prasad vs Mandil Prasad (27 Cal 379) the homogeneity of the Jains was recognised as evidence of existence of the same custom among Jainas of other places, and that there was no material difference in the customs of Agarwala, Chorewal, Khandelwal and Oswal sect of Jains. But Jain Law did not make much headway with the courts of law in India, till in an able and courageous judgment in 1915, Mr. Jagmander Lal of the Indore High Court (original Suit No. 3 of 1914) emphasised the independent origin of the Jaina community and discussed the value of a few old Jain Law books. This judgment did not go unnoticed in British India. (Jain 1930–1931, pp. 163–164)³¹

Jain further makes a note of a statement made in the wake of a case at the Madras High Court which had apparent empathy for the issue that Jainas are indeed different from the Hindus:

Kumaraswamy Shastri, officiating Chief Justice in a recent Madras case, Galeppa vs Eramma (AIR 1927 Madras 228) (noted) 'I would be inclined to hold that modern researchers have shown that Jains are not Hindu dissenters but that Jainism had an origin and history long anterior to the smritis and commentaries which are recognised authorities on Hindu Law and usage.... In fact Jainism rejects the authority of Vedas which form the bedrock of Hinduism and denies the efficacy of the various ceremonies which Hindus consider essential.... No doubt by long association with the Hindus who form the bulk of the population, Jainism has assimilated several of the customs and ceremonial practices of the Hindus but this is no ground for applying Hindu Law as developed by Vignaneswara and other commentators, several centuries after Jainism was a distinct and separate religion with its own religious ceremonial and legal systems, en bloc to Jains and throwing on them the onus of showing that they are not bound by the law as laid down by Jain law givers...' This then is the position of Jain Law in British India at present. And there the matter rests. It now rests with Their Lordships, of the Privy Council to give effect to the feelings expressed by Hon'ble Mr. Justice Kumaraswami Shastri of the Madras High Court. (Ibid, p. 165)

However, in the present context, following this long sustained debate, some developments have taken place with regard to recognition of Jainas as minority. I make mention of one of the important constitutional developments in this regard in one of the chapters, later in this book.

³¹I discovered this reference (*Jaina Gazette*) at the Prakrit Bhavan in Dhavalateertha, near Sravanabelgola, which also houses the National Institute of Prakrit Studies and Research. The staff there were truly helpful and treated me to special cups of tea every once in a while. I make note of this reference because it brings home the fact that onus was always on the community to explain its distinct status in Indian history. In terms of colonial history, interestingly, while the colonial rulers were sending census officials and others to record the existence of different communities and while they were aware of the existence of Buddhists and Jainas as distinct religious sects in India, this 'awareness' did not inform the colonial legal system.

‘Recovery’ of Self?

Interesting though in the Tamil Jaina context was not the ‘discovery’ of the Jainas by these ‘others’ as much as the ‘recovery of self’ (in a sense) of Tamil Jainas in the colonial times and thereafter, looking at themselves through works of Beschi, Caldwell, Ellis and others. Written records and inscriptions become important for the Jainas in Tamil Nadu to ascertain their antiquity and assert their identity through this antiquity, as recorded by the colonial state, in spite of the fact that they were well aware themselves of the antiquity of their sacred centres—rock-cut caves and temples—they visited often, to offer worship. However, making a record of these in local reports on epigraphy, and printing these locally gave them a renewed sense of having been important actors (as ‘also noted by the colonial state’, in a sense) in the history of Tamil Nadu. At the same time, they attained their sense of historical agency through the printed editions of their texts by U. V. Swaminatha Aiyer (*U. Ve. Ca.*, as he is popularly referred to), as well, within the local Tamil context.

Then there were Tamil Jaina scholars such as A. Chakravarti, in the 1930s, engaging with these records with a keen sense of how their community or religion was being written about. And in their views which they expressed, one can see in what way the Jainas perceived the works of Oriental scholarship or the colonial ‘recordists’, as it were, and what sources they were using to present a certain picture of the Jainas. For instance, A. Chakravarti wrote:

The term Ājivika was originally meant to stigmatise Maskari Putra and his followers as professionals. Dr. Hoernle, in his article on “Ajivikas”, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, mainly relies upon *Bhagavatisutra*, a Śvetāmbara Jaina work for his information about Ajivikas. According to this Śvetāmbara version, Makhali Putta Gośāla, was sometime a disciple of Mahāvīra, with whom he had quarreled before he set up an independent religion of his own. Gośāla was very different from the founders of Buddhism and Jainism. He seems, by natural disposition, to have belonged to a baser sect of mendicants, to put on the garb of a religious mendicant as a pretext for idle and self-indulgent career. In one of the Jātaka Tales a mendicant belonging to this sect, is described among other things, as carrying a bamboo staff which shows that he must have belonged to the class of mendicants who are known as Ekadandins or Maskarya... Thus it is clear that the term Ājivikas was a term of reproach in the Buddhist vocabulary to Ekadandin or Maskari. Though Buddhist literature refers to Ājivikas with this sinister compliment, the Buddhist never make the mistake of confusing the Ājivikas with the Jainas. The term used for Jainas is Nirgrantha, the unfettered ones... (and he continues with further references from Buddhist and Jaina literature to differentiate the Ājivikas from Jainas to point out that) Dr. Hoernle depending upon certain Śvetāmbara works of doubtful value, makes certain astounding statements which cannot be left unchallenged. He wants to make out that the Ājivikas were practically the Digambara Jainas.... (Chakravarti 1984, pp. 244–247)³²

³² Emphasis, wherever, mine

He also refers to a reading of an inscription by Dr. Hultzsch, of inscriptions found at the Perumal temple at Poygai near Virinchipuram (*SII*, Vol I, 88, 89, 92 and 108) referring to (according to the reading) 'tax on Ajivikas' (Ibid, p. 251). About this, he writes:

It is evident that the Editor Dr. Hultzsch makes an unfortunate mistake in translating *acuvakkaṭāmai* as the tax on Ājivikas. *A priori* it is absurd to suggest that any finance minister would propose levying tax on wandering mendicants who have to beg for their daily food...Further from the context it is clear that the term refers to some kind of professional tax since it occurs in the midst of words relating to shops, tax on gold smiths, tax on oil mills...The Tamil term *acu* is generally used synonymously with mould. Hence it can only mean a tax on moulding and casting....it is enough for our purpose to state that it does not and cannot mean tax on Ājivikas and the rendering given by Dr. Hultzsch is evidently wrong....He cannot claim as evidence for his conclusion anything more than the Śvetāmbara work which he takes as his authority.... (Ibid, p. 261)³³

I am skipping a large part of the detailed points Chakravarti makes in this regard. But, significantly, it reflects the assertion of a distinct Digambara Jaina identity as against the Śvetāmbara, as it also reveals the sources that these scholars were referring to, as Jaini points out; they were more concerned about sources of Śvetāmbara tradition than of the Digambara tradition. And in this sense, the assumptions they made about the Jainas were of a sect within a universal Jaina tradition.

Mackenzie himself, despite the advantage of officials such as Ellis before him, was assuming that all Jainas were akin to the 'opulent natives' (as referred to earlier). In this, perhaps, he was also looking at the Śvetāmbara Jainas of the north. Thus, what the Orientalists were reading about, or projecting onto traditions and communities was defining the records and, thereby, the history of these traditions and communities. Finally, the way the Oriental scholars perceived, and enshrined the Jaina community in records and manuscripts must be analysed within the historical, political contexts of the time. But it is also important to note that some communities (being documented and not necessarily engaged with) also had their own perceptions and responses to what was being documented about them. We can see that at least in the case of the Tamil Jainas. An interesting point here is to be made as to how the Tamil Jaina community seems to have taken seriously what was written about its tradition, well before the colonial period. In Chap. 4 in this book, there is a reference to the Jaina community's objections to Naccinārkkīṇiyar's commentary on *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*.

Emmrich engages with Chakravarti's writings in this regard. He writes:

To the urban, modern academic, particularly the non-Tamil Indian or Western academic reader, Cakravarti Nāyanār's work...may have, and may still, come across as highly selective, if not to say sectarian, manner of narrating a literary history. This is due to the conspicuous lack of cross-references to non-Jaina works and authors, or even to South Indian

³³ For the entire argument, with inscriptions printed in Tamil, with translations of Hultzsch for reference, see Chakravarti 1984, pp. 251–261.

Jaina works in Prākṛit and Sanskrit. This makes Jaina literature in Tamil appear remarkably consistent and homogenous, as well as conspicuously introspective and closed, pure and limited, artificially cut off by the presumed agenda of the author to essentialize the Jain in Tamil literature. Yet, again, the opposite seems to be true if one reads the work, not as an account of what actually happened to Jain literature in the period of its imagined dominance or following its vicissitudes through its *longue durée*, but as documentation of its discovery and translation. Therein lies the unobtrusive accomplishment, scholarly richness and, if it needs to be demonstrated, non-sectarianness of this work, a documentation presented by a Jain of a discovery that had been carried out mostly by non-Jain scholars. Here, the projected image of Tamil Jainism as a self-contained, hidden and hiding, mimetic yet hermetic parallel universe, reflected in the traditional curricular groupings of texts transposed into a modern literary history, shifts and becomes the image of a literary world. For Jains, still with their traditional background but already trained in academic institutions, this world not only emerges confidently from the shadows, it is imparted a value, is illuminated and rein-vigorated by those very forces that were thought to be the cause of the ambivalent status of Tamil Jainism, a status between presence, absence and dissolution. (Emmrich 2011, p. 637)

Speaking of the initial stages of editing and printing of classics in Tamil, Zvelebil writes:

Appu (or Appāvu) Muttucāmi Pillai (?-1840), a Christian of Pondicherry was a broadly educated man (with a fair knowledge of Sanskrit, Telugu, English, and perhaps Latin, beside his mother-tongue), active in Tamil intellectual circles of Madras. He was appointed Tamil pandit in the College of Fort St. George there. It was at the instigation of Francis Whyte Ellis that he began collecting Tamil manuscripts. In point of fact, it was most probably Muttucāmi Piḷḷai who was the first Tamil scholar to make an extensive tour of Tamilnadu, in 1816, *with the explicit purpose to search for, collect and classify Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts* [sic], in particular the works of Beschi. (Zvelebil 1992, pp. 158–159)

In a footnote, he adds:

The College of Fort St. George (which the Tamils designated as *Cennaik kalvici caṅkam*) was established in 1812...and from about 1820 on it was engaged in vigorous teaching and research activities. It was closed down on 21.7.1854. The British administrators (particularly Francis Whyte Ellis and Colonel Mackenzie) supported teaching of Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Urdu, and local pandits were appointed as “munshis” (language teachers). The first so appointed for Tamil was apparently Citampara Paṇṭāram (d. 1832), followed by Tāṇṭavarāya Mutaliyār, Muttucami Piḷḷai, P. Nayanappa Mutaliyar, K. Civakoḷuntu Tēcikar, Mā. Kantasāmi Piḷḷai, and a few others. K. Rāmasāmi Piḷḷai was its chief librarian. The library (the “College Press” was established in 1813) published quite a few Tamil books.... (Ibid, fn. 36, pp. 158–159)

Further:

The College of Fort St. George in Madras had an important role to play in the early publishing of various books in Tamil. It seems that these activities began between 1810–1812. The first Tamil “munshi” of the College, Citampara Paṇṭāram, translated into Tamil two parts of the Sanskrit law-book, *Mānavadharmasāstra*, and is said to have been awarded the prize of one thousand pieces (*varāha*) for the job; as far as we know, his translation was not published. (Ibid, pp. 159–160)

What I quote hereafter are both important points, and I shall come to the 'why' of it, in a while.

[In] 1812...a man called Nānapirakācar, the son of Tañcai Malaiyappa Piḷḷai, printed in Madras, with wooden blocks, from underlying palmleaf scripts, the texts of *Tirukkuraḷ* and *Nāḷaṭiyār*, as far as we know, these were the first printed editions of the two Tamil classics...P. Nayanappa Mudaliar (1779–1845) of Pondicherry was another Tamil pandit in the College of Fort St. George... Nayanappa was a true pioneer of Tamil critical editing since he took into consideration textual variations and even emended the text. [Among] his editions were *Neminātham* (1836), *Nāḷaṭiyār* (1844), *Tivākara Nikaṇṭu* (parts 9 and 10) and *Cūṭamaṇi Nikaṇṭu* (partial).... (Ibid, p. 160)

It is important that all the texts cited above are Jaina works. Though Zvelebil does not reveal biographical details of these men, there is a possibility that Nānapirakācar, going by his name and his father's name, was a Tamil Jaina, also considering that he rendered into print, from palm leaf manuscripts, two Jaina works. It might be possible to conjecture, also, that Nayanappa was also from the Jaina community, since all the works are Jaina.³⁴ It is also interesting that these men seem to be from the veḷḷāḷa community.

Zvelebil points out that:

Some of those who were engaged in the early activities of editing, publishing, and translating the works of Tamil literature were foreign scholars of Portugese, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, German, French and English origins, very often both Catholic and Protestant missionaries, as well as Western educated Indians of roughly the first half of the 19th century when the oldest classical literature of the Tamils was virtually un-known.... (Ibid, p. 153)

It is intriguing of course that Zvelebil dedicates the rest of the book to listing out select Tamil scholars who 'rediscovered the classical heritage of the Tamils' (Ibid, p. 153) but strangely focusses mostly on those who did not take up the study of Jaina or Buddhist works, barring a few, such as U.Ve.Ca.

To conclude this section, one finds that in the early nineteenth century, the Jainas, as a distinct community, became 'visible' to the Orientalists, partly due to their seeming similarity to the Buddhists and also due to the interest in a community that so religiously preserved its history and documented its manuscripts. So far, it was believed (and would be continued to believe, for quite some years till the early twentieth century) that Indians did not have a sense of history. The nineteenth century, then, saw documentation and recording of numerous manuscripts, the canonical, as well as lay literature, and the Jainas were now entering into the world of official archives, to be used for the future.

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³⁴ Unless (which is also a possibility) he was a Śaivite, in which case, it would be interesting to look at these editions for the emendations. But why would he only take up Jaina works and not any of the Śaivite ones? I would have to probe further to draw any conclusions. It just seemed an interesting idea to think about.

Images: Jaina Sacred Sites, Texts and Tamil Jaina Scholars



Fig. 2.1 Painted ceiling at the Candiranathar temple, Tiruparuttikunram (Picture Taken in year 2003)



Fig. 2.2 Tirumalai rock-cut cave sculptures (Picture taken in year 2003)

Fig. 2.3 Mahavira carved
of single stone, at
Tirumalai (year 2003)



Fig. 2.4 Inscriptions on a rock at Jambai (year 2003)



Fig. 2.5 Rooms cut out from rock at Tirumalai with painted walls and ceiling (year 2003)



Fig. 2.6 Idol of Śaṇi, besides image of Pārśva outside the temple at Tirunaungondai (2003)

Fig. 2.7 Tirunatharkunru rock with image of 24 tīrthankaras carved on it (Picture taken in 2003)



Fig. 2.8 Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions on the rock at Kongarpuliyangulam (Picture taken in 2015)



Fig. 2.9 Cave beds cut inside the rock for the *nirgranthas* at Kongarpuliyangulam (2015)

Fig. 2.10 Tirthankara
bas-relief at
Kongarpuliyangulam
(2015)



Fig. 2.11 Rock face with trithankaras carved at Kilavalavu/Kizhvalavu (2015)



Fig. 2.12 Rock Kilavalavu, at sunset (2015)

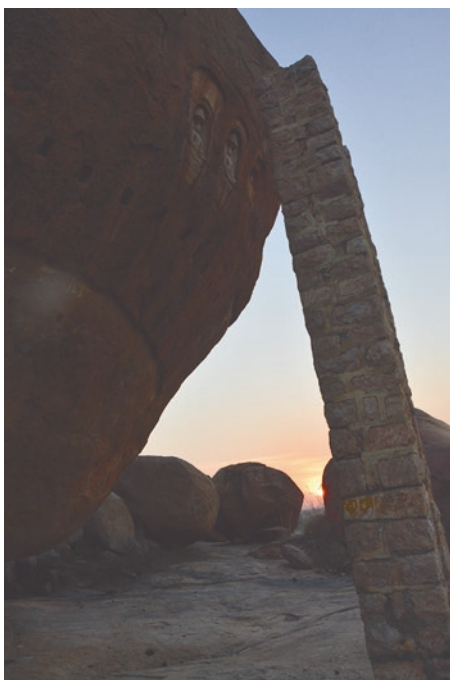




Fig. 2.13 Detail of the rock face at Kilavalavu (2015)



Fig. 2.14 Detail of another part of the rock at Kilavalavu (2015)



Fig. 2.15 Cave beds with inscriptions, inside the cave at another part at Kilavalavu Jain complex



Fig. 2.16 At Anaimalai (2015)



Fig. 2.17 Detail of the Anaimalai rock carvings of tirthankaras and Ambicā yakṣi (2015)



Fig. 2.18 Panchapandavar padukkai at Perumalmalai, tirthankaras carved on rock face, and a Mahāvīra idol underneath (2015)



Fig. 2.19 Mahāvīra idol, from front

Fig. 2.20 Way to
Settipodavu (or
Chettipudavai),
Samanarmalai,
Kilakkuyilkkudi (2015)





Fig. 2.21 Mahāvīra at the entrance to the rock-cut cave, Settipodavu (or Chetṭipuḍavai) hill, Samanarmalai (2015)



Fig. 2.22 Inside the cave at Settipodavu; tīrthankaras and Ambicā yakṣi on the extreme right corner (2015)



Fig. 2.23 Samanarmalai rock with the Ayyanar temple down below (2015)



Fig. 2.24 Samanarmalai rock, with inscriptions and carvings of tirthankara images (2015)

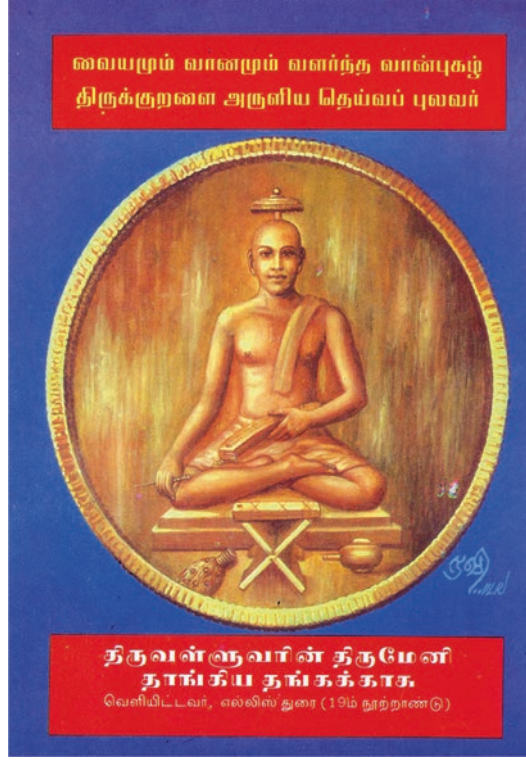
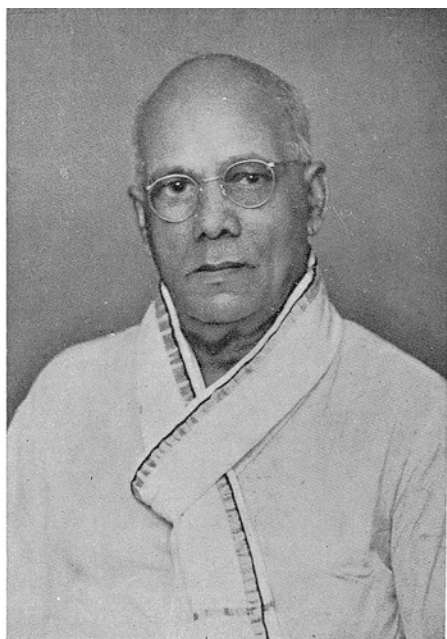


Fig. 2.25 Image of the author of Tirukkural (Tiruvalluvar) inscribed on the gold coin issued by Ellis. Source: Picture accompanying article by Iravatham Mahadevan in *Jivabandhu T. S. Sripal Avarkalin Vāḷkaiyum Tōṇṭum: Niṇaiṇi Viḷā Malar*, 1000–2000, Tamilaka Samanarkal Cankam, Madurai



Fig. 2.26 Kundakunda memorial with his footprints installed at Ponnurmalai (Pic. taken in 2003)



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In English: with English translation and commentary

- (1) *Panchástikāya* by Shri Kund Kund Acharya.
- (2) *Samaya-Sāra* with English translation and commentary by Shri Kund Kund Acharya.
- (3) *Tirukural* with English translation and commentary.
- (4) *Indian Humanism* published by the Madras University.
- (5) *The chapter on Jainism in the Heritage of India* published by the Ramkrishna Mission, Calcutta.
- (6) *The chapter on Jainism in the Philosophy of the East and the West* published by the Government of India, Education Ministry.

In Tamil:

- (7) *Merumandra Puranam* with meaning.
- (8) *Nilakeśi* with an old commentary.
- (9) *Tirukural* with the commentary by Kavi Raja Pandithar.

Fig. 2.27 Photograph of A. Chakravarti (Source: Chakravarti, A. (1957). *The Religion of Ahimsa: the Essence of Jaina Philosophy and Ethics*. Bombay: Ratanchand Hirachand (Pic. taken in 2015 from the library copy at IIAS, Shimla, a providential discovery)

Fig. 2.28 Photograph of T. S. Sripal on a pillar in the Dharmasagar community library in Tirupparambur, which he founded in the 1930s (Pic. taken in 2003). [For discussion on Sripal, see pp. 194ff]. Tirupparambur Reading Library (2003)



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Chapter 3

Community Narratives, Inscriptional Records: A Chronicle of Journeys Through Tamil Jaina Villages

Abstract This chapter explores a different format for the study of the Tamil Jaina community, by juxtaposing community accounts—stories, ideas, perspectives and narratives—about their place in history or the place of their village in Tamil history or Tamil Jaina history and a few of the numerous inscriptional records of the place. The records found in the Tamil Jaina settlements of the past are set against the Tamil Jains of the present, in the same place. In some cases, there are only inscriptional records, but not present settlements. The idea is to look at the layers of history that one can document at a particular place and the manner in which a community relates to these records. This is a study documenting a community over the long term, in terms of their own perspectives of their past(s) and how they look at their present state of being, including their recent attempts to retrieve their antiquity through the Green Walk, or *Ahimsai Naḍai*, through the ancient rock-cut caves and natural caverns with Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions.

Keywords Dharumadevi (Dharmadevi) • Cakkili rājā • Veḷḷāḷa • Murukaṇ • Green Walk • Nīr pūci nayaṇār • Paḷḷiccantam

3.1 A Prologue

From 7 February 2015, I revisited some of the Tamil Jaina villages after many years. I started from Vembakkam, Kanchipuram, though. This wasn't a place I had visited before. Many years ago, when I took up freelance journalism to support my PhD research, I was, incidentally, of course, sent to report on a Jaina event organised by the Kutchi Jain community in Hyderabad. It was a *pañcakalyāṇak*¹ ceremony of Mahāvīra. I was attending a *pañcakalyāṇam* event now, at Vembakkam, near Kanchipuram, for the first time among the Tamil Jains. The *pañcakalyāṇam* is a ritual enactment of *garbha-dhāraṇam* (the conception), *janma* (birth), *dīkṣa* (initiation into mendicancy), *kēvalaṇāna* (attainment of omniscience and the sermon at

¹ Which is a ritual enactment of *garbha-dhāraṇam* (the conception), *janma* (birth), *dīkṣa* (initiation into mendicancy), *kēvalaṇāna* (attainment of omniscience and the sermon at the *samavasaraṇa* and *mokṣa/nirvāṇa* (liberation) events of the fīrthankara's life.

the *samavasaraṇa* and *mokṣha/nirvāṇa* (liberation) events of the tīrthankara's life. The last time I was with them, there weren't many festivals happening, and my fieldwork comprised of essentially conversations with the community, and most of these conversations revolved around Tamil literature, persecution stories and stories about prominent Tamil Jaina people. But this time, it was different, with ritual events in the village temples taking centre stage. In the latter case, it was fascinating to find that participation in these rituals was also a significant community identity marker; people had assembled from cities like Chennai, Madurai and elsewhere to take part in these activities. If they were not present physically, they had contributed in terms of resources for the same. I reached Vembakkam to see decorated temple elephants and horses, on the second day of the *pañcakalyāṇam*. By now, many changes and developments had taken place as I sought to touch base with some of the people I had met those many years ago. I was also meeting some new people this time. I learnt, sadly, of the demise of two people I had met the last time: Cintāmaṇi 'Navalar' Santhakumar Jain and the person who told me the 'Cenji rājā' persecution story for the first time at Vilukkam, Vrishaba Das. They will not be able to see their pictures in my PhD thesis, which I had carried along to share with members of the community; I was unable to do that all these years for reasons not within my control.

3.2 Tamil Jaina Community Narratives: Records of Contemporary History

A note on the format is called for. I have already elucidated some of the reasons for this format in the introduction. But let me say a few words more on the same. All along the journey across Tamilnadu and meeting Tamil Jainas, I was struck by their sense of history and their place in it as also with the nature of continuities, with many of the villages of a really long continuity with the past across several generations. There was a case of lived, shared history of their village. While the inscriptional histories seem to give a sense of *fixity* and seem to fit into a neat chronologically linear format (in terms of the ways in which inscriptions have generally been recorded and studied)² of the past, the people's histories (not necessarily one singular history, for there are many pasts remembered by them) are layered, and their conversations reveal those layers; some of the ways they remember their pasts also depends on how their present is. Not all these histories were about the oldest of the inscriptions being found in their temple or the oldest of the temples being found in

²Which is also something I have consciously followed here in this chapter, in deference to the title of this chapter. I am also not citing all the inscriptions that have been found in each of the villages mentioned here; I have only selected a few representative ones. Simply recording all the inscriptions would require a monograph solely dedicated to the same. Some scholars have already done that in the past, such as A. Ekambaranathan and Sivaprakasam (1987), not to mention the tome by Mahadevan (2003).

their village. There were ‘immediate’ histories (I would use this term to signify a not so ‘ancient’ past) and the usual histories of the longer time spans and of a hoary past. And there were myths and stories that defined them. They did not define themselves through invoking a past ‘recorded’ in inscriptions. Their histories were about their village, about its importance in the larger Tamil Jaina history or about literature that they define also as history of the Tamil Jains. And these histories were not necessarily reflected in the records. But where the inscriptional records made a difference and gave them a sense of living a tradition, as it were, they invoked mention of their village in such and such an inscription; all the better if it was found in their village or in its vicinity. It was the need to see this continuum that urged, or ‘wrote for itself’, this format. I share some of their oral narratives and inscriptional records found at the Tamil Jaina places I visited. I am looking at one dimension of the past in the community narratives and another in the epigraphs, for each place. I reflect on what these different sources of history say about the Tamil Jaina community’s history and status in the Tamil historical tradition.

Before moving further, a point or two more about the general picture that emerged from the interactions with the community, which is related to its history, and in a sense based on ‘rootedness’ and the sanction, gained from rootedness, over a long period of time. This seems similar, at least conceptually, to inscriptional records—again, rooted, in a place for a long period—which gain (depending on where they are placed, which context they occur in) historical sanction. The only difference being the inscriptions were committed to writing. And though interpretations vary, the writing remains visible and tangible. While the dialogues with the community—with the Tamil Jaina community, more so—not having that advantage of ‘hard’ evidence, has the impending possibility of being seen as ‘ahistorical’. The only point that may be made in this connection is that one needs to place the ideas of the community about their history together with other sources to reconstruct their past. And it is also meant to convey the point that not all that is written in the inscriptions reveals the entire not-so-linear movement of history. There are several questions yet to be resolved.

Each village has its own history and its local ‘sacred circulatory space’, as well, in terms of the sacred centres they visit. Each village perceives of itself as part of a Tamil Jaina history, as an important player in it. Thus, within the overall Tamil Jaina context, there is a localised history of each village having been associated with a spectacular ‘event’ of Tamil Jaina history. One perceived a kind of historical continuity in most of the Tamil Jaina villages one visited. There were historical records from their temples and manuscripts and inscriptions in temples showing patronage from some sections of the royalty. Then there were the colonial records mentioning some facets of their history. The missing part, at least at the time of my first field research, was the community narratives. A living community such as this, I had then thought, must be located through these, as well, apart from the pasts of inscriptions. It is rare to find a long, continuous, lived tradition with all the records that a historian could possibly find. Yet, few community narratives have been used in the process of reconstructing the history of Jainism in Tamilnadu. Similarly, each village has its own story of its association with the *matham* at Cittamur—the *mutal*

mariyātai concept—variously, people of Peramandur, Vilukkam and Tayanur (the last mentioned by Thurston, too, in his enumerative record) claim this *mutal mariyātai*. And each of these is associated with the persecution and victimisation stories of the Jainas in different periods. If one were to sieve through these different versions, the common motif would be the importance of the village (within the larger Tamil Jaina history), firstly, as an important actor in the Tamil Jaina history; secondly, the persecution and their role in affirming the Tamil Jaina identity; and, thirdly, the notion of *mutal mariyātai*—a very Tamil (*veḷḷāḷa?*) idiom—for gaining sanctity.

3.3 Stereotypes of Jainas

Paul Dundas in the introduction to his famous work on the Jainas begins with reference to the Sanskrit work *Dāsakumāracarita* by Daṇḍin (about the seventh century CE) where,

One of its heroes encounters a naked Jain monk called Virūpaka ('ugly') who recounts—he was ruined by a courtesan to the extent of being left with only his loincloth...thus in misery and humiliation, converted to the Jain religion, abandoning clothes completely. 'However, covered with dirt and filth, in agony because of ripping out my hair, suffering greatly because of hunger and thirst...and all the intense restraints imposed on me with regard to my standing, sitting, lying down and eating, as if I were an elephant...being trained for the first time, I reflected: 'I am a member of the brāhmaṇa caste. This descent into a heretical path cannot be my religion...But now, wretch I am, I have to assume a contemptible dress of nudity which is to all intents and purposes a fraud and will, through being obliged to listen to continual insults of the Hindu gods, end in hell after I die...After thinking over this unhappy choice I have made, I have come to this grove of trees and am now weeping my heart out.' Daṇḍin here provides the classical Hindu stereotype of Jainism as a religion practised by filthy and naked ascetics requiring pointless torture of the body...and involving as part of its doctrine the subversion of basic Hindu values. (Dundas 1992, p. 1)

There is yet another stereotype, which persists not only among people in general but also among scholarly circles, which is that the Jainas (as a general, undifferentiated category) are all traders and belong to a rich, mercantile class. Most of those I met in the villages in 2003 were in the middle- and low-income group (but there were also a few exceptions, the well-off people, who didn't stay in the villages). In 2015, I could perceive some marked changes in the economic status, or that is how it seemed, looking at the elaborate temple festivities they had organised and some renovations of temples they had sponsored. More diversified occupations and employment in cities (mostly, Chennai) and nearby towns must be the reason. The landless farmer I met in year 2003 was still at the same location. By now, his daughter had been married off. There were some who had sold their lands and others who had leased them out. I found that more people had moved to Chennai, but their organic link with the agricultural village and its seasons and festivities had not weakened. The community remains to a large extent an agricultural society (with

the upheavals that the occupation has seen in the larger Indian context), and their history belongs very much within the agrarian history of the Tamil country.

Why do I focus on the Tamil Jainas, essentially, as a ‘community’? Because in writing the history of what became the overwhelming paradigm (within which communities, such as the Tamil Jainas get marginalised), history-writing, too, reinforces that very overwhelming paradigm, even if it is being critically assessed in that process. There is a need to look at that which was not, or could never be, or was not allowed to be a paradigm worth reckoning; if it was, it was soon silenced in myriad ways, through the overarching paradigm of Sanskrit temple-worship, royal patronage, bhakti and later, perhaps, a certain paradigm of Carnatic (classical) music and classical dance, all of these making for a complete picture.

But some scholars do not believe there was an identity consciousness among Jainas as a distinct community for long and that it is a very recent development.

For instance, quoting Dumas, Babb remarks,

Jains often reported themselves as ‘Hindu’ in the early British census, and even today Jains see this question in more than one way.... (Babb 1998, p.3)

This is not only an erroneous reading of the Jaina community in the Indian historical context (considering that the community itself arose in contraposition to the Vedic belief-system and brāhmiṇism) but also wrong historically. I point out, later, as to how the Jainas returned their ‘castes’ as ‘Jain’ (as reported by Thurston) and at Jains taking recourse to legal systems to prove themselves ‘Jain’ and ‘non-Hindu’. Babb, in fact, affirms that the Jains, farther south, ‘are found mainly in Maharashtra and Karnataka’ (Ibid, p. 2).

This, again, shows the general ignorance of a community of Jains in Tamilnadu and ignorance about the whole history of persecution, which was so directly linked to the question of community (religious) identity.

3.4 The Tamil Jaina Agrarian Context

Earlier inscriptions also reveal the ‘agrarian’ element of the Jainas; even from the earliest times, Jainism had its agrarian base, as support came from the agriculturists (the veḷḷāḷas, in most cases) of Tamiḷakam, who were the Jaina laity. Thus,

An inscription from Varichiyūr (No. 16,³ ca. 2nd century BC) refers to the endowment of *nūru kala nel*, ‘hundred kalams of paddy’. Unfortunately, the inscription is badly damaged and virtually no other information is available. It appears, however, that the endowment of paddy was for the maintenance of the large monastic establishment in this cave shelter having numerous stone beds. The phrase *nūru kala nel* occurring in such an early inscription is interesting. The standard rate of land tax was one hundred kalams of paddy per *vēli* (about 2.67 hectares) of wet land in the delta region of the Cōḷa country during the reign of Rajaraja

³ See Mahadevan (2003), p. 340, for the said inscription [“...behold...to endow...hundred *kalams* of paddy...”].

I. The endowment of one hundred kalams of paddy in the present inscription meant in effect that the tax on one *vēli* of land was made over to the *paḷli*. . . . (Mahadevan 2003, p.140)

Again,

An inscription at Alagarmalai (No. 43,⁴ ca. 1st century BC) mentions a *koḷuvanikaṇ* ‘trader in ploughshares’. The term *koḷu* refers to the hard iron tip fixed to the wooden plough, which has survived with little change up to the present day. (Ibid, p. 140)

Further,

A short Early Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscription from Erettimalai (No. 114,⁵ ca. 5th century AD) is engraved on a smooth shoe-shaped granite stone. The inscription describes the function of the device as a ‘stone (stopper) fitted in the vent of sluice’. While inscriptions on stone outlets (*tūmpu*) to regulate water supply from irrigation sources are common, the present inscription occurs uniquely on the stone stopper used to regulate the flow of water. (Ibid, p. 140)

Thus, there was a very agrarian character to the Tamil Jaina inscriptions (since the early times, with inscriptions of later periods also mentioning terms from the agrarian context) which shows an agrarian community forming the larger popular base of Jainism (unlike what was generally believed that the Jains came from the mercantile and trading classes alone) even as few merchant guilds supported the Jaina faith and were Jainas themselves.

In Karashima’s view, the Chola state during the early 11th and early 12th centuries AD represented the height of (the) earliest efforts to establish an imperial administration that was neither ‘segmentary’ nor ‘feudal’. In contrast to Stein’s initial focus on brahmadēya, Karashima’s scholarship had addressed landholding in communities that were dominated by non brāhman̄s (non brahmadēya villages). . . . that common landholding patterns in these non brāhman̄ village clusters evolved into private ownership—non-labouring large landholders eventually displaced the old corporate communities of peasant cultivators. . . . (Hall 2001, p. 4)

In the context of Jaina peasantry (*veḷḷāḷas*, most of them) and their own conversion story and the *nīr pūci nayiṇārs*⁶ element in them, it may not necessarily have been a purely religious conflict. There were perhaps economic reasons for the shift: power, resources and integration of bhakti into this process.

Coincidentally, class distinction made their presence felt between and among members of the peasant order. By the 14th century social unrest, compounded by dynastic conflict, pitted the landlords against their peasant cultivators, artisans, and merchants. . . . Karashima uses inscriptional evidence to show titles held by ‘those who submitted to Chōḷa sovereignty’. By their acceptance of a personal title the elite acknowledged their position in the Chōḷa state system; Chōḷa monarchs reciprocally confirmed local authority. Royal land grants initiatives assisted the process, wherein the state’s redistribution of its resources concentrated wealth among supportive notables, temples, learned brāhmaṇas. . . . (Hall 2001, p. 4)

⁴ Mahadevan (2003), p. 377. [“Eḷacataṇ, the trader in ploughshares”].

⁵ Ibid, p. 469. [“The stone (stopper) fitted in the vent of the sluice.”].

⁶ I retain the colloquial here, just as the Tamil Jainas used the term in their everyday conversations, which are not the literal *nīru*, or *tiru-nīru*, meaning sacred ash, or *vībhūti*.

Where do the Jaina inscriptions, and thereby community, figure in this understanding? For instance, where would we place the social conflict, between the landed Tamil Jainas and non-Jaina landed communities, if one were to see it beyond the question of religious persecution?

Further,

In early south Indian inscriptions Pallava and early Chola monarchs assume an instrumental role as patrons of brahmadēyas which are believed to have been pivotal agents in the creation of the tank agricultural networks. Or did the indigenous society itself engender these developments as is the case of the non-brāhmaṇ dominant irrigation agriculture communities that coincidentally came into existence? (Hall 2001, p. 25)

This remains a question alone, whereas, ‘In both South Indian and Javanese societies, the temples, their priests and their professional staff became prominent centres and agents for the new agrarian population clusters’ (Ibid, p. 26).

So, where do the Jaina agrarian communities stand in this process of understanding early/early-medieval Tamil Nadu through the inscriptions? It is almost as if they do not exist, even marginally, in these discussions, which are usually centred on brāhmiṇ-veḷḷāḷa peasant context. Responding to Stein’s older hypothesis (in the context of his theory on the ‘segmentary state’) on emerging brahmadēyas being the ‘accurate markers’ of most agrarian localities, Champakalakshmi says,

The brahmadēyas should be seen more correctly as extending agriculture into unsettled areas as well as bringing managerial inputs into existing peasant and/or pastoral settlements, when these were clustered together as brahmadēyas. This is clearly illustrated in the Pallava land grants where both the extension of agriculture into virgin lands and the creation of brahmadēya by bringing existing settlements together are recorded. This practice continued well into the Chōḷa times until an optimum of such expansion was reached by the 12th century. (Champakalakshmi 2001, p. 61)

There is little or nothing regarding the Jaina agricultural settlements—and also the fact of settling brāhmiṇs or brahmadēyas in the former Jaina agrarian contexts (Arpakkam, Magaral, in and around Kanchipuram, being a few of these)—in all discourse on the agrarian expansion processes in Tamil history. Perhaps these arguments need to be extended to see this community, especially in the context of the Śaiva veḷḷāḷa and Tamil Jaina versions of the story of starting settled agriculture and of their being the ‘original’, first agriculturists, even if it is part of their textual tradition in one case (Jaina, as in the story of their first tīrthankara, Rṣabha) and popular history in another (the Śaiva veḷḷāḷa). The truth remains that a majority of the Tamil Jainas are/have been agriculturists. If seen from this point of view, perhaps a new understanding of the persecution, the *nīr pūci veḷḷāḷa*, the Śaiva-Jaina conflict and other stories would emerge.⁷

To cite Champakalakshmi again,

The newly emerging polities of the early medieval period, adopting the Dharmaśāstra model of kingship introduced the brahmadēya as a legitimating institution but more impor-

⁷ Unfortunately, epigraphy and ‘folklore’ or community narratives are seen as disjointed, disparate elements and analysed separately, most times.

tantly as means of agrarian expansion and integration. This is nowhere as conspicuously illustrated as in the Tamil region, under the Pallavas through the 9th centuries... (at the same time) the ideological importance of the Dharmaśāstra dictum about the merit secured by making land grants to brāhmaṇas undoubtedly led to the creation of brahmadēyas. South Indian kings appear to have been equally influenced by the Arthaśāstra prescriptions for agrarian expansion. In doing so, they revived abandoned village sites, populated them by shifting people from their own countries (or inducing 'foreigners' by force?) and settling śūdra agriculturists (a certain number of families being specified). The donees were teachers, experts in the Vedas who officiated at ritual sacrifices... South Indian kings especially Pallavas, actually brought brāhmaṇas from the Andhra region; the Chōlas shifted many of them to new Brahmadēyas within their core domain and even to the distant Pāṇḍya region following its conquest. (Champakalakshmi 2001, pp. 64–65)

It is in this context that one needs to locate the Jaina inscriptions, where scholarship is relatively silent on comparative evaluation of inscriptions recording land grants to Jainas and brāhmaṇs, more in terms of how this would render legitimacy of a different kind to the ruler. Also, somewhere, there is negation of the fact that Jaina agriculturists were present in the same period as when brahmadēyas and agraḥāras were being settled. What would be their relationship? What would be the potential for conflict here? We also know that there was royal patronage (as also patronage from richer classes and others) for Jaina institutions. For instance,

Among kings patronising Jainism there was the Cēra Peruñcēralāṭan. In the 6th century [there was the] Pallava [king] Simhavarman – a Jaina himself (who ruled over Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam – Chengalpattu, North and South Arcot) and Mahēndravaraman (who was a Jaina) under whose patronage Sittanavāsai was made wrote the Maṭṭavilāsaprahāsanam condemning other faiths and upholding Jainism. Chōla Rājarāja's sister Kuṇḍavai built the Jaina temple at Tirunarungondai; Kopperuñchōḷan was a Jaina, who took the sallēkhana vratam; Kūn Pāṇḍya was a Jaina who converted to Śaivism. (Shastri 1994, pp. 131–132)

Interestingly, at many places, we find grants made by individuals, such as those of Karandai. But, of course, they mention the regnal year of the ruling king in the period when the grant was made. Following Karashima's hypothesis on private ownership, in *ūr*s, of land, the other point is that for the Jaina temples, more patronage seems to have come from private individuals and community of Jainas in villages—or sometimes from other communities (but mostly from vellālars) fulfilling a religious vow, making donations to Jaina establishments—than the rulers themselves. Rulers at that point were giving grants to brāhminical establishments. The latter has been studied in greater detail by numerous scholars. And there is rich theorising on it, as well, not so in the case of Jaina inscriptional records. Donors of grants (to Jaina *paḷlis*, including the early cave shelters) included kings, chieftains, feudatories *as well as* śrāvakas—rich merchants—and perhaps bigger agriculturists. People were maintaining these sacred centres and institutions. In a few cases, villages (*ūrār*) were meant to look after the endowments. In some inscriptions, the standard template of 'sin of killing cows on the banks of the Ganga' (if the condition of maintaining the endowment is not met with) can also be seen (as cited later on in this section). Numerous Jaina settlements are mentioned in the inscriptions.

Settlements of Jaina community are at Madurai, Vellarai, Tondi, Ponai, Potalai, Tidiyal, Elaiyur, Venpalli, Nagaperur (Nagamalai), Patimur, Nelveli, Nalliyur, Karur, Yarrur (Arrur), Pakanur and Kunrattur, as mentioned in the epigraphs. Hence, there was an active agrarian context to the Tamil Jainas and perhaps the peasant society; agrarian expansion (or otherwise) discourse needs to look closer at these. Most records have the agrarian element in them or are oriented towards it. They mention the villages, harvest, crops, etc. They mention boundaries, the four directions (in Tirunarungondai, for instance, there are many grants of *naṇcai* and *puṇcai*, wet and dry land, respectively). While in most inscriptions elsewhere, there is more of the *puṇcai nilam*. Or there are inscriptions where individuals are donating agricultural produce, clarified butter, sheep and so on, to the temple, or *paḷḷi*, or for feeding of ācāryas, as well as for daily worship.

Leslie Orr points out,

Jain institutions were also involved in agrarian matters, as revealed by references to land transactions and irrigation works in the Jain inscriptions. Of the 24 inscriptions⁸ with ‘secular’ content... 12 inscriptions refer to land transactions and 8 to the construction of tanks or irrigation works. *The contrast presented by Stein and other authors between Jainism as urban and merchant-supported and Hinduism as rural and peasant-supported is not borne out by the inscriptional evidence... Jainism was not, through most of this (medieval) period, a marginal religious phenomenon that existed only in a few urban islands or in isolated hill sites, but was instead, well-rooted throughout the Tamil countryside....* (Orr 1999, p. 256)⁹

Of course, Orr’s study does not dwell deeper into agrarianism as a socio-economic context beyond this statement, since she is using inscriptional evidence here to seek the ‘centrality’ of worship, as she terms it, and the significance of the ‘sensual’ element in the *yakṣi* worship in medieval Tamil Jainism.¹⁰

3.5 Tamil Jaina Villages and Historical Antiquity: Two Journeys

I would like to state that this format (of merging interview format with documenting epigraphic records, a historical academic-journalistic exercise) suited me best because it helps place the people (with names, faces) within a present, where they speak of their everyday life as a ‘Jaina’ and start reliving some elements of their past through stories they remember of their past. The Tamil Jaina present is about living

⁸ Of “secular content” that she has looked at; 369 inscriptions between fifth and thirteenth centuries in all which she has analysed in the context of medieval Jain temple worship (Orr 1999).

⁹ Emphasis mine. I thank Padmanabh Jaini who drew my attention to this article, sending me a copy by post all the way from the University of California, Berkeley.

¹⁰ I engage with the *yakṣi* worship aspect, in later sections.

the Jaina life (everyday practices), and the Tamil Jaina past has many memories to contend with, some fantastic and some very grounded in what has already been recorded in textual tradition and other kinds of records. Sometimes the past smoothly transits into the present as a linear continuity. Sometimes, the time is not so linear.

When I undertook my journey to Tamil Jaina villages in the year 2003, most of them lived in villages; most were small and marginal farmers (there were a few landless) and semi-literate largely in terms of formal education, but they were all well-versed in their Tamil textual tradition. My journey into the villages where they lived had started with Tiruparuttikunram meeting with the arcaka (priest)'s family comprising of a father and a son. There it had ended, the first time (since I had to garner some funds to make it another time to other villages), and strangely, after all my journeys in the next round, this was the last stop; it was like coming a full circle. The significance of the Tamil Jaina village in the Jaina sacred circulatory historical space is important to understand. The village has a role to play either in the moments of their assertion of their Jaina identity or in the visits of the ācāryas to those villages. There is no divinity associated with the village. But there is a strong sense of defining the village's space in the community history, the lived history. Pilgrimages, too, are defined interestingly. For one, there is the local sacred sphere for each village—a different circulatory sphere, villagers of Peramandur visiting only particular single shrine or shrines—and there is the pan-Jaina pilgrimage of the Jaina sacred centres across India, for instance, undertaken in small or large groups, with guided tours, each year; for the Tamil Jainas both these spatial-historical realms are important. About ritual aspects, there was a perceptible 'sensual' relating to the *yakṣi*, the mother goddess figure within the ritual complex.¹¹ The idea of a god head and temple ritualism itself has had an interesting evolution through the history of Jainism in India as a whole. And the debates within the community on these continue to this day. In this case, then, as James Laidlaw remarks, "Much religious practice takes place in the absence of a theory to explain it... [so why not start the enquiry so as to] declare popular practice, rather than doctrine, to be authentic 'real Jainism'" (Laidlaw 1995, pp. 9–10).

But the point again is, can one draw a distinct line between popular practice and doctrine, either? There were times when 'popular demand' influenced the doctrine and in medieval times the texts were constructed to accommodate and create new attributes within Jainism. Thus doctrine, itself, does not remain a fossilised entity, unchanging over centuries, either in Jainism or Buddhism—barring the basic tenets that both religions insist upon—rituals and popular practices are introduced and reformulated, consistently. For instance, the Tamil Jainas have adopted practices that *seem* brāhminical, in their marriage rites. But there are also other popular elements in these. Kiruttinamurti writes,

¹¹ But not just with the mother goddess. Accompanying a woman from Haryana—a pilgrim—helping her climb the steps at Chandragiri, the small hillock opposite the one with the Gommata monolith on Vindhyagiri, one could see the intensity of her emotion on seeing the statue. This was my experience during the visit to Shravanabelagola, prior to the journey in Tamil Nadu.

The Jainas match horoscopes of the bride and groom before marriage. The girl's approval and interest in the man she is about to marry is given the top priority. After tying of the *tālī*¹² the bride is supposed to offer worship the eight *nāgas* (snakes)—Ananta, Vāsuki, Tatca, Janaka, Kuṇika, Tuvāssa, Karkōṭaka and Caṇka (the eight snakes that the Jainas worship)—in order to protect her from any pain/injury from snakes. Then the bride and groom put *nava dhānyam*¹³ into water.... (Kiruttinamurti 1994, p. 29)

How the Jainas perceive themselves and their past is important to this study. It is interesting enough a phenomenon that the Tamil Jainas have been asserting an identity through different periods in history, continuously, even as they have been constructing their identity vis-à-vis the other(s) through different periods: the Brāhmins; the Buddhists; the Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite (religion and community, within the bhakti paradigm); a Muslim ruler here; or a low caste ruler there, who 'dared to' seek a bride from their community. Their list of the 'other' seems long, the undercurrent the being, the sustained assertion and affirmation of community identity against the overwhelming paradigm of the time and against the hegemony of the period, as it were. And this, what follows, is one way of looking at the past with the community. I share moments from both my journeys, where I visited the same places twice and what I perceived as changes, from a distance.¹⁴

Before my journey into the villages, there were some meetings, in the year 2002, with a few Tamil Jainas in Chennai, who spoke to me about what it meant to be Jaina, in a philosophical sense. They were also the people who put me in touch with at least a few people I was to meet in Vandavasi, Ponnurmalai, Tindivanam, Melsithamur, etc. One of these people I met in Chennai was none other than the grandson of A. Chakravarthy *nayinār*.

I would like to mention a few pertinent points of their perceptions of what it meant to be 'Jaina', and the first time I heard of the deep 'Tamil' connection of the community was in these conversations.

Sreepalan (V. C.), whom I met at his residence¹⁵, was steeped in Jaina philosophy and epistemology. He said Jainism is 'not a religion, but a truth that is universal in its application...It is open for anyone; anyone can enter into its fold and exit, as well. Its *dharmā* is not body-based, but soul-based...While there is no 'god', the idea of 'god', in fact, here means a fully developed soul. Anyone can thus become this 'god'; in other words, a fully developed soul... Earlier, there were six duties assigned for the followers—invocation to the *tīrthankara*, following the teacher, learning/reading (scriptures), self-introspection, meditation, *dāna*/giving (of food; *abhaya*- freedom from fear; knowledge and; *auśadha*—medicine)...Over time,

¹²A yellow thread tied around the neck of the woman to denote that she now 'belongs' to the man who ties it and is formally his wife.

¹³Nine varieties of grains, which include rice and millets.

¹⁴I retain, in spite of misgivings expressed by a few scholars who read my earlier drafts, the structure of a first-person account of these visits, combined with 'what I was told'.

¹⁵10 December 2002.

body-based culture has become paramount and there is more demand for worldly comfort...The community is not really following the true Jaina tenets...'

He then told me '3rd century BC was a golden age for the Jainas [in the Tamil country]; this was the period of the Kalabhras, a time when renunciation, by *dravya* and *bhava* (psychic and physical), was given great respect. 3rd to 6th century BC was a period of change and chaos, which affected the Jaina faith'.

He had asked me to meet the Tamil Jaina families in Vellore, Kanchipuram and Viluppuram and informed me about the annual community gatherings held at Tirunarungondai.

Meeting a former DGP¹⁶ in Chennai was for me my first encounter with a Tamil Jaina claim, that the author of the *Tirukkuraḷ* was a Jaina. He said, 'we can say that by both internal and external evidence. The external evidence lies in the fact that, unlike the Tamil sacred texts such as the *Tēvāram* and the *Nālāyiradivya-prabandham*, this text is not sung in the temples; the internal evidence is the couplet with which the text begins, namely, *akara mutal eḷutellām*....¹⁷ He was also among the first to tell me of 'Vajranandi's 'Draṃiḷa sangham' in Tiruppāpuli-yūr (Cuddalore); Vajranandi (ācārya) was an expert in Tamil, Prakrit and Sanskrit'. The religion of the Jaina is one that believes in making a gradual progression towards 'as little *yoga* (activity) and *kaśāya* (attachment) as possible' and hence stresses on 'non-possession and sacrifice'. He said, while 'fifty per cent of Tamil literature and grammar were authored by the Jainas, persecution affected the Jaina population. Sambandar was responsible for reducing the number of Jainas in Tamilnadu', he pointed out.

Another person I had met around the same time was Jina Vijayan (A. Chakravarthy's grandson) who was the first to advise me to make a visit to the villages Tiruppanamur, Karandai and Vembakkam, and he also told me the story of the Jaina-Buddhist debate and Akaḷanka's victory over the latter. He said the author of *Kalīṅkattupparaṇi* was from Deepangudi (near Thiruvārur, Thanjavur district) and Pavanandi (*Naṇṇūl*; *Peruṅkatai*) hailed from Vijayamangalam (near Perundurai, Coimbatore). He was also the first among the Tamil Jainas who told me that the Tamil Jainas from places like Mannargudi, Vedaranyam, Deepangudi and Kumbakonam usually retain the caste title of Mudaliyar. A good conversationalist, Jaya Vijayan also shared with me his love for Rahul Sankrityayan's amazing book *Volga se Ganga Tak* [Hindi original], which he had read in its English translation, titled, *From Volga to Ganga*.

¹⁶ Director General of Police, Chennai. 10 December, 2002.

¹⁷ A detailed discussion on the *Tirukkuraḷ* is carried out in another chapter of this book.

3.6 Kanchipuram, Tiruparuttikunram

In year 2003, my journey into the Tamil Jaina ‘region’ commenced at Tiruparuttikunram (also called Jinakanchi, which apparently was the site of a Jaina *maṭham*, shifted later to Melsithamur) from the temple dedicated to *Candiraprabhar* (Candraprabhā) *tīrthankara*, built during the Pallava times. The temple has excellent paintings on the ceiling. I met Parsvanathan¹⁸, son of the temple priest here. Only two families of Tamil Jains now reside here in a village of mixed population. Apparently, in the past, this place had many Jaina families. There is a belief among some of the people that the tree (*kurā maram*) within the temple complex is auspicious and is called *Dharumagorā*. It is believed that four great ācāryas meditated under this tree: Vāmanācārya, Candrakīrti, Puṣpasenācārya and Mallisenācārya. At Kanchipuram (in the town), I also met the family of a former DMK¹⁹ Municipal Councillor, Agattiappan Nayinar²⁰ and Sentamarai Ammal, and their older, married daughter, Neelakesi. Mr. Agattiappan gave me, among his other books and articles as “*aṇpu-kāṇippu*” (fond gift, as he wrote in those), a short play, titled *Mayilīṛaku* [peacock feather]. This was basically a short story written by Mu. Karunanidhi, which first appeared on 13 November, 1977. The story is about the religious fundamentalism that overtook the Tamil country in the land of the Pandya ruler, who had initially been a Jaina. In the fire of religious animosity, Buddhists and Jains were either killed, or forced to flee. The peacock’s feather signifies a Jaina monk. One C. Anantharaj from Erumbur brought out this story in a book form (with his permission) on the occasion of T. S. Sripal’s 93rd birthday, on 5 July 1993.

T. N. Ramachandran had written:

A regular colony of Jains seems to have settled in Kāñcipuram from ancient times and the locality where they lived was styled Jina Kāñci – that part of Kāñci occupied by the Jains. In Kāñcipuram taluk, Jaina vestiges are found at Tiruparuttikunram, Ārpākkam, Māgaral, Āryaperumbākkam, etc. The Tiruparuttikunram temple here... (is the) biggest in the taluk.... (Ramachandran 1934, p. 1)

¹⁸ I desist from using transliteration marks for proper names of people I met during my visits.

¹⁹ Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, one of the main political parties (it was the ruling party in that year) of Tamilnadu. DMK leader, Dr. Mu. Karunanidhi, has written on the Jaina contribution to Tamil literature, which is something everyone from among the Jains recall with pride.

²⁰ Agastiappa Nainar, who passed away a year or two after I had met him. *Mayilīṛaku* [peacock feather], written by Mu. Karunanidhi.. He had wanted me to show him my thesis when it was ready, but unfortunately, that never materialised. His daughter, Neelakesi, is one of the ardent fans of T. S. Sripal, who inspired her, she says, to take up the study of Tamil literature. Her parents were themselves deep into reading the Tamil classics and Jaina Tamil literature. Neelakesi has written many articles on Tamil (Jaina and other) literature. Now, in year 2015–2016, she continues to send articles to newspapers on each and every new development in Tamil Jaina villages or historic sites: any modification, destruction or conversion that comes to her notice. Her son is in the real estate business.

Pallavas ruled here from 2nd century to 9th century AD. Chālukyas and Rāshtrakūṭas followed; with Chōlas in the last quarter of the 9th century AD, till the 13th century AD, followed by Kākatiyas, and others. Between the 14th and 17th century AD, Vijayanagara rulers held sway here. Some of the Pallava kings of Kāñci, chief among whom was Mahendravarman I (600–630 AD), a few Pāṇḍya, Western Chālukya, Ganga, Rāshtrakūṭa... Hoysala kings were staunch Jaina... According to tradition, Mahendravarman later converted to Śaivism, by Appar, himself a Jaina earlier, when he was called Dharmasenā... The early faith of Kūṇ Pāṇḍya, or Nedumāraṇ, a great Pāṇḍya king (8th century) was Jainism, from the ‘clutches’ of which, it is said, he was (removed) by Tiruṇāṇa Sambandar.... (Ibid, p. 5)

The older temple in this complex is the dedicated to Chandraprabhā (the eighth *tīrthankara*). The Vardhamāna temple was built later. It is popularly known as the *Trailokyanāthar-kōil*. An inscription, “on the west wall of the Śānti maṇṭapa in the Vardhamāna temple here records tax-free gift to the god at Tiruparuttikuṇṇam, also called Śempōrkunṇu, i.e., the ‘Golden hill’” of the village of Kaṇipākam, in Vīrpedu nādu (district) of Kālīyūrkoṭṭam (territorial division) by its liberal owner Vīmaraisar (Bhīma) during the 18th regnal year of Rājārāja III (1234 AD) (Ramachandran 1934, p.10).

The donor, however, is mentioned as a ‘Jaina brāhmaṇ’, according to Ramachandran, but one is not sure how he drew that conclusion. Another inscription records a tax-free gift of 20 *veḷi* of land in Ambi village, in the territorial division of Eyīrkōṭṭam, to the temple during the 21st regnal year of Tribhuvanachakravartin Kulōttuṅga Chōladeva III. The gift arose in this manner: the headman of the village called Māndiyaṇ (or Māndiyaṇ was name of the headman) was in service of Kulōttuṅga Chōla; Kulōttuṅga himself requested the authorities to give 20 *veḷis* of land to the temple (also) because there lived his preceptor Chandrakīrti, who was conferred the title of preceptor, or Ācāriyar of Kōṭṭaiyūr (Ramachandran 1934, p. 51).²¹

On the lintels of three shrines in Trikūṭa Basti, 45th regnal year of Kulōttuṅga Chōla recorded the sale of Hastinivāraṇa Caturvētīmaṇṅkalam Mahāsabhā to the Rṣi Samudāya of Tiruparuttikuṇṇam of 3000 kuṭis of land for irrigation purposes and payment of 15 maturāntaka-māḍai to the same samudāya in return for the privilege of using the spring water on the river bed of Tiruparuttikuṇṇam by cutting a channel and running the spring water into it.

The inscriptions in Tiruparuttikuṇṇam occur in a succession in the years 1131, 1135, 1199, 1200, 1234, 1236, thirteenth century, 1362, 1387–1388, 1517 and 1518 CE in the times of the Pallava, Chōla and Vijayanagara rulers. The temple today has undergone restoration work, especially on the ceilings. When I went back to the temple in early 2015, I was introduced to the woman who now looks after the temple. It was the same priest’s family, but Parsvanathan was not around, this time. She told me the same story of the *kurā maram*. She said the ASI was now very particular about prohibiting photography, especially of the restored ceiling. The paintings look different now. The temple, as usual, is quiet, and not many footfalls happen here, unless a festival is organised by the community in other villages around here.

²¹ Also see *SII*, Vol IV, no. 366, p.104.

Fig. 3.1 The cover of the book, *Mayiliraku*. With the photograph of Mu. Karunanidhi

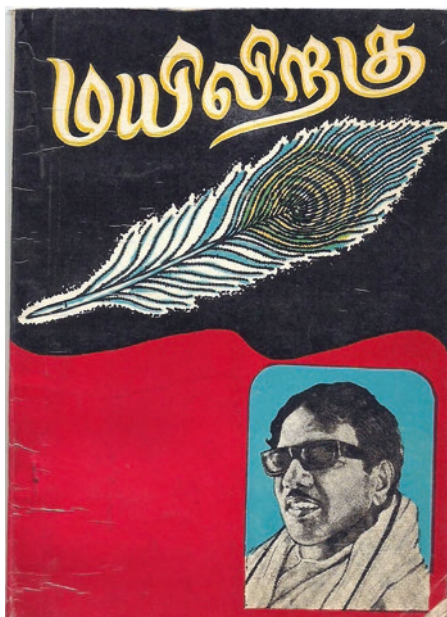


Fig. 3.2 Sentamarai Ammal (wife of Agattiappan Nayinar, Kanchipuram, on the *left*) and her daughter, Neelakesi (back in year 2003)



3.7 Melcittamur (Near Cenji), Villupuram (South Arcot) District²²: 2002–2003

Chittamur is the headquarter of the Digambara Jain community in this region. Its maṭha has been presided over by a succession of pontiffs from the 16th century to the modern period... (*Dilli Kollāpura Jinakāñci Penugonda Chaturtha Siddha Simhāsana Tisvararāhiya Lakṣmisenā Bhaṭṭāraka Bhaṭṭācārya*...mentioned in the inscription of 1951 at the renovated Pārśvanātha temple there). (Ekambaranathan 1996, pp. 23–24)

Around 150 Tamil Jainas lived here in year 2003.

Kiruttinamurti [Krishnamurthy] writes,

The Malainātha temple belongs to the 9th century AD while the Pārśvanātha temple is dated to 16th century AD. The Jinakāñci maṭham at Cittāmūr was established by Vīrasenācārya who was also its first maṭhātīpati. Mackenzie visited the Cittāmūr maṭham in the year 1816 in the time of (the chief pontiff) Muṇibhadradevācārya, who was also known as trividyācakravartī.... (Kiruttinamurti 1994, pp.102–103)

I stayed with the family of Samudra Vijayan (whose house was identified as ‘president vīṭu’ since his wife, Rani, was the Panchayat President then), the old and interesting ‘pāṭi’ (Samudra Vijayan’s mother), Gandharvai and Priya. The Maṭhātīpati (also hailed as *sāmiyār*, locally) Lakshmi Sena Bhaṭṭāraka and the retired teacher Sukumara Panditar, besides Sundari, spent time with me, introducing me to people in the village and organising them, sometimes, to gather around, together. Here I learnt from Sukumara Panditar that Naccinārkkīṇiyar’s commentary on *Cīvaka Cintāmaṇi* was not approved by either the *Cittamur maṭham* or the Tamil Jaina people when it was sent to them to cross-check. He was asked to rewrite the same.²³ One night, sitting together outside the *maṭham*, the women²⁴ told me a few stories. One of these was the story of how Ṛṣabha *tīrthankara* created *eḷuttu* (writing/literature) and *eṇ* (arithmetic); and since then, the Jainas have been educated (enough to read their own scriptures, in this case, in Tamil), and learning is given importance in the Jaina tradition. Another story they told me was regarding Bharata Cakravartī, Ṛṣabha’s son, as the first person to divide the Jaina community into the brāhmaṇa *matam* and Jaina *matam*. How did he do that? On *āvaṇi aviṭṭam tithi* (in

²² In group discussions, it was difficult to keep a tab on who said what, as the women, and sometimes men, spoke together in quick succession and one after the other; they kept remembering things to tell me. I have taken the most defining (in terms of what they perceived of their *selves* and history and observances) arguments, and at moments, I use the term ‘we’, when many of them spoke the same thing or one of them said something which everyone else endorsed. In case of individual interviews and conversations, I mention the names of people and place, where relevant.

²³ This is part of Tamil Jaina folklore. It is also mentioned in U. V. Swaminatha Aiyer’s autobiography, which I dwell upon, in another chapter.

²⁴ Discussions happened in groups of 10, 15 or at times more than 30 (in Vandavasi, for instance, it was a huge gathering since it was a Friday, and they had assembled at the Jinalayam in Vandavasi town, a new one, for the evening prayer—a concept relatively modern) people in most of the villages. Individual names in most cases have not been mentioned. In some cases, they were not particular their names need be mentioned as they believed they represented the thoughts of the Jaina community as a whole. Where possible, and relevant to the discussion, I have mentioned their names.

August–September), he took some *erukampū* (*Calotropis gigantea*)²⁵ and said that whosoever trampled those and walked past, would be the brāhmins, and the rest, Jains.

I did not hear this story anywhere else. Many spoke about the Jaina *koḷkai* [doctrine] being very difficult to practise in everyday life, as it involved taking care not to hurt any living being. ‘Our *samaṇa koḷkai* stresses on *naṛkātci*, *nalolukkam*, *nañānam*²⁶, which are called the *mummaṇikaḷ*, or *mukkuṭai*’. Then they said that there will be more *tīrthankaras* in future times, according to their tradition. ‘Rāvaṇaṇ will be Mahāpadma *tīrthankara* in the forthcoming *kalpa* [the Jaina time cycle]’.

3.8 Observances, Practice

They said the older people, especially older women, remained strict about their diet. They avoided consumption of butter, curds, green leaves or tubers. Others negotiated by observing fasts on certain days, when they observed all these strictures, because it was difficult to keep those rules on an everyday basis, especially for working people. Younger people were allowed certain concessions. In the months of *āṭi* (July to August²⁷), *āvaṇi* (August to September), *puṛaṭṭāci* (September to October), *aippaci* (October to November) and *kārttikai* (November to December), the women observe what they called *aṣṭānikam*. They informed that it was *āti pakavaṇ* (Rṣabha) who had commanded the Jaina community to practise agriculture; and for women, he enjoined that it was their duty to observe fasts. Referring to agriculture, the women said, even until 30–40 years ago, they did not use chemical pesticides, because they killed many organisms. Even when all others had moved on to chemicals, they had abstained. Even today, some of them avoid these. The women said they used mixtures made at home from *punṇāḱku* (betel leaf), *verkaṭalai* (groundnuts), etc. as natural pesticides. Saplings are placed in palmyra and cow dung cake before planting. However, with time, there are more kinds of pests now attacking the crops, so it gets difficult to avoid chemical pesticides. ‘We have no other go’, they tell me, in unison. ‘This is our profession. So we go to the temple and seek forgiveness’.

I learnt of an old woman in this village who refused to take allopathic medicines even when she was severely ill, because it was taboo, as the medicines are made from chemicals. The younger girls said they were not concerned about the difference between religions. They told me, ‘We respect other religions. We make offerings of camphor and rice for other [non-Jaina] religious festivals in the village’.

²⁵ ‘A coarse milky shrub, the charcoal of which is used in making gun powder’; ‘erukkumalar—root... employed medicinally for various purposes’, M. Winslow, *A Comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary*, Asian Education Services reprint, 2004 (originally published by P. R. Hunt, Madras, 1862), p.178.

²⁶ Right/good faith, right conduct, right knowledge.

²⁷ The Tamil calendar months and their equivalents in the calendar we use in general; the Tamil month usually begins on the 13th/14th/15th day of the general, universal calendar we use today.

3.9 Memories of Persecution

Most of them remembered the more recent incidents. They told me of an instance of one Nirmala Sagar (a *nirvāṇa muṇi*—naked monk—who apparently stays in Urjayantagiri now) who had visited this village and surrounding areas around 25 years ago. They told me that some members of the Muslim community had taken him to Tiruchi forcefully (because he was naked). It was during Indira Gandhi's time, they remembered. They said that people from other faiths usually taunted them about their naked monks. The Jainas then brought a letter from the government officials to give protection to the monks whenever they travelled. Apparently, at times, people also threw stones at him. The 'Hindus'²⁸, they said, have also tried to wipe away Jainism. The Jinakanchi *maṭham* was at Kanchipuram and had to be shifted to Melcittamur, because of Hindu dominance, they said. The women also revealed that the stone for the *mūla vigraha*m (deity in the sanctum sanctorum) was brought from Tindivanam.

In a different version, the people told me that the *maṭham* here was established around tenth or eleventh century to protect Jaina *āgamas* from the Buddhists. They told me that the *nīr pūci nayaṇārs* originated during the Śaiva-Vaiṇava [Vaiṣṇava] times; several Jainas were apparently killed; those who converted to the Śaiva religion are called *nīr pūci nayaṇārs*.

Some of them said that 8000 Jaina monks were killed by the brāhmiṇs. Others informed me that though Tiruvalluvar was a Jaina, other communities claim him as their own. It was none other than Kundakundācārya (Eḷācārya), who wrote the *Tirukkuraḷ*. Many expressed sadness that the Tamil Jainas have declined in numbers.

3.10 Understanding of Caste

People here revealed that in the past, they used to 'purify' themselves and their homes and change their clothes if they were even 'touched' by members of other communities and that was mainly because of the eating habits of other communities, especially those who ate meat. It was seen as *tīṭtu*²⁹—polluting. They said, 'We do *prāyaschittam* (repentance) if someone from a meat-eating community has entered'. They also observed purification rituals after childbirth, and there are some taboos for the woman immediately post-delivery. They also observe ritual pollution when someone dies.

²⁸ "Indu-matam" as they usually refer to the Hindu, as an overarching religion.

²⁹ *Tīṭtu*, a brāhminical concept, seems to have entered the Tamil Jaina system.

3.11 A Story of the Malainātha Temple

Sukumara Panditar, a 71-year-old retired teacher at Cittamur, narrated this story about this temple (the older of the two at Melcittamur). The story is interesting in the layers of social conflict that it reveals, preceding the establishment of the monastic institution in this village.

A muṇi came here and the people of the village threw cow dung at him. He felt sad, and went to the Cenji rājā (king). Usually, a *tuṛavi* (Digambara monk) does not go to the king directly. Two boys had gone to fetch water, when they saw him. He asked them to place some manuscripts on the king's bed, under his pillow. The boys did as told; the rājā could not sleep all night. He then learnt from the boys about the *tuṛavi*. The *tuṛavi* told the rājā of the insult meted out to him by the people. He asked the rājā to set up an image of the *tīrthankara* (carved out of rock) on the hill. Hence, the deity here is called Malai-nāthar³⁰ (the hill-deity)... At Jinakāñci, there was once a debate and conflict between Jainas and Buddhists, following which, the *maṭham* was shifted to Cittāmūr. This happened hundreds of years ago, based on what my elders told me, as a child.³¹

Sukumar Panditar told me another story of how the (later period) temple came about in this place.

Jainas from all over Tamilnadu got together and selected someone to head the *maṭham* after Agalur Cakravartī svāmi (the previous *maṭhātipati*) took nirgrantha *dīkṣā* (he became a Digambara monk) and attained *mukti* [liberation]. Before Agalur svāmi's time, initially, there was a brick structure. When the temple was in a bad shape, he thought it should be renovated. For that you needed to find a pure spot: a spot where you could hit on water if you dug up to five feet into the earth. When this was done, sand was sifted and purified and bricks were laid out in the *kaṭṭāyam naṭṭāyam*³² arrangement. They kept on building, until they came to the roof. When they were to about do *abhiṣēkam*, the *gōmukham* fell and broke. It was considered inauspicious and could not be completed. Then, Cakravartī Svāmi from Agalur was made *maṭhātipati*. He went to other temples too, at Tanjavur, Cuddalore, and so forth. Finally, the temple was renovated in 1948. Cakravartī's son became *maṭhātipati* after him and supervised the renovation of the Malaināthar temple. A *pratiṣṭhā mahotsavam* (consecration) was held to renovate the same again in 1978... This was an *agrahāram* earlier, but those brāhmaṇas left. People say there was a *Perumāl koil* here. An idol was found in the flower garden. This was kept in a temple called *bhajana kōil* (a non-Jaina temple) recently.

Krishnamurthy writes,

In 1865, under the auspices of the *maṭhātipati*, Abinava Ādisenā, the gopuram of the Pārśva temple was built. Cinnakuḷantai svāmi, Vimalanātha svāmi and Appāvu svāmi from Viranāmūr were the *maṭhātipatis*, respectively, in the year 1915. Akalūr's Cakravartī svāmi, his son, Samudiravijaya svāmi, Eḷumpūr's Candirakīrti Śāstri, Tachūr Śrīpālavarṇi, Valatti Cakravartī Svāmi were all *maṭhātipatis* in this place, successively... There are 35 Tamil Jaina families in Cenji town. (Kiruttinamurti 1994, pp. 103–104)

³⁰ But I did not hear this account from anyone else. The temple is dedicated to the *tīrthankara* Mallinātha, who, in the Śvetāmbara tradition, is a woman *tīrthankara*.

³¹ Interaction recorded at Melcittamur village.

³² These were his terms, and when I asked him to clarify what he meant, he said it meant bricks arranged in a horizontal and vertical manner, alternately. I failed to find the meaning of this term in the dictionary, but I retain them verbatim.



Fig. 3.3 Milk *abhishekam* to the deity at the older Malaināthar temple at Melcittamur (2015)

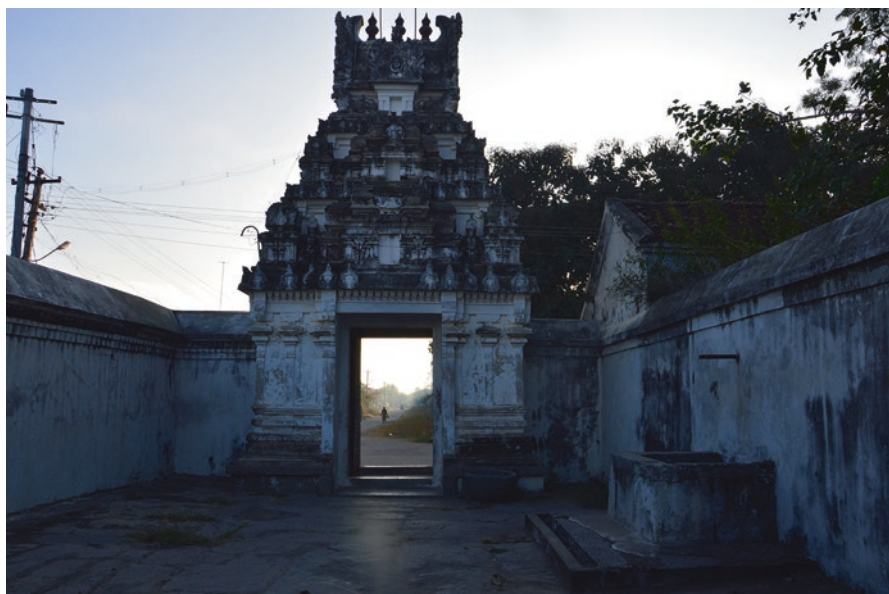


Fig. 3.4 Outer prakāra of the Malainātha temple (2015) (Fig. 3.3 Outer prakāra of the Malainātha temple)



Fig. 3.5 Melcittamur maṭham (2003)

In terms of the ‘sacred’ circulatory space for Melcittamur Jainas, people from here visit Arpakkam for the ritual of the first piercing of ears of the child, and go to Tirunarungondai for the first tonsure. They told me, ‘the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa were *our* stories (*namma kataikaḷ*), but have been interpreted and changed (and owned) by other religions’. There is none to challenge that (overwhelming tradition), they lamented. People here are familiar with the Jaina texts, *Śrīpurāṇam*, *Merumantarapurāṇam* and *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. Among their everyday rituals, prayers and related matters, the women say reciting the *bhaktāmara stotra* keeps obstacles at bay. And they have certain daily routines, which included reciting the *pañcanamaskāra mantram* first thing in the morning and invoking the *pañcaparamēṣṭis*—the *arhat* (Jina), *siddha* (*siddhāṇam*), *ācārya* (*ayiryāṇam*), *upādhyāyar* (*uvajjhāyāṇam*) and *sādhukkaḷ* (*savva sāhūṇam*). They eat their last meal by 6 pm, but there are concessions for older people, children and sick people as well as for employed people, in today’s context. But even those who cannot avoid eating post-6 pm (especially working people) do not consume rice and manage with what is called ‘tiffin’ (*dōsai*, *upmā*, and other Tamil snacks); some consume milk and fruits. And then there are the usual Jaina taboos: onion, garlic, tubers and potatoes (though a few have started consuming these, of late, I was told). Buttermilk and curd are very important part of the meals, as for every Tamil—which has perhaps become part of the larger ‘Tamil’ food culture. Women told me, that once in four months, they observe the eight days of *aṣṭānīkam* without fail, between the *tithis* (certain days of the Tamil calendar) *aṣṭami* and *pournami* (the eighth day of the month and on full moon day). They have evolved their own taboos of what is not allowed on which day of the week (which may have developed in later times). Coconut *tohayal* (grated coconut paste/*chutney*) is not allowed on Mondays,

pumpkins on Tuesdays, *veḷḷerikā* (cucumber) on Fridays and so forth. There is a particular practice among women, which they call *nōṇpu vāṇkikiratu* [‘receiving the religious fasting/penance’]: on the full moon ‘*tithi*’, after washing their hair and offering worship to the *tīrthankara*, they ‘accept the *nōṇpu*’ from the temple priest. Women observe these fasts for a specified number of days (called *vrataṁ nāl*/days), and during this period, they do not even drink water for an entire day until the following dawn. Their last meals (including milk, fruits or medicines) are to be consumed before 5 pm. They are not supposed to bathe, or talk, if they happen to take the *nōṇpu* on the first day of the full moon. They have a practice called *kēṭṭa nōṇpu*, wherein women listen to the *upadēsam* (sermon) and recite the name of the *tīrthankara* of their choice (from among the 24) before consuming food or water.

The women also narrated to me the story of the king of Cenji who asked for a Jaina girl to marry (which I discuss in detail later).

On the question of agriculture, the Tamil Jainas believe they were the original agriculturists.³³

Sundari told me ‘violence’ in agriculture (use of chemical pesticides) is inevitable, but as far as possible, ‘we avoid tilling the land or engaging in farming activities ourselves. We have people doing that for us. However, we cannot do any job if we were to take the non-killing concept to the extreme’. But only those that can afford the cost of labour on land employ people from other (possibly the lower and intermediary castes) to till the land. There are many Tamil Jainas who themselves work on their fields.

Children (aged 8–13) had their own idea of their history. They immediately recounted the 8000 (*eṇṇāyiram*) *samaṇa muṇis* (monks) in Madurai who were killed; according to them, 100 Jaina monks resided in eight hills around Madurai at one time. The Jaina muṇi Eḷācārya wrote the *Tirukkuraḷ* and *Nāḷaṭiyār*. And they added that Jainism emerged in protest against the ‘bad’ practices of Hindu religion. They did not seem to be aware of the difficult, challenging times for the Jainas. According to them, since Jainism has very strict rules, it did not become very popular.

It must be noted that in none of the conversations, except the one with Sukumara Panditar, did the subject of the temple or its history of inscriptional records come up. For a large part in Cittamur, history was what was made out from the idea of practices of the Jaina religion and the Ṛṣabha mythology about creation of vocation and the Cenji king’s story. Malainātha temple did figure in the teacher’s narrative, but that, again, bordered on the story tradition, depicting a spectacle as the important aspect of Malainātha temple. No one recounted the number of grants made to the temple by any ruler or patrons. The story of the place having been a brāhmin village (according to women who said they had heard it was so) earlier is intriguing, since it is not mentioned in any of the inscriptions I gathered about Cittamur. The existence of a Perumāl temple prior to the Malainātha or Pārśvanātha temple, which is also based on hearsay, did not find corroboration from my study of epigraphs, so far.

³³ In this connection, see discussion on the *veḷḷāḷa* agriculturists and the discussion later in this book on Maraimalai Adigal’s *Veḷḷāḷar Nākarīkam* on the community that, according to him, introduced farming.



Fig. 3.6 The *maṭhātipati* leading the evening prayer (invoking the *yakṣi*) at the Pārsu *tīrthankara* temple at Melcittamur (2015)

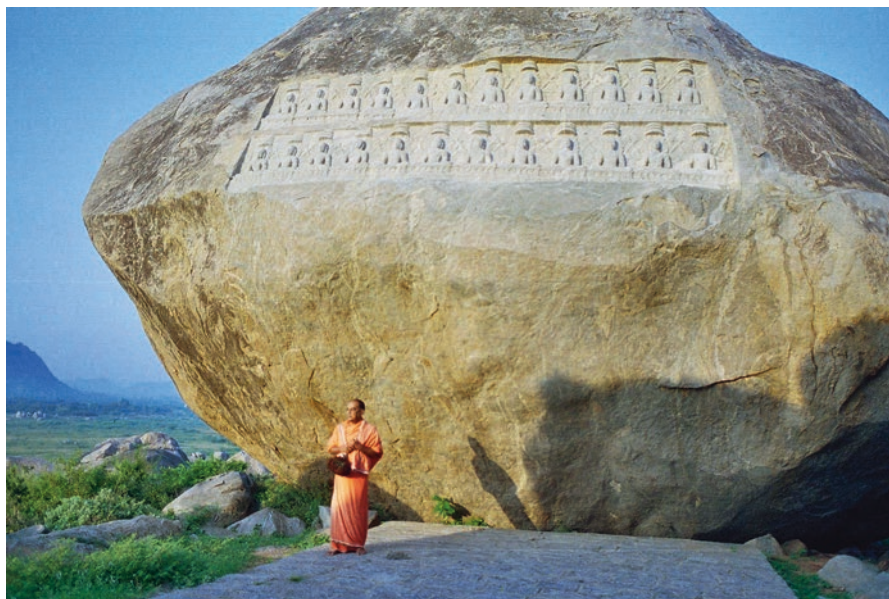


Fig. 3.7 The *maṭhātipati* of Cittamur Jaina *maṭham* at the Tirunatharkunru rock near Cenji (2003)

3.12 Inscriptional Records

I begin with the Tirunatharkunru inscriptions, close to Cenji but not too far away from Cittamur. The *maṭhātipati* of Cittamur was kind enough to guide me to this place.

3.13 Tirunatharkunru (Singavaram), Cenji³⁴

Cittamur, Cenji (Gingee), South Arcot (Tiruvannamalai district). Cenji and a few villages around this place have had continuously recorded Tamil Jaina occupation from the ninth century CE to the present.

The inscription is an epitaph commemorating the death of Cantirananti, a Jaina monk, after 57 days of fasting. The *nicīṭikai* inscription at Tirunatharkunru is an important discovery for several reasons. It is the first of the Early Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscriptions discovered in Tamilnadu. It is also the first discovery of a Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscription from the northern region (forming part of the Pallava territories). It is a Jaina record of a type altogether different from the earlier cave inscriptions in the Tamil-Brāhmi script...On the basis of comparison with several Early Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscriptions discovered later, the Tirunatharkunru inscription is now placed in the 6th century A.D. (Mahadevan 2003, p. 29)

The inscription, on a rock on the hill, reads as, ‘The seat of penance of Cantirananti Ācārikaru who observed the fast (unto death) for 57 days’ (Ibid, p. 473). On the same rock is another inscription, tenth century CE, which ‘records death (*niṣṭīka*) of ḷayanpaṭār who fasted for 30 days’.³⁵

3.14 Cittamur/Melcittamur

* 888 CE (17th regnal year, Chōḷa, Rājakēsarivarman (Āditya I).

Records that one Maṭiyaṇ Aṇṭigai of Puttāmbūr endowed a gift of burning a perpetual lamp in the Kāṭṭāmpaḷḷi (Malainātha temple) and the gift was entrusted with Ārambanandi, Padamūlattār and the ūrār (Ekambaranathan, Sivaprakasam 1987, p. 341).³⁶

* At the base of the boulder containing Jaina images in the Malainātha temple.

Chōḷa queen Kāḍavarkōṇpāvai, 9th century A.D characters. Mentions Kaṭavarkōṇpāvai, queen of a Chōḷa king. She is said to have revived some endowments to the temple which

³⁴ See Ekambaranathan and Sivaprakasam 1987, pp. 378–380. Also *SII*, XVII, No. 262; *ARE* 239 of 1904; Mahadevan 2003, p. 473.

³⁵ *SII*, XVII, 261; *ARE* 238 of 1904.

³⁶ Hereafter, Ekambaranathan. Also see *AR* 201 of 1902, *SII*, VII, No. 828.

fell into disuse. Kaṭavarkōṇpāvai is identified with the queen of Āditya I and therefore the record is assigned to 9th century A.D (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 342).³⁷

- * On the base of the central shrine of Pārśvanātha temple. 1136 CE—18th regnal year of Chōla Rājākēsari Vikramadeva.

Registers gift of 3 mā of wet land in some villages to the temple. *The inscription is now lost... It is interesting to observe that the lands gifted to the temple are said to have been found in more than fifty villages in and around Gingee and Tindivanam taluks.* (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 343)³⁸

The lands are gifted probably by the people of the villages mentioned as it says ‘*nām tarumamāka kaṭṭalai yiṭṭōm 22 aṭi kuḷi 100 koṇṭatu oru marvāka inṇattu vaṅkalattārum koḷḷārum nemaliyum....*’³⁹ Some of the names mentioned of the villages in the inscriptions are ‘...*Vīranāmūr, Arukāvūr, Viḷukkam, Eḷamaṅkalam, Nerkuṇṇam, Tōṇḍūr, Vīdūr...Somāsipāḍi...* [Such villages with lands that yield good harvests of pulses] ‘*payiṛ cīruvalarum mayaḷmaṅkaiyāna...*’ (Kiruttinamurti 1994: 222–223) Interestingly, there are brief descriptions of the lands: ‘*maṅkalamum kaṇamāna karunākara peṭimaṅkalamum...malaiyaṇūr...toruppāṭi, vaḷḷam...nāṭṭamaṅkalam...ūraḷ nilam mūrumā naṇcai nilam ittevaṛku sarvamāṇiyamākka kaṭṭalaiyiṭṭōm*’. [...gifted 3 mā of *naṇcai* (wet) land ... We give this to the tēvar (deity in the temple, Pārśvanātha) as *sarvamāṇyam* (tax-free)]. (Ibid, pp. 222–223).⁴⁰

All these villages are in the immediate vicinity of Melcittamur/Cittamur.

- * On the base of maṇṭapa in front of central shrine of Pārśvanātha temple. Kulōttuṅga Chōla, 12th regnal year, 1148 CE.

Registers the gift of village Siṟrāmūr as dīrgamāṇya to the deity Pārśvanāthadeva in the temple of Paḷḷiāḷvar, by a certain devaraḍiyār... This record is also lost (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 344).⁴¹

- * On a slab built into the floor of the maṇṭapa in front of the Malainātha temple. Chōla Rājādhirājā II, 10th regnal year, 1173 A.D.

Records gift of 4 mā of land by a Sambhuvarāya of the Sengeni family, who is said to have conquered the Pāṇḍya country. The Sambhuvarāya chieftain of this record is the same as

³⁷ Transliteration marks as in the source cited. Also see ARE 203 of 1902, SII, VII, no 830.

³⁸ Emphasis mine.

³⁹ Nemali, Kollaru, etc. are names of the villages (which are still settled by Tamil Jaina families). These details are mentioned by Kiruttinamurti (1994).

⁴⁰ Malaiyanur, Nattarmangalam, Torappadi, Vallam, etc. are in the vicinity of Cenji, close to Cittamur. Some of these villages—such as Torappadi, Vallam and Malaiyanur—have Tamil Jaina families even to this day.

⁴¹ Emphasis mine.

Seṅgēni Ammaiappan who, on behalf of Chōlas, fought against the Pāṇḍyas, and thereby got the title Pāṇḍyanāḍu Koṇḍān (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 345).⁴²

- * On the base of the mukhamanṭapa of the central shrine of Pārśvanātha temple. 1218 A.D(?) Śaka 1140. Vijayanagar dynasty.

Registers gift of 91 *kuḷi* of land below the tank for providing offerings, etc. and for the expenses of festival to the god Simhapurināthadeva and 30 *kuḷi* of land for the worship, etc. to the god Pārśvanātha of the Malaiyanātha temple at Cittāmūr, a pallicantam in Singamporudavaḷanāḍu. The inscription apparently belongs to the reign of Vijayanagara Krishnadevarāya, as we do not know any king as Mahāmaṇḍaleśvara Viṣṇudeva Mahārāya. In that case, the Śaka year would be 1441, corresponding to 1519. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 346)

- * On a slab called Sanyāsikaḷ set up in the village. Śaka 1503/1581 CE. Nāyaka Vaiyappa Krishnappa Nāyaka.

Registers grant of village Siṛrāmūr in Uḍaikāḍunāḍu, a sub-division of Tiruvaḍirājjyam in Vaḷudilampattu-sāvaḍi of Tirumunaippāḍi-nāḍu for the abisekam (ritual bathing) and offerings to the god Chidambaresvara by Bommaiappillai as the gift of Vaiyappa Krishnappa Nāyaka... It is interesting to note that the Jaina village Cittamur had been granted to the Natarāja temple at Chidambaram when Vaiyappa Krishnappa Nāyaka was ruling over the Gingee region as the agent of Vijayanagara kings. In all probability, the gift of the village here refers to the lands other than those of the Jaina temple (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 347).⁴³

[I am not sure as to how Ekambaranathan draws such a conclusion. It is possible that, in some way, the village was providing for the Nataraja temple endowment.]

- * On the base of mānastambha in the Pārśvanātha temple. 1578 CE, Śaka 1500.

States that the *mānastambha* was the gift of Būsseṭṭi, son of Bāyiseṭṭi, a Vaiśya of Jagatāpigutti ...[which] seems to be a village in Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 348)⁴⁴

- * 1582 AD. Tamil Grantha. Vijayanagara. Sri Rangadeva Maharāya.

Gift of all wet lands and dry lands watered by the northern tank as paḍijīvitam for the five musicians (like the uḍal, nāgasvaram, naṭṭuvan, etc) of the Simhapurinātha temple by Timmappanāyaka, agent of Atchutappa Nāyakkar Aiyyan in the reign of Śrī Rangadevamahārāya, the Vijayanagar king. Atchutappa Nāyakkar is identified with the Tanjore Nāyaka ruler of the same name. His son, Raghunatha Nāyakkar also finds place in two inscriptions from Chittamur. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 350)⁴⁵

⁴² Transliteration marks as in the cited source. Also see ARE 202 of 1902; *SII*, VII, no.829.

⁴³ Also, ARE 68 of 1935–1936.

⁴⁴ Also ARE 517 of 1937–1938.

⁴⁵ Emphasis mine.

[This is one of the few Jaina(-related) inscriptions which mention musicians. The *maṭhātīpati* of Melcittamur, during one of our conversations, did mention that the temple did at one point have its own musicians and there is more on the question of music in Tamil Jaina history, which may be right. I cannot think of anyone who may have worked on this aspect of Tamil Jainism. Most focus is on Carnatic music in the context of bhakti.]

* 1586 AD, Śaka 1508, Vijayanagar; Venkatapatideva Mahārāya.

Registers grant of *mānya* lands attached to the Simhapurinātha temple and in the enjoyment of 12 *devaraḍiyārs*, as *sarvamānya* removing the water cess, as ordered by Raghunātha Nāyakkar Aiyaṇ... This practice of enjoying *devaraḍiyārs* (maid-servants dedicated to the temple service was not very common in Jaina establishments). (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 351)⁴⁶

* 1603 AD, Vijayanagar Mahamandaleswara Venkatapatideva Maharaya.

Registers the removal of water cess on the *mānya* lands of the god Nemināthasvāmi of the Simhapurinātha temple left in the enjoyment of the paṇḍita, pūjuka, *devaraḍiyār* and the *meḷakkārār* (drummer) thus making them *Sarvamānya* for the merit of Raghunātha Nāyakkar Aiyaṇ and Dīkshitar Aiyaṇ. These two names would mean only the Tanjore Nayak ruler Raghunātha and his famous minister Govinda Dīkshita. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 352)

* Sanskrit Grantha. 1865, Śaka 1787.

States that Abhinava Ādisenā Bhaṭṭāraka erected the gopura with Jaina temples by public subscription. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 353).⁴⁷

3.15 Melcittamur, Cenji: 2015 (Late February)

Around the time I (re-)visited (24 February), this was, by far, the quietest of places, but the quiet was of a different kind. Most of the houses here were locked up. The village looked half-empty. There were just a few odd women and the elderly to be seen. But back in 2003, this was one of the most populated villages, with every house having entire families residing, even if few of them would go to the city (Chennai) or town (Kanchipuram) to work and return home. There were some new additions here, though: a new rest-house (*chattiram*) has been built with donations from the Digambara Jains from the north, and the Tamilnadu Tourism Department

⁴⁶ This is Ekambaranathan's inference. Leslie Orr has done a detailed analysis of medieval inscriptions in Tamilnadu and does not find the mention of *devadāsis* in the Jaina inscriptions where the reference is mostly to the nuns, female preachers. One would have to find out if the *devaraḍiyārs* mentioned here really correspond to the *devadāsi* system of brāhmipical temples. See Orr (2000) for a detailed discussion on women in the temple context in medieval Tamilnadu.

⁴⁷ Also, ARE 520 of 1937–1938.

[this was a new development, indeed!], as the Cittamur Cāmiyār (the *maṭhātīpati*, still the same) informed me. It was difficult to get time from him for a detailed interview, since he was overseeing many of the festivals (the one at Vembakkam and the forthcoming Karandai-koil *vilā*). His sister, called Gandhi, was also visiting, from Desur. There were Kumar, his wife and daughters who looked after the *maṭham* kitchen and general managerial stuff. The evening prayer happened at the Cittamur koil, reminding one of the *yakṣi* worship presided over by the same *maṭhātīpati* at Perumpokai so many years ago. Otherwise, the temple was deeply silent. The *maṭhātīpati*, for his part, has been urging the youngsters (like Kumar's daughters, Sukanya and Padmapriya) to take interest in the Tamil-language prayer songs. Many books with prayer songs in Tamil, set to popular Tamil film tunes, seem to be popular among the Tamil Jainas, these days.

3.16 Cenji

Here, I met Mekala⁴⁸ (who is originally from the village Sengam but came to Cenji post-marriage). She is one of the younger Tamil Jainas, who are very conscious about their Jaina identity and the historical antiquity of their religion in Tamilnadu. She said,

There are around 197 hillocks in Cenji. Apparently there were *eṇṇāyiram* [8000] *muṇis* in Tamilnadu at one point, and if there were so many monks, there should have been far more householders (*śrāvaka-śravakika*) to take care of them. During the Śaiva bhakti movement, many of the monks were impaled, and that is what their hymns tell us. In Cenji and Uppuvelur, we have heard of the story of the Nāyaka king (before Desingu rājā's times) who wanted to marry a Jaina girl. The Jainas did not want that and hence he got many of them killed. Many threw away their sacred threads and became *nīr pūci nayiṇārs*. One of the reasons for our religion being affected is also because we have very strict rules; not everyone can cope up with these. In Vedal, there was once a university for Jaina monks. Most of the Tamil literature was written by Jainas. Tirukkuṟaḷ was written by Kundakundācārya...

She spoke about differences in the manner of worship between the northern and southern (Digambara) Jainas.

Tamil Jainas used to offer fruits and lentils for worship, while in the north they offered only water. Some Tamil Jainas are not worshipping *yakṣis* and *yakṣas* anymore. Since the last decade or more, some *muṇis* have been visiting these parts, and they are responsible for these changes.

She also informed me regarding a new campaign connecting the past with the present.

⁴⁸ Conversations with both Mekala and her husband Kumar took place on 24 February 2015.

Today there is more awareness also about preserving the old monuments and documenting them. From year 2014, we started an awareness ‘walk programme’ which is called *Akimsai naḍai* (Ahimsā walk). On the first Sunday of every month, we visit the villages in the vicinity of our rock-cut caves and natural caverns, and we tell the people of those villages (not necessarily Jainas) about the importance of those rocks and ask them to help preserve them. If they find any figures or idols, we ask them to keep within under a make-shift shelter, at the very least.

Kumar (Mekala’s husband), said,

On 22nd February, we went to U. V. Swaminatha Aiyer’s birthplace near Kumbakonam to celebrate his birth anniversary. We plan to do that every year and conduct an event in memory of this man who printed the *Cīvakaśintāmaṇi*...

He then narrated to me the elaborate account of Aiyer finding the text, and the story about how he went to the house where *Cīvakaśintāmaṇi* had been recited for hundred days and Aiyer arrived just the day it ended.⁴⁹ Kumar also says that the conversion of Jainas happened in ‘1464 A.D’ under the Nāyaka rule. And it was then that many Jainas took the titles of Cettiyaṛ, Woḍeyāṛ, Mudaliyaṛ, etc.

[This bit—about Jainas changing their *paṭṭam* (title) from *naiṇār* to Mudaliyaṛ, etc.—was new to me. This is also an angle that could be explored further, sociologically and of course, historically].

Fig. 3.8 (From L to R)
Gandharvai *pāṇi*, Priya and
Rani, Melcittamur (2003)



⁴⁹This story is dealt with in detail in the following chapter.

Fig. 3.9 Mekala and her husband, Kumar outside their home (with an interesting message at the door) at Cenji



3.17 Vilukkam, Tindivanam, South Arcot (2003), Community Narratives

There were 30 households (130 people, approximately). All the people I met here were small and medium farmers. Apparently, there were around 60 families earlier, who had since migrated. Here I heard the ‘*sumantāntalaipattu*’ story for the first time. The story, its motifs, etc. will be discussed in detail later. I also found that in this village, the understanding of their history, and the history of the village in its relationship to Tamil Jaina history, was relatively better defined than in Melcittamur. Among others, S. Dharmendiran, Gandharvai, A. Parsuvanathan, Vrushabha Das, Aruka Das and Jeevakumari of this village gave me their time. They were relatively free because there was not much work on the fields to be done at that time. Some of them were playing a traditional board game. Again, it was a group discussion. In this village, there was the important story relating to the Jaina community identity and allusion made to Desing rājā and the numerical motif of *eḷuvatu*—‘70’ (sometimes, ‘72’ *eḷuvattireṇṇu-pēr*) from Vilukkam.⁵⁰ People here believe the Candiranātha

⁵⁰ In the Paḷayaṇūr Ntli stories, there is reference to the ‘70 veḷḷāḷas’ who jumped into the flames in order to honour their word as they could not protect the Ceṭṭi, who was murdered by the possessing spirit, Ntli. The *Periyapurāṇam*, the Śaivite text, also refers to the ‘70 veḷḷāḷas’ who kept their word

temple at Cittamur was built 5000 years ago, in ‘*Kaliyukāti* 59’. Prior to that, an *amman kōil* (a mother goddess temple) existed here. But later they corrected themselves and said it was a Perumāl koil, just as people in Cittamur told me). The temple for the tīrthankara was built in ‘Narasimha Pallava’s times’; they said 1008 *kuḷi* land was given for the temple. The images of Dharumadevi and Neminātha were brought from Mylapore (in Chennai) for the temple at Cittamur and Elangadu.



Fig. 3.10 People at Vilukkam, playing a traditional game of dice (year 2003)

of honour. The story of Nīli was reframed to compose the Tamil Jaina philosophical treatise, *Nīlakeci*, a detailed analysis of which is part of one of my books, *From Possession to Freedom: the Journey of Nīli-Nīlakeci*, which is forthcoming. There is a lot of scope to explore the *veḷḷālas*’ motif occurring in the Jaina stories and the Śaiva tradition in the South Arcot region within a context of agrarian and religious conflict, considering, also, that Maraimalai Adigal’s *Vēḷāḷar Nāgarīgam* and the Tamil Jaina story of the birth of the agricultural profession seem quite similar, which is discussed, briefly, later in this book.



Fig. 3.11 At Vilukkam (where I heard the *cakkili rājā* story in 2003)

3.18 Desing Rājā Times, the Cittamur Temple, the ‘72’ of Vilukkam and the Brāhmins

People informed me, ‘the Cittamur temple and this village have a special relationship, which goes back to Desing rājā (king)’s times; the *periyā kōil* (bigger temple) in Cittamur was not ‘ours’. Our temple was the Mallinātha (Malainatha) *kōil*. The bigger one was a Perumāl *kōil*, within an *agrahāram*. A Jaina *muṇi* (monk) arrived there, and the brāhmins of the village threw a pot of cow dung at him. This happened in Desing rājā (Dharani Singh)’s times. The *muṇi* went to meditate at *Cenji kōṭṭai* (the fort). One of the king’s men came there; he could not retrieve his pot of water, to wash his hands and feet, from the pond nearby. Perplexed, the man asked the *muṇi* what to do. The *muṇi* told him that the silver pot could be retrieved by him if he did a favour for the *muṇi*. The *muṇi* said to him, “I will give you a palm leaf manuscript (*ōlaiccuvaṭi*). Keep it on the *rājā*’s bed”. The man did as he was told. The following day, he was able to retrieve his pot. The *rājā*, meanwhile, got bad dreams and could not sleep. He asked this man about the *ōlaiccuvaṭi* and learnt of the *muṇi*. The *muṇi* told the *rājā* that he was insulted at Cittamur. The *rājā* checked with the Brāhmins. They said if the Jaina *muṇi* would win them over in a debate, the Jainas could take over this temple. They spoke with disdain. The people of Vilukkam village agreed to go to Cittamur. They had very little education, since they were all agriculturists. They shaved their heads, took a *kamaṇḍalam* (pot), peacock feathers

and went on the day of the scheduled debate. The *pārpaṇar* (brāhmins) could not win the debate. They started off by teasing the Jaina *muṇi* thus: "you are so puny, and have the bigger ones, the '72' (*eluvattirreṇṭu- pēr*) from Vilukkam, seated behind you. Why don't you let them deal with us first? And then we shall deal with you". The Jaina *muṇi* told them: "Of course, I am small-made. Win me over first, and then you can deal with the bigger ones!" This way, they lost the debate. The *rājā* decided that the brāhmins would have to leave that village. It was then that the temple became a Jaina temple, and the brāhmins decided to leave that village. Since the '72 people from Vilukkam' went with the *muṇi* to set up the temple (after winning the debate), our village gets the '*mutal mariyātai*'. During festivals at Cittamur, they give the first invitation to people from Vilukkam. Milk for the *utcavam* (*tēr*, the chariot festival) is sent from Vilukkam. This village is called *tāḡirāmam*; 45 per cent of households here have continued to help maintain the temple at Cittamur, and those who migrated also continue to help.'

The people then pointed out that they were in a 'bad shape today', declining in numbers and economically weaker. They confessed that nobody could read their manuscripts (*ōlaiccuvaṭi*) these days. 'We cannot read our own scriptures'.⁵¹

The people here could relate most to *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*; they knew of the *Cilappatikāram*, *Padmapurāṇam* and *Nāgakumārakāvyam*, but almost all of them knew the story of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. One of them told me (perhaps Vrushabha Das) that 'Earlier people used to sit together and read texts. Today, there is no time to do that. Not many of the elders of that generation are left, who did that. Who listens to old texts today? They only watch TV. However, since the last 30 years we are organising *paṭṭi maṇrams* (debate platforms) with the help of a few well-read Jainas in different places. Earlier, there used to be the *vādam* (debate), and *taṛkam* (philosophical discourse) as a regular feature.'

3.19 *Maṭhātipati*'s Election

Here, people told me that the *maṭhātipati*'s lineage is around 700 years old. Earlier, the Kollāpura *maṭhātipati* used to nominate the *maṭhātipati* in this village. Now, the villages around here do it. The criteria for the position of *maṭhātipati* are that he must be well read, especially in the scriptures, and shouldn't have personal and household responsibilities. Information is sent to the people of the villages, who then sit together and decide, based on a majority choice. Apparently, earlier, people would sit together in the temple, discuss and decide. Today, it's no longer the same. Very few people are interested in these things today, I was told. Earlier there was a committee; now there is none, they informed me.

Reading out from article in a Tamil weekly⁵², people pointed out how there is utter neglect of the Jaina centres at Sittanavasal (Pudukkotai), Eladipattam. And

⁵¹ The story has been recorded just as it was narrated, with a lot of people joining in, with inputs.

⁵² 'Graffiti reported on a Jaina rock' was the title of the story.

then they started to discuss how there was no ‘unity’ among the Tamil Jainas. Agriculture had become a challenging profession, with small pieces of land left and exorbitant labour costs. Few of them continued older practices which, according to them, were a crucial part of their identity. I learnt that they celebrated Ugādi (which is also the Telugu New Year) in a big way.

3.20 Sacred Circulatory Space

The people of this village attend the annual *rathōccavam* (chariot festival) at Melcittamur and *brahmōccavam* at Jinakanchipuram, Alagramam, Karandai, Tirupparuttikunram and Mannargudi. They have a 10-day festival in this village and have also been celebrating the *aimperuñviḷā* (five major festivals) since 100 years now with donations from the community.

3.21 Rituals and ‘Samskrutam’

One of them recited an interesting Sanskrit verse (though they say very few among them can read Sanskrit, leave alone understand it; the verse is written in Tamil script), which revealed the influence of brāhminical ritualism on the Tamil Jainas. But the interesting part was the inclusion of *Viḷukkam grāma śrāvaka śrāvakīnām* [the laity of Vilukkam village] in the same:

‘ādityāya svāhā... pitrāya svāhā, sugunaya svāhā, om svāhā, bhum svāhā...*bhū* svāhā...
*bhūr*bhuvah svāhā...om hram *hrīm* hroum...asiya usa padmaprabha jināya jīnatāya parama-
 jyoti svarūpavanāya āditya mahāgraha devāya vruṣabha jina jīnātmya paramajyoti...gra-
 hapati...somamāgrahadevāya viḷukkam grāma jaina samasta śrāvaka śrāvakinānam sarva
 dōṣa parihārārtham sarva dōṣa sarva śāntim kuru kurum svāhā’.

[I couldn’t but help think about how hegemony gets constructed over time, through these everyday practices which enter into people’s lives, because that is the dominant idiom they live in, even if some of them believed these rites were not part of their original religion; just as some of them told me that *navagrahas* (the nine planetary deities usually seen in non-Jaina temple complexes) are not supposed to be part of their tradition, but that these have now become part and parcel of some of their temples. A certain attribution to the ‘power’ of Sanskrit, its sanctity, was perceptible to me in the verse recited, and this may have been a recent development.]

I was informed that they light up lamps during the entire month of *mārgaḷi* (December, until the start of the *tai*, in January)—the *mukkuṭai viḷakku*, which stands for right faith, right knowledge and right conduct—at the temple. If they cannot light lamps everyday in the temple, they make up for it by lighting lamps in that month of *mārgaḷi*. They celebrate Navaratri and Vijaya Daśami. Navaratri

(September/October) is meant for propitiating Pārsu tīrthankara (Pārśvanātha); they worship Saraswati, Dharaṇēndra and Padmāvati during these days.

As for their present status, they informed me that while earlier the Tamil Jaina community here owned around 600 acres of land, only 40 acres are left with them now. Many have migrated out of here. During *Kalaigñar's* (M. Karunanidhi, in his earlier stint as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu) rule, they had sought minority status and reservation for Tamil *samaṇars*.

Tyagi Dharmanathan was a freedom fighter who belonged to Perumpukai but lived in Cenji, I was told. However, not many textbooks (or, perhaps, none at all) give his history.

3.22 A Persecution Story Remembered

I will just record this story (and the subsequent version of it) here but will discuss it in detail in the next chapter. I reproduce the exact narration/rendition of the story here (recounted by Vrushabha Das).⁵³

A king, a *cakkili*⁵⁴ of Cenji had three sons, two were married. He wanted a bride for his third son. He started off by asking all the lower caste people. Then, since he was a king, he went to the *pārpaṇars* (brāhmins). Now, a *pārpaṇar* is a mad fellow (*kiṟukku piṭṭcavaṇ*)⁵⁵; he told the king, “go to the *śamaṇar* (Jainas). They belong to a higher caste than ours; people of this caste (the *śamaṇar*) do not eat food after 5.30 (*añcarai*) in the evening, and are vegetarians”. So, they [the brāhmins] thus asked this king—who, it is said, ruled during the Vīrachoḷa Pāṇṭiya times⁵⁶—to take a bride from this community. When the king came to the *śamaṇars*, they told him, if a dog’s tail can be straightened, we will give our daughter to your son in marriage. In those times we had titles like Woḍeyār (Uḍaiyār), etc. At Kumbakonam they use the title Cheṭṭiār. Now, the king, in anger, ordered that whosoever wears the sacred thread and is seen with the sandal paste on the forehead (as people of our community did), should be beheaded. ‘*Tillai mūvāyiram, Tirunaṅkūṇṇam*’⁵⁷ *Ayyāyiram*’ is a famous saying. Those many members of our community were killed. Then came the turn

⁵³ A note on the place names: I do not use transliteration marks for modern place names but only where the names are associated with an older story or mentioned in inscriptions or in Tamil sources, etc. Where I am paraphrasing colonial records, I have retained the place names as mentioned therein, verbatim.

⁵⁴ A note must be made of the fact that only in this version of the story was the term ‘*cakkili*’ used. At most other places where I was narrated this story, it was ‘a ruler from Cenji’ But the king (in all the versions) was certainly from a lower caste.

⁵⁵ The term is also used to denote a highly conceited person.

⁵⁶ The time period is a matter of confusion in the mind of the narrator. Here it has been pushed back to an earlier period in Tamil history. Within Vilukkam itself, others told me the same story with slight variations, such as ‘*oru Cenji rājā*’ [a certain king of Cenji]. In some cases, it was ‘*cakkili rājā peṇ kēṭṭa katai*’ (the story of the *cakkili rājā* seeking a bride). The story, however, was common in all the Tamil Jaina villages, in terms of the sequence of events and motifs.

⁵⁷ 3000 in Tillai (Chidambaram), 5000 in Tirunaṅkūṇṇam, 8000 in the *Eṇṇāyiram malai* (in Madurai)

of *Eṇṇāyiram malai*, where 8000 *muṇis*, had meditated.⁵⁸ The king then got his son married to his sister's daughter, they say. When his daughter-in-law was pregnant, *śamaṇa muṇis* blessed her. The king then ordered his men to stop the killing of those with *pūṇṭil* (sacred thread) and *candanam* (sandalwood paste) on their foreheads.

The Redemption: He then got his son married to his niece.⁵⁹ When his daughter-in-law was pregnant, few *śamaṇa* monks blessed her. The king then ordered that his men stop killing those with *pūṇṭil*⁶⁰ and *candanam*.

Another Version of the Story

A *cirraṇaṣaṇ* (petty ruler) ordered that nine heads be brought to him. The tenth person's head would be chopped off, which is why it is called '*sumantāṇ talaipattu*'. This way, many Jainas fled, throwing away their *pūṇṭils*. Their descendants still reside in some of the villages here, and we call them *nīr pūci nayaṇārs*. They are still vegetarians and eat before dark. At Arpakkam you can see them; we used to have our temple there, earlier. Today, no Jaina family is left there. Tirunarungondai also has many *nīr pūci nayaṇārs*.⁶¹

Finally, the people here remain a repository of a whole range of songs, ranging from lullabies, marriage songs, cradle songs and so on, with the names of *tīrthankaras* or *yakṣis* figuring in each. Some of them started to sing for me, and I managed to record a couple of those songs.

3.23 Inscriptional History

* Pallava inscriptions—Nandivarman Pallavamalla (730–800 CE). 56th year—786 CE.

Kilsattamangalam Rock Inscription Records endowment of 17 *kalaṇḍu* of gold to a *paḷḷi* called Pavanandivar for the merit of Pūndi Muppāvai, daughter of *Jinadiyār* of *Vilukkam*. (Chatterjee 1978, p.212)⁶²

* Around the footprints placed on a platform by the side of a *maṇḍapa* in the village (Vilukkam).

Mentions the Name of a Monk, *Guṇasāharadevar* *Footprints are of Guṇasāharadeva who is said to be a monk looking after the Jaina establishments at Vilukkam and nearby villages*. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 422)⁶³

⁵⁸ The community in Vilukkam regularly used the refrain '*Vīra Choḷa Pāṇṭiya kālam*' (times).

⁵⁹ As per the tradition prevalent in South India of cross-cousin marriages.

⁶⁰ Sacred thread, sometimes also referred to as *pūṇal*.

⁶¹ In most of these stories, the king's name is not mentioned. Thurston refers to the same story and mentions the king as one Venkatapathy Nāyaka.

⁶² Emphasis, wherever, mine. I used this inscription because the name of this village occurs in it.

⁶³ Emphasis mine.

3.24 Revisit: 25 February 2015

Today only 20 families are residing in this village. I met Selva Kumar of the temple caretaker's family. The temple has a new addition now, a golden chariot (*tan̄kattēr*) which was inaugurated in the year 2011–2012. It was a silver chariot initially, but then they made it into gold. Selva Kumar informed me that in 2006, some Digambara monks came and stayed in their village, following which, the community became more conscious about restoring old temples, etc. At the same time, the leader of the *Samaṇa Peroli* in Vandavasi worked to stop the stone quarrying of rocks which have ancient rock-cut caves and inscriptions. But quarrying continues to be a problem. Altogether, the Tamil Jaina families here have 30 acres of agriculture lands. Selva Kumar does not own any land, though, and has taken one on lease. He said agriculture has suffered on account of high costs of labour and water scarcity. Mainly, the people here grow paddy, sesame, sugarcane and groundnut. He then handed over the print copy of the *Kalyāṇa vāḷṭtu pāṭṭu* [marriage songs] that the women had sung the last time I had visited this village.



Fig. 3.12 Selva Kumar, at Vilukkam (2015)

Fig. 3.13 The golden chariot
(*taṅkattēr*, 2015)



3.25 Perumpukai, Gingee Taluk, Villupuram District (Early Name, ‘Perumpoka!’)

October 2003

I was given a pamphlet, released by the managing trustee and Tamil Jaina villagers of this village for renovation of the Bagavan 1008 Sri Mallinatha Svami Jain temple in the village, which I found interesting:

Bagavan 1008 Sri Malinatha Svami Jain temple situated in Perumpugai village...is one of the few ancient temples belonging to the early Chōḷa period and according to recent findings of Archaeological department this village, known as Perumbhogya those days, being as old as a couple of millennium years, was thickly populated by Jains. This temple the place of daily pūja and worship was being renovated from time to time though partially. Small repairs were made in the year 1940 though major portions remain untouched....

The pamphlet sought donations to complete the repairs and renovation of this temple.

I found this to be an interesting example of the community invoking historical and archaeological evidence for its antiquity, juxtaposed with the religious aspect of a temple requiring renovations for worship to be carried on. Otherwise, in my conversations in this village, the past was not invoked so much. People here spoke essentially of the present status of Tamil Jainas as a community. There were around 30 households. Among the people I spoke to included C. Appandairaj, S. Appasami Nayinar, P. Manohar, A. Rajasekhar, P. Nemidas, K. Somakirti, Kasturi, Padmapriya, Vimala, Chandira Nayinar, Mohan Das and Jinadas.

I was also observing a worship ritual at the temple, which had begun with the *pañca (paramēṣṭi) mantram*. The Cittamur *maṭhātīpati* led the worship. Women gathered for the weekly *pūjai* of the *yakṣi Kūṣmāṇḍini Devi*.⁶⁴ The *Kūṣmāṇḍini stotram* was recited:

śrīmat kūṣmāṇḍini devi ambā ambālicā, yaje gandham graṇṇa graṇṇa śrīmat kūṣmāṇḍini akṣatam graṇṇa graṇṇa...puṣpam graṇṇa...

Most Tamil Jainas in this village owned small pieces of land; most were marginal farmers. Just one or two families owned sufficient land. One of them stayed outside, in Tindivanam. The largest landholder here was referred to as *maṇikar*.⁶⁵ The majority of people here belonged to economically backward classes. People lamented the state of agriculture and said they were tired of being in that profession. It must be noted that by the time I had met them, they had been through a long drought condition in these parts of Tamil Nadu. They cited prohibitive labour costs and inability to find farm workers as reasons for lack of interest in agriculture. So some have left these villages and migrated to towns and cities in search of employment. Some have started petty businesses and own small shops. Some worked as helpers in local shops. Agriculture, they said, was the only vocation for their community, once upon a time. Now it is difficult to solely depend on it. Jaina villages are gradually being abandoned. That is the change affecting their community now, as they observed.

This village has other castes, such as Kounders and also dalits. At one point, the *naiṇār* families were in majority and had people working for them (on the fields, mostly from the lower/other castes). Today, they are not in a good shape and have become a minority, they pointed out. So it has become difficult for them to find people to work in the fields. The men pointed out (with some amount of sarcasm about their womenfolk) that in case of other communities (castes), women too work on the farm and are adept at it, but not the *naiṇār* women. Women from other castes

⁶⁴I happened to reach this village on a Friday, since the *maṭhātīpati* had planned to attend the Friday *pūjai* in this temple. But the women informed him that they had shifted the same to Sundays, on account of a new television series on Friday evenings! I will be discussing the *yakṣi* worship context of Tamil Jainas later in this chapter.

⁶⁵Could this be the colloquial term for 'mānākkar', for a well-educated or learner person? But here it was used in connection with the landholding. The person being referred to was among the larger landholders here.

have no inhibitions about working on other people's lands as field labourers. That way, they contribute to the household income. But the Tamil Jaina women (said the men) continue to bask in the feeling that they are from the '*osanta jāti*' (upper caste). But the women told me that *naiṇār* women are adept at household work. 'We cannot do activities like sowing, ploughing and so on. Other caste women earn a minimum *coolie* (wages) of about Rs. 20 per day and the couples thus manage their households. They are better-off, when compared to any of us. This is the main difference between the past and present'.

They then narrated stories of the '*cakkili rājā*'. They also said Desing rājā was a good king, but were not aware of the story about him I had heard at Vilukkam. I could perceive a kind of community cohesiveness in this village: the better-off among them seemed helpful towards the not-so-fortunate. A few families belonged to the lowest economic rung.

Fig. 3.14 At Perumpukai, a man outside a Tamil Jaina home (2003)



Fig. 3.15 At Perumpukai—family of Candira Nayinar, daughter Padmapriya (R), in 2003



3.26 Inscriptional Records

In the inscription of Nekanurpatti [*nekaṇūrpaṭṭi*], ‘On the south face of the rock (known at Aṭukkaṇkal) outside the cave’, we find mention of Perumpokaḷ. The ‘inscription is enclosed within a rectangular border; weather-beaten and worn thin, but legible’ (Mahadevan 2003, p. 437).

Mahadevan writes,

The place may be identified as the modern village of Perumpukai, about 5 km. from this site. It is an ancient Jaina settlement with rock-cut stone beds in the local cave. The name literally means, ‘great fame’. (Mahadevan 2003, p. 611)

Mahadevan dates it to ‘ca. 4th century A.D.’ (Mahadevan 2003, p. 437). The Nekanurpatti inscription in Tamil Brāhmi script reads as follows:

perumpokaḷ
cē-k-kanti tāyiyaru
cē-k-kant=aṇṇi ce-
yivitta paḷḷi

The hermitage was caused to be made by Cēkkant(i)-aṇṇi, the mother of Cēkkanti of Perumpokaḷ (Mahadevan 2003, p. 437).

In his commentary on the inscriptions, Mahadevan gives the following details:

The expression [*cēkkant(i)+aṇṇi*] is construed as *cē* (name) + *k* (*orru*) + *kanti* (title) + *aṇṇi* (fem. honorific suffix). The nun is described as the mother (*tāyiyaru*) of *cēkkanti*, both mother and daughter having the same name. Probably, the honorific suffix - *aṇṇi* has been added to the mother's name to distinguish her from the daughter. They were both Jaina nuns as indicated by the title *kanti*. Presumably the mother gifted the hermitage (*paḷḷi*) to the daughter. The cave shelter has only a single stone bed. (Ibid, p. 613)

3.27 Revisit: 24 February 2015

I met P. Jinavara Das (among those I met even the last time I came here), who told me (yet again) that,

Agriculture is not as it used to be earlier... [Because of the challenges in continuing the profession] it has resulted in many of our people changing their vocation. Some educated youngsters have gone out of the village. But the *valipāḍu* (religious practice) goes on, as before; some people come here during festivals and leave. Since the last ten years, though, there are fewer females than males among our community. Fewer girl children are born. But so far as education is concerned, our girls are far more educated than our men. This is causing a problem. Our girls are marrying into other communities. Today, there are 20–25 households here. It is impossible to get labour for agriculture because the costs have gone up. And more mechanisation of the farms has happened. In the past, all our community together held around 150 acres of land; now most have been sold out. Now we may perhaps have around 50 acres left, with 25 families. Some have cattle and are into *pāl vyāpāram* (selling milk); the crops grown here include *maṇiḷa* (groundnut), sugarcane (depending on the rains and some have wells). There is a new temple in our village now, that of goddess Māriamman, in the SC colony.⁶⁶

Jinavara Das also pointed out that the Tamil Jains here, as also in Mannargudi, use the title/last name, Nayinar, whereas in Kumbakonam, they are Chettiar; in Vedaranyam, they have the title Mudaliyar, and in Deepangudi, they are Upadhyayar. In Tayanur, they use the title Uḍaiyār.

In Tamilnadu the Tamil Jains are mostly poor he said.

Digambara Jains from the north are now coming here and helping out some of our people with money. The government is not helping in any way. We had a DMK MLA⁶⁷ from our community, Mr. Rajendran, from Polur. There was Tamilmoli from AIADMK, who was MLA from Malaiyanur and Peranamallur. Though the Tamil Jains have been demanding inclusion in the BC category, nothing has been done about that so far, in spite of these people being in the government.

⁶⁶ Interaction in the village, Perumpukai, February, 2015.

⁶⁷ Member of the Legislative Assembly of the state.

Fig. 3.16 Year 2015,
Padmapriya has been
married off



Fig. 3.17 Jinavara Das and his wife at their home in Perumpukai (2015)

3.28 Peramandur, Tindivanam Taluk, Tiruvannamalai, South Arcot: 2003

P. M. Joseph writes:

Tradition says the author of *Śrīpurāṇa* (in Tamil)—unknown—hailed from Peramaṇḍūr. He went to Śravaṇabelgoḷa to learn Jaina religion and that impressed his teacher who asked him to translate the *Mahāpurāṇa* into Tamil. A manuscript with title *Śrīpurāṇa* is found in the Jain *maṭha* at Varāṅga (Ms. No. 53) which says the author is Hastimalla (who has written works in Sanskrit and Kannada)...The title Hastimalla was given to him by a Pāṇḍyan king.... (Joseph 1997, p. 333)

The Tamil Jaina booklet from the temple at this village narrates its historical antiquity thus:

Another name for this village (older name) was Vīragirāmam; and in older inscriptions Perumaṇḍai has two jinaḷayas, Candiranāthar, and the smaller temple is referred to as ‘*ciṛiyakoil*’. There are inscriptions in the former temple of around 1500 years ago. The authors of *Śrīpurāṇam* and *Cūdāmaṇi nikaṇṭu* are believed to have belonged to Peramaṇḍūr. The people of this village are said to have helped set up the matha at Mel Cittamur. The *mūlavar* in the inner sanctum is Candiranātha tīrthankara. There are also Pārśva, Rṣabha, Bāhubali and Kūṣmāṇḍini *yakṣi* images elsewhere. (*Śrī Candiranāthar Jinālaya Gōpura Tiruppaniyin Vāravu Celavu Aṟikkai Peramaṇḍūr Jinālayam* 1993, p.1)⁶⁸

The story of Candiranātha svāmi is mentioned as under:

Once Sāmantabhadra cārya suffered from *bhasma rōkam* (constant hunger pangs) and hence could not stick to the rules of monkhood. To appease his hunger, he turned into a Buddhist bhikku and accepted alms from every place. Based on the belief that Varanasi satiates people’s hunger, he reached there as a *sanyāsi* and met the ruler. He said he would himself feed 12 *kalam naivēdyam* (food offering) to the Śiva linga. The ruler gave his consent. Sāmantabhadra ate all the *naivēdyam* himself. This continued. People believed that the Śiva linga was eating all the food. Over time, he was cured of *bhasma rōkam*; the *naivēdyam* remained unconsumed. The ruler saw this and accosted Sāmantabhadra and said he had fooled them, so he must bow to the Śiva linga as a punishment. Sāmantabhadra said the Śiva linga would not be able to withstand the power of his *namaskāra*. The king tied up the linga with an iron chain. Sāmantabhadra recited the *svayambhū stotra* and the 24 *tīrthankara stuti* with deep concentration. When he started to recite the *stuti* of the 8th tīrthankara, Candiranātha, the Śiva linga burst and flew in four directions. And in its place appeared the image of Candiranātha. The people and the king were surprised, and all those people who were until then Śiva’s devotees, turned into Jainas Today, at Kāśi [Kashi], there is a Candiranātha temple on the banks of the Ganga....⁶⁹ (Ibid, pp. 1–2)

⁶⁸ This Tamil booklet gives an account of the expenditure of the temple at Peramandur, which mentions this bit of history. Note that here, too, the village gives itself agency in setting up the Cittamur *maṭham*.

⁶⁹ Note the story here of other communities converting into Jainas. And Śaiva-Jaina conflict reflected in the motifs.

3.29 Community Narratives

Shreyans Kumar, Lalitha, Suganthi, Padmalatha, A. Vasavadattai, A. Vijayan, B. Rajendiran, Kuppuswamy and S. Hamsa Bai were among those I interacted with. Most of them told me that in the past, there were over a hundred households. Now there are barely 40, with a population of around 204. There are very few men around. Agriculture has declined. Only 30 per cent of them (roughly) are practising agriculture now.

S. Hamsa Bai, who had a bag of stories, told me that the *Jainas at Peramandur established the Cittamur maṭham and people here get the ‘mutal mariyātai’ at the rathōccavam and other important ceremonies at the maṭham (nelai nāṭṭinōm—say the people here of their role in the same).*⁷⁰ She also said the Tamil Jainas have *gotras* and named a few, such as Jambuvanāmar, Amodara, Vilupuradra and Kāsipa gotra (the last one is also called ‘Svāmi gōtra’ since this is supposed to be the *gōtra* of Pārśvanātha), and that they have exogamous marriages.

3.30 Importance in the Tamil Jaina Literary Tradition

Maṇṭalapuruṭar (the Jaina commentator from the early medieval period) hailed from this village. The author of the *Śrīpurāṇam* also hailed from this village according to them. This village was also called Vīragrāmam. People say they came here from Agaragrāmam many generations ago.

3.31 Social Conflict Stories

Hamsa Bai told me,

There have been times when other communities teased and taunted our naked monks. Nirmala Sagar (a Digambara monk) came here once. There was this man who teased him. But the moment Nirmala Sagar looked at him, the man’s hands and feet became numb. He couldn’t speak. When he looked at the man again, he became alright. And fell at his feet. A Mudaliyar person caused to be made footprints in his memory. Villagers worshipped them. It went on for many years until, one day, they built a Kāli temple over there. The Tamil Jainas removed the footprints and placed them in a temple elsewhere. Those who built this (Kāli) temple were struck by ill-luck. That was in 1974. Later, other ascetics did not face any opposition in this village.

⁷⁰ This bit about *mutal mariyātai* is also recorded in the Mackenzie manuscripts, but there the village which gets the *mutal mariyātai* is Tayanur.

Story of the King Who Sought a Tamil Jaina Bride for His Son

During the (Arcot) Nawab times, *a certain rājā*⁷¹ asked members of the Jaina community if one of them would give their girl's hand in marriage for his son. The Jains refused. Instead, they brought a black dog and tied a note on its collar, fleeing to Madurai by the night. The note had this message: 'If this black dog can become white, we will give our daughter to your son'.

3.32 Maṇṭalapuruṭar's Story (and Links to Sanskrit/Knowledge)

Hamsa Bai took out another story from her 'bag', which is as under:

Maṇṭalapuruṭar was illiterate. His wife was well-read. She would finish reading by the time he would bathe and return, in time to feed him. One day, he was very late. She waited for long and, when he did not return, began to read. When he returned, he saw her so engrossed; she got angry and said aloud, '*phalāśai kusumam yathā*'. And went to fetch food for him. He wanted to know what she had meant. He asked her but she wouldn't say its meaning. He said he would eat only after he had found out the true meaning of that phrase. He went to Śravaṇabelgoḷa to study Sanskrit. He was old. People used to laugh at him. But days passed; he had studied all the scriptures, *kāvyas*, etc. He once sent a message to his wife saying he was coming home. She looked forward to meeting him. She prepared a feast for him. He came and had lunch. After eating he said, '*cāru cāru samam bhānti inkuṭiraka miśritam lavaḷēṇa lōbha vriddhai phalam āśai kusumam yathā*'! It means, 'you have prepared it all so well, with ginger and fenugreek, rasam smells so nice...but without salt what is the use!' She (his wife) had actually said to him, giving the analogy of the *Palāsa puṣpam* (Laburnum flowers), that they are so beautiful, but have no fragrance. She meant to say that her husband was very nice, but without learning, it felt like it was a flower without any fragrance. He had countered her aptly. She was very happy.⁷²

Then Hamsa Bai added, 'Nobody knows Sanskrit these days. They read only Tamil'.

3.33 A Story in the Jaina Rāmāyaṇam

When Rāma asked Sītai to give *agni parīkṣā*,⁷³ she went away to do penance and eventually became a Jaina nun. Rāma became an ascetic, too, later... When Maṇḍōdari was pregnant with Sītai, she got an intense desire to drink her husband's blood. An astrologer told her that the child in her womb was not good for her husband. She left the child in a basket, left it to float on the river and in time, Janaka picked it up. A letter was also written and kept along with the child. Among Jains, Rāvaṇa had desired Sītai since 10 *bhāvas*. In the 10th *bhāva*, he lifted her and took her away. But he had taken a vow: to only marry the woman who would desire him. Not otherwise. So he waited. Sītai's woes were on account of her past *karmas*: she had spoken ill of a Jaina nun and monk in one of her *janmas* (births). That is why she suffered for 10 *bhāvas*.

⁷¹ There was no reference to "cakkili rājā" here.

⁷² Hamsa Bai is a voracious reader herself, of both Sanskrit and Tamil literature.

⁷³ That is, prove her chastity by walking through the fire.

Hamsa told me that *Akṣaya tritīyai*⁷⁴ commemorates Rṣabha coming for food after 6 months of *dīkṣā*. Nobody could give him food. Shreyans Kumar gave him sugar cane juice to break his fast.

3.34 Revisit in 2015

I visited this village on 25 February. Jairama Nainar here told me of a new story of a Reddy-Jaina conflict over the possession of the Jaina Chandraprabhā temple in the village, which would perhaps require a detailed research at a later time. He then recited verses from the *Mērumantarapurāṇam* for me. Mekala of Cenji was with me at that point. I could not touch base with Hamsa Bai, who was not staying there at that point. There were far fewer people, with many of the houses locked up.

3.35 Inscriptional Records

* On a pillar of the maṇḍapa in front of the Candiranāthar shrine at Peramandur.

In the 14th regnal year of Kulōttuṅga Cōla (Perumaṇṭaināḍu)—1192 CE.

For the *yakṣi* Mañkaiyaināyaki in the temple built at Perumaṇṭai Iravikula cundari *Perumpalli* for *arcanai* and worship, the people (*ūrār*) of Rājarāja Sambūvarāyaṇ Perumaṇṭaipārputtūr gave 200 *kuḷi* of land (with boundaries to the south of Śri_____ sluice and to the east of Tribhuvanamuḍaiyār devadānam).⁷⁵

* On the west wall of the Rṣabhanātha shrine in the same village.

866 CE. 19th regnal year of (Ganga Pallava king) Kōvicayanandivikkirama (incomplete). In *perumpalli*—200 (*kuḷi*?) land for *palli* (?)⁷⁶

* On the north wall of the same shrine. 1193 CE.

In Perumandai of Veṅkuṇṭrakōṭṭam subdivision of Jayañkondachōḷamaṇṭalam—in the 15th regnal year of Kulōttuṅga Chōḷa—for expenses for shrine of *yakṣi* in the temple—in Rājarājasambuvarāyaṇ Perumaṇṭaipārputtūr—as *pallīccandam*—given by Maṅgaināyakiyār (who bought Perumaṇṭai?).⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Which has a different meaning in the Tamil and Telugu ‘Hindu’ context (as far as I know), when people rush to the markets to buy gold and silver jewellery since it is supposed to increase one’s wealth manifold if purchases are made on this day. Clever marketing also has a role to play in this. In the Jaina context, it seems to have more subdued meaning, since this particular part of Rṣabha’s life story usually brings tears to the eyes of Jainas, because the textual tradition describes it in such a manner that he was a renouncer who could not get food or water (that was appropriate for him) after so many months. He then broke his fast with sugarcane juice that was given to him.

⁷⁵ *SII*, vol. VII, no. 846; *ARE* 219 of 1902.

⁷⁶ *SII*, vol. VII, No. 847; *ARE* 220 of 1902.

⁷⁷ *SII*, vol. VII, No. 848; *ARE* 221 of 1902.

Fig. 3.18 Jairama Nainar with his wife outside their home in Peramandur (2015)



3.36 Jambai, Tirukkoilur Taluk, South Arcot

There were just two small families of Tamil Jainas here when I visited. I could not record the community narratives here.

3.37 Inscriptional Records

Mahadevan writes,

The most outstanding discovery [between 1981 and 2000] comes from Jambai, a small village on the north bank of the South Pennar river near the town of Tirukoyilur in Viluppuram District. There are two caves on the hill to the east of the village, one of them with a Tamil-Brāhmī inscription, which is exceptionally well preserved as it is engraved on the rear rock wall deep inside the cave...The Jambai inscription records the grant of the cave shelter by *atiyan neṭumāṇ aṇci* who has the title *satiyapuṭō*. The record can be dated to ca. 1st century A.D. on palaeographic grounds. The donor of this grant has been identified by [R.] Nagaswamy as Atiyamāṇ Neṭumāṇ Aṇci, the famous chieftain of Takaṭūr (modern Dharmapuri), celebrated in the Caṅkam classic, *Puṛaṇāṇūru*.⁷⁸ The title *satiyapuṭō* occurs in Asoka's Second Rock Edict along with names identified as Cēras, Cōlas and Pāṇṭiyas...

⁷⁸ *Puṛaṇāṇūru* 87–95, 97–101, 103–104, 206, 231 and 235 (Mahadevan 2003, p. 589).

Jambai is also known to have been a flourishing Jaina centre in later historical times. (Mahadevan 2003, pp. 23–24)

The inscription ‘on the rear wall of the cave (called Dāsimaḍam) on the Āḷuruttimalai hill; well-preserved’ reads as follows:

sa ti yap u to a ti ya na ne ṭu mā na a ña ci ī tat a pā ḷi

satīyaputō atīyan neṭumān añci ītta paḷi

The hermitage was given by Atīyan Neṭumān Añci, the Satīyaputta. (Mahadevan 2003, p. 399)

Ekambaranathan, Sivaprakasam write of ‘Atīyamān Neṭumān Añji’ [as the one who is] ‘celebrated in the Śaṅgam classics by poets like Paraṇar and Avvaiyār. The Śaṅgam works describe Añji as a great Śaivite but the fact that he caused to be made an abode to the Jaina ascetic shows his religious tolerance.’ (Ekambaranathan, Sivaprakasam 1987, p. 360).

This seems a fantastic conclusion to draw. One does not understand why the authors make such a reference to him being a ‘Śaivite’ (which they do not substantiate) and how they fix a ‘Śaivite’ connection to the *Puṛaṇāṅṅūru* poems and there upon making a case for ‘religious tolerance’.

Meanwhile, Karashima, too, makes a mention of Jambai, but in a different context.

Record of tax remission by the king (Achyutadeva) for expenses of pūjā (to the Jaina image, Nāyaṇār Vijaya Nāyakaṛ at Saṅbai) and repairs in the Jambai (Jaina?) temple. A petition was presented by Vaiyappa Nāyaka to the king who agreed to remit *jodi* and *suḷāvari* levied on the devadāna villages of Jambai temple, since 24 other devadāna villages had already been exempted from these taxes. The order was executed by Bomma Nāyaka of Vēlūr⁷⁹. (Karashima 2002, p. 39)



3.38 Tirunarungondai/Tirunaṅkuraṅṅam, Ulundurpettai, South Arcot

Ekambaranathan notes that,

Tirunarungondai is one of the very important places of pilgrimage for the Jains in Tamilnadu. The natural cavern on the hill contains a number of stone beds provided with pillow lofts. A little to the north of this cavern is the Appāṇḍainātha temple with the shrines meant for Pārśvanātha and Chandraprabhā. This Jaina temple had been patronised by the Chōḷas, Pāṇḍyas, their feudatories and the later rulers. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 381)

There are no Tamil Jaina families settled here or around, today. This place is famous for the Appandainathar temple. But Tamil Jainas congregate here in the month of February to celebrate *naṛkāṭci* (which falls on the same *tithi* as *Śivarātri*⁸⁰). The

⁷⁹ Also see, in this connection, Ekambaranathan 1987, p.373; *SH*, vol. XXII, 127.

⁸⁰ The festival related to Śiva where people observe fasts.

temple priest's son⁸¹ told me that 'Kamba Ramāyaṇa's first copy (*mutal pirati*) was 'released' at Tirunarungondai'.⁸²

In this temple, interestingly, Śaṇi (one of the *navagrahas*) is worshipped as an independent idol, without the other *grahas*, which is usually the case. The arcaka said, 'Tirunallaru and Tirunarungondai have that unique feature of just Śaṇi being worshipped alone'. The former is not a Jaina temple, incidentally.

3.39 An Origins Story⁸³

He also narrated the following story:

The temple was discovered during Rājā Rājā Chōla's times by his sister.⁸⁴ Two Irula *vēṭṭuvar* (hunters from the Irula community) came this way. They stood atop the hillock (that which now holds the Candiranāthar gopuram). On that very spot, they saw the *kapilar kiḷaṅku* (a kind of tuber) and happily they tried to pull it out, unaware of the fact that there was this tīrthankara's idol within. The axe fell on that image and with that one of the hunters lost his eyesight. He asked his wife, if there was no milk and no *kiḷaṅku*, how did this happen? He asked her to clear the place (the thicket) and see what was inside. She found the *pakavān*'s (tīrthankara) image. She broke into a song almost spontaneously, '*appaṇē, ayyaṇē appāṇḍināthaṇē varuvāyē uyir taruvāyē eṇ kaṇṇa uḍaiya nāṇ teriyāmalē panna tapputtāṇ!*'⁸⁵ The hunter re-gained his eyesight immediately. The couple began to worship the idol. Padmāvati yakṣi appeared in their dream asking them to tell people about the incident. The hunter went to Rājā Rājā Chōlaṇ and his sister Kundavai. She came in a palanquin and later on, had the gopuram built.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Arukacantiran/Candru.

⁸² I have not heard that from anyone else, who might corroborate it. But in essence, it signifies the importance of the place in the Tamil literary tradition, besides being an important Jaina centre that had a rich endowment in the past. Interesting that this was the first thing the priest's son told me, and not about Kundavai's grants, which he came to, later. There are layers to the history people recall, which is significant.

⁸³ Pundi seems to have a similar origin story, in some senses (as told in *Pūṇḍi Talavaṇalāru*).

⁸⁴ Irulas, for a long time, used to make a living out of snake catching and rat catching, but here he used the term for a tribe of hunter-gatherers.

⁸⁵ *Appaṇē* is used for an elderly person and is also a term for 'father'; she pleads with Appāṇḍainātha to restore the eyesight of her husband who erred unknowingly.

⁸⁶ Perhaps this place was sacred to hunter-gatherers—if we look at signifiers within the story—which got converted into a Jaina sacred centre, thanks to the patronage of Kundavai. Interestingly, in some places, Murukaṇ is also hailed as 'appaṇē' sometimes, when people visit his shrines, especially in Palani, where they call out to him (all the way uphill, as they reach his *sanctum sanctorum*), as *Paḷaṇi-appaṇē* or *Paḷaṇi-āṇṭavaṇē*. Though there is not enough evidence to substantiate this point, yet, the story suggests existence of a tribal group. The motif of the hunters (and 'kiḷaṅku') comes again in Pundi, which one will come to later.

3.40 *Narkāṭci* and Asserting Identity

I was informed that this festival started around 20–25 years ago because people from other communities started coming here and placing a *vēl* (spear, of Murukan) at the Padmāvati shrine. The Tamil Jainas foresaw a potential for conflict there. It would later lead to people coming to sacrifice animals as offerings. The elders and the *dharmakartā* (trustee) of the shrine met and decided to organise this yearly gathering of Jainas here, like a festival, to stop further encroachment and appropriation of the shrine. They had recently celebrated the 25th year of this event called *narkāṭci* (right faith). It is preceded by a 48-day *vratam*⁸⁷. Everyone gathers here on a Sunday in the month of February. The *maṭhātīpati* also comes here and addresses the gathering.

3.41 About Arcakas

The priest's son told me the *arcakas* must know Sanskrit. Arcakas come under the overall control of the *maṭhātīpati*. The *maṭhātīpati* gives them the *pūṇṇ* on *āvaṇi aviṭṭam tithi*. Only after that, they can perform the duties of *arcakas*. They have to learn the *grantham* (script) and *pūjā vidhānam*. There are around 150 to 162 villages with *arcaka* families residing there. They are part of the Jaina community. They perform *pūjā* in temples and also practise agriculture. Few *arcakas* are also priests in *sēṭh* (Śvetāmbara) temples. He also informed me that since the last 20 years, they have their *ślokas* (verses) written in Tamil. In his father's times, they used to read these from palm leaf manuscripts in the Grantha script. Now very few can read them. Regarding Tamil Jainas' vocation, he said, 'Since the time of *Ādipakavaṇ* (the first tīrthankara) Jainas have been agriculturists. We started the profession of agriculture'.

He then found it necessary to add a point that 'In our community the *maṭhātīpati*'s is not an exclusive position, or post, unlike that of the Sankarācārya. It is not hierarchical, either. People elect the *maṭhātīpati*. The temple trust pays for the *arcakas*; they are paid salaries in cash these days, and get some donations, as well, besides salary.'

3.42 Persecution

He said,

We were many in numbers in the past. Now very few of us are left. '*Tillai mūvāyiram*' denotes killing of so many people from our community: 3000 in Chidambaram. *Ayyāyiram*

⁸⁷ Some Tamil Jainas believe that the format of Sabarimala Ayyappa pilgrimage (after a 40-day vow men take to observe simple living, celibacy and other strict rules) may have had its influence on this relatively new festival in the Tamil Jaina calendar.

(5000)⁸⁸ in Tirunarungondai, they say. The decline set in due to Muslim rulers and other problems. *Nīr pūci nayiṇārs* in this village were Jains earlier. They come to this temple even today. They also worship Murugaṇ, Gaṇeśa and Śakti. They are settled in Arpakkam... Appar (Tirunāvukkaracar) came to this temple.

He then informed me that people believe this ‘god’ (of this temple) is powerful. Unmarried people come here and circumambulate 108 times and have been blessed. Childless couples too come here. Very few (Tamil Jaina) families are left here. Many have migrated to towns.

3.43 Inscriptional Records

* Tamil inscription on the base of the veranda around the Chandranatha shrine in the Appandainatha temple at Thirunarungondai.⁸⁹

These are ninth century CE characters (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 380).

The inscription mentions the administrative division of Rājaraṇjavalanāḍu, Tirumuṇaiippāḍu, within which is located the *nāṛpateṇṇāyiramperumpalli*⁹⁰ at Tirunaṇṇuṇṇṇai. It registers the gift as *tirunāmattukkaṇi* to enjoy the income from the *naṇcai* and *puṇcai* lands of Āṇṇrūpaḷḷiccantam, Ullūr and Ēṇātimaṇṇkalam and the offerings for the month of *āṇi* on the *kārttikai* star day. The gift mentions one Araicanārāyaṇaṇ Ḍappiṇṇantāṇ alias Vīrasēkhara Kāṭavarāyaṇ.

* In the same place.⁹¹ Chōḷa Kōṇēriṇmaikoṇḍāṇ, third regnal year.

Mentions a gift of 10 *veḷi* of land as *paḷḷiccantam* made tax-free, in the villages Kudaḷilāḍarpāḍi Vāṇavaṇ Mādevipuram and Sirusāttanallūr to the paḷḷi at Tirunaṇṇuṇṇṇai and to the Bhaṭṭāras attached to the same *paḷḷi*. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 392)

Part of the details (which are not mentioned in the above-cited source are as follows):

20 *kalams*⁹² of paddy for harvest; for every third of the 10 *veḷis* of land this said portion, to be kept aside; every three years *uḷvari* to be paid by the *ūrār*, of 25 *kalams* (of paddy); out of 200 *kalam* to be set aside for *paḷḷi*. Any transactions on this land [must] be according to the wishes of the *amaṇa piṭṭāra*⁹³; that is the *kaṭamai* (duty) of the *ūrār*. Kulōttuṇṇka Chōḷaṇ Kāṇkaiyarāyaṇ, and Mīṇavan Mūventaveḷāṇ.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ It was not clear if the concept *ayyāyiram* was used to denote Jaina villages or number of people.

⁸⁹ *SII*, vol. VII, No. 1011; *ARE* 381 of 1902.

⁹⁰ 48,000.

⁹¹ *SII*, VII, No. 1012; *ARE* 382 of 1902.

⁹² One *kalam* = 29 kg in Chōḷa times (Mahadevan 2003, p. 140).

⁹³ This may be a reference to a Digambara Jaina monk.

⁹⁴ *SII*, VII, 1012.

* On the south wall of the store room in the same temple.⁹⁵

1031 AD, 13th regnal year of Rājādhirāja I Chōla (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 389).

Mentions gift of 6 *kācu* to the *yakṣi* of Tirunaṇṇkoṇṭai *mēlirpaḷli* by *ātibhaṭṭārakan* puppacēṇa-dēvaṇ through Oppilātāṇ Uṭaiyāṇ of Kolliyūr for the burning of a twilight lamp (*cantivilakku*) to the deity.

* On stone set up at the foot of the hill bearing the same temple.⁹⁶ Chōla Kōṇēriṇmaikonḍāṇ.

The inscription records that the *nāyaṇārs* of Tangaḷūr, decide to start a festival in their name, in the same manner as the already prevalent *Tiruvaikāci tirunāl* being conducted for *Appāṇṭar* of Tirunaṇṇkoṇṭai *nārpattēṇṇāyiramperumpaḷli*. They will celebrate a festival in *tai* month (January) named *Irācakkāṇāyaṇ tirunāl* as decided by *Iruṇkālappāṭi-nāṭu*'s Tavattāḷaṇ Tēvar. [Towards this end] 3 harvests would be monitored within the four boundaries of this village, and uncultivated land is to be cultivated. Expenses from the fourth harvest would be used for conduct of the festival. This is recorded on stone and committed to writing [on copper plate?].

* On a rock to the south of the same shrine.⁹⁷

It is a damaged inscription. Mentions *muṇaipāṭi-paḷliccantam* and a gift towards a perpetual lamp for the deity on the rock. It mentions the boundaries of the lands, such as the stream flowing south of *Āṟrūr*, etc.

* On the same rock.⁹⁸ Records gift of 15 *kalaṅcu poṇ* (gold) for the *kīlpaḷli* at Tirunaṇṇkoṇṭai.

* In the same place.⁹⁹

Tenth regnal year, 995 AD of Rājārāja I, Chōla¹⁰⁰ (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 384).

*Atikāracciyār*¹⁰¹ Aiyāraṇ of Ammaṇūr made a gift of uncultivated land to cultivate good paddy for purposes of offerings (*tirupaḷli-ūṭṭukkaḷ*) to the deity (at Tirunaṇṇkoṇṭai) for worship...creating a new grant in her name altering the (existing one) of Kuntavai (of an earlier grant)...Southern boundary *Uṭumpaṇkal*...; a brook...mentions four boundaries of the land thus granted...Damaged.

Ekambaranathan and Sivaprakasam read it thus:

⁹⁵ *SII*, VII, 1013; *ARE* 383 of 1902.

⁹⁶ *SII*, VII, No. 1014; *ARE* 384 of 1902.

⁹⁷ *SII*, VII, No. 1015; *ARE* 385 of 1902.

⁹⁸ *SII*, Vol. VII, No. 1016; *ARE* 385-A of 1902.

⁹⁹ *SII*, Vol. VII, No. 1017; *ARE* 385-B of 1902.

¹⁰⁰ *SII* says Rāja Rājakesari Parāntakaṇ.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*. The term is used is *atikāracciyār* (verbatim), not *atikāricciyār*, as used in general parlance for a female official.

The inscription is damaged and left unfinished. Seems to record some land for the various services in the temple by an *adikāricchi* (lady) who was the wife of *Aiyāran*. The boundaries of the land are also mentioned, besides a tank called *Kundavaipērēri*.... The tank, *Kundavaipērēri*, was named after *Kundavai*, the sister of *Rājarāja I*, *Adikāricchi* means wife of an official (*adikāri*)¹⁰² (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 384).

[They do not, however, mention the point about altering the existing grant and issuing a fresh grant, as is noted in the inscription, which is significant, since the person now making the grant does not seem to be from the royalty. However, the inscription is much damaged.]

* On rock to the west of the Chandranatha shrine in Appandainatha temple.¹⁰³

Rājendra Chōla, 1012–1044 AD. Damaged. Begins with historical introduction ... of Rājendra I. Records gift of 96 sheep for a lamp to god *Paḷḷiyilālvār* by *Kaḷimaṇaṇ Vijayālaya Mallan* of *Tirumanañjēri* in Rājendrasimha Valanāḍu. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 386)

* On rock at entrance into the main shrine in Appandainatha temple.¹⁰⁴

Kulōttuṅga Chōla I, 1070–1120 AD. Fragmentary and damaged. Contains historical introduction of Kulōttuṅga I beginning with the words *Pugalnāḍu viḷaṅga*... Seems to record endowment of paddy for a lamp in the temple by Rājendraśoḷa *Cedirāṇ*. Mentions *Uḍaiyār Malilisenā*, evidently a Jaina deity [sic]. (Ekambaranathan, p.388)

[It is likely referring to a Jaina ācārya, Mallisenā?]

* 1078 AD, 8th regnal year of Kulōttuṅga Chōla I. Damaged. Seems to register the gift of 40 cows for burning a perpetual lamp probably in front of the god *Kaccināyakadeva* in southern shrine of the temple *Nārpattēṇṇāyiraperumpallī* at *Tirunaṇṇuṇḍai*... The verse at end of another epigraph of Kulōttuṅga III from *Tirunaṇṇuṇḍai* refers to a certain *maṭhātipati*... There is at present no *maṭha* in the village... The mention of the god *Kachchi Nāyakadeva* in the temple at *Tirunaṇṇuṇḍai* suggests that the *maṭha* now at *Cittamur* was at that time in *Tirunaṇṇuṇḍai*. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 389)

* On base of veranda around the Chandranatha shrine in the Appandainatha temple.¹⁰⁵

Chōla—1178–1216 AD; Kulōttuṅga Chōla II. Verse in praise of *Vīrasaṅgha* of Jains and lord of *Tirunaṇṇuṇḍai*. It also mentions Kulōttuṅga and records gift of village *Nallūr* to the Jaina temple here. A certain *maṭhātipati* is also referred to in the last line of the verse. This place seems to have had a *maṭh* presided over by a *maṭhātipati* in medieval times. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 398)

[Note: The Tamil Jains remember that there was a shift of the *maṭham* from *Tiruparuttikunram* to *Cittamur*; none speaks of *maṭham* at *Tirunaṇṇuṇḍai* (it does not figure in their memory). They seem to have two memories of the persecution, and a history that immediately occurs to them. Even the temple priest at this place did not know of an existence of a *maṭham*, but told me of several villages that

¹⁰² Ekambaranathan's reading (1987, p.384).

¹⁰³ ARE 300—1939–1940.

¹⁰⁴ ARE 301—1939–1940.

¹⁰⁵ ARE 299 of 1939–1940.

existed around there. Did the Jaina *maṭham* shift thrice in that case: from Jinakanchi to Tirunarungondai around the twelfth century, to finally Cittamur in the sixteenth century? Tirunarungondai, in the Chōḷa period, was given rich endowments of land; and Kundavai's patronage was instrumental in this. In that case, perhaps, did the *maṭham* shift from Jinakanchipuram (Tiruparuttikunram) around the eleventh-twelfth century? But Mahadevan points out that this centre was among the important centres of Jainism even in early periods, between eighth and tenth century CE (Mahadevan 2003, p. 139). Perhaps, the *maṭham* here was different in structure from the present-day one at Cittamur? But why didn't the Jainas I had thus far met refer to Tirunarungondai as a place which once had had a Jaina *maṭham*?

There are several gifts of wet land (*naṇcai*) mentioned in the inscriptions that I am not referring to here.

3.44 Tindivanam, South Arcot

I met Jayachandiran, Charumathi and Jayarao Nayinar here. Jayachandiran gave me a copy of the *Idaiyālakkuṛavaṇci* which is the story of the love that develops in Cuntari for the *yakṣa* Brahmadevar.¹⁰⁶

We have an inscription here in '11th-12th century characters', 'on the pedestal of Ādinātha bronze image now kept in the Chennai Museum. Records that this image was caused to be made by the *Kiḷārs*¹⁰⁷ of Agaram...' (Ekambaranathan 1987, pp. 377–378).

The Jaina ācāryas, Mallisenā and Vamanācārya, are supposed to have visited this place. The temple priest mentioned to me that the *yakṣa* Brahmadevar of this place is considered very powerful. On Sundays and Thursdays, they decorate the *pādams* (footprints) with *candana kāppu* [sandal paste]. Some say this village was Vamanācārya's birthplace and that he also taught here.

3.45 Another Story

The priest told me this story:

A few goat-herders noticed a huge box with palm-leaf manuscripts (it was raining and goat-herders had taken shelter under a banyan tree when they saw this box). They saw the *siddhāntam* (*āgamam*) there; they told the Jainas of that miraculous sight. The local Jainas brought the *siddhāntam* here; but they flew [sic] to Mudbidri.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ An interesting folk genre has been used to construct this tale which is dated to the eighteenth century and was found in a palm leaf manuscript in possession of a Tamil Jaina person from Uppuvelur, which was then brought out in book form in 1988 by the author, Tirumozhi.

¹⁰⁷ 'A chief of the village or its leading landowner or an eminent person of the place is referred to as *kiḷār* in the inscription at Ammankoyilpatti (ca. fourth century A.D) (Mahadevan 2003, p. 125).

¹⁰⁸ Of this account, some Jainas say there is another aspect to the 'vanishing' of the *āgamas*; they say the *āgamas* were taken to Mudbidri by a former priest of a temple.

Possibly this kind of a story is meant to be in the reckoning, as it were, of being an important Jaina sacred place (since the *siddhāntam* was found here); hence the story. They use both the words *siddhāntam* and *āgamam*.

An advocate by profession, Jayachandiran informed me,

Siddhāntam inke pīrantatu [*siddhāntam* was born here]. Today, there are just five families here, and one priest. Earlier there were around 25 families. They migrated some 50 years ago. Idaiyalam is a central temple for the villages Talavattur, Kalagolattur and Alagramam. There are some palm-leaf manuscripts here. Not many can read the Grantha characters. There is a *kol* (measuring yard) on a rock in Kiledaiyalam measuring 3.7 or 3.8 meters; it is a 27-fingers *kol*. It was set up in the 16th year of Rājendra Cōḷaṇ, a 16 *tandu kol*. The temple here was earlier dedicated to Śītala tīrthankara; 100 years back, the Ādinātha statue was placed in this temple. The Brahmadeva *yakṣa* temple is called Sāttanār temple. Sāttanār is a popular deity. This place has Vamanācārya's *pādukas*, installed with inscriptions. All the Tamil Jaina families in Idaiyalam own land.

3.46 Inscriptional Records

* On a rock called Siddharparai near a tank in the village. Modern characters; Sanskrit, Grantha.¹⁰⁹

Two pairs of foot marks, a book stand, two *kamaṇḍalas* and two fly-whisks engraved on rock. And in a circular line round them is engraved in modern characters an *aṇushtub* verse, paying obeisance to Mallisenā muṇīśvara, otherwise called Vāmanācārya. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 357)

Round a pair of foot marks and a book stand is engraved the name Vimalajinadeva. (Ibid, 1987, pp. 358–359)¹¹⁰

3.47 Tirumalai, Polur Taluk, Tiruvannamalai District (North Arcot)

October 2003

In this place four great Jain saints had attained *mukti* in days of old. The footprints of these 4 saints are to be seen even to this day—Vṛṣabhasenācārya, Sāmantabhadrācārya, Varadattācārya muṇivar and Śrī Vadeepa Simhasuri...It is believed that about 8,000 Jain saints (of the) 12, 000 saints who accompanied Bhadrabahu from Patna did penance in this place and attained salvation. The image of Neminātha the 22nd tīrthankara (16 ft. and resembles Gommata of Śravaṇabelgoḷa, is built here). At the top of the hill a small temple dedicated to Pārśvanātha, the 23rd tīrthankara on a 4 ft high stone (is also seen here). (Sastri M.S.S. n.d., pp.120–122)¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ ARE 311 of 1938–1939.

¹¹⁰ ARE 312 of 1938–1939.

¹¹¹ *Jaina Gazette*, Vol. XXVIII. Nos. 323–325. Year of publication missing in the copy at the library of Prakrit Bhavan, Dhalavateertha, near Shravanabelgoḷa.

At present, no Tamil Jaina villages are found here. Swami Dhavalakirti, whom I met, took his *dīkṣā* [initiation] at Śravaṇabelgoḷa and came here to start a new kind of *gurukulaśrama*. This is a new kind of Jaina ‘space’; poor Tamil Jaina students, as well as a few from other communities in the vicinity, are given residential education. Reading the scriptures and observing the Jaina strictures are part of the training, which also includes, to a large extent, modern school education in the mainstream format. This seems to be a new ‘movement’, in a sense, to propagate Jaina philosophy and a new movement, perhaps, in identity construction, as well. Swami (or ācārya) Dhavalakirti (who knows Sanskrit, Prakrit, Kannada, English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and few other languages and is computer savvy) shared some of the following information:

All the important ācāryas of the past of the Digambara tradition hailed from the south, such as Kundakunda, Akaṣaṅka and Sāmantabhadra, although the tīrthankaras were from the north. From the retinue of 12,000 monks of Bhadrabāhu, 8000 stayed in Tamilnadu and 4000 in Karnataka. In Tamilnadu, there were more Jainas, since more monks came here (there are fewer in Karnataka). They stayed in Eṇṇāyiram (the 8000) malai. Their route was, from Mysore via Kerala, Madurai, Tiruchi, Tayanur, Cuddalore, Pondicherry, South and North Arcot. Many monks came *via* this route. There were a lot of ācāryas from what is the modern Andhra Pradesh.¹¹² Kundakunda was basically from Andhra, but did his *sādhana* in Tamilnadu around 1700 to 1800 years ago. He is also called the *Kalikāla tīrthankara*. Akaṣaṅka joined a Buddhist college, initially. He is also called Niṣkaṣaṅka. The *guru* found out that he was a Jaina, since he called out the name of the *arahat*; he was forced to flee. An army was sent to look for him. A *dhobi* [washerman] gave them information (about his whereabouts) and he was killed. There was a debate (between Akaṣaṅka and the Buddhists). Those who lost had to leave the place. Hence, very few Buddhists are left here, compared to Jainas. Today, the number of Jainas is also declining. Now you have namesake Jainas... There is no protection for Jaina centres—temples, rock cut caves etc... The government authorities are not giving us Minority status, either.¹¹³ We are running this centre with voluntary donations... The Digambaras in Tamilnadu are mostly Bispanthis. For Bispanthis, rituals are important; there is use of milk, curd, flowers, etc.; Terapanthis do not use milk and fruits; they use only water. For Kanchpanthis, the time (of the ritual acts) is very important. Tirumalai has been an ancient Jaina centre; *pañcapāṇḍavas* came here to seek the blessings of Neminātha. The idol was made around 2000 years ago. The Śrāvakas have maintained the place since; many ācāryas have come here and stayed (during the *cāturmāsya*). Akaṣaṅka came here; they say he ran an educational institution here, which is why we have also started this *gurukula* in his name: Ācārya Akaṣaṅka Vidyapeetha Gurukula. Even the monks accompanying Ācārya Bhadrabāhu came here and stayed, which is why this place has its fame and name. However, there has been no history of *bhaṭṭārakas* who stayed here. It was only recently that the *bhaṭṭāraka* of Śravaṇabelgoḷa, Charukirti Svamiji came here; that was around 10 years ago. And he felt it was necessary for someone to be stationed here, to guide the people of Tamil Nadu. He chose me. I was then studying at Banaras. He did my *pattābhiṣekam* [ordaining into the order] in 1998, February... We started a Vidyapeetha with 9 children in a small rented place. Today, we are making efforts to document and restore Jaina temples and sacred places in and around here. Gradually, with help of śrāvakas, we bought 20 acres of land here and have built this *dharmaśala* and hostel. The number of students has risen to 140 now. Children are educated

¹¹²In 2003, it was Andhra Pradesh. By 2013, there are two new states, AP and Telangana. Incidentally, Jainism’s spread was more in the Telangana region (now state), while Buddhism had many centres in the Andhra (coastal, delta) region in the early centuries BC and CE. Kolanupaka was one significant Jaina centre in Telangana, among others.

¹¹³This was in the year 2003. The Jainas have since been given the status of Minority in India.

here; beyond that, the aim is to protect and preserve our Jaina *dharma* in our country. The *gurukula* method of training is essential. We are involved in many other activities, like conducting eye camps in villages around here, not just for Jaina people but others too... We help children from poor families. The *bhaṭṭāraka parampara* [tradition/order] in Tirumalai has started with me; prior to this, there was only the history of visiting *sādhus/ācāryas*/monks... We have started the Ācārya Akalaṅka Educational Trust... Jainas are in minority; so, it is necessary to preserve our faith... We have done some renovations here at Tirumalai—24 steps were made; 24 lakh rupees were spent on that... We have begun gathering data about old temples¹¹⁴: Tamil Jaina population, history, professional status, family status (economic well-being), and so on. About temples, again, we are systematically gathering data as to the antiquity of the temples; whether a particular temple is protected or needs protection; number of inscriptions found there; where it was found, and so on. We intend to publish a directory of (information on) the people, and the temples. There are about 170 Jaina villages in Tamilnadu and 200 temples. And [there are] around, or more than, 25 rock-cut caves. We intend to teach our students here to read the palm-leaf manuscripts, too....¹¹⁵

About inclusion of the worship of *navagrahas* (planetary deities), he said,

As per (Jaina) *siddhānta*, the *grahas* concept was always there. There are eight *karmas* and eight *grahas*... *Tiloyapaṇṇati* talks of *vāstu*. Worship of *tīrthankaras* is part of the religion. Each *tīrthankara* is associated with a *graha*.¹¹⁶ Each *tīrthankara* is also associated with a colour. Hence, inclusion of *navagraha pūjā* is within the Jaina dharma.

This new ‘movement’, if it were to be perceived that way, is seeking to renew the affirmation of the Jaina identity (in this case, not necessarily the Tamil Jaina, but a universal Jaina identity). It seems to build upon the long heritage of the place Tirumalai with Jainism in Tamil Nadu.¹¹⁷ And that continuity has a ‘historical’ legitimacy, in this case, with long history of patronage visible in numerous inscriptions found here, of which I only mention a few representative of the nature of grants, people donating, kinds of donations, etc. This is not an exhaustive list.

¹¹⁴ He showed me the format used to collect this information, which was fairly systematic.

¹¹⁵ Personal communication.

¹¹⁶ He listed these: Padmaprabhā, Sūrya; Chandranātha, Candra; Vāsupūjya, Maṅgala; Mallinātha, Budha; Mahāvīra, Guru; Puṣpadanta, Śukra; Munisuvrata, Śaṇi; Neminātha, Rāhu; Pārśvanātha, Kētu.

¹¹⁷ In 2015, I could see that Acarya Dhavalakirti had managed to persist with the idea of Jaina identity; in Vembakkam, he had brought along young students from his school in Tirumalai to give various performances, including Bharatanatyam, and other dance forms. Apparently, he has a troupe now which attends most of the annual rituals held in Jaina villages in Tamilnadu. There are also a bunch of drummers who go to each of these celebrations (wherever they are invited). There seemed to be a parallel *bhaṭṭāraka* tradition in place in Tamilnadu, with two of them attending most of the temple festivals. Whether there is a conflict of power cannot be said, unless one studies this development carefully. Some Tamil Jainas, in casual conversation, told me they were not too pleased with the inclusion of Hindi film songs and dances and the drummers coming as a ‘package’ to events such as *pañcakalyāṇam*, which they think should be a more minimalist affair. Among the Tamil Jainas, as in 2003, even today, there is difference of opinion regarding excess of ritualism and fanfare and preserving historical roots and engagement with the ‘true’ idea of Jainism through preserving of texts, etc. There is yet another stream which now believes in moving with the times and helping the next generation go beyond the identity question. Since there is the association with Karnataka, the Tirumalai *svāmi*, as he is called, also seems to be influenced by the religious-political milieu specific to that state.



Fig. 3.19 Rock-cut painted cave at Tirumalai



Fig. 3.20 Some of the students at the Tirumalai *gurukulam* (2003); the residential school is co-educational

3.48 Inscriptional Records

* On a buried rock in front of the Gopura at the base of the Tirumalai Hill.¹¹⁸

The inscription...dated in the 21st year of Ko-Rāja-Rājakesarivarman, *alias*, Rājarāja-deva...The inscription records that a certain Guṇavīramāmunivaṇ, built a sluice, which he called after a Jain teacher, whose name was Gaṇiśekhara-Maru-Poṇchūriyaṇ. The Tirumalai rock is mentioned under the name Vaigai-malai, 'the mountain of Vaigai'...The name Vaigai seems to be connected with Vaigāvūr, the village at the base of the rock, which occurs in No. 67 and 68. (*SII*, Vol. I. p. 94)

Guṇavīramāmunivaṇ, whose feet are worshipped by kings of destructive armies, the lord of the cool Vaigai ...having given a sluice, which is worthy of being preserved in a good state and which is called by the name of Gaṇiśekhara-Maru-Poṇchūriyaṇ, the pure master, who is skilled in the elegant arts and very clever—saw the paddy grow for a long time on both sides of the high mountain of Vaigai. (*Ibid*, p. 95)

* On a piece of rock on the top of the Tirumalai hill.¹¹⁹

Rājendra Chōla I, 12th regnal year. '1024 A.D.'¹²⁰. Tamil Grantha.

The inscription opens with long list of countries which the king conquered. It records the gift of 10 *kācu* for lighting a perpetual lamp (*nantā viḷakku*) and offerings to the Kuntavai Jinālaya in Mukaināṭṭupaḷḷiccantam of Vaikāvūrtirumalai of Paṇkaḷanāṭu, a sub-division of Jayañkoṇṭa Chōlamanṭalam by Cāmunṭappai, the wife of Naṇṭappayaṇ, [a] merchant of Malliyūr on the borders of Perumpānappāṭi.

[Note: The metaphors referred to in this inscription are not Jaina. For example, the Chōla king's conquests are described thus - 'crown of pure gold, worthy of Lakṣmī, which Paraśurāma, who out of anger, bound the kings 21 times in battle..., had deposited (there)...'. The inscriptions also show donations coming from Karnataka region. Interestingly, the initiation of a new pontiff at Tirumalai, in today's times, by the Karnataka pontiff, seems to reflect a kind of historically linear account, in terms of the connections between Karnataka and Tamilnadu, though of course, the regional and political boundaries (and cultural connections) of the past are no longer the same.]

* On a rock buried underneath the steps between the gopura and the painted cave.

This is dated in the 12th year of Ko-Parakesarivarman¹²¹, *alias*, Uḍaiyār Rājendra-Chōla-Deva. It records the gift of a lamp to the god of the Tirumalai temple, who seems to have been called Ārambhanandin, and allots money for the maintenance of this lamp and of another lamp, which had been given by 'Śiṇṇavai, queen of the Pallava king'. (Ekambaranathan 1987, pp. 265)

¹¹⁸ *SII*, Vol. I, No. 66, p. 94.

¹¹⁹ *ARE* 80 of 1887; *SII*, Vol I, No. 67; *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. IX, No. 31.

¹²⁰ Ekambaranathan 1987, pp. 229–233.

¹²¹ 1024 CE (Ekambaranathan 1987, pp. 264–265).

‘Like Kundavai, the queen of the Pallava king Vandyadeva, this was probably a Cōla princess, who was married to a Pallava king.’¹²²

In Tamil it reads thus *ciṇṇavaiyār...vaitta nantāvilakkoṇṇukku koṭutta kācu arupatu*.¹²³ The gift is to the value of 60 *kācu* for the burning of the perpetual lamp. Moreover, one Iḷaiyamaṇinaṅkai had previously given a donation towards lighting a perpetual lamp for the lord at Tirumalai hill; taking over from this grant [in a newly issued grant], *Ciṇṇavai* gave 60 *kācu* from the proceeds of the produce of the land for it.

* On the wall of a maṇḍapa at the base of the Tirumalai rock, to the left of the entrance. 1349 AD, 12th regnal year of Rājanārāyaṇa Sambhuvārāja.¹²⁴

Records that Naḷḷattāl, the daughter of Maṇṇai Poṇṇāṇṭai, a resident of Poṇṇūr, set up the image of Vihāranāyaṇār Poṇṇeyilnāthar, at Vaikaittirumalai.

* On the wall of the maṇḍapa at the base of the Tirumalai rock to the right of the entrance.¹²⁵

A well¹²⁶ is given as *taṇmam* [pious duty] to Cīṇṇinaṅkai, by Iṭaiyāraṇ Appaṇ Periya Piḷḷai of Aruḷmoḷitevarpuram.¹²⁷

* On the south wall of the maṇḍapa at base of the Tirumalai rock.¹²⁸
1374 CE

On the *nakṣatra uttiraṭṭāti* which corresponds to Monday (*tīṅkaḷ*) the eighth lunar day of the former half of the month... in the *Ānanda* year, which was current after the expiration of the Śaka year 1296 (*SII*, Vol. I. p. 102), during the reign of the illustrious *mahāmaṇḍalika*, the conqueror of hostile kings, the destroyer of those kings who break their word, the lord of the eastern southern, western and northern oceans, the illustrious Ommaṇa Uṭaiyār, the son of Kampana Uṭaiyār, the illustrious Vīrakampana Uṭaiyār,¹²⁹ whereas the great people of *Cempukulaḷperumāl akaram*, alias *Rājakempīra caturvētīmaṅgalam* (in) *Murukamaṅkalapaṇṇu*, in *Ceyāṅkoṇṭacōḷamaṇḍalam* gave to the illustrious Viṣṇukampulī

¹²² Hultzsch's translation. *SII*, Vol. I, No. 68, p. 100.

¹²³ Ibid, p.101.

¹²⁴ ARE 85 1887, *SII*, Vol. I, No.70.

¹²⁵ *SII*, Vol I, No 71.

¹²⁶ Tamil *turavu*: a well for irrigation.

¹²⁷ Hultzsch's reading is '...pious gift of the brothers of the eldest son of Iḍaiyāraṇ Appaṇ (*an inhabitant*) of Aruḷmoṇi-devarpuram'. The Tamil inscription reads thus: '*cīṇṇinaṅkaikku iṭṭa turavu aruḷmoḷitevarpurattu iṭaiyāraṇ appaṇ periya piḷḷai uḷḷiṭṭār taṇmam*'. *Periya Piḷḷai* could be a name of a person. Perhaps literally it is taken to mean 'eldest son'. *Iṭaiyār*, though, would refer to the pastoral community. But here, the term is *iṭaiyār*.

¹²⁸ *SII*, Vol I, No 72.

¹²⁹ Translated in *SII*, Vol. I, p. 102 as 'Ommanā Uṭaiyār, son of Kampana Uṭaiyār, and grandson of Vīra-Kampana-Uṭaiyār.' In Tamil, it reads as '*śrīvīrakampanauṭaiyār kumāraśrīkampanauṭaiyār kumārār śrīommaṇa uṭaiyārku...*' S. Palaniappan (in his review of my earlier draft) says it is a misreading by Hultzsch. Kumāra Kampana was not the son of Vīra Kampana. He says both Vīrakampana and Kumārakampana are referring to the same person. It is intriguing, though, that the term *kumār* and *kumārār* come twice in the sentence. I translated it as above.

nāyaka...of *Alacu nāṭu*, within *Tuḷunāṭu* a document (*pramāṇam*) about the cost (of) land... We the great people (hereby declare that) having thus agreed, gave a document about the cost of land to the illustrious Viṣṇukampulī Nāyaka. At the pleasure of these great people. I, Aṅkārai Śrīdhara Bhaṭṭa of *Cempukulaperumāl akaram*, wrote this document about the cost of land, this is (my) signature.¹³⁰

The inscription mentions the boundaries—south and east of the field; sluice, for the field; tax exemption for these lands; 10 *poṇ*¹³¹ in three instalments. It mentions signatures of *Kumāṇṭūr* Aruḷālapperumāl, *Cempukulaperumāl akaram* and Kantāṭai Periyāṇṭāṇ Bhaṭṭar, which is not mentioned by Hultzsch in the translation.¹³²

* In a small shrine below the painted cave at Tirumalai, first inscription¹³³.

‘*Svasti śrī Kaṭaikottūrttirumalaipparavātimallar māṇākkar... ceyvitta yakṣi tirumēṇi.*’ The inscription records that Ariṣṭanemi ācārya of Kaṭaikottūr, student of Paravātimalla at Tirumalai, caused the yakṣi image to be made.

* On a rock to left of the painted cave.

Rashtrakuta. Śrī Kannaradeva, ‘who took Kanchi and Tanjai’ (19th year, 958 AD). Gift of lamp to the *yakṣa* on the Tirumalai hill at Vaigāvūr by a servant of Gangamādevi, queen of Kannaradeva—Pridigaṅgaraiyar.¹³⁴

* Chōḷa (Para)Kesarivarman—fourth regnal year (11th century?). Gift of (4 *kalañcu* of) gold for feeding one devotee [*aṭikaḷ*] daily in the *paḷḷi* on the Tirumalai at Vaikāvūr in Paṅkalanāḍu, a sub-division of Paḷakunṛakōṭṭam, by two persons, ēraṇ puttukaṇ, a *ṭēvakaṇṇi* of the village of Kaṭuttalai in Iruṁaiṭṭōḷar Kannāṭaka (country) and Madurāntaka Kaṇampular, *alias* Somanāyakaṇ Sanṭaiyaṇ Āyiravaṇ of Kaṭuttalai, provided to give food regularly to one devotee [*aṭikaḷ*] in Paṅkalanāḍu (which was a district) of Paḷakunṛakōṭṭam ‘so long as the sun and moon endure’.¹³⁵

Instead of ‘devotee’ (as mentioned in *SII*, mentioned above), *aṭikaḷ* could be read as a ‘monk’.

* On a rock to the left of the painted cave.

11th century AD. Chōḷa Parakesarivarman. Records gift of gold for daily offerings to *paḷḷiālvār* (tīrthankara) and for feeding one ascetic (*aṭikaḷ*) in the *paḷḷi* on the Tirumalai hill at Vaigāvūr in Paṅkalanāḍu a sub-division of Vīrachevakaṇ Piḍāraṇ Būttugaṇ and

¹³⁰ *SII*, Vol. I, No. 72, p. 102. Emphasis added.

¹³¹ Land value—40 *poṇ*—consisted of 32 *kaṇis* = 4000 *kuris* of wetland (*nilam*) or 2000 *kuris* of dryland (*kollai*) and of some houses (*manai*).

¹³² *SII*, Vol. I, p. 104.

¹³³ *SII*, Vol. I, No. 73, p. 104.

¹³⁴ *SII*, XXIII, No. 65; *ARE* 65 of 1907–1908.

¹³⁵ *SII*, Vol III, No. 97; *ARE* 66 of 1907–1908.

Viracamanāyakaṇ Chandayan Āyiravaṇ belonging to Iruṁṁṁṁṁṁṁ Karuṇāḍaga Kaḍuttalai and Madhurāntaka Karuṇāḍaga Kaḍuttalai, two regiments of the king. ...The two personal names Būttugan and Chandaya... suggest that the donors hailed from Karnataka.... The temple was of widely acknowledged sanctity. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 268)

* 1445 CE. Vijayanagara (Virapratapa) Devaraya II.¹³⁶

The record seems to register some gift to provide for removal of silt in certain tanks. ...The cyclic year of krōdhana in this record corresponds to Śaka 1367 (1445 AD); records decision by Tipparaisa Nāyakkar, agent of [the] king, the *tanattār* and the Maheśvaras¹³⁷ and also residents of Paḍaivīdu, setting apart the money received as income from the fishing lease in the tank (*ērīppasi*)¹³⁸ from four specified tanks in the *tirunāmattukāṇi* of Tirumalai, for removing silt and deepening those tanks every year, and the amount of *vāśalkuḷippanam* (?)¹³⁹ from the *paḷliccantam* to deepen another tank. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p.276)¹⁴⁰

* 877–907 A.D. Rājamallā II. Western Ganga. On a rock containing Jaina images.¹⁴¹
Kannada Grantha.

Records the foundation of the Jaina shrine in which the inscription is engraved by the king Rājamallā, the son of Raṇavikrama, grandson of Śrī Puruṣa, and great grandson of Śivamāra. ...The inscription gives a list of names of the Western Ganga kings of Tālakāḍ, whose influence was felt on the border areas of Tamilnadu in early medieval times. The Jaina shrine founded by Rājamallā is the two groups of sculptures representing Tīrthankaras, Yakṣas, Yakṣis, carved on the face of the rock, which could have been provided with some sort of shelter so as to form a front maṇḍapa in those days. (Ekambaranathan 1987, pp. 280–281)

3.49 Mottur (North Arcot): October 2003

Here I met (and learnt a lot from) the *tātā*, ‘Cintāmaṇi Nāvalar’ Nemi Santhakumar Jain, perhaps the [then] only living orator of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. He was among those who were inspired by T. S. Sripal to read Tamil Jaina texts and recite them. He became a professional orator (performer) of the text and recited it across Tamil Nadu. He had earned several *birudus* (titles), ‘Cintāmaṇi Nāvalar’ being just one of those. James Ryan had recorded his recitation of the text, I was informed. At Mottur, there were 12 Tamil Jaina households not very long ago; only two remain. I shall revert to Santhakumar in the next chapter.

¹³⁶ *SII*, XXIII, No. 69, ARE 69 of 1907.

¹³⁷ *Tanattār; Māheśvara*.

¹³⁸ *ērīppaci*.

¹³⁹ *vāśalkuḷippanam?*

¹⁴⁰ Italics as in the original.

¹⁴¹ Also *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. IV, no.15 A, pp. 140–41; ARE 91 of 1889.

3.50 Pundi, Arani Taluk, North Arcot: 2003

The temple at Pundi [as the modern place name reads and sometimes written as Poondi], near Arani, is a beautiful one but in a bad state. There are two Tamil Jaina families here now, and many Śaiva veḷḷāḷars are settled here and in the vicinity of the village and town. The temple is in the midst of green fields; a few acres belong to the temple (given as grant in the past). The Tamil Jainas in Arani taluk (apart from Poondi) seemed mostly from the educated middle class and showed a strong sense of community. Vrishabha Das, Sambandam Chettiar, Rajendiran, Chudamanicudai, Chintamaniammal and Samanasamaya Sevamani were among those I met. Another person I met, who is popular as Vijaya ‘teacher’, told me that the Tamil Jaina text, *Nīlakeci*, was penned here and that the famous ācārya Accananti came here. This very beautifully quiet and old temple, in the midst of green fields, with the very beautiful sculpted image of the *yakṣi* Dharumadevi, is maintained by the Jainas of Arani, Putukamanallur, Rathinamangalam and Akkarapalayam. They do the *nitya* (daily) *pūjai*, *mukkuṭai pūjai* and *tai* (5th day) *vihāra mahōrcavam*. The *dharmakartā* (caretaker) is one Jaykumar Jain, who is a rice mill owner.

3.51 A Story of Origins

The Pundi temple has an interesting legend associated with it, which goes as follows:

Toṇṭaivalanāṭu was a forested area. Two hunters, who were brothers, lived there, by name, Irumpan and Pūṇḍan. One day, they saw a creeper (*vaḷḷi*) growing around an ant hill (?); they struck it with an arrow. Milk began to ooze from there. They saw an image (of Ādinātha) there which they started to propitiate with flowers, etc. They prayed to the image everyday. One day in the forest, they came across a Jaina monk, and finding the image they used to worship similar to him in appearance, they asked him who he was. They showed him the image of the tīrthankara. With his clairvoyance (*nāna dṛṣṭi*), the monk told them that in the past when the Jaina temples were destroyed, the image was also thrown out and lay under the ant-hill for long. When the hunters’ arrow struck the chest of the image, milk spouted from it. The Jaina monk said that he would sit on a fast there until a temple was built for the image to be placed within. Around this time, a ruler in *Paṭavēṭu* [sic], Nandirājā—whose daughter had been possessed by a spirit (*pēy*)—had issued a command that whosoever released her from the *pēy* would be gifted with half his kingdom and his daughter in marriage. The Jaina mendicant ordered the hunters to go to the king and do the needful: the moment they would set eyes on the princess, she would be freed from the *pēy* and she would come rushing to the mendicant. The hunters did as they were instructed and the *pēy* indeed went to the mendicant and asked him to advise her as to what she should do. He ordered her to keep a vigil over the place. The princess, thus freed from the *pēy*, sought the blessings of the mendicant and offered *aṣṭavidhāna* (eight kinds of) *pūjai* to him. The king, too, went and asked the mendicant to accept half his kingdom and his daughter in

marriage. Refusing both, the mendicant instead asked for a temple to be built at the place for the Jina image found there. When asked as to where the material to build the temple would come from, the mendicant said the material originally meant to be used for a Saraswati temple should be used on this. The princess was given *dīkṣā* as a nun. The temple was constructed in seven days. Apart from the tīrthankara, images of Brahmādēvar *yakṣa* and Kūṣmāṇḍini *yakṣi* were installed in separate shrines for each, while the tīrthankara (Pārśvanātha) was installed in a central shrine within the temple complex. The king also built a 16-pillar *maṇṭapam*, a *maṭapaḷli*, a 1000-pillared *maṇṭapam*, *catram*, *muṇivāsam*, 7 tanks, *gōpurams*, tanks etc... The boundaries of the temple were: to the east, Kaṇikīluppu; to the south, Paiyyūr, Āraṇi; to the west, Chevūr, Mayana Kuṇḍukaḷ, Rattinamañil; to the north, Aṭaṇūr, Aḍaiyapulam.¹⁴²

The two hunters, Irumpaṇ and Pūṇḍaṇ, were granted the following boons: that they would remain immortal, and live on in people's memory, with two villages named after them, Pūṇḍi and Iṇumbēḍu (still existing). The two villages would forever have a rich harvest of sugarcane, *karuṇai* (a type of yam), turmeric...as long as the sun and moon endure....¹⁴³

Fig. 3.21 The Pundi Jinalayam



¹⁴²J. Das Jain (compiled) *Pūṇḍi Śrī Poṇṇeyilnāthar Jinālaya Varalāru, Ātmapāvanaiyūm Tūya Naṛcintanaiyūm* (Tamil), Sri Jinabavan Publications, Chennai (based on legends, manuscripts and texts), not dated, pp.14–17. The title means it is a book not just on the history of the temple but it is also a compilation for good thoughts and self-introspection/meditation.

¹⁴³Ibid, p.17.



Fig. 3.22 Subsidiary shrines at Pundi outer compound. The shrine on the rightmost corner is where the booklet donated by the descendant of A. Chakravarti (with some history of the text, *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* and the U.Ve.Ca connection) ‘fell’ into my hands, literally (the book *Ālayam Toḷuvatu Cālavum Nanru* was donated as *śāstra dānam* by J. Samudra Vijayan and Raja Lakshmi Ammal of Vidur)



Fig. 3.23 Inside a rice mill owned by a Tamil Jaina of Arani

3.52 Inscriptional Records

Two inscriptions were found here.

* On the west wall of the Jaina temple of Poṇṇinātha at Pundi, same taluk. Chōla feudatory Sambuvarāya.¹⁴⁴

The valorous king (or chieftain) of a large force, Cempuvarāya, one truly delighted in the religion [of the Jina], asked the ascetic/monk as to what must be done, to which the ascetic/monk sought that the land of Jayañkoṇṭachōlamanṭalam in Palkuṇṭakōṭṭam in Mēyūrṇāṭu, Pūṇṭi *tirunakar* (town), be utilised. The king of kings (*maṇṇarmaṇṇan*), in order that the Jina's/arhat's way (*nallaram*, *aṇa-neri*) prosper and be propagated, as per the wish of the monk, gave the temple of the *Jinavarāṇ* and gave it his name, Vīravīrajinālaya, where a spirit of festivities may thrive and monks may come/stay. For this purpose, he granted the temple land whose boundary stones, inscribed with the mark of the peacock feather and water vessel would be set up, were as follows: to the west [of Pundi, where the temple exists] the borders of Nerunaṇpākkam; northwest, the river waters of Porunaṇkuṇṇu, north of which is the Kulāmalī-kuṇṭikai; to the north-east of which lies the border of Ātittamaṇkalam; south-east is Irumpuṇṇa-poykai (lake) at the border of Mēyūr [and so on]. Besides, there are tax exemptions of various kinds (taxes such as *antarāyam*) and taxes on paddy; the donees are allowed to build on these lands and asked to cultivate various kinds of crops, fruits, trees and flowers—paddy, kinds of jasmine, sugarcane, areca, red/blue lily (*kaḷunīr*), etc., the yield to be used for the temple. There is also a place for pilgrims (or ascetics) to stay. All this is towards the propagation and growth of the doctrine, penance and *dharumam* (dharma). The king ordered that the grant may be inscribed on stone and copper so that his name and fame may endure so long as the sun and moon endure.¹⁴⁵

* Thirteenth-fourteenth-century characters, Vīravīra Sambhuvarāya.

Records building of a Jaina temple called Vīravīrajinālaya, named after the chieftain, and the gift of a village to it. The lands belonging to the temple were marked Kundihaikal Pundi is stated to be a village in Meyyurnadu in Palkuṇṭakkōṭṭam...Kuṇḍihaikal means boundary stones marked with a Kamandala (water pot). (Ekambaranathan 1987, p.248; Emphasis mine)

¹⁴⁴ *SII*, Vol VII, No. 62; *ARE* 58 of 1900.

¹⁴⁵ I thank Dr. Kanaka Ajith Das (Chennai) and Mr. Selvamani (www.tamiljain.org) for helping me with this particular inscription. I am also grateful to S. Palaniappan who asked me to revisit the inscription which I had earlier misunderstood.

3.53 Tachur and Odalavadi (2003)

These villages are close to each other. Padmendiran, Tamil Maran, Kanchanamala, Nirmal Kumar, N. Raja Kumari, Ramesh Kumar, Sanjeeva Kumar, Anuradha and Padmaprabha were among those who spoke to me.

3.54 Odalavadi (Near Tachur)

There were 40–45 households, 90 per cent of them being agriculturists. Here *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* has been recited by one family for more than three generations, which I found interesting.

Odalavadi in Polur taluk owns a shrine dedicated to the Arhat. The central image herein, made of granite, and is depicted as seated in the meditative pose with the palms joined over the lap. An inscription in the shrine referring itself to the reign of the Pāṇḍya king Kulaśēkhara I (circa 13th century AD) registers an endowment of land to the deity by a private person. In this record the deity is referred to by the epithet ‘Aniyād-aḷakiyar’¹⁴⁶ which means ‘He who is beautiful without adornment.’ Now Bāhubali, the younger son of the first tīrthankara is considered as endowed with natural beauty par excellence and the image of Gommaṭeśvara at Śravaṇabelgoḷa, which represents the former, is described as supremely beautiful. From this we are persuaded to think that the presiding deity in the temple at Odalavadi is in all probability Bāhubali or Gommaṭanātha. (P. B. Desai 1957, p. 95)

3.55 Arpakkam (2003)

The Jaina temple here is a new one. I could not find inscriptions associated with this place. Jayakumar (*arcaka*) and T. Rajagopalan (a self-taught, independent scholar, who used to run a library of his own collections of books on Buddhism and Jainism) were the people I met here. This village had no Tamil Jinas. The *arcaka* was living there, in order to conduct worship in a modern temple built by the Tamil Jinas, right opposite the library mentioned above. Rajagopalan’s library was named, interestingly, S. S. Arunagirinathar library. He guided me to Magaral (the ‘Vīracōḷiyam’ of Buddhist texts, as he informed me). Rajagopalan told me that Arpakkam and Magaral were once Buddhist and Jaina settlements. This has been mentioned by many scholars, too. One noticed a mutilated Mahāvīra statue outside the present-day Śaiva temple and also a Buddha statue. Rajagopalan said Ādikesavaperumāl temple was a Buddhist temple which was converted into a Vaiṣṇava temple. He

¹⁴⁶ I have paraphrased Desai verbatim here (diacritics used in the original); the word *aṇi* in Tamil means ornament, beauty, to decorate, to be attached to (*aṇi poruntu*), etc.

informed me that at Palur (*en route* Chengalpattu from Walajapet), a Mahāvīra statue, was found in a lake. At Magaral, there is a locally reputed Vīṭṭurinda Perumāl temple and a Perumālkoil at Arpakkam, with Venkatāchalapati's idol in the *sanctum sanctorum*. This must be one of the Jaina tīrthankaras, at some point, according to Rajagopalan.¹⁴⁷

One part of this temple, I could see, had a dilapidated room, with broken pillars and images, which might have well proven his point. Nānasampantar is believed to have sung the *Tēvāram* hymns at Magaral at the Tirumagaral (*Īśvarar*) koil. Was it one of the converted Jaina temples? One cannot draw a definitive conclusion without deeper probe.

Fig. 3.24 Rajagopalan outside his library, *Boudha Samaṇa Āyvu Nūlakam* (year 2003) at Arpakkam



¹⁴⁷ Interestingly, Rajagopalan belongs to the Śaiva veļļāla community. When he took me to his relative's house, one could see, at the threshold of this old typical tiled-roof home, patterns and motifs that seemed similar to the entrances of the Tamil Jaina homes. But then I thought I was simply looking for similarities, having heard so many of the *nīr pūci nayaṇār* stories. Rajagopalan believes those conversions happened. But someday, it would be interesting to record the other side of the same story, from the point of view of the Śaiva veļļālas, perhaps.



Figs. 3.25–3.28 Mutilated Jaina and Buddhist images at Arpakkam and Magaral, outside Śaivite and Vaiṣṇava temples, supposedly converted [Credit for showing me these goes to T. Rajagopalan]

3.56 Tiruppanamur¹⁴⁸/Tirupparambur, Cheyyar Taluk (Earlier Tirupparambur-Karandai Part of the Same Village)¹⁴⁹: 2003

Aruhakirti, Kasturi, S. Bahubali and P. Adivasan were among the people I spoke with. This was, strangely, a village full of the elderly; they were mostly retired teachers, and the village had barely 15 households, with only 30 people. Some years back, I was told there were 60 families here and around 200 people. Sudharmasagar of this village took *vaṭakkiruttal* (as *sallēkhana* is referred to here, as in the old Tamil texts) near Nasik. P. Adivasan's grandfather, Dharmasagar, also took *vaṭakkiruttal* and it was the same with Gajapathi Sagar from this village. People here felt that it was the good fortune of this village to have seen three such great men in this modern context. In Tamil Nadu, nobody had taken *vaṭakkiruttal* for years now (especially a householder). They also told me that during the Kālappirar (Kalabhra) times, many Jaina monks came to the villages in these parts. There is a *maṇḍapa* dedicated to their memory in Karandai, the twin village here.

Ekambaranathan writes,

[In the *maṇḍapam*] there are carved the footprints of three monks. These are—Dharmasagar of Tirupparambur, Sudharmasagar and Gajapati Sagar [with details of their respective dates of initiation into monkhood, fast and date of *nirvāṇa*]. Born in 1870,¹⁵⁰ Dharmasagar followed diligently the *camāṇa* (Jaina) tenets and later became a monk, and finally gained release at Sravanabelgola in 1940 [after *sallēkhana*]. Sudharmasagar, this great man's son, was born in 1902. He, too, following in his father's footsteps, respected the *aruṇaṇ aruṇeri* (religion of the Jina). He was well-versed in Sanskrit and Tamil and was steeped in the knowledge of Jaina scriptures. He became a monk and in 1973, gained release in Gajabandha in Maharashtra...In the same Tirupparambur was born Gajapati Sagar, with deep knowledge of Jaina scriptures and popularly hailed as *tattuva kaṭal* [ocean of truth/true learning]. He became a monk and on 3-11-88, attained *sallēkhana maraṇam*. There are footprints inscribed, dedicated to his memory, too. (Ekambaranathan 1991, pp. 35–36)

There is a fifteenth century Puṣpadanta tīrthankara temple at Tirupparambur. The footprints of these three residents of Tirupparambur are installed here.

3.57 Story of Akaḷaṇka and the Buddhist Debate

The community at Tirupparambur believes Ācārya Akaḷaṇka was a local from these. The idea of a sect/community leaving the place after losing a debate seems important to the Tamil Jinas. One saw this in Cittamur where the brāhmins left the place after losing out in a debate to the Jinas.

The Buddhists used to live not far from here. Akaḷaṇka had a debate with the Buddhists. The debate went on for 10 days and he kept losing. In despair, he hit his

¹⁴⁸ In everyday usage, it is referred to as Tiruppanamur.

¹⁴⁹ Jeevabandhu T. S. Sripal, whom the Tamil Jinas greatly admire and respect, hailed from this village. I dwell on him in the next chapter.

¹⁵⁰ The term used here is *avatarritta*.

head against a stone, and *yakṣi* Dharumadevi appeared and told him: ‘tomorrow, ask the person who puts the first question to you, to repeat the same. There is a goddess, seated in an urn/pot (*kalaśam*), who is helping them.’ He followed her instructions and won the debate. The Buddhists, who lost, decided to leave the place. There is a very old Śiva temple here in this village, which had a Buddha image once, which is now in the museum. People (from different communities) used to co-exist here in this village.¹⁵¹

Mackenzie manuscripts (No. 14, Sec.3) mention the goddess of Karandai’s help given to Akaḷaṅka in defeating in debate the Buddhist teacher Himaśītala at Kancipuram (Ekambaranathan 1991, p. 32, note. 6).

There is a song to Dharumadevi of Karandai temple which refers to the deity as the one of green colour (*paccāi nīṛattavaḷē*), who helped Akaḷaṅka defeat the Buddhists of bad thoughts/deeds (*tīviṇai puttār*):

*aramē viḷanka vakaḷaṅka māmuṇi yaṇṇipinṇu
tirumāru koṇṭavat tīviṇai puttār ceyittavaḷē
nīṛamāṇa paccāi nīṛattava ḷēniti pōlutavun
paṛavōr pukaḷ paṛampāpuri mēviya cuntariyē*¹⁵²

[Standing (in support) behind Akaḷaṅka, the monk, defeating the Buddhist of bad deeds, one of the beautiful green colour, your fame is widespread, oh you beautiful one who resides in Parampāpuri.]

A platform with footprints commemorating Akaḷaṅka was built here a hundred and 50 years ago, and people offer worship here during special occasions.

Joseph narrates the story of Akaḷaṅka, which is very popular among all the Tamil Jains (who might miss a few minor aspects of the story, sometimes, but are all familiar with it):

Nēmidattā in his Ārāḍhanakathākōśa relates this story—Puruśōttama, minister of king Subhadatta of Maṇyakhēṭa had two sons, Akaḷaṅka and Nishkalaṅka. When they grew of age, their parents wanted to see them married, but they desired to obtain knowledge. They were sent to a nearby Buddhist monastery and were initiated into studies. When the teacher one day taught them a Jaina text he found the version spurious but failed to correct it. Akaḷaṅka found the correct version and helped him. The teacher suspected the brothers to be Jains and found added proofs. They were turned out and the king sent (his) soldiers to apprehend the culprits and punish them. Akaḷaṅka hid himself among lotus stalks but Nishkalaṅka was caught and beheaded. Akaḷaṅka reached Kalinga. Himaśītala [was the] king of Ratnasañcayapura (a Buddhist, whose wife was a Jaina). (In a debate between) Buddhists and Jains, Akaḷaṅka could not win for many days. He was told by the yakṣi Padmāvati that the Buddhists were invincible as yakṣi Tārā remained hidden in a pot behind a curtain and was helping them. Next day Akaḷaṅka broke the pot and Buddhists were made to surrender (Śraṇabelgoḷa inscription 77). (Joseph 1997, p. 98)

Interestingly, Ekambaranathan dates the Dharumadevi shrine to the fifteenth-sixteenth century. But the story of Akaḷaṅka *ācārya* and the debate with the Buddhists is from an earlier period. This might be an instance of a mythology built around the shrine to give it the sanctity of association with one of the more promi-

¹⁵¹ This is about the only village, so far, where I heard this statement.

¹⁵² In the compilation called *Tiruppaṇampūr Taruma Tēvatai Pattu*, in Ekambaranathan 1991, p. 61. Incidentally, this booklet is published by the Karandai Munigiri temple establishment. Hence, it contains, besides the historical account, specifically inscriptions, some chronological account, and locally popular songs.

nent and influential *ācāryas* of Jaina religion. The green-coloured Dharumadevi is shown seated on a lion. There is a small image of Akaḷaṇka *ācārya*, too. The placing of the image of *ācāryas* is not common in the Jaina temples I have seen (within the temple precincts) and may be a later addition, perhaps influenced by the same practice in placing the images of the Śaiva *nāyaṇmārs* in temple complexes (which may also have been a later addition in that context).

3.58 Sacred 'Circulatory' Space, Everyday Religion

Arpakkam, Tirunarungondai and Tiruparuttikunram are the places frequented by the people of Tirupannamur-Karandai, but no daily worship is offered (of the kind, that is, in other temples) in Tiruparuttikunram¹⁵³, which is a protected monument under the Archaeological Survey of India.

People here spoke to me about the general understanding of their religious practices and their religion. They said the *illaṟattār's* (householder's) duty is to think of the tīrthankara and go to the temple the first thing in the morning or read texts everyday. Four hundred years ago, agriculturists from nearby villages used to pay a visit to the temple at Karandai before going to the fields to start work on their fields. But by the time they reached the fields, it would be late; so they had decided to construct a small temple in Tirupparambur. The *teppa tiruviḷā* in *māci māsam* (February to March) is a special occasion. Karandai is the only Jaina temple in Tamil Nadu where the *teppa tiruviḷā* is held, when the procession deity is taken around the tank and brought back to the temple.

People here stressed on *svādhyāyam* (self-learning/reading of texts) for the Jaina householder. They have manuscripts and books in Prākṛutam (Prakrit), Samskrutam (Sanskrit), Maṇipravālam (though they cannot read it, they said) and Tamil. Families bring out texts during every festival. *Śrīpurāṇam* in Tamil is an important text. Vardhamana Patippakam in Chennai has brought out these texts in abridged versions in Tamil. Some people have preserved palm leaf manuscripts. I also heard that if a family completed the recitation of the entire text of *Cīvakaśintāmaṇi* in a house, they celebrated with a feast. But not many do it these days. U. V. Swaminatha Aiyer saw such a celebration, they told me, in a Jaina Chettiar's house¹⁵⁴, and he preserved and brought it out in print form.

The people here are proud of their library, the Dharumasagar library.¹⁵⁵ The library has texts such as *Illāraṇeri*, a *maṇipravālam Gommaṭasāram* and some handwritten manuscripts, too. Here I heard the story that Rṣabha had two daughters: he taught writing/literature to one and arithmetic to the other. Hence, education is important for the Tamil Jains.

Those dependent on agriculture (mostly paddy) are in a very bad state now. Some are giving up agriculture, too. Agriculture here is mostly dry land and rain-fed; most Jains have *puṇcai* land; and very few have *naṇcai* (wetland). For the temple (at

¹⁵³ This is apart from any special occasion, with due permissions from the ASI.

¹⁵⁴ See the next chapter for a related discussion.

¹⁵⁵ Set up by Sripal in the 1930s.

Karandai), there is some land-based income and people support it with donations, too. During the 10-day festival, each village takes charge for a day each. Then there are the regular rituals of everyday worship and milk and sandal *abhiśēkam* and water *abhiśēkam*. Alagramam, Cittamur and Tirunarungondai are places where all the Tamil Jinas gather. At the Karandai temple, people take vows and decorate the *yakṣa* with sandal ‘*kāppu*’ (adorning the deity with sandal paste).

3.59 Caste Surnames

I was told here that some Tamil Jinas had started using titles such as Mudaliyar, Chettiar and so forth, instead of ‘*Nayinār*’ on account of the persecution they had faced.

3.60 Karandai

I was informed by Appandai Nayinar¹⁵⁶ that Karandai was the village of the author of *Nannūl*, Pavanandī. The temple here has one of the most exquisitely carved black stone idols of Dharumadevi (painted in green colour), the *yakṣi*, who helped Akalanka in his debate and since then is held to be a very powerful, boon-granting goddess, by the people. The temple is also very beautifully built.

This temple is also called Kuntunāthar Jinālaya and is 1200 years old... It was called Tirupparaṃpūr-Karandai in the past. Today the southern part is called Karandai and the northern part is Tirupparambur.¹⁵⁷ They are now separate villages. A temple to the 17th tīrthankara in Karandai (Kuntunāthar) is called Muṇikiri Jinālayam. Legend has it that in the past, there were hillocks surrounding this place where Jaina monks meditated; hence the name Muṇikiri. But no hillocks can be seen today; only a few boulders... The temple complex has a central shrine to Kuntunāthar, Mahāvīra to the south, Ādināthar to the north, Dharumadevi *yakṣi* shrines as subsidiary shrines. Apart from the central shrine, others are of later periods. (Ekambaranathan 1991, pp.5–6)

In all, 17 inscriptions [were found in] this temple dating from 9th to 19th century A.D. The 1st of Nandivarma III [CE 846–869], the Pallava ruler (two of his inscriptions here record his victory over the Chōḷa ruler in Teḷḷār—‘*Teḷḷār eṛinta Nandivarma*’) 8 miles south west of Vandavasi is Tellar with a Jaina temple. In the 11th century it was called Vīraṛājendra Perumpalli, after the Chōḷa ruler. The Pārśva image came up in this time. In the 5th regnal year of Vīraṛājendra (1068), 3 villagers sold some land with tax for the temple as *tiruvilāpuram* (expenses for festivals in this temple). (Ekambaranathan 1991, pp. 22–23)

Karandai was part of Tirukāmakṣṭṭam (ARE 129 of 1939–1940).

¹⁵⁶ The former *dharumakartā* of the Karandai Munigiri Jinalayam. His house was right across this temple at Karandai where he lived with his spouse, Sunanda. He breathed his last in January 2017. He had seen my thesis with great joy and was expecting to hold it someday as a book in his hands, which could not happen. His wife Sunanda passed away in August 2017.

¹⁵⁷ In common parlance, it is called Tiruppanamur.

Fig. 3.29 Kunthunathar at Munigiri Jinalayam at Karandai (picture taken in 2003)



Fig. 3.30 Mahāvīrar at Munigiri Jinalayam at Karandai (2015)



Fig. 3.31 The beautiful green yakṣi, Dharumadevi (Kūṣmāṇṭiṇi) in her separate shrine at the Karandai Munigiri Jinalayam (2015)



Fig. 3.32 Footprints of monks installed within the Karandai temple (picture taken in 2015)



Fig. 3.33 Photograph and footprints of Gajapatisagar svāmikal of Tirupparambur (Tiruppanamur) who became a monk and later undertook *sallekhana vratam* (picture taken in 2003)



Fig. 3.34 Aruhakirti Nayinar (L) and Appandai Nayinar (R) at Karandai, outside the *Chatram* across the Karandai temple (2003)

In the 45th regnal year of 1st Kulottunka Chōlaṇ (1115 AD) Tirupparampūr villagers sold some lands to give as *paḷḷi valākam* for the Tirukāṭṭāmpaḷḷi ālvār Mahāvīra temple.¹⁵⁸ Tirupparampūr was the *cīṟṟūr* (small village) of Tirukāmakōṭṭappuram; part of Kāliyūrkōṭṭam and Kāliyūrnāṭu of Jeyāṅkoṭṭachōḷamaṇṭalam.¹⁵⁹ In Kulōttuṅka's time, Karandai was known as Tirupparampūr and the *cīṟṟūr* of Tirukāmakōṭṭam... In the 12th century AD—a resident of Tirupparampūr—called Tukilikkilāṇ-Araiyāṇṭaiyāṇ donated some sheep and goats for the temple... Many grants of different kinds are made in the Rāja Rāja Chōlaṇ III (1216–1256 AD) period. In his 10th regnal year (1226 AD)... the *tirumēṟṟicai perumāl* (Pārśvanāthar) got an offering of 300 *kācu* for lighting the perpetual lamp... By including Tirukāmakōṭṭam as part of Veṅkuṇṟakōṭṭam (part of Iḷaṅkāṭu division), Karandai was made a bigger village.¹⁶⁰ (Ekambaranathan 1991, p.25).

3.61 Inscriptional Records¹⁶¹

- * On the inner wall of the *gōpuar*, at the right of entrance of the Kunthunathar temple. Pallava Nandivarman III; 846–869 CE.

There are three verses in this inscription eulogising the Pallava king Nandivarman III, who fought the Cōla king at Tellāru and imprisoned him.¹⁶²

* There is an inscription of the time of Chōḷa Vīra Rājendra (1063–1069 AD) here. So it was called *Vīra Rājendra Perumpāḷḷi*. The *Meṟṟisai Perumāl* (Pārśvanātha as referred to in the inscriptions) sanctorum has Pārśvanātha's image. The inscription dated 1156 AD mentions 300 *kāsu* for lighting lamp for this deity.¹⁶³

- * 1068 CE. 5th regnal year of Rājakesarivarman Vīrarājendran. On the base of the Kunthunathar temple steps.

*Records sale of land made tax free, by three members of the assembly (ūr) as tiruvilāppuram, to the Jaina temple at Karantai, a hamlet of Tirukkāmakōṭṭappuram.*¹⁶⁴

[Note: The donation here is made by the assembly—sale of land tax-free—and not the king.]

- * Kuthunathar temple, steps of the maṇḍapa. 1226 CE. Tamil. *ARE* 132 of 1939–1940.

10th regnal year of Cōla Rājarāja. Records that one veḷḷāḷar from the ūrūkkāṭṭu village¹⁶⁵ in *ūṟṟukāṭṭukkoṭṭam* in Jayaṅkoṭṭachōḷamaṇṭalam donated a few cows towards the maintenance of a perpetual lamp for the Tirupparampūr Jaina temple. (Ekambaranathan 1991, p. 44)

¹⁵⁸ 'The Mahāvīra shrine, a separate one within the complex, is dated in the twelfth-century AD. This shrine was called Tirukāṭṭāmpaḷḷi and the deity Tirukāṭṭāmpaḷḷi ālvār' (*ARE* 141 of 1939–1940).

¹⁵⁹ *ARE* 129 of 1939–1940.

¹⁶⁰ *ARE* 141 of 1939–1940.

¹⁶¹ I am not citing all the inscriptions, just a few representative ones.

¹⁶² *ARE* 140 of 1939–1940; (Ekambaranathan 1991, p. 39).

¹⁶³ *ARE* 141 of 1939–1940.

¹⁶⁴ *ARE* 129 of 1939–1940. Emphasis added.

¹⁶⁵ 'A village near modern Walajapet; ghee from the cows was to be used for perpetual lamp' (*ARE* 132, 1939–1940).

- * 1115 CE, 45th regnal year of Kulōttuṅka Chōla I, Vardhamāna shrine.

Records sale of land belonging to the *ūr sapai* (sabhā) of Tirupparampūr as *paḷḷiviḷākam* for the temple of Tirukāṭṭāmpaḷḷi-*ālvār* in the village by the assembly situated in Kāliyūrnāḍu, a sub-division of Kāliyūrkōṭṭam, a district of Jayañkoṇḍachōḷamaṇḍalam. (Ekambaranathan 1991, p. 42)¹⁶⁶

- * On the steps of the *mukhamaṇḍapa* of Kunthunathar temple. Cōla Rajarajadevan. 11th regnal year (1227 CE).¹⁶⁷

For lighting the lamps at the time of the *tirupaḷḷi eḷucci* at the *Vīrarājendraperumpaḷḷi* at Tirupparampūr, the people of Aruḷmoḷitēvapuram town, part of Rājarājavalanāṭu and Paḷaiyūrnāṭu. (Ekambaranathan 1991, pp. 44–45)

- * At the base of the Kunthunathar temple. Thirteenth century CE.

Record of a donation of goats for lighting the perpetual lamp in front of Arukatēvar in the *Vīrarājendiraperumpaḷḷi* by one Tukilikiḷāṇ Araiyaṇ Uṭaiyāṇ, a resident of Parampūr, in Kāliyūrnāṭu, a sub-division of Kāliyūrkōṭṭam. (Ekambaranathan 1991, p. 46)

- * At the West Pirākāram of the Kunthunathar temple. 20th regnal year of Telugu Chōḷaṇ Vijayaḱaṇṭakōpāḷaṇ. 1270 CE.¹⁶⁸

One Aruvantai Āṇṭāl, Tirucōṛṇṭutturaiuṭaiyār of Poṇṇūr, gave a gift of 3 coins and paddy towards lighting 6 lamps for one *jāmam* [3 hours]. (Ekambaranathan 1991, 47)

- * In 1510 AD, Rāmappa Nāyaka (the Mugappāvāḍai officer of Narasimharāya) levied *joḍi* tax on temple lands, and many temples were neglected and that Krishnadevaraya on accession to the throne made all *devadāna* lands *sarvamāṇya* (tax-free) including Jaina and Buddhist temples in *Paḍaivīḍu-rājya* and *Chandragrii-rājya*, and this benefitted the Karandai temple (ARE 144 of 1939–1940).

In 1510 AD during Kṛṣṇadevarāya's rule, temples in this part, including the *Vīrarājendraperumpaḷḷi* at Karandai benefitted from the *sarvamāṇyam* (tax-exemption) to *paḷḷicantam* and Jaina and Buddhist *devadāna* lands. (Ekambaranathan 1991, p.29)

- * On a stone by the pirakaram. A Vijayanagara ruler, Ramadevamaharaya. 1619 CE.

Inscription incomplete. Mentions one Kayilāya Pulavar got some lands as *sarvamāṇyam* gift from Bālanākam Nāyakkar. Kayilāya Pulavar must be a Jaina resident of Karandai; there is not much information regarding him elsewhere. (Ekambaranathan 1991, pp. 49–50)

- * In 1747 CE, one Agastiappa Nayiṇār renovated the *gōpuram* “of the ‘Munigiri Swami’”¹⁶⁹ temple (AR 136 of 1939–1940).

Ekambaranathan mentions an inscription found in the Śiva temple in Chakkaramallūr in Walajapet taluk which records the sale of land by the Mudaliyārs of Cakkaramūdurai to Puṣpanātha Nayiṇār and Agastiappa Nayiṇār. The latter must be the same as the one mentioned in the 1747 inscription. (1991, p. 52)

¹⁶⁶ ARE 135 of 1939–1940.

¹⁶⁷ ARE 131 of 1939–1940.

¹⁶⁸ ARE 138 of 1939–1940.

¹⁶⁹ Ekambaranathan 1991, p. 50.

3.62 Vandavasi (Wandiwash of the Colonial Times) and Ponnur, North Arcot: 2003

There were around 150 Tamil Jaina families settled here, I was informed, and population of approximately 700–1000. This seemed, by far, the largest concentration of this community in one place that I had visited. They were all educated, and most of them were employed in different sectors (private and public). People gathered every week on a Friday evening (I met them too, on a Friday evening) at the Jaina temple here. I was told that I must pay a visit to Ponnurmalai, which was not very far from Vandavasi. That was the most frequented sacred site for the people residing in Vandavasi.

I could not make a trip again to this place. But I would like to quote from a book on the history of Madurai, which came into my possession years later, which mentions Vandavasi in an interesting context:

‘This book is dedicated to the thousands of Jains living presently in the Vandhavasi region because of historical reasons despite Madurai being their motherland.’ (The Green Walk Team 2014, Dedication page)

3.63 Inscriptional Records

* 1256 CE (seventh regnal year of Māravarman Vikrama Pāṇḍya).¹⁷⁰

Ādinātha temple - Records that the *nāṭṭavar* of Viḍālparru assigned taxes payable by those settling in the *pallī viḷākam* of Ādinātha, to provide for worship and repairs. (Ekambaranathan 1987, p. 244)

* 1733 CE (Ādinātha temple).¹⁷¹

*Jainas of Svarṇapura*¹⁷² *Kaṇakagiri should take images of Pārśvanātha and Jvālāmālīni amman from temple of Ādiśvara every Sunday to Nilagiri parvata situated to the north-west of the temple at the time of the weekly worship of Heḷācārya.* (Ibid. p. 245)

I have added emphasis to point out the nature of ritual ‘movement’ and connections between the places mentioned above.

Desai writes,

Svarṇapura is evidently identical with Ponnūr. The Nilagiri Hill which also figures in the legend of Heḷācārya has still retained the name, being three miles away from Ponnūr. The icons of Pārśvanātha and Jvālāmālīni mentioned in the epigraph are probably the metallic images preserved in the temple of Ādinātha to the present day or their earlier substitute... Judging from the earlier Jaina inscriptions found here and the tradition connecting it with Heḷācārya Ponnūr appears to have been a renowned stronghold of Jainism from earlier times (Desai, *Epigraphia Indica*, XXIX, p. 202).

¹⁷⁰ ARE 415 of 1928–1929.

¹⁷¹ ARE 416 1928–1929.

¹⁷² Sanskrit name of Ponnur, *Ep. Ind.*, vol XXIX, p. 199ff—‘Heḷācārya monk of Drāviḍa gaṇa, native of Hemagrama, Ponnūr. Heḷācārya’s feet carved on Nilagiri hill, north-west of the Jaina temple’.

This is the first time that a ritual associated with Elācārya is mentioned in inscriptional records in these parts. The Tamil Jainas (at Vandavasi) informed me they were planning to revive this tradition which had stopped many years ago.

3.64 Ponnurmalai: Sri Visakhācārya Taponilayam

The last *nirgrantha muni* (so far) of Tamil Nadu,—originally a resident of Erumbur (South Arcot?)—Subhadrasagar *muni*, was residing at this *Taponilayam*, a modern structure, when I visited the place. He was very old and could not talk with clarity of speech, and there was not much I could retrieve from the recording I had done with him. But he was essentially speaking about Jaina philosophy, as much as I could gather. And he was rather unwell when I had seen him.

I also met Siva Adinath, a celibate (not monk) scholar, at the Taponilayam. He has published numerous books on Jaina thought and the way of the Jina. It was his personal opinion¹⁷³ that the concept of *maṭha* came in much later in Jainism and that the concept was taken from Hinduism. He said that since the last 400 years or so, the link between the community and the ascetics has changed. More ascetics are moving north. And he reasoned that the ‘unfavourable’ conditions were affected by



Fig. 3.35 Year 2003. Subhadrasagar with Siva Adinath and a few of the Tamil Jaina laity from Vandavasi engaged in a discussion on *arivu*, perception, knowledge, *atman*, etc

¹⁷³I retain this point he made, without worrying about the historicity or otherwise of it, just to highlight the manner in which some of the Tamil Jainas perceive the changes within their religion and institutions.



Fig. 3.36 *Muni Subhadrasagar* (the last Digambara monk from Tamilnadu at the time when I met him, in year 2003, who belonged to the village Erumbur before initiation into monkhood) at the Visakhacharya, Taponilayam, Ponnurmalai

the responses from other communities and from Hindus; and the brief period of Muslim rule in Tamil Nadu, too, he believed, affected the Jaina (Digambara) ascetic tradition here, and its contact with the community. For him no ‘real/true Jainism’ exists in the present time.

3.65 Revisiting the Old and Seeing the New: Year 2015

In 2003, I had started with the question as to where history had taken the community to: an unknown, hidden corner (where people may or may not know of the existence of this community or its history), from where it had been, at Tirupparuttikunram or Jina-Kanchipuram. In 2015, I began with where it stands at present, with a new kind of religious expressionism and grand celebrations becoming important to make its presence felt, in whatever small way, in the midst of few other celebrations held at the local Śaivite temple in a nearby village, close to Vembakkam. I would then proceed to the sleepy Karandai-Tiruppanamur and then onwards to Madurai, a site long abandoned by the Tamil Jinas in the wake of the extreme Śaivite assertions which are still visible from afar.

I reflected as to how agrarian change can affect the awareness of an agricultural community of its past or the way it remembers its past. In 2003, when I visited these villages (many of which I revisited in 2015), agriculture was still the mainstay of many Tamil Jinas. At that time, they had more time to talk of their past, remembered

more stories and were seen playing some of the traditional games outside their homes (and almost all the houses were occupied in those streets); they seemed more tuned in to, or stuck to, their past (both the good past and the one they remembered with sadness). In 2015, more houses were locked up, and the community members seemed more into ritual expressions of a pronounced nature (maybe because I was visiting during a major festival in Vembakkam, held once in 12 years), but the stories were missing. What one heard here was ‘what constitutes a true Jaina’ and what is being done to ‘preserve that Jaina part’ of their selves. Agriculture has also been a low-key affair in this past one decade, I was informed (and as statistics also reveal, owing to the long periods of drought and inadequate rains until then)¹⁷⁴, with costs of labour and mechanisation changing the scenario in a big way, and many of the younger generation have flown off the nests and chosen other professions. Many of them now live in and around Chennai, and in some cases, the parents live with them in these cities, and many of those I had met in my previous visit were now residents of the big metro.

I started the 2015 journey with a more ritualistic context and hustle-bustle at Vembakkam. I then went through Karandai village with an almost surreal feel to it—hanging, as it did, between the hoary past and a fast-changing present, suffering from the effects of a long-drawn drought, with some of its ponds and tanks dried-up and with agriculture hard hit. Most houses at Karandai were either locked, or they housed only senior citizens (above 60). Here, a temple fest later would suddenly bring in some life and activity. I visited the reading room, now modernised, at Tiruppanamur, but more religious literature was now seen here compared to the books on Marx and Lenin that I had last seen, more than a decade ago. I proceeded towards the Cittamur *matham*, which became very busy with many ritual events lined up and which was just catching up from the ritual frenzy of Vembakkam and moving on to another one to be held at Karandai. And I moved to the truly ancient, quiet ‘walks’ at Madurai, going past the truly hoary Tamil Jaina past of rock-cut caves and natural caverns.

3.66 Vembakkam

February 7, 2015—I found some people distributing a pamphlet here which was titled, *Tamil Nadu Digambar Jain Professionals and Business Census, 2015*. This new census has been undertaken (according to the pamphlet) under the auspices of Acaryasri 108 Gyan Sagar Ji Maharaj [Digambara monk] to find out the number of professionals among Digambara Jaina community across India, including doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, teachers/educationists, scientists, scholars, etc. In this connection, the census was started in Tamilnadu, as well. The pamphlet listed names of concerned people (who were coordinating) in Tindivanam, Thanjavur, Chennai, Uppuvelur, Kanchipuram, Arani, Thenatthur, etc.

The last census of 2000 comprised a count of all Tamil Jainas, but this one will bring out a new dimension to the numbers, even if it will leave out the rest. I was

¹⁷⁴ Of course, later that year, Chennai would see an unprecedented deluge following copious rains. These rains of course filled up the dried-up (when I had last seen) Palar River and some small reservoirs in Kanchipuram and around.

told that no other common census was conducted in recent times of the Tamil Jainas in Tamilnadu. Rough estimates of their numbers vary (as per people's calculations) anywhere from 40,000 to 60,000.

Jinachandran, of Tiruppanamur, who now resides in Kanchipuram, in a casual conversation here said, 'The Hindu bhakti *margam* impacted the Jaina religion. The Jaina religion believes in the individual soul which can attain salvation through action; we do not have a god. There were 84 Buddhist and 26 Jaina temples in Kanchipuram when Hiuen Tsang (Hsuan-tsang) came here....'

3.67 *Nirgrantha* Monk (*Samaṇa Muni*) Comes Visiting

It becomes clear that women become the central actors in the whole idea of religion. With the burden of being the repositories of culture and way things are done, they are supposed to prepare the food with utmost care and caution and wear clothes and maintain absolute 'purity'. The burden of 'purity' weighs heavier on the women than the men, though there are a few men who assist the monk and also have to maintain ritual 'purity'. The nuns are in their own worlds and command a different kind of respect (and perhaps intimacy, with the women devotees, but these nuns cannot speak Tamil, and the women do not know Hindi). The women tell me that the *nirgrantha muni* should not ever go away without taking alms they offer him, for they will accrue bad *karma*. The Jainas avoid that, at all costs. They take utmost care to not earn the displeasure of the monk, even by a slightest 'mistake', either in the manner of preparing food for him or by mistakes in maintaining cleanliness and ritual purity. The alms giving procedure is a highly specialised activity, as I am seeing it, and the amount of preparations and apprehensions—that go into making that ultimate 1-hour (or sometimes, even less) act of giving—is amazing.

The act of giving happens in the house of one or the other householder. The last time I met a Digambara monk was in Ponnurmalai, which was not a householder's colony. The monk at Ponnurmalai was quite with himself, and there was no ritual event around his presence, the way it happened this time, with the *pañcakalyāṇam urcavam*, where the monk became the centre of focus, as he gave many sermons during the 6-day event. A *paṭṭi maṇṇam* (debate) was also organised as part of the festivities. They called Tamil scholars (including many, or more, non-Jainas) from different fields to debate on the topic titled, 'In today's times, is practising ahimsā a pain, or pleasure?' One of the women participants in the debate invoked Jesus and Mohammad Nabi, who taught love and universal brotherhood but were all tortured by people for having preached the same. She said, 'It is important to realise where ahimsā strived'. She invoked Gandhi, too.

In his sermons, meanwhile, the monk was focussing on the need to maintain 'purity' and non-violence in thoughts and action and in everyday matters, including what people ate. Since he hails from the North, he has managed to learn Tamil after staying in various places across Tamil Nadu over the last few years. He speaks Tamil with a northern accent but gives the entire sermon in Tamil without inserting a single word of Hindi.

3.68 Meeting the Digambara Nun¹⁷⁵

I got the opportunity to speak to Chintansri Mataji. She was ordained as a nun when she was 23 years old. She was born in Katni in Madhya Pradesh. She became a nun because she felt the ‘world is full of suffering and it was necessary to cross over this ocean’. It has been 16 years since she became a nun. For the last 7 years, she has been travelling across Tamil Nadu. She has been to Tirumalai, Ponnurmalai, Madurai, Kanchipuram, Tiruchirapalli and Thanjavur. She has visited several temples. It was during her first *cāturmās* that the *samavasaraṇa* was erected in the temple here at Vembakkam. This is her second *cāturmās* when the *pañcakalyāṇak* is being held. I asked her where her next stop would be, and she replied that would depend on the community and as to who wanted them (the nuns) in their midst, the most. She then said, ‘We cannot preach, because we do not know Tamil’. She has come here with another nun of her order. She then began to share her perception of the Tamil Jainas in Tamil Nadu, which may be reflective of the perception of what constitutes the ‘pure’, ‘original’ tradition and perceptions of the northern and southern within Digambara Jain religion, irrespective of the antiquity of Jain religion in the south.

Here they do not know *vairāgya*. They are not very much aware of the religion and they do not know how to maintain purity. It is only after the coming of *munis* like Devnandji, Nirmalsagarji and Arjivasagarji that people here have learnt to give *āhār* (food) to the monks and nuns. Earlier, this was not the case. Earlier, they used to pray to *devis* and *devatas* (*yakṣis* and *yakṣas*); they used to invoke them first. Now, they have been taught. Earlier, there was more of *mithyā* [worshipping false gods]. But now they have learnt. A lot has changed. But these days, there are fewer *ācāryas* and more computers....

She also informed me that there is one nun from Tamil Nadu, who is now staying in Rajasthan and there are also two or three *brahmachārīṇis* (celibates, not yet ordained as nuns). But in general, not many from Tamil Nadu come forward to become nuns.

During this field visit, there is a lot of talk about differences between the ‘right’ (northern) and the ‘mistaken’/‘*mithya-drṣṭi*’ (southern) practices among the Tamil Jainas. This bit seems more pronounced in places where the monks and nuns visited. The monk Arjivasagar’s earlier visit (before 2003) had also brought about some changes in the nature of worship among some Tamil Jainas, if not all. The north-south divide seems to remain a perpetual problem even here, it seems.

At Vembakkam, I also touched base with S. Bahubali of Tiruppanamur, who now stays in Kanchipuram, who was among those group of Tamil Jainas (including Appandai Nainar and Aruhakirti Nainar) who were very keen on preserving manuscripts, printing and publishing of books and a lot more into the historical aspects of Jainism. Bahubali, this time round too, gave me the text, *Nilakeci*—edited by A. Chakravarti—which has been reprinted by the Tamil University, Thanjavur, from the original 1936 bilingual (English summary and Tamil text), which is extremely hard to get hold of, now. The U. V. Swaminatha Aiyer library at Chennai has one single copy (a donated one) which, for some reason, they have not yet digitised, as they have other classics in Tamil.

¹⁷⁵ On 9 February 2015, at Vembakkam.



Fig. 3.37 Chintansri Mataji blessing a Tamil Jaina couple at Vembakkam



Fig. 3.38 A billboard (next to one by a local MLA of the place, in praise of *Puraṭṭitalaivi* J. Jayalalithaa (then Chief Minister of Tamilnadu) on the main road towards Vembakkam, announcing the Vembakkam Jain temple *pañcakalyāṇam* festival



Fig. 3.39 The elephant procession on the first day of the *pañcakalyāṇam* at Vembakkam (7 February 2015) (riding astride are the people from the family that performed the ritual, enacting the roles of the parents of the *tīrthankara*)



Fig. 3.40 Women carrying vessels of water, coconuts and other ritual paraphernalia for the *pañcakalyāṇam*; they will perform all the rituals associated with the birth event (7 February 2015)



Fig. 3.41 The *urcavar* (procession deity) goes through the village on a field tractor in Vembakkam (highlighting the agrarian context)



Fig. 3.42 People eagerly awaiting the *muni mahārāj* (the women are wearing sarees specifically meant for the alms-giving ritual)



Fig. 3.43 Women giving food to the monk (9 February 2015) (the place wears a solemn look at the time of the feeding. Extreme care is taken during this time)



Fig. 3.44 Appandai Nayinar (late) at Vembakkam, with S. Bahubali, looking at the former's picture taken in 2003 (2015)

3.69 Tiruppanamur-Karandai Revisit: Late February and Early March 2015

I was sitting in Appandai Nayinar's house. Age had caught up with him. I was revisiting him after nearly a decade. But he did not forget to remind me of a slim book that he had given me (in Tamil, on the history of Karandai temple and village¹⁷⁶) to translate into English¹⁷⁷. I have begun that work in earnest now, I told him¹⁷⁸. But I am amazed that this man, in his late 80s, asked me that question the very moment we met at the Vembakkam event. We then moved together to Karandai. He had severe osteoporosis and arthritis and most times walked with a belt around his lower back and bent, at others. But he used to insist on cooking and making the morning cups of coffee and tea on his own. What a change from the man whose picture I had taken so many years ago! I was glad to meet him and his wife, Sunanda, who seemed to be these two elderly people from a very different world, in a village that still looks like one from another era. But some things, surely, have changed here, too.

I asked Appandai Nayinar about changes, in these many years, that have affected Karandai. He said,

Lots of changes have occurred. We now have a new *dharmasāla*. It cost Rs. 12 lakhs to build. Now, at least a thousand people can sit inside the temple precincts, because we have constructed a shed. People today are doing a lot for the temple and religion (Jainism). We have made arrangements for a water pipeline from the Palar (river). After the visit of Suprakash and Subhushan *mātā ji* (nuns), people have started showing more *bhakti* and inclination towards the religion. Many north Indian tourists have started visiting and the Karnataka Jainas are coming, too. In the last three months alone, 500 buses came here! These are all fully AC buses, which never used to come here before. I don't know, though, why they come here, and how [do they know of this place]. May be because this is the year of tourism? They come here, cook their meals, sometimes ask the village people to join them, and then leave. This is a new experience for me!¹⁷⁹

The other important thing here is the years of drought, which has made it very hard for drinking water to reach the village. Water comes in trickles at the common tap, once every morning. And I see the old couple diligently filling up the buckets. Appandai Nayinar and Sunanda's children are in Chennai.¹⁸⁰

I met Padmajyoti at the temple, who said there once used to be at least 30–40 families here (Tamil Jainas), but now there are only 7–8 families; they have all moved to town because they are in different occupations. But they do come to the

¹⁷⁶From where I have cited the references from the previous visit.

¹⁷⁷Life has taken so many detours since then, that the book—which had rested on my table all these years (with that request in mind all through)—is still not translated.

¹⁷⁸Before his demise, in January 2017, I had begun translating the book. Unfortunately, I did not get to meet him alive to say that.

¹⁷⁹Personal communication, at Karandai village, 11 February 2015.

¹⁸⁰One of them has had a major accident and has been hospitalised for a long while now. Sunanda also shared the pain of having lost her young daughter-in-law sometime back; she keeps remembering that event and tells me about her daughter-in-law (she seems to have loved dearly) often during the day.

temple for festivals and to pray. A 10-day *tiruvilā*, *brahmōrccavam*, will take place here in the month of March, when they will raise the flagpost (*koṭi ērum*).¹⁸¹ The deity will go out in procession, and the tenth day, there will be the *mahābhiśēkam* at the *maṇḍapam*. This Dharumadevi *ammaṇ* is very auspicious; she fulfils wishes. The *navagrahas* here are also powerful. A businessman suffered severe losses, and someone said he should worship the *navagraha* here everyday for 10 days. He did, and became prosperous again.

I stayed in Karandai twice this time, the beautiful quiet of the place being difficult to let go of. Even the temple is absolutely peaceful and quiet. The second time round, the village was preparing for the *brahmōrccavam*. And another development had taken place: the *muni maharaj* (the Digambara monk one met at Vembakkam) decided to rest here for a few days. So, there was a sudden commotion, and the quiet place would soon become the hub of numerous visits by people from far and near.

I also touched base with Mr. Aruhakirti and his spouse at their home in Tiruppanamur. I felt this time that the community is more fervently into the act of worship and temples; renovations of older Jaina temples are in order. I also felt that the ‘Jaina identity’ was being asserted through collection of funds for rituals and festivals in the Tamil Jaina village temples, where some of them still stay. Each village seeks to have its *vilā* (festival) in a grand manner.

3.70 Meeting the Monk

On the morning of 26 February, I get the chance, finally, to interact with Vishwesh Sagar Maharaj, the Digambara monk, who is staying for a while at Karandai and has some time off from the busier schedule he had at Vembakkam. The 10-day festival here will begin next month, and there aren’t too many visitors to the village at this time. The monk has decided to stick to coconut water for the entire time he will be staying here. Perhaps he knows there are only three households in Karandai and two in Tiruppanamur, with mostly elderly people residing there.

I asked him as to why he took up the path of a monk. He said,

There are four realms (*gati*)—*manuṣya*, *dēva*, *trīyaṇca* and *naraka*—and in none of these realms there is peace, or joy. In each realm, there is something that causes an element of *dukkha*... Jaina *dharma* teaches that body is distinct from the soul... Everyone knows that when we die, we die alone. Yet due to passions, we find it difficult to let go... Unless we take up this path (of the monk), there is no possibility of *mukti* (liberation)...

Regarding his views on the general aspects of Jaina religion in Tamil Nadu, he had many things to say:

When *ācāryaśrī*¹⁸² came here in 2006, at Melcittamur, for *cāturmās*, 26 of us (monks) came here with him. When *ācāryaśrī* realised that Tamil people do not know a lot about the Jaina

¹⁸¹ This signifies the commencement of the 10-day event.

¹⁸² His teacher and the head monk of his congregation.

dharma in terms of how to feed a monk, the rituals, etc, and when three of us stayed here, he told us we need to propagate the religion and teach people here how to feed Digambara monks, with bhakti, and how to prepare pure food to give alms to the monks, etc. These things need to be taught to the people here. We said to *ācāryaśrī*, that is alright, but these people do not know Hindi, and we do not know Tamil. How would we teach? He told us to remain here; it will all be done. Our first *cāturmās* was in Peramandur in year 2007, after getting leave from the *ācāryaśrī*. There were a few people from Pondicherry with us whom we taught all these things to. Gradually, over time, people are becoming aware of these things: how to prepare food, how to maintain purity. Yet, there are a lot of differences. But between 2007 and now, a lot has changed. The kind of devotion and faith they had then is much less today. There are more inter-community marriages happening now. Many are still not aware of *pujā vidhi* (how to offer prayers). They only depend on the priests, irrespective of whether they are right or wrong. In the north, among the Jaina community, people of all ages will come to see the *tīrthankara* (in the temple), offer prayers at their time of convenience and carry on with their respective professions. Here, people today are only thinking about issues like education of their children, etc, more than they do in the north. Which is a good thing, the kind of importance they give to education. In the north, it is not so. The Jaina people there are wealthy, and many are into trade and business. Here, they were mainly into agriculture; many are still poor and weak, so they have not been able to develop; some have educated their children and acquired some wealth. Since agriculture is not so profitable, and they are faced with drought, some are seeking employment in cities and towns, while the older people stay in villages. People have given their children education, which is alright, but not education in *dharma* or spirituality. They are only looking at how to make some money. That is because of lack of rains, high cost of labour in agriculture. Tamil Nadu has many old temples and a very ancient history (of Jainism), but people are slowly getting distanced from religion and shifting towards materialism. Girls here are more educated than the boys, who are not very highly educated, and the girls get married to people of their choice. There are fewer children now. Many are not getting married. Once they get married outside the community, then (as per Jaina religion) they have no right to prepare or give alms/food to the monks. But people here are not able to understand the right from wrong in these matters. Of late, there is renovation of older temples and many people have started to take *vratas* and are observing rules, like sacrificing some kinds of food, and so on, but the new generation is not much into all this. Unless the new generation comes forward, how will the religion survive? A Digambara monk has to be fed in a particular way because we are strict about *ahimsā*; no living being should be hurt. We only take food from those who are equally strict about rules of *ahimsā*. We take only pure food and only some kinds of food. Each monk has different rules; some have sacrificed some substances and others something else, and each according to their own capabilities. As for me, I eat only some kinds of grains: either wheat or *moong* or *kombu* or *bājra*, and only once a day. We eat standing. We (monks) have to be very strict about food: care has to be taken while preparing and accepting food about 32 *antarāyas*, 32 *dōṣas*, 10 *maladōṣas*, and 4 other *dōṣas*.

There should be no interference in matters of religion; people should be free to follow them. Some do oppose the fact that we go about naked. They say we should be clothed. Seeing all this, we cannot travel freely, unless we get police protection and the company of people around us. It is the others who oppose us who are thinking of all this. We do not think of these things. Earlier, we had to travel with police protection, though now we can move with our community people. It is not so in the north, except in some places. But the monks there do travel (walk) by themselves sometimes; because people are aware of the monk tradition. In Tamil Nadu, there was only one Digambara monk (in recent times). Since many do not know Tamil, many monks do not come here, and if they do, they come for a short visit and leave....

When I asked him about the rock-cut caves and of historical aspects of Jaina religion in Tamil Nadu, he said,

Now the Jainas are very few in numbers and wherever possible, we are taking help to renovate temples. There is nobody to take care of these places. In Pondicherry, there is someone called Sridharan, who brings some people together, and they all go to the rock-cut caves, offer worship and inform people of other communities, too, to take care of these sites.

As to whether many people from Tamil Nadu are coming forward to take up the life of a monk, he said there are, but with fewer children, the families do not encourage this.

Someone from Peramandur, and one from Vilukkam became our disciples, but their families stopped them from becoming monks. That is because of lack of knowledge of the Jaina *dharma*. There is no encouragement. Now *Bhaṭṭārakas* want to retain their positions and do not want people to go with the monks. Earlier, the work of the *bhaṭṭārakas* was to go to each village, gather people, teach them about the religion, the tenets of Jainism, about *ahimsā*, etc. Now with changes, the *bhaṭṭārakas* have changed. Earlier, *bhaṭṭārakas* had to take *dīkṣā* (ordination) and act according to the principles of the system. Now, they do not seem to have the time to do all these things. They have now moved more towards the material aspects of it.

I couldn't help asking him regarding contemporary developments, many of which seem intrinsically violent (constructing dams, breaking rocks, clearing forests, etc), and if Jaina monks who believe in *ahimsā* speak up against those forms of violence. He said, firstly, some things are necessary for survival, which is linked to fire, earth, water, etc. Secondly, some people do these things with good intentions, but the results are destructive. But governments carry on these activities for profit. And it is not possible to speak against the government; even if someone does, it does not seem to make a difference, just see how governments continue to give licences for shops selling alcohol, though they warn us that it is harmful to health.

This, in our religion, is called the *dukkham kāla* which changes people's mindset, and activities will happen in accordance with that kind of mindset. We can only preach; we cannot force. That is not allowed in our religion....¹⁸³

The temple, meanwhile, was readying itself for the festival and getting a new lease of life. There seemed less of the din here than that I witnessed at Vembakkam, with musical events, debates, etc. Here was an older way of doing things.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ At Karandai village, 26 February, 2015.

¹⁸⁴ Personally, I wondered as to which one was better: the ostentation of richer people of the north or the quieter faith of the people here at Karandai, most of them quite old.

Fig. 3.45 Drummers announcing the *tiruvilā* at the Karandai temple (2015)



Figs. 3.46–3.47 (L) Ritual purification of the *dhvajastambham*; (R) Readyng the small pots for the *abhisekam* inside the temple



Figs. 3.48–3.49 Appandai Nayinar readyng the ritual umbrella (This was his last big *urcavam* (he passed away early 2017) and was unwell most of the previous year)

Fig. 3.50 Aruhakirti with his wife and Jayankondan (one of the descendants from the family of Sripal) at their home in Tirupparambur (2015)



Fig. 3.51 Sunanda Ammal sitting in her home, in Karandai (2015)





Fig. 3.52 Vishwesh Sagar Muni Maharaj at Karandai (26 February 2015)

3.71 Madurai¹⁸⁵

My base was the Madurai Jain Heritage Centre, which is situated in Nagamalai Pudukkottai, on the outskirts of the main city of Madurai. This centre was set up in 2009 with the purpose of helping researchers and visitors interested in the Jain religion and Jain studies. The people behind this facility were the same as I had met during my first trip down Tamil Jain places, more keen about preserving the ancient Jain manuscripts, literary and historical lineage than about constructing temples. This centre has some collection of books and articles in Tamil and English on Jain studies and history of Tamilnadu in general, though it is still developing its collection. There is a caretaker here, who stays with his family. This place is the ideal vantage point to explore the Jain hillocks. The autorickshaw driver, Selva, who took me on some part of the tour, made the whole experience a memorable one with his own views on history, besides stopping patiently for me to take pictures, and though not a Jain himself, he was well aware of the Jain heritage of Madurai. The entire experience was beautiful, going past some of the oldest sites of Tamil Jain history, starting early in the morning, with the sun just about to rise, and to imagine a past of a different form in these parts, which is now reduced to rocks that stand mute witness to what transpired in the past and also assuming different meanings over time.

¹⁸⁵ 16–19 February 2015.

Mayilai Sini Venkatasamy writes:

The rock-cut caves of Madurai, at one point, housed *samaṇa* monks who stayed there performing austerities. During the Pāṇḍyan rule, they stayed on eight of the rock-cut caves and natural caverns and those hillocks became known as ‘*enperuṅkunṇam*’ [lit. eight great/big rocks/hillocks] and the monks there began to be known as ‘*enperuṅkunṇattu eṇṇāyiram camaṇar*’ [the eight thousand *samaṇars* of the eight hills]...Anaimalai, Alagarmalai, Tirupparankunram, Samanarmalai, Kalugumalai, Sittanavasal, Kongarpuliyangulam, Kilavalavu, Muttupatti, Nagamalai (Vikkiramangalam), Siddharmalai, Varichiyur, Marugaltalai¹⁸⁶, etc., had Jaina monks staying there, and these places have the images of tīrthankaras carved on them, with *vaṭṭeluttu* inscriptions. Even before the Kalappira times, Jaina monks stayed and did penance here, and in some of these hill caves Buddhist *bhikkus* are also known to have resided...Pallava Mahendravarman (also called Guṇaparaṇ and Guṇataraṇ) was also a Jaina. In his time there was a Jaina *maṭham* at Pāṭalinagar of Toṇṭaimaṇṭalam (Tiruppātipuliyūr) where the Jaina *ācārya* Simhasūri wrote the text *Lokavibhāgam*...Vajranandi, Vikrama era 525 (470 AD), founded the Drāviḍa Sangha during the time of the Kalappira rulers, who supported the Jaina Drāviḍa sangham.... (Mayilai Sini Venkatasamy 2012, pp. 57–58)

Venkatasamy also points out that the Kalappiras supported Buddhism and the Buddhist monks and their monasteries, as well.¹⁸⁷ Kaveripumpattinam, Kanchipuram, Uraiyur, Putamangalam, Cankai, Mayurapattinam, Madurai, etc. were well-thriving Buddhist centres during the times of the Kalappira rulers, according to Venkatasamy (Ibid, p. 59).

Changes occurred in the eighth century AD, when Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples are seen at the earlier Jaina centres. Many Jaina temples were converted into Śaivite-Vaiṣṇavite temples in this period. Tirupparankunram was converted into a Śaivite temple in the time of Māravarman Sundara Pāṇḍyan I (1216–1238 AD) (Ibid, pp. 9–10).

3.72 Samanarmalai at Kilakuyilkkudi

I went up this hillock when the sun had not risen fully yet, and the rock had an amazing presence in that light. At the base of the strikingly beautiful hillock are a lotus pond, and a temple, dedicated to Karuppanasami-Ayyanar [Karuppaṇṇasāmi-Ayyaṇār]. This temple was built in 1887, by a person from the Thevar community. This entire region (and this area in particular) has a Thevar dominance. The temple has the idols of the Thevar community leader and his wife, which are also worshipped.

¹⁸⁶ Modern place names; hence, I do not use the diacritical marks here.

¹⁸⁷ It must be noted that several earlier historians, including K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, used a blanket term “dark ages” for the Kalappira (Kalabhra) rule, and it is now that some scholars acknowledge the fact that the support to Buddhism and Jainism (and also perhaps other non-Vedic) schools of thought (such as Ājīvika and Lokāyata/Cārvāka who are known to have existed around this time) gave them this ‘notoriety’. School and college text-books too, continued to propagate this idea for a very long time.

The hillock has Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions dated to the second century BCE and reliefs (on the rock face) and inscriptions in Tamil *vaṭṭeḷuttu* of the ninth-tenth century CE. Atop the hill is the base of the *Mādeviperumpaḷḷi* (the ancient Jaina monastic institution).

There is a legend associated with this Ayyanar temple, which is also interesting. Local people say it was constructed during Pāṇḍyan times, though that is not what is written on the board. They believe that perhaps the big temple was constructed later, but the shrine was already there during Pāṇḍyan times. They keep the temple open on Tuesdays and Fridays, when people come to offer worship. As per local legend, the god here was earlier on top of the hill; an old couple used to worship that god, but the old lady was unable to walk all the way up to the hill, and at that time, a bear (in those days, there were many bears in these parts) came by and helped carry the *pongāl* pot for the old lady up the hill; the old lady worshipped the deity up on the hill with *pongāl*, fruits, etc.

There is also a shrine here built in honour of one Thevar, with the legend written on a board outside the Ayyanar temple, which reads 'Memorial for Veera Thevar'. The details are mentioned on the board thus: of the three Thevar families of Kilakuyilkkudi, is that of Chinnapuli Thevar, to whose family belonged Veera Thevar, *alias* Paṭṭavaṇ Cuvāmi, who died defending his village against the enemies during Malik Kafur's rule, before the British times. This shrine is built in his memory.

It is an interesting juxtaposition: the rock-cut caves of the monks, with figures of the *ṛṣi*thankaras who swore by non-violence, as against the warring clans of the powerful Thevars of Madurai, which is also reflected in the iconography that surrounds the temple of Ayyanar. The story of the old lady who went up the hill to propitiate the deity (who, the local people say, has come down to this temple to 'settle down', may be in some ways linked to what the Jainas say about some vestiges having been removed from the hillocks above at some point. But there is no evidence to prove this point. And once the idols become part of the dominant religious idea, it is difficult to raise these issues.

There is a board outside, by the temple, announcing the 'Jaina Tourist Circuit' (but it does not mention Jaina sites, only the general tourist places), which gives details of the Jaina sites, giving the distance of each from Kilakuyilkkudi (which seems to have been called Muthupatti earlier, which is struck off).

On Settipodavu (or Chettipudavai) hill on the south-west of Samanarmalai, there is an image of Mahāvīra carved on the rock face in bas-relief showing him seated on three lions with attendants fanning him. He is shown seated under a Peepul tree. Below is inscribed in Tamil *vaṭṭeḷuttu*:

*swasti śrī Veṇbu-nāṭṭu-k-kuraṇṭi-aṣṭa-upa-
vāsi-paṭārar-māṇākkar-Guṇasenā-dēvar-guṇa
sēna dēvar-māṇākkar-kaṇakavīra-pperiyaṭika
-l-nāṭṭārru-p-purattu-amīṛta-parākki-
rama-na lūrāna-kuyīrkuṭi—ūrār-pērā
l - ceyvitta-tirumēṇi paḷḷi-
c-civikaiyār-rakṣai*

Translated as: ‘Hail! Prosperity! Guṇasenadeva was the pupil of Aṣṭōpavāsi Bhaṭṭāra of Kurandi in Venbunāḍu. Kaṇakavīra-p-periyaḍikaḷ (who was) the pupil of Guṇasenā, caused this holy image to be made on behalf of the residents of Kuyiṛkuḍi (village), also called Amirta-parākrama-nattūr in Nāṭāṟru-ppuram. May this be under the protection of the paḷḷi-c-civikaīyār.’¹⁸⁸

Inside the cavern, you find the bas-reliefs of Ambikā *yakṣi*, tīrthankaras and a *yakṣi* called Kotrakiriya, shown seated on a lion facing a demon. Beneath these figures are three inscriptions in vaṭṭeḷuttu, which tell us that ‘Guṇasenātēvar, who held the responsibility for Mādeviperumpallī for a long time, and his disciples, got these sculptures made and guarded them’.¹⁸⁹

On the same hill, right on top, a stone pillar can be seen, which has over time become the object of Murukaṇ worship. People from the village apparently come here on *Kārtikai* (November–December) to light lamps. They also celebrate the *Māci Sivaratri* (February–March to propitiate Śiva). On this day, people throng here to the pillar to light lamps and offer prayers. So, this was yet another site for me where an ancient Jaina site has become a Murukaṇ-Śiva worship space, which carries on in its own pace. The hillock is a protected monument under the ASI.

At Pechipallam, east of Samanarmalai are eight tīrthankara images, including those of Pārsvanātha with inscriptions which date from the eighth to tenth century CE, indicating as to who got them made.

From these inscriptions, one learns about the sculptures made by the mother of Sage Acchanandi [Ajjanandi], Gunasena tevar [Guṇasena tēvar], the head of the *paḷḷi* and persons from Kurandi Tirukattampallī [Kuraṇṭi Tirukāṭṭāmpallī].¹⁹⁰

Inscriptions at Pechipallam reveal that,

The Pāṇḍyan ruler Parāntaka Veeranāṟyaṇaṇ (860–950 AD) built the Maadevi Perumpallī in his wife Vaanavan Maadevi’s name.¹⁹¹ After the disintegration of the educational academy/monastery, people placed the idols of the Iyakkiyars from here in the Ayyanar temple below the hillock and prayers are offered to them there...The stone inscription was made in 889 AD, ie, the 29th year of the rule of Veeranāṟyaṇaṇ. From this it is known that this hillock was known by the name ‘Thiruvuvagam’ and donation of two Veḷis of land in Pulingkunroor situated in the Maadakkulak-keezh division of the kingdom for maintenance of this monastery was made. Pulingkunroor is the modern-day Kongarpuliyangulam where Jaina rock-cut beds are seen.¹⁹²

These hillocks were apparently in bad shape, and some of the boulders were broken when T. S. Sripal first chanced upon them in the course of one of his campaign tours. He met other Tamil Jainas like A. Chakravarti and also met the

¹⁸⁸ Both, the inscription and the translation, from ‘Samanarmalai Inscriptions’, edited by M. Venkataramayya, Epigraphical Assistant, Ootacamund, in T. S. Sripal, *Samanarmalai Celvōm*, Vira Sasana Sangha, Calcutta, 1954, pp. 5–6 of the Appendix.

¹⁸⁹ *History of Madura—A Voyage into Jaina Antiquity*, Green Walk, Madurai, 2014, pp. 22–23.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, pp.23–24.

¹⁹¹ Spellings as in the original.

¹⁹² Ibid, pp.24–5.

Superintendent of the South Indian ASI at Fort St. George in Madras and requested for protection for this set of hillocks. *The Hindu*, dated 15 July 1949, noted that,

Recent discoveries of archaeological interest were explained by Dr. B. Ch. Chhabra, Government Epigraphist for India, in an interview with a representative of *The Hindu* today. 'Some Jain inscriptions of 10th century AD in Samanar Malai, Seven miles from Madura, had also come to the notice of the Department' he said, and added that steps were being taken to prevent the quarrying of the rocks there. The place he said, was an early Jain settlement and there [were] Jain bas reliefs with inscriptions in Vattezhuthu characters. (Sripal 1954, p. 37)

In a letter written to Sripal, dated 4 March 1950, the Superintendent, Department of Archaeology, Southern Circle, Madras, wrote,

... You will be pleased to know that the Mathurai Samanar Malai is now a protected monument and the Collector is doing his very best to see that there are no prejudicial quarrying in the vicinity of the monuments.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely

(Sd.) V. D. Krishnasamy (Ibid, p. 42)



Fig. 3.53 Karuṇaṇṣāmi-Ayyanar temple with a glimpse of Samanarmalai in the backdrop



Fig. 3.54 The story that local people told me (of the old lady who went up the hill to propitiate the deity), in iconographic representation



Fig. 3.55 Pattavan Cuvāmi memorial near Samanarmalai

3.73 Kongarpuliyangulam

This village is about 15 km from Madurai, not far from the Madurai Kamaraj University. Here, three young boys, Chinnathambi, Ananth (the youngest) and Srikanth, became guides and showed me parts of the hill and rock face I would have otherwise missed. This place is also their playground, where they hang around, when not in school (as on that day). There is a natural cavern here with Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions by the rock beds. This is another ASI-protected monument. The board declares that nothing within 200 meters of it should be moved, modified or removed. But right at the base of the hillock is a shrine, which the boys tell me is dedicated to Tālārammaṇ (a local goddess). But elsewhere, the shrine is said to be that of the deity called *Māyaṇ*.¹⁹³ People offer worship by sacrificing goats, fowls etc., on certain occasions. A stone with a vermillion mark is the *ammaṇ*. On top of the hillock here, again, there is the idol of Murukaṇ with Vaḷḷi and Devasenā, which reminded me of a similar one at Tirupparankunram. Again, there is a stone pillar (as in Samanarmalai), where people light the *kārttikai deepam*. This seems to be a recent phenomenon, but it is intriguing that all the Jaina caves have resumed the Murukaṇ ‘connect’¹⁹⁴ in these parts, as in the ancient times. One of the reasons could be the association of Murukaṇ with hills, in general. The other may be seen in more worldly terms as appropriation of spaces. But for those who, simply, believe, they simply offer worship, perhaps, without the thought of what was here before and without any knowledge of the monks who lived here and its antiquity or even what these sites mean to another community. Chinnathambi told me another story about what people here believe (so does he): there are tiny slots carved into the rock just above the bas-relief image of the tīrthankara. You are supposed to make a wish and place a stone each in those slots; if the stones remain there the next day, your wish will be granted by that deity (tīrthankara), and if the stones fall off, it won’t.

For me, it was about understanding that there are ways in which people relate to a monument of a hoary past which has been abandoned for long. To the Tamil Jinas, this is a place for occasional visits (though now they have the Green Walk more regularly, but for years, only historians and archaeologists and a few Tamil Jinas may have visited these hillocks); there is certainly no worship offered to the tīrthankaras here, or so it seems, also because it is a protected monument, which the Jinas take very seriously. Local people have constructed their own meanings of the site and have made a bond of their own kind. But the deeper problematic question is that of how the dominant idioms almost always carry their weight and subsume everything and gradually make for a common overarching template of rituals and practices. People who follow these, at least the ones who offer worship, are not at fault—many are poor peasants or landless workers; they are equally subservient to the dominant construct and dominant castes in these parts, who seem to lay a claim over everything, and that includes the business of quarrying. In a sense, the constant offer of worship and setting up of these local shrines at these Jaina sites will see to it that

¹⁹³ *History of Madura*, Green Walk, 2014, pp. 28–29.

¹⁹⁴ Just as my initial interest in Jainism came about from my research on Murukaṇ, finding most of the six sacred sites associated with his worship having earlier Jaina ‘connect’/association.

nobody will crush these stones, at least. But what if the ‘destruction’ of another kind has already happened by way of building shrines over a monument of a religion that does not believe in these practices? Or when that site is sacred for another community in a very distinct manner and form? Hegemony, then, plays its game.

An elderly woman here told me another story that Rāmar (Rāma) had paid a visit to this place and hence you see the beds inside the cavern. But she also said that *Puttar* (Buddha) had done penance here. She informed me that the rocks in front of the main hillock have been quarried and broken up right in front of her eyes.

Incidentally, some people here use the words *samaṇar* and *puttar* interchangeably while referring to the hillocks with the Jaina images.

Meanwhile, the cave here has three Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions dated to second century BCE.

Mahadevan (2003, pp. 333–335) records these, as under:

1. The first inscription (from left on the brow of the cave on the Perumalkovilmalai hill; incomplete at the end. ca. 2nd century BCE.

kura koṭupitavaṇ upaca-aṇ uparuva[ṇ]...

Upparuva (ṇ), the preceptor, caused to be given (this) cutting.¹⁹⁵

2. The second (middle) inscription on the brow of the cave. ca. 2nd century BCE.

kuru koṭalku ittavaṇ cer-ataṇ-[o]ṇ

Cerṛataṇ gave for carving (this) section.

3. The third inscription (from left) on the brow of the cave. ca. 2nd century BCE.

pākaṇ-ūr pē[r]ataṇ piṭaṇ itta vepōṇ

Pērataṇ Piṭṭaṇ of Pākaṇūr has endowed this.

Another inscription is found under the bas-relief of a tīrthankara on the rock, which mentions Accanandi who got this made. This one is dated in the ninth–tenth century CE.¹⁹⁶

Mahadevan notes that,

The expression *upacaṇ* at Tiruvadavur and its variant form *upaca-aṇ* at Kilavalavu and Kongarpuliyankulam dated to ca. 2nd century B.C are derived from Sanskrit *upādhyāya* ‘spiritual teacher’ through Prakrit *upajhaya*, *uvajha*, etc... The *upādhyāya* is venerated as one of the Pañca-paramēṣṭhin (along with Arhat, Siddha, Ācārya and Muni) by the Jains. In the Tamil Jaina tradition, the *upādhyāya* is a lay teacher of scriptures. He functions as the priest in the local Jaina temple and also conducts religious ceremonies in Jaina households. In course of time, with the waning of Jaina influence in the Tamil country, the Uvaccar became priests in the shrines of *piṭāri* (< *bhaṭāri*, originally Jaina) and other village goddesses. Still later, they figure as temple-drummers, dance masters and musicians in medieval inscriptions. (Mahadevan 2003, p. 130)

¹⁹⁵ ‘Of the section of the drip ledge’ (Mahadevan 2003, p. 333).

¹⁹⁶ *History of Madura*, Green Walk, 2014, pp. 27–28.



Fig. 3.56 The Talaramman shrine underneath the Kongarpuliyangulam rock

Fig. 3.57 A stone pole erected on the Kongarpuliyangulam Jain rock, which is propitiated by local communities on certain days of the month; this seems to be a recent addition





Fig. 3.58 Chinnathambi, Ananth and Srikanth who told me the story of the wish-fulfilling *kaṭavul* (tīrthankara) and showed me the Murukan worship site on the rock

3.74 Perumalmalai

There is a natural cavern where you find a lone sculpted Mahāvīra in stone, and on the rock face are two tīrthankara images in bas-relief. The cave has rock beds for the monks and Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions. A small distance away from this rock, I saw a tiny thatched-roofed house and some people. I decided to meet them. This was the home of Muchamma and Macchakalai with their livestock—goats, hens and a cow. Their daughter Aiswarya and her son stay with them. Macchakalai told me his family worships the figures at this *samaṇa malai* as they worship any other god. The ‘*naiṇārs*’ come here once a year and organise a feast to which they invite all the village people. Interestingly, Macchakalai called the hill *samaṇar paḍukkai*, while local people here refer to it as *pañcapāṇḍava paḍukkai*.

Incidentally, people say there are some projects coming up in the vicinity and some underground exploration is happening just a few miles from Perumalmalai. They do not know whether their village or these rocks will be affected.

I was thinking of the concept of *eṇperuṇkuṇṇam* and all the Murukaṇ linkages (from my earlier work on Murukaṇ and seeing the connections now), and I wondered if it was possible to conjecture that the *arupaṭaivīṭu* (six sacred centres) concept may have been a counter to the *eṇperuṇkuṇṇam* of the Jainas?¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷That would need more research, at a later point.

Fig. 3.59 Macchakalai (with his grandson), who also offers worship to the 'god on this (Jaina) hill'



3.75 Kilavalavu

This was an interesting experience. It was time for the sun to set for the day by the time we reached. The place is interesting because it seems to repeat the history of the stone quarrying incident of the early 1940s, which got ASI to grant protection for Samanar Malai. Here too, the rock-cut caves and Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions would have been destroyed had the demolition of the stones and rock surfaces all along the road to this place continued unabated. This place is located in Melur taluk, which is known for its granite reserves. The stone quarrying industry is also big in terms of the influential upper castes and political leaders involved in the affair. It took one sensitive District Collector, I am told, to stop the destruction of the Jaina caves here. The place has a rare natural beauty, which was enhanced by the play of light at dusk and women farmers taking a break, seated on the rocks, after a long day's labour. Far ahead, one could see stone quarrying carrying on.

On a big boulder, high up, is the carved figure of Mahāvīra with a Tamil Brāhmi inscription below, which is dated to the third century BCE. This place was apparently a Jaina *paḷḷi*, and it was donated by one teacher named Ilavōṇ from Tōṇṭi village. Another inscription records the donation of 50 goats and ghee and food. The figures of Pārśvanātha and Bāhubali are also carved on the rock surface. Apparently, these date to the ninth-tenth century CE.

Mahadevan records this inscription:

On the brow of the cave called the 'school' on the Pancapantavarmalai hill.. ca. 2nd century B.C.

*upa[c]a-aṇ toṇṭi=
[l]lavōṇ koṭu paḷi-i*

The hermitage given by the preceptor, (I)lavōṇ of Toṇṭi. (Mahadevan 2003, p. 331)

In his commentary on the inscriptions, he points out:

The Cēra port of Toṇṭi on the west coast was more famous in the Caṅkam Age... (*Aiṅkuṇūru, Toṇṭipattu*, 178:2–3). However, the eastern post of Toṇṭi is probably referred to in *Kuṟuntokai* (verses 210 and 238) where the city is specially associated with rice cultivation...The eastern port of Toṇṭi is more unambiguously mentioned in later works.... (Ibid, p. 554)

On the way back from Kilavalavu, we passed through an interesting village shrine, where the presiding deity was called Muṇiyāṇḍi. Muṇiyāṇḍi would mean any *muni*. The iconography was striking. It seemed like an image of a tīrthankara (seated, in penance), which had metamorphosed into Muṇiyāṇḍi. There are several such instances in Tamilnadu where Buddha and tīrthankara images have become a local god or goddess image.



Fig. 3.60 Signposts at Kilavalavu showing the way to the Jaina rock (called Pancapandavamalai) and the Murukan temple (the latter is not a temple but a sacred space created underneath the rock where the spear is worshipped)



Figs. 3.61–3.62 The space where the spear of Murukan is worshipped (this was earlier the cave beds where Jaina monks resided. The place has Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions)

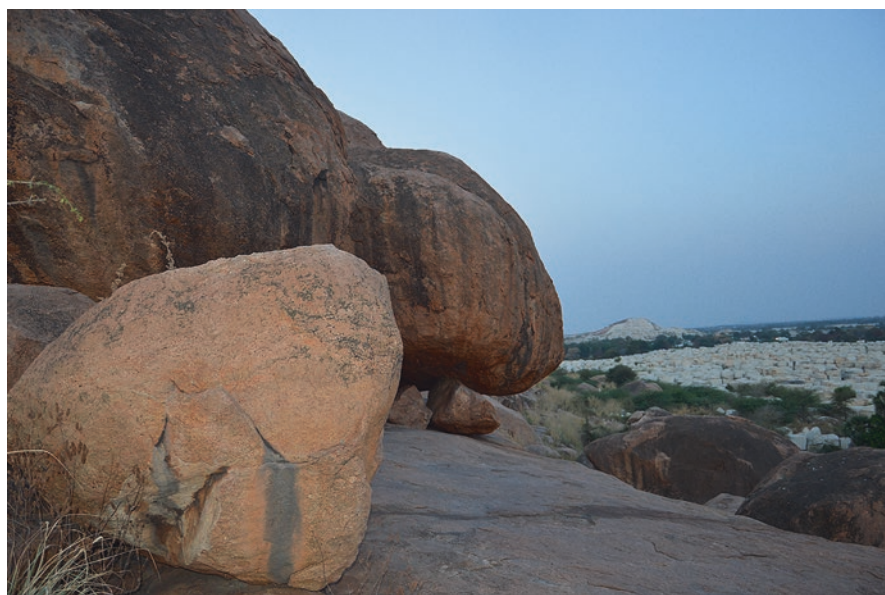


Fig. 3.63 Near Kilavalavu Jaina rock stone quarrying, for construction industry and other purposes (the District Collector had ordered stopping of quarrying here after several requisitions from the Jaina community)



Fig. 3.64 Muniyandi idol

Metamorphosis of a Mahavira image

How a seventh century Jain sculpture became an Amman idol in rural Tamil Nadu

T.S. Subramanian

CHENNAI: A beautiful sculpture of Mahavira, the last Tirthankara of Jainism, has been converted into the idol of a Hindu Amman (mother goddess) on the edge of the Aliyar dam near Puliyanakudi village in Coimbatore district in Tamil Nadu. It has now been revealed by a scholar. The idol, complete with *trishuls* (trident) planted behind it, is now that of "Aadhali Amman."

The original sculpture, circa seventh century A.D., has all the makings of a Mahavira sculpture. There are three umbrellas (*mukkudai* in Tamil) above the head, *chauri* bearers on either side, and lion motifs on the pedestal. Mahavira is in the *padmasana* pose. The granite sculpture, about 4.5 feet tall and 2.5 feet wide, is in a rock shelter on the banks of the Kadamparai river.

K.T. Gandhirajan, who specialises in art history and has found several rock art sites in Tamil Nadu, said he discovered in May 2007 the metamorphosis of Mahavira into Aadhali Amman.

The transformation happened some 20 years ago when people belonging to nearby Kottur village found the sculpture in the rock shelter. They were clearly not aware that it was a Mahavira image, Mr. Gandhirajan clarified. They brought a sculptor from Palani who set about transforming the damaged sculpture into a Hindu female deity. The damaged visage of Mahavira was repaired and female features were created in cement.

Ornaments were added and the eyes painted to make it look like that of a Hindu female deity, and *trishuls* were planted behind it. It was wrapped in a sari. People started calling it Aadhali Amman or Aakali Amman. A priest conducts pujas before it every day.

Mr. Gandhirajan noticed the three umbrellas above the Amman's head, the *chauri* bearers on either side and the lion motifs on the pedestal — sure signs that it was Mahavira.

There are several places in Tamil Nadu where sculptures of the Jain Tirthankaras, or transformed into idols of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Vishnu and Shiva sport vermilion (*kunkum*) and holy ash. Since three more heads could not be added to one of the sculptures to make it look like Brahma, a legend in Tamil proclaims it as Brahma, he said.

Another instance

According to D. Ravikumar, who has studied the history of Buddhism in several districts in Tamil Nadu and is a legislator belonging to the Dalit Panthers of India, a statue of the Buddha at Arangan-kuppam in Pulucherry has been converted into that of Brahma Rishi. The Buddha is seated in a *padmasana* position, he is wearing a *vastra* with folds on it and there is an *ushnisha* (flame) above the head.

The Buddha now wears a dhoti and a priest performs pujas including *aarti* to the Brahma Rishi. Statues of Vinayaga and Muruga were added to the temple, Mr. Ravikumar said.

Jainism in Tamil Nadu

Jainism prospered in Tamil country circa 200 B.C. to the ninth century A.D.

There was a substantial population of Jains and a number of Jain monuments concentrated during that period in a large part of north-eastern and southern Tamil Nadu.

BEFORE AND AFTER: The Mahavira sculpture, bare. (Right) The sculpture converted into Aadhali Amman.

PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Fig. 3.65 A report in *The Hindu* dated 4 July 2007. The Mahavira idol has been converted into that of Aadhali Amman (a goddess) in Puliyanakudi village in Coimbatore district in Tamilnadu

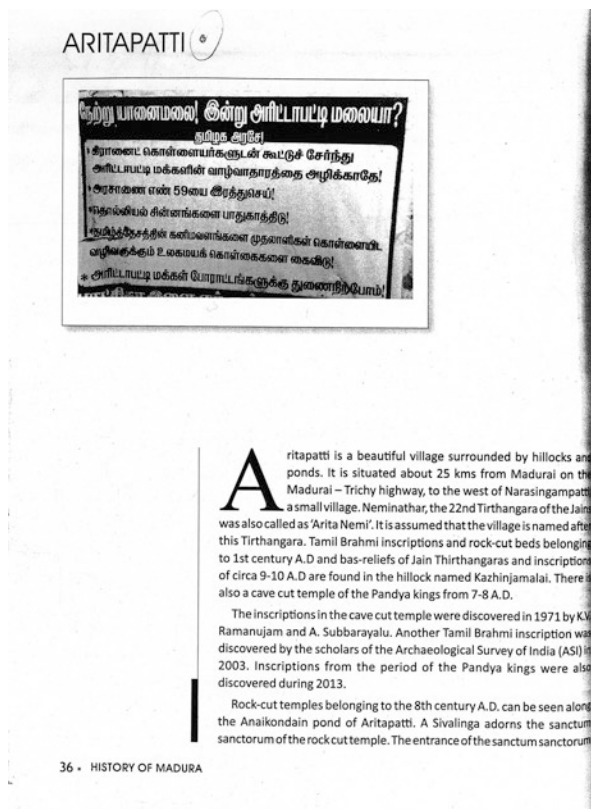


Fig. 3.66 A wall poster asking the question: 'Is it Arittapatti's turn after Anaimalai?' The Tamil Jainas inform their support to local groups protesting quarrying of rocks at Arittapatti (Source: *History of Madura, Green Walk*, 2014, p. 36)

3.76 Some Reflections

There is a certain section of the community that retains its sense of 'connect' with the ideological basis of the religion; this section approaches the idea of their marginalisation as a community from that perspective. These sections of the Tamil Jainas insist also on the historical tradition of the religion in Tamilnadu; by *historical*, they are very particular about the documentation of historical evidence of their antiquity, and they try to connect the historical with the ideological base of their religion (in terms of both ideology and praxis) which is, in the strictest sense, atheistic, and does not, therefore, believe in offering worship to the *yaksis* which, they feel, is an attribute that moves away from the idea that the *tirthankara* is the central aspect of the religion, who teaches people to attain the highest individual self-realisation through the practice of right faith, right conduct and right knowledge.

Then there is the related aspect of *ahimsā* in its strictest form, to the extent possible and advisable, for the śrāvakas. This particular section of the Tamil Jainas also maintains the deepest engagement with Tamil language and literature, in terms of preserving manuscripts through printed editions they bring out with striking regularity. This section may be called the *discourers*, who are very much historically located, in the sense that they assert their historical location in Tamil history in terms of what was, and what has become of them, in today's times.

There are the others who continue to practise their religion at its basic level to the extent they can, negotiating with the present, perhaps also through means of compromise at the everyday level. For them, the preservation of temples and attending to rituals constitute, by extension, the preservation of their religion. By preserving the ritualistic aspects of their religion, which they call 'a way of life', they feel they are contributing not simply to their own religion but to the general well-being of all people around them. This section of the community will persist in the belief that the insistence on *kollāmai* (non-killing) protects living beings and the environment; they will also insist that these practices inspire other communities and thereby help the society 'live and let live'. Reaching their personal destination towards the personal salvation, as referred to in their scriptural tradition, seems to them the ultimate goal of their existence. The sense of community, too, changes through time and does not remain constant. So, when I use the term community where I do, it is when they (the Tamil Jainas) make the point (consciously) of their being *samaṇarkaḷ*—with the *samaṇa koḷkai*—and being Tamil as their central point, as conscious historical agents and distinct from the others. And when they come together to express this 'being Tamil *samaṇar*' or simply 'Jaina', during events and occasions, and also when they assert their literary outputs through historical time and when they insist on their minority status (for which they make representations), the sense of community becomes prominent, but *within*, and *among*, the community (like with every other community), there are differences of opinion as to what would constitute being a true follower of Jainism and everyday negotiations with larger political, economic and social changes facing them.

For some, perhaps, attending to the religious aspects of their being—going to the temple for annual rituals, donating to charity and religious functions and taking time off their jobs in cities like Chennai to participate in the annual rural gatherings (in their original homes in villages during temple renovations and chariot-*tēr*- processions)—constitutes being a true *samaṇar*/Jaina. In many cases, though many have moved to cities and a very small minority of them have perhaps gone abroad to work or study; they retain their connections with their original home in the villages through these annual rituals or by the upkeep of the ancient temples, some of them coming under the protection of the ASI, in which case, there is the everyday lighting of the lamp to the *tīrthankara* and attendant *yakṣi* and *yakṣa* by a caretaker of that temple in the villages.

In some Tamil Jaina villages, while you see a desolate ambience, with many houses locked or sold out to non-Jainas, on normal days, during annual festivals in the temples, the place undergoes a visible transformation, with numerous Tamil

Jaina people assembling there. And some of the houses that open up during these occasions, play host to a number of families taking part in the festivities. The houses, which are classic models, with distinct architecture, are among the last few remaining, with the imminent possibility of their being either destroyed due to lack of maintenance or sold out. While the community members do see the need to maintain their scriptural and monumental tradition (the latter being the rock-cut caves, caverns with inscriptions and structural temples), somehow, the upkeep of their traditional homes in villages has not yet gained their attention, so far. Some of their houses in villages are locked forever, perhaps awaiting the gradual disintegration into ephemeral time.

At another level, there are several identities, just as true for other communities in history. There is the *Tamil* Jaina identity; there is the *Jaina* identity, the *veḷḷāḷa* identity and the *agriculturist*, who is negotiating at the economic and political level with changes in the agrarian context all over the country, Tamil Nadu not excluded, and how that *agriculturist* deals with the changes and how that affects his or her ideas of *kollāmai*. In the last case, for instance, when asked whether the Jaina ideal of *ahimsā* affects the manner in which they practise cultivation, some of them did say they use organic fertilizers and do not use chemicals, but some others said it was impossible to do so. And within the religion, they invoke the *allowance* for different kinds of *himsā* that are conceded to the householders, including *udyoga himsā* (where some amount of *himsā* is involved in one's livelihood). But these compromises are made up through stricter observance of *kollāmai* through *ūṇ uṇṇāmai* and strict observance of restrictions on food. But like any other community, here, too, life in the cities and towns has meant some relaxations on matters of food, as well, which senior members of the community rue and talk of the general changes in ways of the world which have affected their religion, as well, especially among the younger generations.

There is, today, an evident interest among some of the Tamil Jainas—in their 30s and 40s—to understand their antiquity in Tamil Nadu. There is a concept of *ahimsā walk* that has been introduced by some of them which undertakes walks to the rock-cut caves and natural caverns with Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions, as a religious walk, with pamphlets and posters highlighting the importance and relevance of non-violence. In some of these contexts, Mahatma Gandhi is also invoked, at times. There are also programmes arranged for public debates on Jaina religion and history in Tamil Nadu. There is another section of the Tamil Jaina community, which began the more secular *Green Walk* in Madurai in year 2013, covering all the ancient rock-cut caves and natural caverns with Tamil Brāhmi inscriptions, which had the stated purpose of highlighting the history of Jainism in Tamil Nadu. As part of these walks, the focus is history, with lectures arranged by historians and archaeologists. Many people, across communities, attend these walks. There is a stamp here of historicising the Jaina past, rather than focussing on ritual aspects of veneration of these sites. These walks also take cognisance of the destructions rampant in these parts due to stone quarrying and other developments; hence, the focus is also on preserving ancient vestiges for historical purposes. The effort to preserve the antiquity of the

community in Tamil history merges here with the efforts to preserve the larger history of the Tamil country.

3.77 Historical Self-Location

Among the numerous books donated to me by the Tamil Jainas, nearly 80 per cent pertain to books on history of Jaina monuments and Jainism in Tamil Nadu, epigraphy (either compiled by historians or the community scholars, with keen interest in history, very conscious of the historical method, highlighting inscriptional 'evidence' for any statement made or corroborating with historical writings about Jainism) and books on *Tamil* literature, *Jaina literature* in Tamil, *regional* Tamil history and so on. Most books were in Tamil. For instance, there are books written by Mayilai Sini Venkatasamy¹⁹⁸, V. Vedachalam, etc., which I was asked to read 'compulsorily'. And there are smaller booklets, some written by historians based in Chennai (such as Ekambaranathan and Iravatham Mahadevan), or articles contributed by historians like R. Champakalakshmi.

Most of these were local publications, mostly published in Chennai, Kanchipuram, Madurai or Tindivanam, and one would not find most of these books in a random bookshop or in libraries. There is a phenomenal output of writings in Tamil among the Tamil Jainas. Some of these writings are on history and literature, and also, lately, some of them have begun to transcribe and print the palm leaf manuscripts found in their homes or temples or at the Cittamur *maṭham*, a study of which should be interesting. And some of these printed versions are songs: lullabies, marriage songs, songs on *tīrthankaras* and local *kuṛavañcis*. There are also efforts to document Jaina treatises on music. This latter aspect should fill a lacuna in what is otherwise an overemphasis on studies on Carnatic music within the brāhminical tradition.¹⁹⁹ Hence, writing history with these sources becomes richer and more rooted and organic to the region and context.

Most of their conflicts—which they remember—and self-perception and persecution are pegged on the language Tamil in some way or the other. The Śaivite bhakti bards (with whom they have the long-drawn, recorded conflict) composed in Tamil much later than the Buddhists and the Jainas who had already been writing in the language. The Buddhist and Jaina traditions also seem to have been part of the Caṅkam corpus. But the Śaivite tradition and writings influenced by that tradition continued, and continue, to make the assumption that Tamil received an impetus with *bhakti*. And the Tamil Jaina community internalises these moments of being

¹⁹⁸ Mayilai Sini Venkatasamy was introduced to me by the Tamil Jainas, in fact.

¹⁹⁹ There is perhaps a need to understand the inherent violence in these seemingly non-problematic aspects of dominant traditions as well, which marginalise several others. It would be truly a significant exercise if someone were to collate treatises on music from the Tamil Buddhist and Jaina tradition, for instance, with a non-god approach to the world, and to music, which has as yet not been done.

delinked from their past. The Śaiva-Jaina and the Brāhmin/Hindu-Jaina contestations are part of the community memory. The Buddhist conflict does not find so much mention, barring one or two legends that are recounted, including the defeat of the Buddhists in a debate at Karandai village.

A final word before I end this chapter. The title of my doctoral dissertation started with the words *Identities in Conflict...*, which is what may be one of the truths of Tamil history for long. I was told by many—including historians—that there was peaceful co-existence between communities and it should not be read as ‘conflicting identities’. But my conversations with the Tamil Jainas²⁰⁰ revealed to me a substratum wherein this presumed, outwardly peaceful, co-existence covers up elements of conflict that are expressed in feelings of being marginalised; overt and covert acts of violence perpetrated on ancient monuments; appropriation of texts; writing one-sided histories of a singular, long, Tamil ethos, where some communities do not exist; wiping out of literature; etc. No different from some of the goings-on of contemporary times.

Regions and regional contexts of the religious communities’ social histories are important to take cognisance of. Village history plays an important role in the Tamil Jaina context. There are no *sthalapurāṇa* kinds of texts within Tamil Jainism; only booklets you will find in temples donated as part of *śāstra dāna*, which will again list out the inscriptions found in the temple, of historical value to the place. There are no sacred tanks which have been visited by a divine presence which cure all ailments. It is important to bring out these striking differences between the temple context of the Jainas and that of the ‘Hindu’ ones, in a general sense. Leslie Orr, in her study on what she calls ‘Temple women’, or ‘*devadāsīs*’, finds no mention of this category of people in the inscriptions found in medieval Jaina temples. The only references to women found are references to the Jaina nuns. Most of the other temples in medieval Tamil Nadu (non-Jaina) show the existence of *devadāsīs*, as mentioned in the inscriptions. She writes,

Jain religious women, defined in a way that parallels the definition for temple women²⁰¹, are those women (a) who are referred to by the term *kuratti* (teacher...) or *mānākkīyār* (student...), (b) who functioned in or received support from a Jain institution, or (c) who are described as belonging, in some sense, to a Jain institution. The Tamil inscriptions do not refer to these women as nuns or ascetics or as members of specific Jain monastic communities (*gaṇas* or *sanghas*) but the fact that they are generally identified with reference to a disciplic succession rather than a kinship group seems to indicate their status as renunciates. These women are particularly in evidence in inscriptions of the eighth century, before the

²⁰⁰ Though, in the case of the lower castes, and the ‘untouchable’ castes, there has never been a history of ‘peaceful’ co-existence for the longest time. Even today, they continue to bear the costs of being born into a caste, through attacks on them across Tamil Nadu, which get reported, time and again. The identities they were born with seem to stick to them even to this day, more to victimise them. While my study focussed on a religious minority and marginalisation by a tradition that becomes dominant and overbearing (mainly ‘Hindu’, brāhminical), the people who bear most the brunt of marginalisation are the dalits and the tribal communities/adivasis.

²⁰¹ Though one wonders how and why.

beginning of the Cōla period, when they are prominent as donors of the Jain images found in caves and on rockfaces in Tirunelveli district, in the far south of Tamilnadu. (Orr 2000, p. 40)

The Jaina doctrine would have been, perhaps, responsible for keeping in check this tradition in their temples.

3.78 Worship and Rituals

At Melcittamur, and elsewhere, women, in general, knew how to define their rituals in opposition to/contrast to brāhminical (Hindu) religion and folk religion. Even where there were obvious influences of a dominant religious culture. Perhaps one needs to look at a larger ‘Tamil peasant cultural complex’—celebration of Pongal, the *tēr* (chariot festivals), *kārttikai* (of course with Tamil Jaina meanings and associations) and goddess worship (various arguments were given as to why there is goddess worship in śrāvaka dharma despite opposition by a few of their own teachers to this kind of worship). Example was given of a Jaina monk called Arjivasagar (from the ‘north’/vaṭa nāḍu) who had (in one of his yearly tours, in recent times) opposed these rituals and asked the Jainas to discontinue and dispense with what he believed were bad influences of brāhminism. Among the Tamil Jainas, there is a section that follows his strictures. Others do not.

We do see donations made by individuals to Jaina *paḷlis* and other establishments or simply for worship; and if in that period the larger influence of a dominant religion, thought and ideology ruled the roost, then the donations and grants and nature of ritual patterns too would be influenced. ‘Borrowing’, or one religion taking from another, may not be a sufficient analysis. It must then be seen through the concept of hegemony and processes that go into creating that hegemony, which will later become, simply, the ‘normative order’.

3.79 *Yakṣi* Worship²⁰²

One of the most distinguishing features of Tamil Jainism is the worship of the *yakṣi* (and in rare cases, the *yakṣa*) within the structural edifice of the Jaina temple complex. Among the most popular *yakṣis* in Tamil Jaina temples are Padmāvatī, the *yakṣi* of Pārśvanātha, and Ambikā locally referred to as Dharumadevī or Kūṣmāṇḍinī, the *yakṣi* of Neminātha. Of the two, Ambikā is by far the most popular in Tamil Nadu, and her worship is older than that of other *yakṣis* as temples dedicated to Neminātha in Tamilnadu are older and more numerous than the ones dedicated to other tīrthaṅkaras. (Uma Maheshwari 2002, p. 33)

²⁰² A larger version of this appeared in the Centre of Jaina Studies Newsletter, March 2009, Issue 4 (pp. 33–35); as Nehru Scholar at the Victoria and Albert Museum Jain Art Fund, London, I focussed on the relational aspect of *yakṣi* worship among Tamil Jainas.

Padmanabh Jaini notes that ‘Ancient Jaina texts are silent about the status of the *yakṣas* (or *yakṣis*) within their religious fraternity...’ (Jaini 1991, p. 193).

M. N. Tiwari points out that ‘The earliest archaeological evidence...shows that Ambikā does not appear in Jaina worship prior to A.D 550...’ (Tiwari 1989, p. 21).

And further,

The worship of Ambikā started as early as in the 6th century A.D and at least up to 9th century A.D she was carved in association with Rṣabhanātha, Pārśvanātha and Neminātha. (And) her more distinctive iconographic form was first visualised towards the close of the 8th century AD.... (Ibid, p. 23)

Inscriptional records mentioning *yakṣi* worship in Tamil Nadu have been found at Pancapandavarmalai, Tirumalai, Ponnur (North Arcot district), Aivarmalai, Tiruchanatrumalai and Kalugumalai (Madurai district), among others. One finds *yakṣi* images as prominent ones in terms of holding their own, iconographically, at Anandamangalam (Siddhāyikā and Ambikā), Pancapandavarmalai (North Arcot, Poṇiyakkiyār, golden *yakṣi*), Anaimalai and Settipodavu hill (Madurai district), Tiruparuttikunram (Jinakanchipuram, Ambikā), Kalugumalai (Tinneveli district, Ambikā) and Karandai (Dharumadevi). The Tamil Jinas believe that the Ambikā image in the Tiruparuttikunram temple was originally part of the Kāmākṣi temple complex at Kanchipuram which, according to them, was a Jaina temple later converted into a Śaiva temple. But some others believe that it was a Buddhist temple. Ambikā in the Tiruparuttikunram temple is shown holding a mango leaf, a child and a staff. She is seen as a powerful deity in her own right and granter of boons. The story of Ambikā is most popular with the Tamil Jinas. Her story, which appears in the *Śrīpurāṇam* (a text found in all Tamil Jaina households) virtually, lives in the minds of Tamil Jaina women, especially.

The story goes like this²⁰³:

Agnilā was the wife of a Brāhmin named Somasarma from north Girinagara, and together they had two sons. Once during a ritual offering to the departed ancestors (*śrāddha*) Somasarma went to bathe in the river with his relatives. In the meantime, a Jaina monk passed by his house and Agnilā gave him some of the food that was meant for the Brāhmins. When Somasarma returned and heard of this, he was furious, and accused his wife of being unchaste. Dejected, she left her house with her two children and sought refuge in the forest with a Jaina mendicant. Later, a repentant Somasarma followed her to the forest (with a burning torch of flame in some versions) with the intention of bringing her back; but seeing him thus, in her fear Agnilā jumped into a well, leaving her children behind. She instantly became a *yakṣī*, named Ambikā. In his despair, Somasarma too gave up his life and was reborn as her mount, the lion. Ambikā became the protective deity of Neminātha (or Nemi) tīrthaṅkara. The Tiruparuttikunram temple Sangīta Maṇṭapam (a corridor with musical pillars) has paintings depicting the story of Agnilā.

Ambikā’s story is intriguingly similar to that of the Śaiva saint poet Kāraikkāl Ammaiār. Scholars are of varied opinion regarding the influence of one over the other. Both are stories of ordinary housewives turning into a ‘supernatural’ or other-

²⁰³ As narrated in Vedachalam (1989), p.89; I remember, with thanks, my mother, who read this book for, and with, me. The same story was also shared with me by the Tamil Jaina women.

worldly women—the chaste wife Agnilā turning into Ambikā *yakṣi* and another chaste woman, Punitavati, turning into Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃyār, a Śaiva bard/poet, symbolically discarding her clothes and adornments. Her story is narrated in the Tiruṇṇracarukkam section of Cēkklār's *Periyapurāṇam*, and it is as follows:

Punitavati belonged to a merchant family and was married to Paramadattan, son of a judge in Nāgapattiṇam. His friends once gave him two mangoes which he sent over to her. Meanwhile a Śaiva mendicant passed by their house and Punitavati gave him one of the mangoes to eat. That night after dinner Paramadattan asked for the mango. Finding it delicious, he asked her for the second one. But she had given it already to the mendicant. She prayed to Śiva and he blessed her with a mango. Paramadattan found its taste heavenly and, deciding to test her, asked for another, which she similarly produced. Fearful of her supernatural powers, he abandoned her and married another woman. Dejected, Punitavati went to Kailāsa, and sought a boon to become a *pēy*, a possessing spirit. Śiva granted her the boon and she thus became Ammaiṃyār of Kāraikkāl (a place near present day Pondicherry). (Vedachalam 1989, p. 93)

Vedachalam believes that the story of Ambikā *yakṣi*, and her form, is the older of the two in Tamilnadu. He opines that Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃyār's birth is celebrated as *māṇkaṇi viḷā* (association of mango leaves also similar to Ambikā) and that the Śaivite story of Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃyār's comes from a later period (Ibid, p. 97).

The *yakṣis*, according to Vedachalam, were initially 'village goddesses (and folk deities) later incorporated by major religions as guardian deities or protection deities...in order to attract communities to their religion through their nature of worship...' (Ibid, p.15).

The worship of *yakṣis* in Tamil Digambara Jainism needs to be seen within the evolution of temple worship in Tamil Nadu. Worship of the image of tīrthaṅkaras and their associate *yakṣis* gradually gave way to worshipping *yakṣis* as independent deities. In the temple at Karandai, Dharumadevi *yakṣi* has a separate shrine, with steps leading up to it, within the temple complex. The tīrthaṅkaras have their own individual shrines as well. Similarly, in Tiruparuttikuṇṇam, the *yakṣi* shrine is an individual shrine dedicated to her. Goddess worship in Tamil Nadu is known to be one of the oldest forms of worship, and goddesses such as Koṇṇavai are mentioned in the Caṅkam works. This basic cultural ethos may have had its influence on the development of *yakṣi* worship in Jaina temples.

I was witness to one aspect of *yakṣi* worship at the old Jaina temple at Perumpukai which I narrated earlier. Again I became witness to the *yakṣi* worship at Melcittamur in 2015. The form of worship was similar to brāhminical goddess worship, offering *kuṇkumam* (vermillion) powder and flowers, with the Kūṣmāṇḍinī *stotram* recited, as noted earlier. Following this was the recitation of a Tamil *pōṛri* (eulogy) of Kūṣmāṇḍinī as well as Jaina religion. The ritual seems to be of a much later origin, however. Tamil Jaina women relate to the *yakṣi* more personally than they do to the tīrthaṅkara. Tīrthaṅkara worship is filled with awe, reverence and some 'distance'. On the other hand, the *yakṣi* is 'ammaṇ' (mother, as Tamil women generally refer to goddesses) from whom it was easier to seek boons, while the tīrthaṅkaras, beyond 'this worldly' attachments, are also, by extension, beyond matters of granting boons to the laity. They worship tīrthaṅkaras as perfect beings and for self-realisation, keeping them outside the purview of their everyday struggles.

But with the coming of Digambara monks and nuns from the north, of late, there are efforts on part of Tamil Jainas to either do away with, or reduce, the ritualistic prayers to the *yakṣis*. But, as I noticed in my last field visit, including a similar ritual offering at Melcittamur (as with Perumpukai in 2003), the tradition of *yakṣi* worship is intrinsically part of the Tamil Jaina culture.

The *yakṣi* image and worship within Tamil Jainism is a relational aspect of women vis-à-vis the *yakṣi* within ritualistic temple worship. Most work so far has concentrated on elaboration of the descriptive features of these ‘attendant deities’ within the larger Jaina tradition. A closer look at the evolution of non-Jaina mother goddess shrines in the same areas as the Jaina temples would be fascinating in terms of understanding the larger ‘Tamil’ cultural ethos and its subtle or obvious influences on the iconography and ritual aspects of Jaina *yakṣi* worship.

3.80 Administrative Divisions in Inscriptions

In all the inscriptions, the following divisions are mentioned: *Paṅgalanāḍu*, *Palkunrattukkōṭṭam*, *Rājarājavalanāḍu*, *Siṅgapuranāḍu*, *Venkunrattukkōṭṭam* and *Ponṇūrṇāḍu* agrarian divisions. Wherever land was transacted between the *ūrār* and the Jaina *pallis*, a relationship was forged between these two segments. It may be interesting to see how it would change over years, influenced by ideology and state with the dominance of the brāhminical and Śaivite movement, considering that there is also—in the Tamil Jaina narratives—a conversion sub-text (Śaiva vellāla). Could this latter point also have been one reason for the consistent decline in Jaina agricultural settlements over the years?

3.81 A Note on Layers of History, Memory and Community’s Construction of Past

There are layers of history that people remember. At the topmost layer (of something that they remember immediately when one asks the question), their village is the central focus. It tells one of their constructions: of themselves, their history and their place in the history of their village and a larger history of the community. In many cases, inscriptional records may not figure in their seeking ‘sanction’ of a ‘glorious’ past. But the past is important to them, as is history. Not everything they relate to dwells in the realm of mythology, nor do they resort to myth-making, in most cases. There may be a few stories like Dharumadevi helping Akaḷaṇka in the debate, but it is ‘rooted’ in Karandai, the village. And the goddess is the *yakṣi* ‘of’ Karandai, not simply the *yakṣi*, Dharumadevi, the protective deity of a tīrthankara of the larger Digambara Jaina tradition. Karandai, in this case, is the central point of the story and becomes part of the collective memory of the community; their history. Thus, their place in history is vectored through the history of their village; the association of their village vectored through history of their religion and their

village in the history of Tamil Jaina religion, its place there. Each village has its own importance within a circulatory space—sacred and secular; antiquity of the village and its link with religion is something everybody stresses on.

What do they invoke, when speaking of the past? The community's relation to its history; the ones who fare better than the rest—average—invoke the past and the Jaina ascendancy; the poorer classes and the ones who are at present tilling their own lands (for many, this itself spells the decline in their status); and marginal farmers speak of the Jaina community at present—in terms of economic status (being on the decline). Some own an acre or even less than 1 acre of land. Past and its glory are not something these classes relate to. Class consciousness is definitely part of the construction of history. There seems a link between present status and perspective on their history as a community. So they mention the change—in Vembakkam as a case (but could do for other such villages too)—where in the past over 400 acres belonged to Tamil Jinas, now only 50 acres are theirs. At Tiruppanamur, there were 26 Tamil Jaina teachers, 20 years ago, and now only 4–5 retired teachers. These are also ways in which they evaluate the past against the present.

Since the last 20 years or so, many have moved out of agriculture as an occupation. There is a change in wealth in terms of land, education and mobility. But some sort of cohesiveness too, which may be invisible, does exist in help offered to the poor (among them), but not in marriage ties which happen, more or less, among equals. The place for histories that people have constructed over centuries, or a few hundred years, is important as a source. Where substantiated, it can produce a marvellous document of history, but even where unsubstantiated by 'recorded history', these histories symbolise people's construction of their role in a moving time, in a region and in language, which is equally important for historians today trying to reconstruct history of a living community. For instance, the information provided by T. Rajagopalan (whom we met at Arpakkam), an independent scholar in a small village with a collection of Buddhist and Jaina literature and history, taking note of all the 'conversions' of Jaina and Buddhist temples into Hindu temples, around his area. He has been bringing it to the notice of trained historians or the media. His own community identity (which he also points out) is important. As Śaiva vellāla, he comes from his own history. He takes me to his home which is very like a Jaina home; the threshold marks (symbols over their doors, of a pot), their food culture, eating dinner by 7 pm, vegetarianism and so on make me revert to the Tamil Jaina story about *nīr pūci nayiṇārs*. Even if they were not Jinas who converted back to Śaivism, who are these people? What is their history? Rajagopalan, for his part, seems to believe that conversions (or re-conversion) of communities did happen.

Village, for the Tamil Jinas, then is the 'theatre' where history is played out and, in that process, gives the community its identity, besides other identities such as caste, language and so forth. There is the historically tangible past that they will identify: the inscription, the temple and so on. That gives one kind of sanctity. Then there are stories of *ācāryas* visiting or villages' importance for the *maṭham*. At Vilukkam, we came across the story of *agrahāram* and cow dung thrown at a Jaina monk during Desing rājā's time. That *Nīlakeci* was composed in Pundi was something people living around Arani speak of. Pundi, then, plays a role in Tamil Jaina literary history. Similarly, Peramandur people believed that *Śrīpurāṇam* was written

there. Since Kiledailyalam does not have a history of an ancient past and the temple is a modern one, its story about the *siddhāntam* vanishing and the *Idaiyālam kuravañci* becomes important. In these ways, the community is also building its own sacred sites. The nature of sacred centres changes, and that change is perceived through the inscriptions and what they contain. Early inscriptions show donations to *ācāryas* and rock beds for monks, nuns, etc. Later, donations are made to the *tīrthankaras* at the temple, *paḷḷis* or to the *yakṣi*. This is an important shift.²⁰⁴ These sites become sacred by virtue of these acts of the laity and *ācāryas* or monks staying there. Today there seems to be a 'linking up' happening again, through the move by few Tamil Jainas to resume these activities. What they aimed to do when I met them last in 2003, they have managed to, in a limited way, with the setting up of the Madurai Jaina Heritage Centre and the Green Walk.

If these inscriptions and the narratives do not make any sense in terms of connectivity, perhaps that was what was meant to be conveyed. At the most, the antiquity of the place they relate to 'historically', for some, still remains inscriptional records, which give historical validity to the existence of Jainas in Tamil Nadu in a certain period. Where they make sense of the historical past, it can be seen in some of the narratives. But lived history, for them, for most part, is a shared cultural heritage with the language Tamil being important, which is not something we find in any of the inscriptional records. Nor can we find the way in which the community continuously draws on different periods of the past: of different periods. This chapter was a starting point to understand that idea.²⁰⁵

And there can only be a few points of analysis drawn from epigraphical evidence in a context where Jainism in Tamil Nadu has been exhaustively studied through epigraphy. There may not be much to add to the details of these records, as scholars of great repute have already worked for years to bring these out in a chronological order. Their contribution is not in question. Nor is there a question on the significance of these records. The question, however, is this: how does one, trying to understand conflict and identity as concepts in history, work with these records, if not by setting them against the community's narratives of its history and culture, or 'seeking the community'? Community concerns or community history is not something that these records reveal. They can, at the most, tell us about the support to institutions and the temple paradigm; and of course, there are details of agrarian settlements and agricultural resources going into maintenance of these Jaina institutions, the *paḷḷis*. Again, much more work needs to be done on the last point, to be able to draw any definitive or near-definitive conclusion about the Tamil Jaina agricultural community through inscriptional records.

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²⁰⁴T. S. Sripal, *Samanar Malai*, Varthamanan Pathippagam, Chennai, 1996, p. 30. I thank Mr. Anantharaj Jain who gave me his personal copy of this book, out of print now.

²⁰⁵I thank all the Tamil Jainas who took time out to speak to me. And I must mention that this does not purport to be a record of all the narratives of the community. Many villages one could not visit; even where one did, one could not record the narratives. In any case, there cannot be one single, complete (or final) account of the history of any single community in India. The complexities are far too many to capture in a study with a limited scope and resources and time-frame.



Fig. 3.67 The Madurai Jain Heritage Centre Building in Melakuyilkudi, Madurai

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Chapter 4

‘Retrieving’, Seeking, the Tamil Jaina Self: the Politics of Memory, Identity and Tamil Language

Abstract This chapter analyses the Tamil Jaina community identity through their own assertions, at different times in history. These assertions are pegged on their persecution stories, memories of persecution through different periods in history, and their innate sense of identity with the language Tamil. The concept of persecution is also analysed: persecution need not be understood in a singular manner. The idea of ‘violence’ too is understood in a different sense, not as a physical violence unleashed on the people at some point in history, but also violence of the construction of the hegemonic, which suppresses ideas and people and wipes them out from history, in different ways. There is also an attempt to problematise the possibility of understanding conflicting identities against the backdrop of socio-economic tensions prevalent at the time. So there is the memory of persecution by the bhakti bards, such as Āṇācampantar, as there is about the attempt to ‘behead’ the Tamil Jains by a certain king of Gingee of low-caste origins. These stories are also placed against the larger economic-political contestation over land, state patronage and agrarian conflict. Conflicting identities is a ‘constant’ in Tamil history. The manifestations of it happen in debates over appropriation of texts (the *Tirukkuraḷ* authorship debate, the sectarian acts of editing texts), Dravidian identity (in which Tamil Jains take active part, including in the Self-Respect Movement of Periyar) and their memories of the persecution incident. There is also a discussion on Caste and the Tamil Jaina context. There are also the Tamil Jaina figures of eminence (Sripal) who initiate social debates. The chapter also critiques the dominant tendency among scholars to negate non-‘Hindu’ identities in the discourse on Tamil language and literature (refusing to go beyond the brāhminical) and at times overtly Śaivite renditions of the Tamil language history discourse. The negation of Jaina contribution to the movement from palm-leaf manuscripts to print is stark, even in writings about, around, ‘U.Ve’Ca’, who narrates in detail his ‘discovery’ of *Cīvācacināmāṇi* and the help of his “Jaina friends” in his autobiography.

Keywords Persecution • Pain sites • Authorship • Caste • *Cīvācacināmāṇi* • Periyar • ‘Jeevabandhu’ Sripal • *Cināmāṇi* Nāvalar • U.Ve.Ca

I am trying to locate a community and its identity and the changes through a 'long' historical time. The basic idea is to critique the prevalent tendency among scholars to 'freeze' a living community within set periods and trace an entire 'movement' from 'entry', through 'dominance' (?) and 'decline', based on records of political/state patronage. 'Persecution' and conflict are also seen in different terms, over different periods, not confined merely to the period of the bhakti bards. Importance is given primarily to the Tamil Jaina community's narratives that reflect a situation where you find them constantly asserting their identity. Conflict is seen as the 'constant' here or a sub-text. One sees a minority community consistently negotiating and working out ways of survival: moving from marginal to mainstream and marginal, time and again. The previous chapters have already traced the historical presence of the Tamil *samaṇars* through time and their present state of being. What I do here is pick up the common thread from what their conversations were all about when I met them and how it has made me understand the community in a very different manner than what I did before. Though they are within the Tamil history—in which I place them as actors and agents of the periods they have lived through—here they come across through mirrors of memory (located in historical time) and language Tamil. I found the Tamil *samaṇars* (or Tamil Jainas) constantly constructing themselves as a community vis-à-vis the other: the Śaivites at one point, a 'low-caste' king at another or the brāhmins at yet another. Even in the twentieth century, there was the case of the abusive 'HNV' record, which I shall come to later. I also engage with the caste question, which has mostly been unaddressed in previous scholarship on Tamil Jainism. Do the Tamil Jainas accept or follow caste? Are they outside of it, since their original doctrine did not bother about it? Or, did they adhere to the caste system, which itself became the hegemonic, which their own doctrine had once rejected? For, even in a Tamil Jaina text, dated, variously, between the fifth century CE and tenth century CE, you have one of the strongest denunciation of caste and that too, through hard-hitting metaphors, and from a female voice. This was the philosophical poetic treatise called *Nīlakeci*. Did the discourse of that text ever flow into the community's consciousness?

I am also looking at the way the prominent Tamil Jainas located themselves within the Dravidian and anti-brāhmin movement as much as with the movement for Tamil language and culture as against Sanskritism. There are conversations, snippets from recent history and more. Having met the Tamil Jainas, the whole idea of looking at Tamil language as a separate discourse came from their constant affirmation of their contribution to Tamil and Tamil identity being as strong as their Jaina identity. The community also asserts its identity constantly by way of claims to a past and figures of the past that have been 'appropriated' by the dominant communities: the Tamil *Tirukkuraḷ* being a case in point. This is also discussed in detail. The Tamil Jainas have continued to claim the author of this text as a Digambara monk, or a teacher, Kundakundācārya/Eḷācārya. And most important of all, the Tamil Jaina community is agrarian. And this last point is significant, considering the fact that most people (scholars including) associate the Jainas (as a universal category) with only trade, based on erroneous notions that the doctrine of non-violence is the reason for that choice of vocation. The Tamil Jainas have, for generations,

been involved in agriculture and need to be considered as an agrarian society. Their agrarian self is also expressed time and again in their self-perception. Tamil Jaina settlements are agrarian. The Tamil Jainas consider themselves as the original agriculturists, since agriculture was devised by their first *tīrthankara* Ṛṣabha, as he divided the society into occupational groups. Most Tamil Jainas also happen to be *veḷḷāḷars*. And this context is mostly negated or is a relatively unknown aspect of Jainism in Tamilnadu. Changes in the agrarian context over time have also impacted change in their state of being, just as it does any other farm-based rural community.

A story of origins is not my concern for the present study, but for whatever reason, when the Jaina religion came to the south, certain sections of the farming community (in the Tamil country) seem to have been attracted to its ideals to adopt it as theirs; but most scholarship continued to present the Jainas as essentially mercantile and trade-oriented. Perhaps this comes from not having engaged with the community within their present-day contexts. Let me, however, make note of the fact that scholars writing in Tamil, about Jaina history, mainly in the past, have been more aware of the Tamil Jainas as a living community than the ones who wrote in English. People like Mayilai Sini Venkatasamy, and others, have also made references to the agricultural context and the connection with the first *tīrthankara* Ṛṣabha.

The historiography of Tamil Jainism has largely been history of the volumes of epigraphical evidence (most of them published), art and architecture and a few works on the Jaina literary output in Tamil, each subject being largely a distinct one and almost disjointed. And, despite the abundance of material available as to the area occupied by Jainas, donations of land, the '*paḷḷiccantam*' lands, monastic institutions, etc., there has as yet been no effort on tracing the historical geography of Jainas/Jainism, developments or 'movements' within or their role in Tamil history. Again, while a wealth of information and analysis exists for the sudden increase in *brahmadēya* grants and settlement of *agrahāras* by the state, there is as yet a very sketchy descriptive account of the *paḷḷiccantam* lands without a comprehensive account yet of the agrarian-political history of the Tamil Jainas. It may have been enlightening to place the '*paḷḷiccantam*' concept within this larger scheme to look at the popularity the Jina doctrine commanded. A lot about this community's history remains hidden yet in mainstream scholarship. Let me add a note here, that the literature on Jaina religion and debates on the aspects of Tamil language, or questions of association with Self-Respect Movement or questions of contemporary Tamil Jaina society have a far better representation in Tamil books, articles and pamphlets, which, again, came to me from the community members at various villages. In English scholarship, there seems to be a more or less standard template, in most cases.¹ For instance (though debated), Kennedy (1977, p. 1) had written at length of

¹ But scholars like Emmrich and Ryan are making interesting departures from the historiography so far prevalent. At least they have given importance and world-wide reception to the idea of the existence of a community of Tamil Jainas. When I had begun my doctoral research, years ago, this wasn't the case.

the ideal of brāhmiṇ as 'renouncer', whom the king 'refers' to for 'legitimacy', and the Tamil concept of kingship, for him, became the concept of ritual submission to the idea of the brāhmiṇ as supreme renouncer. The only mention of Jainas and the Buddhists is limited to reference to (or work on) their famous epics, the *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*, which mention Jaina or Buddhist mercantile associations and an urbanisation context. The whole period of possible Jaina (or Buddhist) influence over the ruling dynasties is ignored, and it may be anybody's question as to what was the ideal of kingship being referred to in this period. Moreover, the Jaina monks were renouncers in a stricter (total) sense than the brāhmiṇs.

This chapter deals essentially with three major issues emerging from what 'went on' in the minds of the people when I asked them about their history. The three segments are in fact those issues that formed the most common—or predominant—layer of their memories, self-perceptions and what seemed to them most significant aspects of their history. What I have attempted with the Tamil Jaina history could perhaps work at a theoretical level with communities minoritised or marginalised over time. How does one retrieve those layers to build for histories that acknowledge them as equal agents in the histories of nations or regions?

So, the three segments are memories of persecution (stories they told me, which I analyse), the Tamil identity question (within which I include issues of 'authorship' of texts and how it affects their sense of agency in Tamil and their involvement with the Dravidian and Self-Respect movements) and the Caste question. May I also add that the persecution memories and the Tamil question merge in the bhakti paradigm, and I touch upon a few examples of how mainstream scholarship continues to engage (mostly) uncritically with bhakti, ignoring its problematic social-political aspects. Even where they agree on the fact the Appar and Nānacampantar filled their verses with abuse for the Jainas and Buddhists, scholars still write volumes on these hymns and consider the bhakti concept a 'democratic', 'liberal' discourse.² The bards' verbal abuse of other communities becomes a mere footnote in most of these works. I cite some of those examples.

4.1 The Persecution Question: Sites of Memory, Expressions of Pain

I was walking with an elderly Tamil Jaina from a bus stop to a home at Tirupparambur—barely a kilometre—back in 2003, and the first thing he told me after initial introductions was the story of Sundara Pāṇḍya: the king was a Jaina initially; he had a headache. His sister was a Śaiva. The king's Jaina guru could not

²Even though it is known that these hymns became (and are) part and parcel of the economic-political power paradigm of Tamil temple worship.

cure him. But Appar, who was brought in by his sister, cured him. The king converted to Śaivism.³

This story gets retold in many versions in many of the villages. Appar is one of the Śaiva bards who was instrumental in zealous proselytisation and conversion of many vellāḷas into Śaiva faith. The Tamil Jains believe that two of the Śaiva bards, Appar and Nānacampantar, were the most vociferous opponents of the Jaina faith. Stories abound as to why Appar chose to become a reconverted Śaiva:

Appar (was a) contemporary of the Pallava king Mahendra I (AD 600–630) whose capital was Kāñci. Appar was born about 600 AD in a rich vellāḷa family at the village in the South Arcot district. He got in touch with the Jaina scholars and became a zealous convert to their faith. To get rid of an acute colic pain, he went, at the instance of his devout sister, to a Śiva temple and broke forth into a song of prayer... (Śiva) relieved (him) of pain and in a voice from heaven gave him the title Tirunāvukkarasu (the blessed king of speech, Sanskrit equivalent of Vāgīśa, the saint is known as Vāgīśa also). An ardent devotee of Śiva [he] initiated Pallava king into the Śaiva faith. The boy saint Sambandar affectionately called him ‘Appar’ (father) ...since then [he has] this appellation. He is said to have composed 49,000 decads of hymns, of which 311 are extant. (Pillai 1959, p. 341)

Similar phantasmagoric tales of other bhakti bards prevail (to this day):

Sambanda is said to have been born about AD 639 to a brāhman couple of Shiyali. Śiva and Pārvati are said to have appeared before him and fed him in a golden cup, the milk of spiritual potency. Abiding wisdom and power entered into him (and he thus became) Gnānasambandar....He condemned what he disliked in the life and teachings of Jains and Buddhists of his time. After re-establishing Śaivism in the Pāṇḍyan kingdom (he) returned to the Chōḷa land; from where he started on a northern tour...He is said to have sung in all 16,000 decads of hymns, of which only 384 are extant.... (Ibid, p. 342)

Sripal notes that Appar was ‘*Appan munivar*’, a popular name for Dharmasenā, a Jaina ascetic at Tirunarungondai. He preached from there, treated illnesses and so on. People called him ‘*Appar*’ out of love and respect. In Śaiva accounts Appar converted to Śaivism when he couldn’t be cured of a stomach ache, at his sister’s behest (Sripal 1975, p. 112).

Many others have narrated accounts of the persecution: impaling of the Jain monks, the *kaḷuveṛra viḷā*, the festival celebrating the same at Madurai and so on. Let me cite two examples that reveal the Śaivite exaggerated myth making within brahminical temple-land ownership paradigm:

In a story in the *Periyapurāṇam* (Cēkkiḷār) refers to Tiruvōṭṭiyūr. A Śaiva planted a male toddy tree. Some Jains questioned him if he could transform these into female trees. Nānasampantar sang a *patikam* (verse) and before dawn, the trees were transformed. The Jains fled the village... The Tiruvōṭṭiyūr Śiva temple has frescoes showing the impalement of Jains (as in Madurai). (Venkatasamy 1954, pp. 68–69)

Tiruvārūr Tirukkuḷam is a tank feeding eighteen acres of land. The *Periyapurāṇam* mentions that the Taṇṭiāṭikaḷ (Śaiva) tank was a small one surrounded by Jaina land and *paḷḷis* on four banks. The Śaivas wanted to make it bigger by removing the Jaina settlements. The

³This is how that gentleman remembered the story. It was the first time I had heard of that story. I recount it here just as it was told to me in that brief walk. I did not remember to ask his name.

Jainas protested. Cēkkiḷār mentions that Śiva appeared in the dream of the king to command destruction of the Jaina settlements at this place (Ibid, p. 70).

Thurston records another, as follows:

...The Madura District Gazetteer mentions taking from the Madura Sthalapurana about the origins of Anaimalai—The Jains of Conjeevaram tried to convert the Saivite people of Madurai to the Jain faith. Finding the task difficult, they had recourse of magic. They dug a great pit 10 miles long, performed a sacrifice thereon, and thus caused a huge elephant to rise from it. This beast they sent against Madura. It advanced towards the town, shaking the whole earth at every step, with the Jains marching close behind it. The Pandya king invoked the aid of Siva and the god arose and slew the elephant with his arrow at the spot where it now lies petrified... In connection with the long barren rock near Madura called Nagamali—Local legends declare...it is the remains of a huge serpent, brought into existence by the magic arts of the Jains which was only prevented by the grace of Siva from devouring the fervently Saivite city it so nearly approaches. (Thurston 1909, p. 434)

These stories signify the efforts at land appropriation and seeking control over the sources of cultivation. Extensive tank-based agriculture attributing divinity (through the use of Purāṇic mythology) to tanks was in profusion in this period of conflict, which was not merely 'religious' in nature. There were underlying economic considerations. Incidentally, among the Tamil Jaina villages that I visited, the number of temples with *kuḷams* (tanks within temple precincts or immediately outside the temple) are rare or very few; this kind of evolution of clusters around temples, irrigated land and tank networks mostly revolved around the non-Jaina and non-Buddhist (and mostly brāhminical) sites, which had a bhakti paradigm in operation as well. Then there was the story of a certain king of Cenji who ordered beheading of the Jainas which led many to convert to Śaivism; then there is the account of texts being appropriated by the Śaivite revivalists in modern times. There are layers of memories of different kinds of persecution, not simply physical acts of violence but also loss of history and literary traditions of the Tamil Jainas, some of which I focus on here. There aren't any works (or many works) focussing on the social-historical or ethnographic account of Tamil Jainas to try to understand the past from within the community's 'sites of identity', as I see them, which are the community memories.

For memory is, by definition, a term which directs our attention not to the past but to the past-present relation. It is because "the past" has this living active existence in the present that it matters so much politically. (Feld 2012, p. 147)

And Kansteiner remarks that,

Methodologically speaking, memories are at their most collective when they transcend the time and space of the events' 'original' occurrence and take on a powerful life of their own, "unencumbered" by actual individual memory and become the basis of all collective remembering as disembodied, omnipresent, low intensity memory. (Kansteiner 2002, p. 189)

Elsewhere, I have discussed the concept of *pain* of remembering the past and a collective pain that the Tamil Jainas constantly express. I wish to evoke parts of that discussion here:

One of the important aspects to the memory of persecution of the Tamil Jains is that these constantly refer to the political context of the Tamil country, where the cultural-religious realm of brāhminical temple and land nexus played a crucial role in marginalising religions such as Buddhism and Jainism. However, even these religions were not free from the land and temple paradigm in the medieval period. Initially, the Jaina sacred centres were rock-cut caves and natural caverns with donative inscriptions in Brāhmi script and Tamil language. In the medieval period, you find temple structures with Buddhist and Jaina images coming up. In the ultimate contest, however, the brāhmin and vellāla landlords of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava denominations seem to have captured the political sphere and worked towards establishing a larger idiom where neither Buddhism nor Jainism held any significance.... (Umamaheshwari 2016, p. 241)

Aleida Assmann points out that,

In three aspects, the political constructions of memory differ clearly from personal and social memory. First, they are not connected to other memories and the memories of others but tend towards homogeneous unity and self-contained closure. Second, political memory is not fragmentary and diverse but emplotted in a narrative that is emotionally charged and conveys a clear and invigorating message. And, third, it is not something volatile and transient, but is anchored in material and visual signs such as sites and monuments as well as in performative action such as commemoration rites, which periodically reactivate individual memories and enhance collective participation. In this way, a political memory is stabilised and can be transmitted from generation to generation. (Assmann 2010, p. 43)⁴

In this sense, the Tamil Jaina memory—of various persecution stories, or episodes...—is a political construction. (Umamaheshwari 2016, p. 241)

According to Pierre Nora,

Our interest in *lieux de memoire* where memory crystallises and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn—but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de memoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de memoire*, real environments of memory. (Nora 1989, p. 7)⁵

The *sites of memory* in the Tamil Jaina case are also *sites of pain*, located in the *real environments of memory* as well and intrinsically connected to the idea of their identity having been constantly in a state of conflict and contestation. The stories and the historical records—aided by constant efforts by mainstream religious groups to appropriate older Jaina sites and newer economic developments, like stone quarrying from ancient Jaina rock-cut caves—keep the memory of the persecution alive. In this sense, one tends to agree with Nora when he points out that, “The defense, by certain minorities, of a privileged memory that has retreated to jealously protected enclaves...intensely illuminates the truth of *lieux de memoire*—that without commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away. We buttress our identities upon such bastions, but if what they defended were not threatened, there would be no need to build them. Conversely, if the memories that they enclosed were to be set free they would be useless; if history did not besiege memory, deforming and transforming it, penetrating and petrifying it, there would be no *lieux de memoire*. Indeed, it is this very push and pull that produces *lieux de memoire*—moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells

⁴I have quoted this reference my article I am referring to here.

⁵As quoted in Umamaheshwari (2016), p. 242.

on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded" (Nora 1989, p. 5) ...In the Tamil Jaina case, the collective memory of victimhood and persecution is integral to their construction of their Self. In the history of religion, which is a historical fact and something remembered by the community, the Jaina doctrine (along with Buddhist, Ājīvika, and others) had once countered the then dominant Vedic religion; but over a period of time, thanks to political change and social constructions, the Vedic (with adoptions from other religious ideas and becoming more overarching, with the brāhminical structure) managed to overpower all other religious constructs in India, so much so that the dominant idiom today is the so-called 'Hindu'. In constructing the Self that was persecuted, the Tamil Jainas also refer back to all these pasts which rendered them marginals of the system, which is a reality of their present as well... For the Tamil Jainas, or any other presently minority community with their history of persecution, their memory itself might be a weapon that tortures; it could be the dominant cultures, traditions, the loudness of it all, the way Hindu prayers and symbols are either the main text or the very visible sub-text in politics, commercial marketing, etc.; the reading out of certain prayers and performance of certain rituals (for instance ritual enactments of events that contain memory or history of a pain of the past, impaling on stakes of Jaina monks used to be ritualized in a temple in Madurai until early twentieth century); or razing to the ground a mosque or the re-enactment of it; or even the sound of music that reminds a community of its present state of marginalisation.... (Umamaheshwari 2016, pp. 242–244)

Further,

At a deeper symbolic level then, it hurts them to find that the rock-cut caves, natural caverns with Brāhmi inscriptions and carvings of *tīrthankaras*, who taught the value of *kollāmai* (in Tamil, literally, non-killing), should over time become sites where dominant communities have virtually established their stamp. The silence of the rocks seem quite stark against the din of the quarterly, or weekly or annual sacrificial rites carried out at the base of these rock caves, in some of the places. At times, the Tamil Jaina person accompanying you will show you the icon of their *tīrthankara*, a seated (in meditation posture) Mahāvīra, or Ādinātha, transformed into a Muṇiyāṇḍi, a Hindu deity with Hindu embellishments with Hindu ritual paraphernalia accompanying that image. The icons of Muṇiyāṇḍi or a goddess, made from original *tīrthankara* images (with a 'historical' stamp on them, with ample 'evidence'—the Jaina will lay stress on the fact of historical evidence in order to convince you of their very ontological being and presence in Tamil history) can be found in several places in Tamilnadu with a Jaina or Buddhist past. And these will be usually associated with myths of sudden appearance in someone's dream and a temple built for the new deity which will be installed with great fanfare. For the Tamil Jainas, watching these changes and obvious power of the dominant tradition is painful and hurtful, even as they show you these signs to prove their point of how they have been marginalised and cast aside in the course of history of Tamil country. The present—of a *tīrthankara* image dressed up as a Hindu one—and the past atrocities of persecution and violent suppression of their faith to them seem part of one long, nearly unbroken thread, showing them their own insignificance built over time. Even today, in one of the rock-cut cave sites at Kongarpuliyangulam near Madurai, one can spot the *vēl* (spear) associated with Muruga placed at the bottom of the hillock, where animal sacrifices are offered during festivals. Against this backdrop, the Tamil Jainas seem to find it simpler to live with their loss of significance and seem to feel it sufficient to narrate the tales of their loss in their own narratives, and when they point to the overt changes. Pain, it seems, will be their constant. The other moments of pain as a community comes out when their naked monks are hurled stones at by other communities who object to seeing a naked man walk past. Hence, there is a police force and a group of Jaina laity that usually walks with a Digambara monk on occasions when they come visiting the Tamil Jaina villages. The visit of a Digambara monk is always accompanied by anxiety and fear of attack from other communities (Ibid, p. 245).

4.2 Reminded of a Pain

I record here, one instance of the Jainas being reminded of their past persecution, in a letter written in *Cudesamittiran* (Swadesamitran, published 8-1-1937) by Sripal (in the position of Secretary, South Indian Jaina Mahasangha) regarding a film on the Śaivite bard Appar (Tirunāvukkarasu):

Since some months the Jainas are undergoing trauma on account of a film on Appar. Some months ago Vel Pictures Company's script of Appar, which is quite at variance with reality, came into our hands. Our members read the same with great care and then wrote our comments and we passed a resolution that this film should not be made in its present form. There is in Tamilnadu an effort to paint Jainas in a bad light and to spiral hatred through Tevāram, Periyapurāṇam, Tiruvilaiyāṭarpurāṇam. Many Śaiva scholars have written on many aspects of these literary works. Even in schools these works are taught to children thereby infusing hatred for our community in children's minds. In Madurai, Tirumangalam, Sirkali and other places, they celebrate Sampantar viḷā, where effigies of Jaina monks are impaled on stakes. In this contest, this film would add fuel to the fire of hatred already being spread against Jainas. Hence, so that people may live in harmony, the government should make efforts to stop this film. Lastly, a request to Vel Pictures Company is that if they have to show Appar's story, they may refrain from showing Jainas in that film. (Sundiran and Tanakkoti 1959, pp. 74–75)

Apparently, Ka. Subramanya Pillai and Rajan from the film company invited Sripal to their office and requested him, if he wished, to correct the portions of the film which were objectionable which Sripal said he would not do, since it deals with a past that had caused suffering to the Jainas, and he told them to remove that section of the film which shows this past. The filmmakers apparently apologised to him and conceded to his request (Ibid, p. 75).

4.3 A Letter to the Mahatma

Though what I produce below is not in the context of the Tamil Jainas, yet, its contents reflect the manner in which the community of Jainas (at the pan-Jaina, pan-Indian level) had struggled with mainstream perceptions of their religion. It is a letter written to Gandhi by a Jaina Bar-at-Law in London on the question of attack on the Jaina religious tenets in one of the issues of *Navjivan* by Gandhi (here, influenced by the views of Sardar Patel). It is also interesting because it evokes the idea of what the Indian nation's approach should be towards different religions. The letter was reproduced in the *Jaina Gazette* which used to be brought out by a Tamil Jaina, called Mallinatha Jain.

An Open letter to Mahatma Gandhi (from C.R. Jain,⁶ C/O. Imperial Bank of India, 22, Old Broad Street, London, EC – 2)
1st July 1931
Dear Mahatma ji,

⁶He was a barrister.

I am distressed to read in the Navjivan in one of its recent issues your support to the sacrilegious views entertained by Sardar Vallabhai Patel concerning the nudity of Jaina saints and your own impolite notions on the subject. Sardar Patel is a national hero and in his own department (Satyagraha) it will be well nigh impossible to challenge his views except by a man who has put in an equal amount of self denying service. But as an athlete however excellently well trained, would not be entitled to speak on surgery and medicine, so the worthy Sardar should have refrained from expressing his opinion hastily on the subject of nudity of saints, which I am sure he does not understand in the proper way. As for yourself, you are an acknowledged great man—perhaps the most unique leader of men in the world today—but I am inclined to think that you yourself are aware more than anybody else of the fact that Jainism requires a life long study and a scientific intellectual acumen before its principles can be fully appreciated and understood. You will permit me if I criticise your views and incidentally those of the worthy Sardar in this letter...The views of the society may change from time to time, but religion is unchanging; it cannot change; if it did change it will cease to be correct and true. Today society is involved in frivolity and fun on the one side and politics and money on the other. Religion is almost ignored... As for society, are the Jains not a society in themselves? The Jains are exalted and sanctified with the nudity of the saints; they worship it. Are they to be ignored altogether?...And what about that section of (Hindu) society who go into temples of Shiva and worship the most direct and undisguised representation of the sexual origins of the two sexes actually engaged in the act of sex gratification?... And what about the images on the dome of the great temple of Puri in Orissa, where Hindus of all classes and communities flock in millions to worship the great Jagannath?...Is the Hindu society shocked by its naked saints and by representations of sexual union in the temples...? The Hindus count something like 250,000,000 in India. When you referred to society, you were talking on behalf of these 250 millions, if not why do you ignore this vast number of men and women who act in the way described above....? If you have read anything of the past history of India, you must have known that not only Mahavira, but many other teachers like Makhali Goshal and Puran Kashyap all moved about naked, and nobody was horrified and shocked...The Jaina standard of morality and ethics has come down to us from time remote that it does not pay one to cite a calculation about it; and no swarajya is worth the having which will aspire to interfere directly or indirectly therewith. The British, at least when they came to India, did not suggest that they were going to interfere with any well- established religious usage or practice. The Home Rule you are trying to obtain dear friend, begins before it has materialised, by making an article of faith that the Jaina saints should abandon their ancient practice. Do you seriously maintain that your Swarajya can be worth having under the circumstances? Abu Qasin Geelani was one of the Muslim saints who roamed about in Digambara attire. Higher Muslim saints, called Abdals, go completely naked...Nudity of saints was respected alike in Hinduism, Mohamadism, and also in certain other religions in the past. I do hope dear friend that you will re-consider the subject once again and recognise fully the two principles which are involved in it namely,

1. Right of every community to practise its religion unhampered and unhindered by any other community or individual and
2. The guiding policy of the state, the strength and stability of which lies in the principle of non-interference with any form of religion...

Is it asking for too much to demand that they (Jains) should be allowed to nurse their own "follies" without interference from any one?.

(Signed Champat Rai Jain, Bar-at-Law and life President Digambara Jain Parishad)⁷

⁷ *Jaina Gazette*, Vol XXVII, Nos. 7 and 8, Madras July and August 1931; pp. 133–140. I found this reference at the Prakrit Bhavan, National Institute of Prakrit Studies and Research, Dhavalatirtha, near Sravanabelgola, Karnataka.

4.4 The *Sumaṇṭān Talai Pattu Katai* (Story of ‘The One Who Bore Ten Heads’)

This story was remembered by most Tamil Jainas in the villages Vilukkam, Melcittamur and Peramandur (in general in the area around Cenji) when they spoke of their history of being persecuted. People in other places (around Kanchipuram or Madurai) did not invoke this tale of persecution. A ruler of Cenji from a lower caste sought a high-caste bride for himself. He went to the brāhmiṇs who told him the Jainas were of a higher caste. He sought a bride from among the Jainas. The Jainas, insulted by a low-caste ruler seeking a girl from their community, in turn insulted him by tying a dog to the wedding post on the wedding day and fled the place. He retaliated by ordering severing of heads of Jainas in Cenji country. Fearing their lives, many Jainas converted to the Śaiva faith by smearing sacred ash on their foreheads. The exact narration/rendition of the story is reproduced here (as recounted by the late Mr. Vrushabha Das, a Tamil Jaina farmer in Vilukkam⁸ (in Tindivanam taluk, South Arcot district where I first heard this story in year 2003):

A king, he was a *cakkilī*⁹ of Cenji had three sons; two were married. He wanted a bride for his third son. He started off by asking all the lower caste communities. Then, since he was a king, he went to the *pārpaṇars* (brāhmiṇs). Now, a *pārpaṇar* is a crazy/arrogant fellow (*kīrukku piṭicchavan*)¹⁰; he told the king, go to the *samaṇar* (Jainas). They belong to a higher caste than ours; people of this caste (the *samaṇar*) do not eat food after 5.30 (*añca-rai*) in the evening and they are vegetarians. They asked this king—they say he ruled during the Viračoḷa Pāṇṭiya times¹¹—to take a bride from this community. When the king came to the *samaṇars*, they told him, if a dog’s tail can be straightened, we will give our daughter to your son in marriage. In those times we had titles like *Woḍeyār* (Uḍaiyār), etc. At Kumbakonam they use the title *Chettīār*. Now, the king, in anger, ordered that whosoever wears sacred thread and sandal paste on the forehead (as people of our community did), should be beheaded. ‘*Tillai mūvāyiram, Tirunaṇṭunṇam*¹² *Ayyāyiram*’ is a famous saying. Those many people of our community were killed. Then came the turn of *Eṇṇāyiram malai* (where 8000 *muṇis* had meditated).¹³ The king then got his son married to his sister’s daughter, they say. When his daughter-in-law was pregnant, *samaṇa muṇis* blessed her. The king then ordered his men to stop the killing of those with *pūṇṭūl* (sacred thread) and *canda-nam* (sandalwood paste) on their foreheads.

⁸This story has been narrated in an earlier chapter; but one is repeating the same for the sake of analysis of the story and its versions in this chapter.

⁹There was usually a consensus about his being from a low caste—*kīl jāti* in all versions of the story.

¹⁰*Kīrukku*: ‘crazy’, ‘lunatic’, ‘conceited’ and ‘arrogant’.

¹¹The time-period is sometimes a matter of confusion in the telling of the story.

¹²3000 in Tillai (Chidambaram), 5000 in Tirunaṇṭunṇam and 8000 in the Eṇṇāyiram Malai (in Madurai).

¹³People in Vilukkam usually had this refrain when speaking of something that happened in the past. I did not hear this refrain anywhere else.

4.5 Other Versions of the Story

One *cirrarasaṇ* (petty ruler) ordered nine heads be brought to him. The tenth person's head would be chopped off. Many Jinas fled, throwing away their *pūṇṇils*. They converted to Śaiva faith; we call them *nīrpūci nayaṇārs*.¹⁴

Thurston records this story as follows:¹⁵

In 1478 AD, the ruler of Gingee was one Venkatampittar, Venkatapati (local oral tradition gives his name as Dupala Kistnappa Nayak) who belonged to the comparatively low caste of the Kavarais. He asked the local brahmans (for a girl from their caste to marry, they directed him to the Jinas; they called him to a particular spot; left a dog tied to a post at the marriage place...) Furious...he issued orders to behead all Jains...Meanwhile, another Jain of the Gingee country, Gangayya Udayar of Taiyanur, had fled to the protection of the zamindar of Udayarpalayam in Trichinopoly, who befriended him and gave him some land...(he fetched back Virasenacarya, made tour of Gingee...got some people to return to their faith). These people had mostly become Śaivites, taken off their sacred threads and put holy ash on their foreheads, and the name Nirpuci Vellalas....is still retained. The descendants of Gangayya Udayar still live in Tayanur, and in memory of the services of their ancestors to the Jain cause, they are given the 1st betel and leaf on festive occasions, and have a leading voice in the election of the high priest at Sittamur in the Tindivanam taluk. This high priest, who is called Mahadhipati, is elected by representatives from the chief Jain villages. These are, in Tindivanam taluk, Sittamur itself, Viranamur, Vilukkam, Peramandur, Alagramam and the Velur and Tayanur already mentioned. (Thurston 1909, pp. 429–30)

The above story is also recorded in the Mackenzie manuscripts (D 3796, Vol I, Madras, 1837).¹⁶

Mallinatha Sastri also recounts this story:

Many Jinas, who were used to wearing sacred threads, threw them for fear of being killed. Many became Śaivas, wearing ash on the forehead and these are referred to as *nīr pūci nayaṇār* (the Jinas who wore sacred ash). At the same time, Vīrasenācārya, who was sitting in meditation at Vellore was forcibly taken to the king. The king set him free as he was happy at the birth of a male child just then. Vīrasenācārya left for Śravaṇabelgoḷa. Around this time, a person named Gāṇgeya Uḍaiyār at Tāyaṇūr, near Cenji, went to Uḍaiyārpālayam rājā for protection and the king gave him land. After the persecution and killing, Gāṇgeya Uḍaiyār fetched Vīrasenācārya from Śravaṇabelgoḷa and reconverted those who had changed their faiths, back to Jainism. With *yajñōpavitam* (*pūṇṇil*) and *ratnatrayam*. He could not reconvert all the people who had become Śaivas. Till date, the Uḍaiyār clan has a special place in the hearts of Jinas of Tamilnadu. At weddings and so on, they are given the *mutal mariyātai*. Some converted to Śaivas; others became Muslims. Around Kerala, there

¹⁴ In most of these stories recounted to me, the community did not mention the king's name. Doing some archival search for the story, I found Thurston referring to the same story, and the king's name there is given as one Venkatapathy Nayaka.

¹⁵ As recorded by Thurston.

¹⁶ Section 2: Account of the Raja of Gingee who persecuted the Jinas. Available at the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Chennai.

are still some Muslims named Jaina Allauddin or Nainar Mohammad. These were Jains at one point. Masjids in Tamilnadu are still called *paḷḷivāsal* (Sastri 1995, pp. 46–47).¹⁷

Mayilai Sini Venkatasamy, too, mentions the story:

Around 500 years ago—in 1478—Cenji (ruler Venkatapathy Naicker, also called Tumāl Krishnappa Nāikaṇ—a Telugu ruler) wanted to marry a woman from each of the higher castes. He called the brāhmins (they did not want to marry into a lower caste); they directed him to the Jains as the latter were of a higher caste, and if they agreed to give their daughter, the brāhmins would, too. The ruler did so. The Jainas together decided to call that king to a place on the said occasion. He came there, only to find a dog tied up there. They migrated. The ruler ordered the killing of Jainas... [The] Jainas of Cenji were killed. Many ran away and some applied sacred ash and converted to the Śaiva faith—these are the *nīr pūci nayaṇār*, the Śaiva vellāḷar. In this time, Vīrasenācārya in Vellore was taken to the king. Gāṅgeya Uḍaiyār of Uḍaiyārpālayam, who had been to Śravaṇabelgoḷa, came along with Vīrasenācārya to Cenji; initiated the converted Jainas back to their faith (from Śaivism to Jainism), giving them sacred thread. Gāṅgeya Uḍaiyār's descendants are still in Tāyāṇūr. They are given the *mutal mariyātai* to this day during weddings in Cenji, in honour of Gāṅgeya Uḍaiyār's contribution in saving the Jaina faith. (Venkatasamy 1954, p. 73)

The Manjaputhur Chettiar and Jaina connection (linking the Cenji king story)

In the course of his campaigns against animal sacrifices in temples in Tamilnadu, Sripal recounts an interesting incident. At Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Paramakudi and Ilayamkuti resides this community of Manjaputhur Chettiars. They are small merchants/pawn brokers....This community has their family deity, at Tiruppuvanam, near Manamadurai, called Gorakkanāthar. They visit this place and offer sacrifice of goats (not less than eight each time). When Sripal learnt of this practice, he went to that place. There he saw a statue of Mahāvira at the temple entrance, which seemed to be in worship. He was amazed and asked an old man there about it. The old man (from that community) referred to the deity as Ammaṇasvāmi, their original family deity—*kuladēvatai*. He narrated the story of their clan and their origins. Their ancestors came from South Arcot, Manjakuppam (near Cuddalore). A king asked for the hand of a girl from their community in marriage. They were not interested. At the clan leader's house, they tied a dog to a post and left a note for the ruler on a palm-leaf and left that village that very night and settled near Madurai. Sripal was struck at the similarity with a story in the Jaina tradition. (Sundiran and Tanakkoti 1959, p. 103)

Sripal thought, perhaps, these Chettis were Jainas at one point of time, now converted. He succeeded in convincing them against animal sacrifice, invoking their Jaina past (Ibid, p. 104).

Venkatasamy also refers to this community, thus:

In Ramanathapuram, there is a sect called the Manjaputhur Chettiar. They are Śaivas. Inside the Ilakayankudi Śiva temple, they propitiate Ammaṇa Svāmi (a Jaina image, '*amaṇam*': 'nude'), which is their *kuladaivam*. Śaiva Chettiars were Jainas in the Pāṇḍyan times.... (Venkatasamy 1954, p. 76)

Be it Vilukkam or Peramandur or Tayanur, each seems to have the concept of '*mutal mariyātai*' (the honour of the first betel on important occasions). While Thurston's

¹⁷ But the term *paḷḷi*, started by the Jainas or even the Buddhists for educating, perhaps became a common generic term used of any place of congregation to learn something, and one may take this explanation with some trepidation.

and other versions have mentioned Gangeya Udaiyar and Tayanur getting the '*mutal mariyātai*' in Cenji during weddings and so on, people of Vilukkam have their own story about helping re-establish the Jaina families and the *maṭham* at Cittamur, as noted earlier. About these episodes in Tamil history, Sripal says:

Impalement, exodus of Jainas, killing, land grabbing from Jainas are episodes that reflect a '*veri*' [mania], not conflict. This resulted in Jainas being marginalised and many converted to Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava religions. (Sripal 1975, p. 50)

4.6 Ways of Understanding the Story

A word or two about the Nāyaka king of this story:

Gingee found its most vigorous ruler in the person of Tubākki (Dupāla) Krishnappa Nāyakar (Tuppaki Kirusnappa in Mackenzie manuscript)...Tubākki (1509–1521) ruled over a realm that extended from the town of Nellore in the north to the Coleroon river in the south. (Hiltebeitel 1991, p. 19)¹⁸

Moreover,

The stories of Tubākki Krishnappa recall his reign as a sort of Nāyaka golden age; a period of *peace and ordered harmony* under the most celebrated of the Vijayanagar emperors, Krishnadevarāya, a time when the three southern Nāyakas of Gingee, Thanjavur, and Madurai are supposed to have accepted the imperial definition of their domains and harboured no thoughts of independence or rebellion. (Ibid, p. 99. Emphasis added)

There have been no studies on the story of this king that the Jainas remember. As to why some of them call him '*cakkili*'¹⁹ *rājā* is also curious. Perhaps, they just use it as a generic for any person from a lower caste. If this story is so strongly remembered regarding their community, did it historically take place? Apart from mentioning it as a story, the Mackenzie manuscripts do not say much else. Even if it is a tale of metaphors, it is intriguing that this story does not find mention in the works on Jainism in Tamil Nadu, even as a 'wandering tale' that the Jainas remember or recount (and in that sense, relive). One is trying to locate the story within the question of the Tamil Jaina identity under threat, and their perception of the other community closest to them in attitudes and perceptions on certain everyday habits, the '*nīr-pūci*' Śaiva vellāḷars. Or perhaps this story has more to it than the persecution of Jainas. In that sense, it needs to be located within the Nāyaka rule and changes in that period.

Karashima, for instance, records:

¹⁸ Hiltebeitel does not qualify 'vigorous', however.

¹⁹ The community of Cakkilis, meanwhile, figured in the Backward Classes list of the colonial records; it is a term also used for leather workers, cobblers in Tamil. But was there a king from this community during the Nāyaka times? In which case, the Nāyaka rule of that time in which this person ruled indeed deserves to be studied in more depth.

Conditions in the fifteenth century proved to be no less harsh and exploitative (the other being AD 1250 to 1400) which ‘brought considerable hardship to people’, as is evidenced by the heavy burden of taxes imposed on the people by the invading warriors and the arbitrariness of their taxation system. We have plenty of inscriptions which record the ‘running away’ of cultivators and artisans during this period...There was yet another factor, more important and basic to the society, which imposed additional burdens on the population during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. We allude here to the class struggle which assumed a new dimension in the thirteenth century. More specifically, during their period the confrontation was between two agrarian classes, landholders, on the one hand, and tenants or landless cultivators, on the other. The prevalence of landlord villages became conspicuous after AD 1250 and created new relations among the classes within the agrarian order. The poorer peasants, along with artisans and merchants, suffered under the oppression of the well-to-do peasants who became landlords. This confrontation was made even more acute by the extortionate demands of the Vijayanagar invaders during the fifteenth century. This is well attested to by the open revolt of the *Valaṅgai/Idaṅgai* people against the landlords (*kāṇiyālar*) and the Vijayanagar officers (*irājāgarattār*) during the first half of the fifteenth century in the region South Arcot, Tiruchirapalli and Thanjavur districts. It seems however that the growth of the *nāyakas* in the latter half of the fifteenth century had a stabilising effect on the society.... (Karashima 2002, pp. 31–33)

‘Running away’, meanwhile, is something even the Tamil Jinas refer to in their story, that many had to flee to other villages in that time. If seen in the context that Karashima mentions, is the ‘running away’ due to economic and political reasons—being perceived by the Tamil Jinas as running away from persecution as well, which is their most instant response and reaction to hardships faced at a community level—having a real history behind the whole understanding? So, they see everything through a mirror of being victimised and persecuted? Or, it may also be seen as something that these political, economic conditions added, to the social attitude towards the Jinas by the *Nāyaka* ruler, who was closer to the (*Vīra*) Śaiva tradition.²⁰ There have been times in history where economic, political excesses combine with social prejudices and bias against a section, caste, community, too. The conflict within the agrarian order is also an economic context one wishes to place the Tamil Jaina agriculturists in. Surely, it is not merely in terms of the Jaina religion that the Tamil Jinas related to the broader society. There are economic and other considerations like there are for any other community. Persecution must be seen as a phenomenon layered against all these (non-religious/extra-religious, if one may put it that way) levels of dissatisfaction, discontent, as a community, towards the larger, more overwhelming view of the state and society, which is hardly ‘Jaina’ in any sense of the term. While the Buddhists chose, perhaps, the better conditions prevalent in Sri Lanka (where they perhaps moved to, escaping from the *bhakti* persecution), negotiating their status in the Sri Lankan society, unless of course someday someone comes up with the study of the Tamil Buddhists (of the original ancient Buddhist past) to know that they too, exist, but hidden to the mainstream. The Jinas remained in Tamil Nadu. This also shows in their own perspectives on persecution: failing to place it within socio-economic changes that swept the state in these periods, whenever they were attacked as a social group. Reverting to Karashima’s

²⁰ At least the grants (recorded by Karashima) show the ruler’s affinity towards the Śaiva religion.

above-mentioned study, most Nāyaka inscriptions he mentions record donations to non-Jaina temples, in areas where substantial Jaina settlements existed (and many exist till date) For instance, in Arani, Polur, Cheyyar, Cenji, Kunrattur and Villupuram. Many of these records show concessions, and grants of land to brāhmins.²¹

Interestingly, one of the inscriptions (recorded in *SII* XXII, 127, of CE 1532) at Jambai, Tirukkoilur taluk (South Arcot), mentions exemption of taxes for the *devadāna* of the Jambai temple. Jambai, as we had seen, has a few Tamil Jaina families still settled there. One has mentioned the record from ca. first century CE in the previous chapter. This was definitely an important Jaina centre then, and also in later times.

Perhaps a fresh wave of sanction to brāhminism and temples happened in the period of the Nāyakas. Karashima does not make mention of the Jaina associations in these places. There is just one more point to be made here before moving on to the motifs of the *sumantāṇ talai pattu* story. The Cenji region and South Arcot seem to have numerous stories: there is the Muttāl Rāvuttan story, the Desiṅgu rājā story, Draupadi stories, this Jaina story, and the Nīli stories of the possession spirit who is transformed as a Jaina philosopher in a Tamil Jaina text. Cenji—South Arcot—seems to abound in story-telling traditions. Some of these are tales of kings, while others are tales of a person or a cult figure. But all these stories have their own perspective on the region. Each of these stories is seemingly disparate, but perhaps there is need to look at the links. In case of South Arcot alone, or the Tamil Jaina community, a region rooted in its stories, even a comparative analysis of the stories, may lead to new information on the region:

Cenji was part of Toṇṭaimaṇṭalam in Pallava times; and part of Jayañkoṇḍachōḷamaṇḍalam—Rājendralaṇāḍu (1044 AD) and Uttamavalaṇāḍu (1114 AD), Singapura division. In inscriptional records from 870 AD onwards it is mentioned as part of Singapura nāḍu. Cenji was known in various times as Simhapuram (Pallava), Singapuram (Chōḷa) and Singavaram (Vijayanagara). Jainism was widespread in Cenji more than two thousand years ago, through the times of the Pallava, Chōḷa, Pāṇḍya, Sambuvarāya, Vijayanagar, and Nāyaka rulers. (Kiruttinamurthy 1994, p. 23–25)²²

4.7 Motifs in the *Sumantāṇ Talai Pattu* Story

Gingee (Chenji, formerly called Nasratgodda by the Musalmans), 16 miles south west of Tindivanam, population 524....The citadel on the north is called Kistnagiri, that on the south Chandrayan Durg, and that on the west the highest and most inaccessible of the three is named Rajagiri or 'king of hills'. There is also a smaller and less important fortified hill, Chakkili Durg to the south of the last. (*Gazette of South Arcot* 1906, p. 347)

²¹ See entire argument in Karashima 2002, pp. 36–44.

²² Mr. Jinadas (Tindivanam—of Perumpukai) lent me a copy of this book, a comprehensive account of Jainism in this region, which also looks at the community settled today.

‘*Cakkili*’, interestingly, is the prefix to the king referred to in some versions of the Tamil Jaina stories. Probably it refers to this fortified hill, and the king that ruled from there or who represented the administration at Cenji. Yet, there is the low-caste association to the king (even if ‘*cakkili*’ may not have meant the ‘cobbler’/‘leatherworker’ caste)²³ in the story, which explains the nature of response to his proposal seeking a marriage alliance—tying a dog to a post and leaving a note on its collar. It was a demeaning response, and the idioms of violence of caste are reflected in it. It also explains the way the Jainas recall the nature of punishments; he is said to have meted out to the community (beheading the Jainas). But there may be other angles to the story. Thurston records Venkatapati Nayāka’s (*alias* Kistnappa Nāyaka) time to be 1478:

By late 14th century, northern Tamilnadu was organised into five or six provinces called *rājya* or *ucāvaḍi*...; this administrative system...was highly exploitative and colluded with local military leaders (*nāyaka*) and landlords (*kaṇiyālar*) in extorting as much revenue as possible. (Kenneth Hall 2001, pp. 4–5)

And in 1429, a ‘revolt of cultivators and artisans’ (Hall 2001, pp. 4–5) also seems to have taken place.

In this context

The *nāyaka* chiefs surfaced as agents of Vijayanagara in the restoration of peace and used their local leverage to consolidate positions of authority as *nāyakaṭṭaṇam* in the Kannada and Tamil regions and as *nāyaṅkāram* in Telugu speaking regions. (Ibid, pp. 4–5).²⁴

I have referred to the ‘running away’ of peasants and artisans, citing Karashima. Is it possible to conjecture, then, that these Nāyakas (and their chiefs) could have colluded with certain castes in this exercise? In which case, the Tamil Jainas (agriculturists) fled, and their land was usurped by brāhmins and Śaiva *veḷḷālar*—the latter being in a larger majority today in the areas Karashima mentions. Are the Manjaputhur Chettiar among the ones who fled in this time and is that why they narrate the same story of their origin and worship a deity who resembles a *tīrthankara*? In some places in Tamil Nadu, any case, the Jainas do have the caste suffix of ‘Chettiar’. Something serious should have happened, which gave rise to this story: a story that is part of the collective memory of the Tamil Jainas of the South Arcot region.

Coming to the ‘perpetrator’ of this violence, Venkatapathy Nāyaka, why did he desire to marry a woman from a ‘higher’ caste? Why did the brāhmins direct him to the Jainas, if not—considering the popularity of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava bhakti religiosity among them—to spite the Jainas? Was it their planned ‘mischief’? And why did the Jainas insult the king in the manner that they did? What had happened to their legacy of earlier stories highlighting their affirmative tradition, so to speak? Was there no other way than to respond to the king than in such an extreme manner?

²³Thurston refers to Kistnappa Nayaka belonging to one ‘Kavarai’ caste (Thurston, cf.cit, p. 429); Winslow’s Tamil English dictionary calls Kavarai a lower caste.

²⁴Emphasis added.

The story raises many other questions, too: of changing land relations, feudal economy, a revival of temple brāhminism and persecution of a caste/community. Surely, the Nāyaka king's lower caste (as recorded) is also important. The question, as to whether the Jainas have indeed resorted to that kind of an insult or is it symbolic of their disdain for the proposal or the king, is moot. There are obviously deeper antagonisms at play in this story and a sense of assault of some nature on the Tamil Jaina agricultural settlements or their identity as a community, at one level. At another, there is the aim/'higher ambition' of a lower-caste ruler (some sort of an oxymoron, with prestige associated with the ruling class, and 'shame' of a lower caste) aiming at upward mobility.

The Jainas do have a caste status that is well known to the brāhmins directing the ruler to them. They are among the 'higher' castes. From a religious community, they assume a caste identity; the king goes to them because they belong to a higher 'caste' and not because they are Jaina, followers of the Jaina dharma (which is the usual manner in which the Jainas take pride in themselves); the outcome of the king's anger in the story also suggests some interesting points to ponder upon. All of those who feared for their lives converted to Śaivism (and not any other religious sect) adorning the sacred ash, 'throwing away their sacred threads'. They assume the identity of Śaiva (*nīr pūci*) *veḷḷālars* or *nīr pūci nayiṇārs* (the Jainas who smeared sacred ash). While some in the community (Tamil Jainas) assign this latter story to the bhakti movement, most others link it to the Cenji rājā story.

There are many dimensions to the story that suggest mass migration (at some point), mass conversion, caste-based conflict/tension, some sort of an agrarian unrest (all the cultivators—Jainas—fleeing), machinations of the brāhmins and an insulted lower caste king seeking a change in identity and status based on his position of authority over the region. That the brāhmins did not think of a similar 'solution' to the dilemma they faced when the king asked for one of their daughters, also calls our attention to the origins of the story. Did the story indeed originate among the Tamil Jainas of South Arcot? Or was it a Śaivite revivalist story meant to show the weakness and fear of a community, which turned into Śaiva '*nayiṇārs*' to save their lives? Was it, perhaps, a successful 'vanquishing' of the Jaina community from the region? Or, was it a comment on the level of insult meted out to the king? None could say where this story originated, except that it has left an indelible impression on the Tamil Jainas in South Arcot, for whom it is their community folklore. It must have been the story they told the copier or assistant of Mackenzie when he first approached the Jainas, in the same the way that they narrated the story to me. In that sense, it is historically part of the community's own perspective of its history, if with some element of exaggeration about the beheading of the Jainas, which does not seem to have been noted in any historical record. Whichever way we look at it, the story is rooted in some kind of identity crisis and conflict that occurred around the fifteenth century (considering that the dates mentioning the cultivators' and artisans' unrest, the date mentioned by Thurston, and other scholars referring to this story seem to coincide). In one of his writings, while speaking of marginalisation of Jaina

history in the Tamil context, Sripal links it to the nature of ‘selective’ history writing—of the victorious and not the victimised—in world history. (Sripal 1975, pp. 58–59)

4.8 The Identity Question

If one were to contextualise the ‘*nīr pūci veḷḷāḷar*’ story that the Jinas narrate within the agrarian expansion context, one would say that the context of bhakti and extension of land to the brāhmins had its own role to play in the conversion which may not necessarily have been religious. It was the need of the hour for some of the veḷḷāḷas to convert to also align with the bhakti and Śaiva tradition in order to receive royal patronage which was surely tilted against Jinas and Buddhists of the time, if not totally, at least to a large extent. The areas settled by the Śaiva veḷḷāḷar (which is the term they refer to themselves with, while the Jinas call them *nīr pūci nayiṇār*) till date have a small number of Jaina families settled there, or these villages have been Jaina settlements in the past as is evident in the inscriptional records and existence of old Jaina temples or vestiges of Jaina tradition of the past. It may also be mentioned that in these villages, people refer to the visit of Appar in his proselytising mission; while the Śaiva veḷḷāḷars highlight the importance of the visits as something ‘divine’, the Jinas refer to it as their nemesis.

Stein had noted that

The Chōḷa period is the necessary starting place for any longitudinal interest in the agrarian system of the Tamil plain and its extensions into the interior upland of modern Salem, Coimbatore, portions of the Arcots, and major portions of the Karnataka plateau and the Andhra plain. From the 9th to the 12th centuries, the foundation of a system of agrarian organisation was established which appears to have endured through most of the subsequent career of the agrarian order to the 19th century...[And] the interaction of Brāhmins and localised peasant folk constituted the primary cultural nexus of medieval South Indian peasant society. (Stein 1985, p. 4)

There is a need to place the history of the Tamil Jinas in a larger context of agrarianism/agrarian relations. While one did not start off with this premise in this study, it became clearer that at some point, one needs to address this context in relation to the Tamil Jinas, largely agriculturists. A deeper study of agrarian settlements vis-à-vis the Tamil Jinas might be worthwhile.

4.9 Persecution as a Concept: The Issues, History

The ‘persecution’ which most scholarship on Jainism in Tamilnadu has mentioned is not to be seen merely in the blatantly violent suppression (the oft-mentioned example of the impaling of 8000 Jaina monks on stakes or the signifying of it in the

frescoes at Madurai Mīnākṣi temple) but also in its subtler sustained sense, wherein a minority, persecuted, community begins to adopt certain practices of the dominant religion/culture, thereby 'giving in' to the social pressures, in order to survive; where it is forced to introduce that, which in essence, was never part of its cultural ethos. This kind of understanding of persecution stresses on what the ideology and power of hegemony and violence of a more subtle/hidden nature can do; and also looks at community's own internal response to external circumstances, rather than just begin and end at a more 'visible' single instance of a wave of violent fundamentalist attack on a section of population.

It also means that the forces that bring about such responses (from within the community) do not always come in 'hordes' in a single visible combat and also look at the way hegemony is constructed and sustained through a power structure that protects the interests of the dominant. It also shows the successful means through which a singular system (here the Purāṇic, 'syncretic', brāhminical and bhakti paradigm) has the power to convince people of its 'efficacy' and need, in their everyday lives. Adoption of certain practices of a system that becomes dominant (and by extension, 'normative') may also be seen in another sense: the non-dominant cultural system becoming victims of a hegemonic tradition and changing their basic essence. In this latter sense, one would perceive the inclusion of certain ritualistic practices in the worship of the *yakṣi* of more recent times, among other practices. There are two ways of looking at this: one, that there was a 'willing acceptance' of certain traditions that gained popularity (by whatever means). This would also be a more convenient way of perceiving these changes. On the other hand, it can be analysed as a problematic. For, what becomes 'popular' over a period of time²⁵ is itself rooted in a context where multiple forces operate: power, ideology, dominance and tradition. The state, brāhminism as a dominant paradigm, Sanskritism, may be seen to comprise this multi-pronged complex of forces. The dalliance of brāhminical temple religion with power, helped by bhakti (which initially seemed to include those elements that were excluded in Vedic brāhminism), meant an intrusion into the 'popular' (in the true sense) spaces and establishment of the 'superior' way of doing things, such as conducting rituals, offering worship, 'communing' with the god (seemingly, through the hymns) and so on. Hence, while one may speak of specificities for the Jaina social context and maintaining distinctness, wherever possible, it is still a question as to how and why certain practices did become part of their everyday.

In this connection, as Carrithers and Humphrey put it,

It is true, for example, that some Jains have adopted the sacred thread, but their use of it is quite contrary to its use among Hindus. Jains, like Hindus, take vows and fast, but their way of doing so is unmistakably Jain. (Carrithers and Humphrey 1991, p. 9)²⁶

²⁵ In fact 'popular' itself cannot be used as a 'redeeming' concept and may not always be representative of the marginal, the 'folk' layers—some things can also be 'made popular' through means that may hardly be inclusive, democratic.

²⁶ For the Tamil Jains, the *pūṇḍrī*, sacred thread, represents adherence to the *ratna-trayam*, *mummaṇikāḷ*, the three gems of Jaina ethic: right faith, conduct and knowledge.

But at the same time, these may be perceived as the ultimate survival of the dominant patterns which formed the basis of these ‘variants’ and interpretations—though culture- and community-specific. They remain, at the end of it all, ‘interpretations’ and not the essence of the ‘original’ tradition that came out in opposition of these practices. To resolve these tricky questions is not one’s aim here. But resolutions seem to be readily available in the community’s own narratives and discourses. The Jains believe that many of these concepts—the *yakṣi* worship, for instance—were appropriated by brāhminical religion from Jainism, though there is a debate among them regarding its validity. Another instance is the mythology around Rṣabha, the first *tīrthankara*, and similarities they find in the Śiva concept. Rṣabha attained *nirvāṇa* at Kailāśa mountain, and the destruction of the three worlds, in his case, is interpreted as vanquishing *kāma* (desire), *veguḷi* (anger) and *mayakkam* (delusion). The *arhat* conquered these three inner traits to attain *nirvāṇa*. And according to the Jains, these three qualitative concepts were changed into a violent concept of Śiva destroying the three worlds (*tri-loka*). Mayilai Sini Venkatasamy points out that Śivārātri is a concept borrowed from the Jains. He writes,

Ādi pakavaṇ, Rṣabhadeva, attained nirvāṇa on this day, i.e. *māci māsaṃ caturdaṣi tithi* (February-March). It is a common practice for Śaivas and Jains to use the term ‘śivagati’ for demise/mokṣam. Terms such as śivapuri, śivagatināyakaṇ are found in Jaina textual tradition. The Kailāśa mountain is sacred to both Jains and Śaivas. For the Jains, it is Ādinātha’s abode. Ādinātha is referred to in the Jaina tradition thus—“*ālanaṇṇiḷalamarntaṇai kalam mūṇṇum kaṭantanai tāḷ śaḍai muṭiccenni kāturu ponnīyir kaṭavuḷ*” (as one with locks—*śaḍai muṭi*—conqueror of the three worlds, etc) In Pāṇḍyan times you have the image of Ādinātha with locks. (Venkatasamy 1954, pp. 81–82)

He also points out that ‘*Triśaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacaritam* in its ‘Ādīśvara Caritam’ refers to Ādinātha as one with locks’ (Ibid, p. 84).

And that,

Gomukha yakṣaṇ is considered Ādinātha’s family deity. Nandi with a bull face as Śiva’s mount was (later) incorporated into Śaivism. In Jainism, there is the Nandigaṇa. Ajjanandi, Pavanandi, Kaṇakanandi belong to this gaṇa. (Ibid, pp. 86–87).

4.10 Seeking Colonial Intervention and a Twentieth Century Record

As a community looking at itself over a period of time in history and what it makes of its identity in relation to the larger social context, I refer here to an interesting piece of information found, again, in the journal, *Jaina Gazette*, of the same period (1931). It is as follows:

During the pratishtha mahotsav at Venbakkam near Conjeevaram a big meeting of Jains was held on 30-6-1931 under the distinguished presidency of His Holiness Sri Lakshmisena Bhattaraka Bhattacharaya Svamiji. Messrs Brahmasuri Sastri of Sravanabelgola, C. Vasupala Nainor of Arni and Bhadrabahu Sastri of Nahal delivered learned lectures on Jainism. The following resolutions were proposed by Sikhamani Sastri of Tirumalai and unanimously passed.

1. To pray to the *Government to reserve at least 2 seats for the Jains in the council and the local boards.*
2. To request the Government to include Jains in the *list of backward classes.*
3. To request the persons nominated by His Holiness to form a deputation to wait on the Ministers.
4. To organise a Fund under the control of His Holiness for the amelioration of the Jains. H.H was pleased to nominate messrs. C.S. Mallinath ji of Madras T.A. Sridhara Nainor of Madras, C. Vasupala Nainor of Arni, V.A. Chandhranath Nainor of Melmalaiyanur and Bhadrabahu Sastriar of Nahal as members of the deputation.²⁷

Incidentally, this Mallinath ji, mentioned above, was the Editor of the *Jaina Gazette*.

Then, there was the case of a gramophone record that the Jainas found offending their sentiments:

In 1937 the Chennai Ibrahim Company had a record on Tīrūñāna Sambandar. Sripal got himself a copy. It had songs and speeches that were abusive to Jainas. At Chennai, he met some Śvetāmbara Jainas and shared that record with them. Sripal met the advocate Lobo, gave him a translated version of the same in English. On 20th January, 1937, the Jainas gathered together. The Advocate Lobo told them that this record by the HMV Company (Calcutta) was capable of spreading religious discord (Sundiran and Tanakkoti 1959, p. 151).

Abstract from Fort St. George, Madras, Public Department Notification, Fort St. George, February 9th 1937, G.O. No. 299 (public, General). No. 3—In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 19 of the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act 1931:

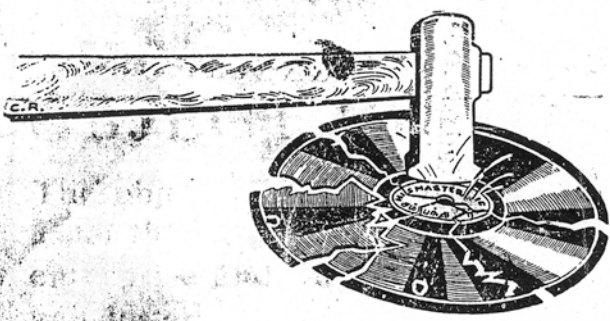
The Governor in Council hereby declares to be forfeited to His Majesty all copies wherever found of the booklet in Tamil entitled "Thirugnana Sambandar" written by one S. Narayana Ayyar of Madras and of the set of Four Double-sided Gramophone Records in Tamil bearing Nos. N.8422, N.8423, N.8424 and N.8425 produced by His Masters Voice Gramophone Company, embodying the subject matter of the said booklet and all other documents containing copies of translations of or extracts from the said booklet or Gramophone Records on the ground that they contain matter which tends to promote feelings of enmity and hatred between different classes of His Majesty's Subjects and are consequently of the nature of described in Sub Section (I) of Section 4 of the said Act as embodied by Section 16 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1932 (XXIII of 1932). Signed. Brackenbury, Chief Secretary.

It seems significant that on this question, the Jainas sought the help of the colonial state, and the Digambara and Śvetāmbara Jainas came together in this matter.

²⁷ 'A Jaina meeting at Venbakkam', [a Notice, no author mentioned], *Jaina Gazette*, Vol. XXVII, Nos. 7 and 8, July and August, Madras (1931), p. 172. Emphasis, wherever, mine.

ஸ்ரீ கிருஷ்ண மஹே:
ॐ
சு

திருஞான சம்பந்தர்



**கிராம போன் ரிகார்டுகள்
பறி முதல் செய்யப்பட்டன.**

Abstract from Fort St. George Gazette, Madras.
PUBLIC DEPARTMENT NOTIFICATION

FORT. ST. GEORGE FEB. 9, 1937
G. O. No. 299 Public (General)

No. 3—In exercise of the powers conferred by section 19 (OF THE INDIAN PRESS (EMERGENCY POWERS) Act 1931 (XXIII of 1931), The Governor in Council hereby declares to be forfeited to His Majesty all copies where-ever found of the book-let in Tamil entitled "THIRUGNANA SAMBANDAR" written by one S. Narayana Ayyar of Madras and of the set of Four Double-Sided Gramophone Records in Tamil bearing Nos N. 8422, N. 8423, N. 8424 and N. 8425, produced by his Master's Voice Gramophone Company, embodying the subject matter of the said book-let and all other documents containing copies of translations of or extracts from the said book-let or Gramophone Records on the ground that they contain matter which tends to promote feelings of enmity and hatred between different classes of His Majesty's Subjects and are consequently of the nature described in Sub-Section (1) of Section 4 of the said act as embodied by section 16 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1932 (XXIII of 1932).

மோழி பேயம்பு
பொது இலாகா அறிவிப்பு.

போர்ட் செஷன்ஸ் ஜார்ஜ் 9-2-37
சர்க்கார் உத்திரவு
நே 299 (பொது)

செம்பர் 3—சென்னை எம். கரையண ஐயர் என் பவர் எழுதிய "திருஞானசம்பந்தர்" என்னும் புத்தகமும் அச்சப் புத்தகத்தைத் தழுவி "ஹில் மால்டர் வாய்ஸ்" கிராமபோன் கம்பெனியார் தயாரித்தனான N. 8422 N. 8423, N. 8424, செ. 8425 செ இரூபரூமும் பதிவு பெற்ற உள்ள ரிகார்டுகளும் மன்னார்கோன் பிரதேசத்தை ஒரு வருப்பாருக்கு மந்திரி ஒரு வருப்பார்ப்பை வேறுபுண்டாக்கத் தக்க வசனங்களாகியிருக்கின்றன வாகையிலே, இவை இந்திய அக்கைச் சட்டத்தின் 4வது விதி 1வது உட்கிரித்தும் 1932ம் வருஷத்திய XXIII வது கிரிமினல் சட்டத் திருத்தச் சட்டத்திற்குள் உட்படு மாகையிலே செ. 1931ம் வருஷத்திய 23வது சட்ட மிகேஷாதிக்காக்கைப் பிரயோகித்த சபை போடு கூடிய கவுன்ஸ் செ. புத்தகத்தின் பிரதிகளையும், அத்த ரிகார்டுகளின் பிரதிகளையும், அவற்றின் எல்லாப் பகுதி களையும் எவ்வு கண்டபோதிலும் பற்றாக்கல் செய்வதாக உத்திரவு கிரிமினல்.

[ஒப்பம்] மிரேக்கன் பரி,
பிரதமகாரியதரிசி.

(Sd.) BRACKENBURY,
Chief Secretary.

சம்பந்தம், சபை தலைவரும் குறுகொண்ட பண்டைய அரசர்கள் காலத்தில் எழுதப்பட்ட புரணக் கதைகளி லொன்றையே திருஞானசம்பந்தர் கதைமூலம் மொத சத்திய சபைத்தைப் பழித்தல் கிளப்பிய திருஞான சம்பந்தர் கிராம போன் பிளேட்டைப் பித்தித்தல் செய்வதற்கு, பாத கட்டின் பல பாகங்களிலுமுள்ள மொத சமயத்தகரனை வரும் ஸ் வேதாம்பர், திகம்பர், சந்தனவாசுலி மென்ற வேறுபாடுகள் ஒற்றுமையுடனும் உணர்ச்சியுடனும் புரிந்த அறக் கிளர்ச்சி யல், மொத காரணிய மிக்க கிரிடிஷ் அரசாங்கத்தார் கடு கிலகமையோடு ஆராய்ந்திருந்த மகக்கு வழங்கிய செ. தீர்ப்பின் பெற்றத் கற்குறியாக ஸ்ரீ பகவான் மகாவீர வர்த்தமான ஸ்லாமியின் 2464ம் பரி கிரவணத் திருஞானசெய தீரவணி தினத்தன்று தங்களுக்கு அன்புடன் அனுப்பிய மெறிச்சிப் பத்திரம்.

இவ்வணம்
தங்களுள் பன்,
T. S. ஸ்ரீபால்.

சென்னை
2-11-37.

Fig. 4.1 The notice—G.O. 299 of 1937 (I received the photocopy of this order from one of the Tamil Jaina villages in the year 2003; it has also been reproduced in some of their Tamil journals, and it was brought into public domain by T. S. Sripal)

4.11 A Ritual Enactment of Persecution

T. S. Sripal recounts an episode from his life, in course of his campaign against animal slaughter in temples. Sripal attended the annual *Tirumulaippāl viḷā* of Nāna Campantar celebrated at Sirkali in the month of April. A day before this, offerings of buffaloes and goats used to be made to the Pidāri ammaṇ shrine there. Sripal, accompanied by a SPCA member (Muthukumaraswamy), had gone there in connection with some SPCA work. Thousands had gathered that evening. Sripal described this ritual he saw:

There were six people with shaven heads, saffron *vēṣṭi* (*dhoti*), holding peacock feathers, and they stood before the *uccavar* (procession deity) of Nāna Campantar. Facing them were ten Śaiva devotees, who asked the former this question (in a song), “what did Nāna Campantar say?” To which the former replied “*Samāṇa peṇkalai....*” (Speaking of Jaina women describing parts of their body in graphic detail).

Apparently, Sripal started to cry listening to this kind of abusive language and a ritual that celebrated this. In fact, he does not completely describe all that was in the song; he writes that it is difficult for him to even write those demeaning words. The song was apparently part of Sambandar's ‘*Tevāram-Manṇakāṭilum*’. He writes that he regretted that such a festival was celebrated to this day. (Sripal 1975, pp. 61–62)

4.12 Relocating Bhakti

The Śaivite tradition has always contended that theirs was the original Tamil religion and culture, and many works highlighted this aspect. In most of these works, Buddhism and Jainism were written off as ‘other’ faiths that had entered the Tamil land and destroyed the ancient culture. I came across one such book in the U. V. Swaminatha Iyer library in Chennai, and I shall note down below a few pertinent arguments made in this book. Such works should not be ignored as many things they write therein are what many people internalised. This book is about the bard, Tirunāvukkaracar (Appar), dated 574–655 AD (as per this book). The author writes

From the 1st century to 7th century, for 600–700 years, Tamil people suffered under the language and rule of foreigners on Tamil land, who destroyed the original Tamil religion and culture, which comprised of Śiva and Tirumāl. The Pallavas, Kālapras, Kadambaras, Gangas, etc., were these outsiders. But after 7th century AD, the *Tamiḷaṇ*, Tirunāvukkarasar, re-energised Tamil language and culture, the *Caṅkattamiḷ*. He established the *tirukkōil nāgarīgam*.²⁸ Appar can be compared to Gandhi, father of the nation. (Murugavel 1954, 2; 14–15)

These are standard modern-day Śaivite hagiographies of the bards Appar, Nānacampantar and others, which are constructed on the belief that the ‘original’ Caṅkam culture was vilified by the Buddhist and Jinas (not the brāhminical or

²⁸ Lit. ‘temple civilisation’.

Vedic religion). Śaivism, for them, was the original Tamil religion/idea. These works come disguised as history. Interestingly, this book has a photograph of a pond at Tirupadipuliur, which is considered sacred. The author goes on to narrate the story of Tirunāvukkaracar, which I share below:

Tirunāvukkaracar was known as Murulnikkiyar. He became a Jaina *nirgranthar* (monk), called Dharumasenā; and with his knowledge, soon became the leader of the monks' congregation. His sister, Tilakavati, was very upset with her brother's conversion to Jainism and sought Śiva's divine intervention through fervent prayers at the Śiva temple at Tiruvaṭikai. Śiva appeared to her in a dream and told her that her brother, in a former life, was into great penance to Śiva but had once missed out on a few austerities, which is why he was punished, and which is why he has converted to another faith. Śiva told her—"I will make him suffer from a disease (*culai-noy*—colic/gout?) and get him back to our faith. You do not worry." The Jaina monks could not cure him, in spite of all their efforts. Murulnikkiyar remembered his sister and she told him to seek Śiva's help. He composed a *patikam* "*cūṟṟāyinaṁvāru vilakkakilīr*" and immediately got cured of his disease. Śiva gave him the name Nāvukkaracu. The Jainas complained to the king, Mahendravarman, thinking, if this guy becomes a Śaiva, their own faith will be in trouble. They told the king that he was faking about the disease all the while and they shared with the king their fears. The king asked them what could be done about it and they said to him—"throw him into a lime kiln". He said, 'so be it'. Nāvukkaracu was thrown into a lime kiln in which he stayed for seven days and when the Jaina monks opened the doors, they were surprised to find a smiling, unscathed Nāvukkaracu. Next, the monks fed him *naicu* (poison); it did not kill him. Next the king ordered he be trampled upon by an elephant. The elephant circumambulated him, bowed to him and stood before him. They then threw him into the sea, tying a stone around his neck. The god Varuṇa held him up on his head and brought him up ashore from a place called Tiruppāḍipuliūr, which is now called the *karaiyēṟavitta kupṇam* (the place where he came ashore). Mahendravarman Pallava destroyed Jain paḷlis in Pāṭaliputra after he gained realisation and then became a Śaiva. (Murugavel 1954, pp. 19–21)

The Śaivite tradition thrived on creation of grand myth making. These bhakti stories and the temple myths have been written about by several scholars. In some cases, critical distance from the tradition itself would also be missing in their accounts. Bhakti, too, has got mainly eulogised narrations in most scholarly treatises. Bhakti may be also seen as 'personally relating to' a god, necessarily enshrined in a temple, with a physical space and site. There is a huge difference between this and the way it has been described by a large number of scholars, as devotion to a 'personal god'; for if it were the latter, it should have had nothing to do with several *patikams* sung to god/goddesses of a *particular* temple at a specific geographic location, across Tamil Nadu. God should have then been 'within', in a more personal space of the self or the individual. And that personal god would have had no problems with someone having different ideas of god or non-god. For, the personal relationship between the *bhakta* and the god/goddess would have sufficed; and not desired attacking other faiths.

The story I noted above (on Appar) has a sub-text, which serves to forewarn those who might think of converting to another faith, as to what will happen if they do, just as what happened to Appar. Appar stuck to, held on to, Śaivism with a heroic faith and that is why Śiva helped him. About Buddhism and Jainism, the author (cited above) says these were '*vēru kolkaikaḷ vēru molikaḷ*' (other religions, other languages) which pushed themselves into Tamil Nadu (the word used is *pukuntu*, 'having entered', in the sense of pushing themselves in).

About bhakti, Hawley writes:

The paradigmatic bhaktas who are the heroes of the bhakti movement are in large part creations of song. They are remembered not just *because* of what they have sung or are believed to have sung, but precisely *as* what they have sung. (Hawley 2015, p. 295)

And, in the case of the Śaivite bhakti bards in the Tamil country, that—*what they have sung*—is the problem so far as some communities, who are vilified in there, are concerned. Because each time these are sung, the Tamil Jaina community finds itself invoked in a manner that reminds it of its painful suppression. Bhakti has usually been seen in an all-India kind of context in most studies like a universal ethos that pervaded through the sub-continent. But there are regional contexts to the phenomenon, which need to be taken into consideration and analysed with critical distance and historical contextualising of the phenomenon. In the Tamil case, the temple-brāhminical ritual complex cannot be delinked from the bhakti bards and their efforts to create a bhakti *nation* across Tamil country, through establishment and reaffirmation of 'Hindu' temples, complete with land grants and rites and rituals which had little to do with transcending the 'this worldly' and had everything to do with 'this world' and the spaces and sites such as tanks, ponds, fields and resources. Nānacampantar, for instance (born in a brāhmin family in Sirkazhi), has glorified 241 temples in his *patikams*.

Stories of the Śaiva bards are a mix of myth and superhuman incidents, and here myths are taken as history. While they may be called *vaṇalāru*, or history, they are filled with mythical tales. For instance, Śiva ordered Pārvati to breast-feed the child Nānacampantar when his father left him, as he went to bathe in a pond and the child started to cry. He was fed 'Śivanpāl', milk of devotion. These myths made the bards part of a divine scheme; their being enshrined in temples as idols, which are treated with equal veneration as the principal deities, also reflects the entrenched nature of bhakti with temple worship. In this sense, the author, Muruguvel, may not have been wrong (though he meant to say it in praise of the bards) when he said that Śaivism started an entire "*tirukkoil nāgarīgam*" in Tamil Nadu.

I share some words from a preface to another book by the author, M. Arunachalam, here:

Philosophy runs in the veins of the Indian; much more so of the Tamilian, in whose land Śiva the Supreme dwells...When foreign invasions sought to undermine and destroy the ageless cult of the Śaivas, many gifted seers were exponents of philosophy and authors of philosophical treatises; besides they had founded religious orders which trained mature minds to live in a godly life and help other struggling souls to advance in the path of god. (M. Arunachalam 1981, p. v)

I paraphrase some more from this book in order to give an idea as to what really exists in the cultural sub-stratum with regard to this particular period in Tamil history:

In the days when the entire Tamilnadu was overcast with clouds of alien religious repression, the grace of Śiva considered it fit to have the *avatār* of a great soul for the resuscitation of the Tamil language and culture and the Śaiva religion. The person who was given this mission was Tiru Jnanasambandar. He was born in Sirkali in the Chola country...It is said

that Parasakti fed him Her own milk of Grace in a cup, when the child cried... Immediately he acquired supreme knowledge and also the gift of poesy... He received a pair of golden cymbals from Siva for marking time while singing as a little child in the temple so that his little hands may not hurt in marking time for the songs, a palanquin on which to ride on his travels since he could not walk long distances, a pearl umbrella and canopy for protection under the sun... His prayers had worked many miracles... He gave his father a purse of gold from God, to perform a sacrifice, for overcoming evil and for spreading good. His more glorious achievement was his struggle with the Jain priests at Madurai in the presence of the Pandiya king. At the request of the Pandiya Queen, he went there, had several contests with them in philosophic discussions and came out successful with the help of God in all of them. The King's fever was cured by him, the palm leaf on which his song was written was fresh and unscorched when placed on fire, and another such leaf from his songs floated on the water against the current of the river Vaihāi. His miracles won the King back to the Saiva faith... Saint Sundara, who lived some fifty years after him, says that Sambandhar did propaganda for *Tamil* through music and for this purpose he was given a pair of cymbals by God. Here and elsewhere in all the hymns, the word *Tamil* is synonymous with Saivism... He was this one person responsible for restoring all that is great in the three divisions of *Tamil* today, at a period when it was threatened with extinction by an alien clan. He had visited the largest number of shrines, had sung the largest number of tunes. The musical tunes which are called today *raga* were called in his day *pann*²⁹ and had he not taken steps in his day to preserve the *pan*s and propagate them, we would not have had what is now known as Carnatic music at all... His story is narrated by Sekkilar in his *Periya Puranam* in 1256 verses. (Ibid, pp. 15–18)

Centrality of some discourses, by their very being (or becoming) central, marginalised others—bhakti being one such in the *Tamil* case. There have been persistent and long euologising and romantic ideas about bhakti as a liberating tradition, transcending caste and gender barriers. While it has not, on the material plane, historically or sociologically, if one were to break down the seemingly esoteric realm into parts, the sheer number of temples constructed, or thriving post-construction, and the land grants necessarily associated with these will show the plain and simple idea of what this esoteric actually did in real historical and social terms. Establish a hegemony of not just caste and gender (male) but also nature of ownership of resources, and this became possible through the personal-relating-to-a-god concept; though ideally, if bhakti was indeed an ideal of love (in the *Tamil* case), the temple and mediating priests (who later 'woke up', bathed, fed, put to sleep, the god within the *sanctum sanctorum*) might have had no place. If you say this, immediately the story of Annamayya and his poetry or other stories of devotees, who defied the physical constraints of the temple space, will be put forth. But the temple refuses to go, even within all these narratives. The *Tevāram* should have, or could have been, sung by peasants on fields rather than in a particular temple in a particular context alone. And a large part of the hymns would not have focussed on the atrocities on the Jainas/*amaṇar*. Ideally, if it was ideal, it would have done away with the form or a particular deity—in terms of iconography—and here I am not referring to the tradition of Kabir, for whom the *form* may not have been important, but we are talking of the *Tamil* case, specifically.

²⁹ Verbatim.

Between the seventh and ninth centuries CE, bhakti and the songs are supposed to make a certain fixed form of god to appear. It is important to re-evaluate and re-examine bhakti. The Self-Respect Movement and others following it did question these traditions vehemently. At another level, the Tamil Jinas, one of the victims (the Buddhists being the other, and perhaps other social groups as well, if we do a deeper research) of Tamil bhakti movement keep reminding people and scholars to try see it from their perspective. But when it comes to scholarship and the tomes published on temples and on bhakti, it still seems to hold its sway. And much of this writing comes from the West either by Indian scholars in Western universities or Western scholars keen on India/'Hindu studies'. Shu Hikosuka writes,

Buddhism had enjoyed a very remarkable popularity in Tamil soil and was at the height of its prosperity in the so-called dark age...The tremendous development of the Bhakti movement initiated and nurtured by the Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite devotees can be deemed as one of the major factors that had weakened the foundations of the edifice of Buddhism...The emotional Bhakti wave swept the whole of Tamilnadu as a powerful current as well as a tender zephyr shaking the very roots of the rational and philosophically oriented religions of Buddhism and Jainism. The Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite works inform of the uncongenial environment in which Buddhism was put into due to the upsurge of the devotional cult. We may safely assume that from the 3rd century AD right up to the 12th century AD, Buddhism had to fight hard for its existence against the great Hindu revival. Some champions of the Hindu revival carried on incessant propaganda against Buddhism. The famous disputation of Mānikkavācakar with the Sri Lanka Buddhists held at Chidambaram really marks a stage in the decline of Buddhism in South India. The result of the disputation was that the king of Sri Lanka and his daughter were converted to Hinduism...Tirujñānasambandar carried on many a disputations with Buddhism, one of which was held in Talacheri against Cariputta. As far as the Vaiṣṇavites were concerned, Ṭṇṭarātippoti Āḷvār carried on fierce and passionate propaganda against Buddhism while Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār went so far as to comment the looting of Buddhist monasteries and Caityas. The emergence of the...advaita philosophy of Śankara as well as the establishment of Hindu mutts as counterpoints to Buddhist monasteries also quickened the phase of decline of Buddhism in Tamilnadu. Politically, the emergence of the later Chōḷa dynasty as a massive power had also become one of the main causes of the decline Buddhism in Tamilnadu...The Chōḷa kings extended patronage mainly to Hinduism. (Hikosuka 1989, p. 201)

There is a Buddhist aspect to Tamil as well. As Hikosuka writes,

After the 6th or the 7th century AD, with the gradual upsurge of the agrarian community to the highest stratum of society and the emergence of the Bhakti movement, Buddhism started to decline and Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism became very powerful. At this time Potiyil [which was associated with Avalokiteśvara, according to him] as a sacred place of Buddhism was gradually lost. It became a place for Agastiyar...*Viracoliyam*, a Tamil grammatical work of the 10th century A.D by Puttamittiranār, a Buddhist writer...states that Akattiyaṇ (Agastya), the Tamil sage learnt Tamil from the great Avalokitāṇ (Avalokiteśvara) and expounded it to the world...Potiyil mountain was a sacred abode of Avalokiteśvara for quite a long time and with the decline of Buddhism in Tamil country, probably after 10th century AD, it became the seat of Agastya. (Ibid, p. 194)

Mayilai Sini Venkatasamy says

Several centuries before the entry of printing machines, Buddhist and Jaina religions had been in a forgotten state, without people to take care of Buddhist or Jaina manuscripts. But on account of the efforts of some Jaina people, some of the Jaina manuscripts have been

preserved, yet many have been lost...Having destroyed Buddhist and Jaina texts, in later periods, [the Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas] became fanatic about their own faiths, as well, not reading each other's texts. (Venkatasamy 1962, p. 115)

Monius writes

Although many devotional poets, both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, criticize the Buddhists and Jains, it is Campantar, the late sixth- or early seventh-century Śaiva devotee closest in time, perhaps, to the composition of the *Maṇimēkalai* text, who most consistently and vehemently criticizes these non-Śaiva communities, particularly on the issue of language. Although Campantar's sarcastic comments regarding "dirty Jain monks who walk about like rutting elephants" might bear close resemblance to the anti-Jain attitudes expressed in the *Maṇimēkalai*, Campantar's poetry clearly differs from the Buddhist text in its condemnation of a perceived Buddhist and Jain disregard for both the Tamil and Sanskrit languages. He writes:

With Araṇ of Ālavāy by my side,

I will easily defeat those filthy Jain monks who...

mutilate the good Sanskrit of the Āgama and mantra texts,
loudly declaiming in the corrupt Prākṛit tongue.

I will easily defeat those blind fools...who...know neither good Tamil nor the Sanskrit language. (Monius 2001, pp. 84–85)

An example of how it is difficult to draw the line, in some scholarship, between personal faith and historiography is an article I found, excerpts from which I cite here below:

Cēkkiḷār composed the colossal epic [Periyapurāṇam, also called the Tiruttōṇḍarpurāṇam] when he was a minister and chief poet of the Chōḷa king Kulōttuṅga Chōḷa II (1138–1150). The Chōḷa regime was reputed for its antagonism against Vaiṣṇavism, Jainism and Buddhism. Kulōttuṅga Chōḷa II was himself an ardent devotee of Śiva in the form of Nataraja in Chidambaram. He arduously propagated Śaivism that his ancestors had initiated. It is rather surprising then that a king of such a lineage was enchanted by a Jaina Tamil text—a courtly epic called Jivaka Chintamani—an interesting epic composed in the sringāra mode... Cēkkiḷār was disturbed by the king's enchantment with Jainism and contemplated a means to reverse the king's religious interest, Hence he persuaded the king to read about the lives of the Tamil Nāyaṁmārs as exemplified in the works of Cuntarar and Nampī Āṇṭār Nampī... Cēkkiḷār composed the colossal epic at the famous Chidambaram temple in its Thousand Pillared Hall. This lofty composition transformed Kulōttuṅga Chōḷa II who made a re-entry into Śaivism in a full swing. It is considered as the fifth Veda in Tamil...It is significant that this *divine* text contains an account of the *lives of saints who were historical personages and not mythical*. (Thellam 2013, pp. 83–84)³⁰

There is more:

The Periyapurāṇam was multiply transformative at various levels. It transformed Kulōttuṅga Chōḷa II who re-bounced back to Śaivism; it also transformed Cēkkiḷār who renounced worldly life to embrace the life of religious devotion as it also transformed the masses who were often wonder-struck on listening to the spiritual poetic composition...Highly democratic, it was created during an era of intense socio-religious reformation since it encom-

³⁰ It must be noted that only three are historical personages with no historical details available for the rest. Scholars have also noted that this text had for its model a Jaina text, *Triśaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita*, which treats of 63 important figures in Jaina epistemology, and it was composed in the seventh to eighth century CE. It seems tempting to make a conjecture that this could be true, but it has been debated. Note the adjective 'divine' used unqualifyingly. Emphasis, wherever, mine.

passes within its gamut, nearly all the subaltern classes of the Tamil society who were hitherto marginalised from the dominant mainstream brāhminical hegemonistic Hinduism. (Ibid, p. 84)³¹

But, in the song of Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃyār, you have these lines:

At Ālankāḍu, beheld she the Lord's dance, thus blessed by him the master of the Vedas.... (Ibid, p. 90)³²

Whether it was against the 'hegemonistic' brāhminical-Sanskritic tradition is a question. For, Karen Pechilis, in another one on Kāraikkāl Ammaiṃyār, writes of the moment when the woman poet witnesses the dance of Śiva at Tiruvālañkāṭu and Śiva addresses her thus:

The Lord who is attained by those who worship him gave her his grace...After receiving that gracious gift [watching the dance], she worshipped the Lord who is the truth and meaning of the excellent *Vedas* and took her permitted leave of him.... (Pechilis 2006, p. 183. Emphasis added)

Elsewhere, Pechilis has written that

The hymns are called śruti ('that which is heard'), a traditional designation for Vedic texts (v. 32) [of the text, *Tirumuṣaikantapuṇṇam*]...The legitimacy of the Tamil hymns is not presented so much as an appeal to their likeness or equivalence to the Vedas but to their ability to make the Vedas effective. (Pechilis Prentis 2001, p. 2)

In a critique of the dominant discourse on bhakti (being socially inclusive), Patton Burchett writes, while contextualising Nandaṇār (Tamil), Ravidās (UP), Tiruppāṇ Āḷvār (Tamil) and Chokhāmēlā (Maharashtra), that,

Presuming (and exalting) the presence of a democratising and revolutionary spirit in bhakti across history, many scholars have unintentionally presented a notion of bhakti that is far more coherent, consistent and anachronistically modern than what a close reading of bhakti texts actually demonstrate...While the egalitarian, democratic and revolutionary may occupy important spaces...bhakti's message in regard to the social sphere has throughout history often been far more complex—muddled even—and far less progressive than words can convey. (Burchett 2009, p. 117)

I cite one instance of the evolution—within the broader changes—of the cult of Murukaṇ. By the eighth-ninth centuries CE in Tamil Nadu, Jaina and Buddhist centres were re-appropriated/re-occupied by, or converted into, Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite religious centres, even as the bhakti movement gained stronghold over polity, social and cultural life. The trend was of a seemingly 'personal' god concept, subsuming various local gods and goddesses into a larger family of gods enshrined within temples with brāhmin agrarian settlements around them. The local god, Murukaṇ, is important for this larger edifice to survive, and hence his incorporation, with all the paraphernalia of agrarian life, with rituals and festivals introduced corresponding with the agrarian seasons and officiating brāhmin priests. The *vēlaṇ-āṭal*, so intrinsic to the worship of Murukaṇ seen in *Caṅkam* poems, virtually disappears in the temple complex of Murukaṇ-Subrahmaṇya. The construction of

³¹ Note that in the previous statement, she called it the fifth *Veda*.

³² So, were the Vedas not part of the hegemonic tradition?

religious pilgrim circuit coincides with the construction of a later Subrahmanya mythic corpus and proliferation of land grants, integrating all other Purāṇic gods and goddesses.

While elaborating on the sacred geography of Tamil Śaivism, George W. Spencer had written that

The close connection between the sacred geography of Tamil Śaivism and the early agricultural development of Tamilnad is evident if we consider the rather uneven distribution of sacred places within Tanjore district. The greatest concentration is in the northeastern portion of the district, chiefly in modern Shiyali, Mayuram, Kumbakonam, Papanasam, Nannilam, and Nagapattinam taluks. The most important sacred places in the district, then, as measured by the number of references in the hymns, can be enclosed by an imaginary triangle bounded on one side by that portion of the Coromandel coast from the mouth of the Coleroon River on the north to Point Calimere on the south, with the other two sides extending westward to a point located around Tiruvaiyaru (Tiruvāḍi). This triangular area corresponds almost exactly to the Cauvery delta, and encompasses not only the most fertile, but also traditionally the most densely populated part of Tamilnad. This close correspondence is partly a reflection of the significant role played by temples in the control and utilisation of land, as well as in the organisation and maintenance of tanks and irrigation systems. (Spencer 1970, p. 236)

He also shows that the ‘overwhelming majority’ of sacred places referred to in the *Tēvāram* hymns is located in the districts of

Chengleput, South Arcot, Trichinopoly (Tiruchirapalli) and Tanjore (Thanjavur). Indeed, Tanjore district alone contains some 160 places... This concentration of sacred places within Tanjore district is scarcely surprising, since that district contains the fertile Cauvery delta, which was one of the earliest regions of settled agriculture in south India, and even today is one of the most densely populated. The close connection between the sacred geography of Tamil Śaivism and the early agricultural development of Tamilnad is evident if we consider the rather uneven distribution of sacred places within Tanjore district. (Ibid, p. 236)

Spencer also opines that

Both the devotional zeal of the saints and the “publicity” value of their hymns had a profound influence upon styles of religious devotion in later times, especially in the Cauvery delta, where Devāram symbolism was omnipresent. The program of temple-construction which was encouraged by the imperial Chōḷas, who dominated the Cauvery delta from the ninth through the twelfth centuries, drew much of its inspiration from the earlier bhakti movement of the Pallava period... It is understandable that the process of growth and proliferation of temples in the Tamil country and the travels of the saints and singing of their hymns reinforced one another. (Ibid, pp. 239–40)

The cult of Murukan got subsumed under this larger network in Tamil Nadu. In fact, all these above-mentioned places had earlier been Jaina sites³³ when many of them later entered (either transformed or converted, perhaps?) into the Śaivite mould and became part of the brāhmiṇical temple worship paradigm. In this, bhakti could be seen as a clever construct that aided in marginalising these traditions and establishing an overpowering religious-cultural-political idiom in the Tamil region

³³ Tirupparankunram, Palamutircolai, Kalugumalai, many of the rock-cut cave sites in Madurai district, for instance, had earlier Jaina associations as the early centuries BCE Tamil-Brāhmi inscriptions show, but gradually became Śaivite sacred sites.

for a long time to come, against an overwhelming agrarian ethic, to the exclusion of the forest- and hill-based ethos of several communities (especially tribal groups), gradually marginalised. Some of the sites that had early Jaina associations also got subsumed within this. For instance, Tirupparankunram. This rock-cut cave temple is situated 5 miles southwest of present-day Madurai and belongs to the early medieval Pandyan rock-cut style. The earliest historical association of *Parankunram* hill is with the Jaina caverns at the hill top. The earliest inscription of this place belongs to the second century CE, referring to a Sri Lankan householder (or trader) *Ilā Kuṭumbikaṇ* who got a stone bed to be carved out at the cave shelter at this place (Clothey 1978, p. 124). Tirupparankunram's natural caverns with rock-cut cave beds were occupied by Jaina monks intermittently from the third century BCE to the fourth century CE, after which they were abandoned. They were reoccupied from the eighth century CE, from which period there are two inscriptions in Sanskrit-Grantha and Tamil-Vaṭṭeḷuttu characters, referring to the 'foundation of the rock-cut cave temple on the hill'.³⁴ One of the interesting stories in the temple literature is about the legendary King Sibi who required 'one more brāhmiṇ' to give land to, in order to complete the traditional count of 108³⁵. Murukaṇ thus became the 108th brāhmiṇ and accepted the gift of Tirupparankunram.

The myths also construct ideas of divinity associated with water bodies, tanks, irrigation wells and so on. It is locally believed at Tirupparankunram that Brahma created the Brahma *tīrtha* near the Subrahmaṇya temple after marrying Sarasvatī. This sacred *tīrtha* is said to cure skin diseases. Similarly, Palamutircolai, which is a hill shrine of Murukaṇ atop the hill Alagarmalai, 21 km northeast of Madurai, has a temple below, dedicated to Tirumāl (Viṣṇu) where he is called *aḷagar* (the beautiful one), hence the name, Alagarmalai. Not much is known about the history of Murukaṇ worship in this place. This place was earlier a site of Buddhists and Jaina religions, in the time coinciding with the early *Caṅkam* anthologies. One of the Alagarmalai inscriptions, dated ca. first century BCE, "records the gift of Kaḷumāra Natan; from his name, [he] was probably a Pandyan king or prince" (Mahadevan 1968, p. 97).³⁶

The temple today seems to be a modern structure. The central deity is Murukaṇ with his two consorts, Vaḷḷi and Devayāṇai. Local legend has it that here, Murukaṇ appeared before the famous *Caṅkam* poet Auvvaiyār and offered her black berries.

Mayilai Sini Venkatasamy refers to one story that appears in the Tamil Śaivite text *Kāñci Māhātmyam*:

Tāraka's sons, Vindumāli, Tārakākṣaṇ, Kamalākṣaṇ, did severe penance and got a boon that they could fly to any place they wished. They resided in the golden, silver and iron worlds. Devas (the gods) were envious of these three *asuras*. They prayed to Tirumāl to destroy the *asuras*. Tirumāl produced *bhūtas* to destroy these *asuras* (with a yajña). The *bhūtas* could not destroy the three worlds. Tirumāl hatched a conspiracy and from his own body, produced another person and said, "You will be called Buddha; you will go to the three *asuras*

³⁴ K.G. Krishnan, *Epigraphia Indica*, XXVI, p. 114.

³⁵ Where feeding 108 brāhmiṇs is considered the most auspicious charity of all in Sanskrit Hinduism.

³⁶ Also, Mahadevan 2003, p. 378. [All Alagarmalai inscriptions in his book, pp. 369–383].

and preach them a text called *gaṇabhaṅgam* and dissuade them from propitiating Śiva. Nārada will accompany you.” Accordingly, Buddha did so; the three *asuras* converted to Buddhism and Jainism. The devas went to Śiva and told him his asura disciples had given up on him; Śiva burnt down the three worlds (‘tripura’). Buddha and Nārada, to atone for their sin of dissuading the asuras from propitiating Śiva, went to Kanchipuram. On the way, they saw a huge iron mountain transformed into a huge bale of cotton; they named it Tiruparuttikuṇṇam (Venkatasamy 1954, pp. 198–99).

Kanchipuram had earlier Buddhist and Jaina associations before it became the heart of the Sankarācārya *maṭham* and Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.³⁷ This story seems to refer to the efforts at destroying the Buddhist and Jaina religions from Kanchipuram. Tiruparuttikuṇṇam, also called Jinakanchi, has a Jaina temple and was earlier a flourishing Jaina settlement.

4.13 The Tamil Jaina Agrarian Context in History Writing

Rajan Gurukkal points out that

The formation of agrarian localities was an ongoing process, and everywhere it accomplished a uniform structure of social relations irrespective of whether they were brāhmaṇa settlements (brahmadeyas) or vēḷḷāṇ-vakai settlements (ūr). The social structure was a hierarchy with landholders (brahmadeyas—kiḷavaṇ in the case of brahmadeya and ūrār/nāṭṭār in the case of vēḷḷāṇ-vakai settlements) at the apex and the large number of leaseholders (kāraḷar) who were mostly artisans and craftsmen, in the middle, placed over the primary production (aṭiyālar), who were at the bottom. (Gurukkal 1996, p. 332)

The Jainas (vēḷḷāḷa agriculturists) somewhere do not figure in this process/understanding. Again, he writes

The brāhmaṇas being a non-cultivating group by themselves, had to depend upon the familial labour of neighbouring clans for the cultivation of their land. This meant making some permanent arrangement for the supply of labour in the brāhmaṇa households obviously a system transcending kinship. The brāhmaṇ land with this household thus emerged as an independent unit of production with working clansmen families attached to it. The centre of brāhmaṇa households is referred to in poems as ‘pārpaṇa-c-cēṭi’...an alternative system of agrarian relations counterposed to what was dominant.... (Ibid, p. 324)

Herein, it may be noted that same was the case of Jaina agricultural land, and to this day, the term ‘*nayinār-teru*’ is used to refer to Tamil Jaina hamlets, cluster of settlements in a village.

Gurukkal adds that, ‘With the manifestation of the bhakti discourse as a temple based movement in the 7th-8th centuries, the formation of the dominant ideology of the agrarian society was complete’ (Ibid, p. 333).

While there seems now a general consensus on the understanding of this side of the ‘discursive’ process in Tamilnadu, there is still a question as to where the Tamil Jaina ‘vēḷḷāḷa’ agriculturists—facing persecution from the nāyaṇmārs and ālvārs—

³⁷The Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, a religious body, has numerous Śaivite temples and shrines under its umbrella across India, besides educational and philanthropic establishments.

figure in this entire discursive process. Is it time to look at persecution from outside the purview of a religious ('communal') conflict alone and try to revisit the nature of this agrarian expansion, to look at this very interesting intra-veḷḷāḷa conflict between the Śaiva and Jaina veḷḷāḷars? By the post-bhakti period, the Jainas seem to have a relatively greater hold over south Arcot and surrounding areas rather than Madurai and Kanchipuram of the early periods. Were they forced to migrate to the former region at some point? It has been mentioned elsewhere that the Jaina *maṭham* of Jinakāñci was shifted to Cittamur (towards the fourteenth–fifteenth century CE). And it is a different matter, that by this time again, there is a 'fresh round' of persecution stories involving the Tamil Jainas and the rulers of the time. And again the '*nīr-pūci*' veḷḷāḷar concept figures in this. Thus, the history of the Tamil Jaina community does not remain a static one that can be explained against the dominance of the bhakti, agrarian expansion of that period, royal patronage, and decline within a period of seventh to ninth centuries CE. It continues through other periods, beyond the bhakti paradigm, constantly seeking to refresh the identity question. But most certainly the bhakti period persecution sets the 'base' for marginalisation of the community, which never quite manages to get back to a status it aimed for, of the early centuries BCE and CE.

Gurukkal notes that

Though there is no reason to believe that the Jainas and Buddhists were concerned about the values of agrarian society, *their interest in social peace has always been in favour of the communities engaged in exchange, whose operations required peace and order as an esoteric pre-requisite*. This circumvents the discursive needs of agriculturists and social groups engaged in exchange of goods.... (Ibid, pp. 324–25. Emphasis mine)

There seems an almost altruistic association of the Jainas and Buddhists with 'peace and order'. This in a sense denies the severe debates that ensued between these two sects for gaining both state and popular patronage. Moreover, when Jaina textual tradition speaks of the origins of four occupations³⁸—agriculture being the foremost in order of importance—as devised by the first *tīrthankara* Ṛṣabha, surely at some point in history, there was a full-fledged practising agricultural group among the Jainas that called for this construction of the divinely ordained (via the *tīrthankara* Ṛṣabha) occupational segregation. In a different context, and a different nature of study altogether, Karashima shows that there existed private ownership of land in medieval Tamil Nadu. He uses inscriptional evidence to show that there were increasing numbers of non-brahmadēya lands in that period:

There was a striking increase in number of individuals who held land in non-brāhmaṇa (non-brahmadēya) villages in the second half (of Chōḷa rule, 1070–1279 AD)...Towards the end of the Chōḷa rule, prominent non-brāhmaṇa individuals held extensive plots of land, often covering more than one village (which is a) clear indication of a stratified society. (Karashima 2001, pp. 45–46)

³⁸ Of course, the Jaina tradition is clear that these are not hereditary groups, as in the brāhminical system, nor are they strictly hierarchical, unlike the *varṇāśrama* dharma. As Jaini puts it, "As for the castes, they had no divine origin at all" according to the Digambara Jaina tradition as mentioned in Jinasena's *Ādipurāṇa* (Jaini 2000, pp. 339–40).

Couldn't these land-owning individuals also be, among others, the Jaina vellāḷas? Of course, there is no mention of the Jainas in the land-owning context even in Karashima's work. It must be pointed out here that the Jaina *maṭham* at Melcittamur also became a land-owning establishment. Returning to Gurukkal, where then, are these aspects of the Tamil agrarian context in the discursive processes, where the Jainas and Buddhists have little else to do, apart from existing on the fringes, as merchants and artisans? Are they non-agents in a non-problematic way? The location of the Tamil Jaina 'secular' or temporal history is in the villages and hilly terrains in rock-cut caves and natural caverns across the Tamil country as much as it is in their act of claiming (usually historically valid, justifiably so) authorship of Tamil texts and language. As a landed class, what kind of a status did the Jainas build for themselves which might have been perceived as (if it was) qualitatively different from the brāhmiṇs and non-Jaina landed vellāḷas? In the case of the Tamil Jainas, the community, as well as its history, had to contend with Vedic Hinduism as a 'larger' entity, at the pan-Jaina level, and brāhmiṇism and Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava (more often the former) religions within the Tamil region.

4.14 Texts and Identity and the Tamil Language

The printed editions of Tamil texts—ancient and otherwise—by Tamil Jainas in the modern period need to be seen in a critical context. Even within the context of scholarship on Tamil literature, perhaps they had to contend with debates on whether Iḷaṅko Aṭikaḷ (author of *Cilappatikāram*, brother of the Cēra king) was a Jaina; or, was Tiruvalluvar a Jaina and, could *Kural* be called a Jaina work. The process of putting to print palm leaf manuscripts needs to be looked into. Among the pioneers who devoted their time and energy to retrieving, compiling, editing manuscripts by the thousands, travelling to remote villages and meeting families, was the redoubtable 'Tamil savant', 'Tamil *tāṭā*' (as he is variously hailed), U.V. Swaminatha Iyer (U.Ve.Ca). He edited the *Cīvācakintāmaṇi*, *Cilappatikāram*, among other Tamil Jaina works that he collected. 'Jeevabandhu' Sripal and A. Chakravarti³⁹ are two important figures in the Tamil Jaina (contemporary) history: the former, a social activist with a reformist, with a nationalist zeal and the latter, a philosopher-writer.

³⁹ Although my first introduction to Chakravarti was from his book *Neelakesi* which I had discovered at the Sahitya Akademi Library in Delhi—which also introduced me to the characters of Nili and Nilakeci—every village of Tamil Jainas I have been to referred me to Chakravarti's books. It meant a lot for them if I had read the book *Nilakeci*; but it meant a lot more for me to read his other works, which someone or the other in one or the other village/town/city referred, or commanded me, to 'read'. An ardent fan of Chakravarti *naiṇār*, Anantharaj 'Jain', has installed a stone bust of Chakravarti's outside the Cittamur *maṭham*. Similar is the case with 'Jeevabandhu' Sripal. Every place one visited gave me new information about him, urging me to read his works. I owe this understanding (however limited) of the Tamil Jainas and a renewed building of Tamil Jaina consciousness to all the Tamil Jainas I have met, including the grandson of Chakravarti *naiṇār*, Mr. Jaya Vijayan at Chennai and their extended family in Chennai and Tindivanam. In a sense, my own engagement with the question of Tamil Jaina identity got substantiation in my introduction to Sripal and his works. In a sense, it all felt like a story asking to be written.

Both of them were into writing and publishing. Both represent a generation that worked tirelessly and consistently to trace, monitor and highlight the history of Jainism in Tamil Nadu and the Tamil Jaina literature. Both were inspired by the national movement, and one of them even participated in it actively while also earning respect and support from the stalwarts of Tamil socio-political movements, such as E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker 'Periyar', Tiru. Vi. Kalayanasudaram Mudaliyar, Kamaraj, Karunanidhi, etc., at different points in time. Chakravarti and Sripal wrote primarily of their literature—with references to inscriptional records, highlighting a past that was glorious for the Jainas in Tamil Nadu—as well as of the persecution at different points in time. It is important to see the close association they felt to their literature: Tamil literature. The need to reaffirm the contribution of Jainas to Tamil language and literature is perceptible in most of these efforts, which shows a close link between the language and the identity of the Jainas as partakers of a great Tamil heritage. Especially, a heritage constructed of the written word. In their writings, you find them asserting claims or 'reclaiming' from the votaries of other faiths (most essentially, the Śaiva), the vast corpus of Tamil literature. Tamil language, a need to reclaim the intrinsic relationship of the Jainas with Tamil, is a very important 'identity marker' for the Tamil Jainas in asserting their place in Tamil history and contemporary Tamil cultural complex. These claims signify 'sites' of identity, too.

4.15 'Jeevabandhu' T. S. Sripal

Sripal was born on 5th July 1900 at Tirupparambur (10 miles from Kanchipuram). He used to run a free library, called the Darumasagara Svamigal Free Reading Room, in his village, Tirupparambur. The library had both secular and sacred literature,⁴⁰ including copies of the paper *Swadesamitran* [Cudecamittiran]. I also found Marx and Lenin perched comfortably with old Jaina literature and works of Subramanya Bharati when I first visited, in year 2003. He was initially a Congress worker and a Gandhi follower during the freedom struggle. He studied at Kanchipuram. From 1919 onwards, he stayed and worked at his village. Post his Congress-worker days, Sripal associated himself with the Self-Respect Movement of Periyar as a sympathiser, if not being fully in it, out of respect for his views on blind beliefs in the name of god and religion.

He apparently brought out a printed edition of a palm leaf manuscript, called *Dharma Parīkṣai*, which was lying in the Reading Room in his village and, based on that manuscript, sent his essay called *Purāṇa-āpācam* to Periyar's *Kuṭi Aracu* in the years 1928 and 1929. Periyar apparently penned his *Purāṇa-āpācaṅkal* based

⁴⁰ I was told no one reads these; some are preserved in good shape by the elders there. But they inform me that raising funds is a serious issue. That was in year 2003. In 2015, when I revisited the place, new cupboards had been put in place and many new books were visible, but I could not find the older ones that I had seen the last time I went there. I did find some interesting old Tamil manuscripts this time in the collections. In terms of readers, the situation is the same, with most people being out of the village, and only the elders living there. And there is no staff employed to look after the collections.

on this essay sent by Sripal. Periyar met Sripal and asked him to publish the contents of that palm leaf manuscript. Periyar was also a great help to Sripal's campaign against animal sacrifices. One of the letters dated 6 August 1934, signed by Periyar, Indirani Balasubramaniam and Kuncitam Gurusamy, reads thus:

...We think that this South Indian Humanitarian League (Chennai Ten Indiya Jivarakshaka Prachara Sabha) should be supported by all people who believe in compassion and that it is an important work...Friend campaigner Sripal has put in genuine labour and effort in this and we wish to convey that we, the undersigned, stand in support. Signed.... (Sundiran and Tanakkoti 1959, p. 186)

Sripal refers to (in his letter in connection with the film on Appar) schools teaching Śaivite texts (and stories).

Pandian has noted that

Towards desacralising Tamil, the Self Respect Movement campaigned against the singing of Śaivite hymns in Tamil conferences, teaching religious texts as part of Tamil language courses, and including invocations to gods in textbooks.... (Pandian 2007, p. 225)

Sripal, in fact, organised numerous public debates and discourses in Chennai and across Tamil Nadu (also included recitation of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*) spreading the notion of community pride and consciousness among contemporary Tamil Jinas. He appears to have encouraged many young orators and scholars in Tamil Jaina literature, something quite a few educated Tamil Jinas today vouch for. One of the people he encouraged was 'Cintāmaṇi' 'Nāvalar' Santhakumar of Mottur, who made a name for himself as the best orator of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*.

It is not incidental that, in the year 2003 when I met them, among the group of Tamil Jinas—including the head of the *Tamil Samana Peroli* at Vandavasi, Aravazhi and many others—who were struggling to put in place a Jaina resource centre near Vandavasi, were those inspired by the work of Sripal. An interesting anecdote from his life involves his work during the imprisonment of Gandhi, at some point. Sripal used to take out processions with Gandhi's photographs through the villages:

Sripal took out the procession carrying a *mridangam* and with his associates—10 friends—and a harmonium. When the Sub-Inspector objected, the group squatted right there and continued playing the *mridangam* and harmonium...Between 1925 and 1927, he worked as a school teacher in the Panchayat Board High School in Nalli. He started the recitation of texts such as *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, *Mērumantarapurāṇam*, with references and allusions to *Nālaṭiyār*, *Kamba Ramāyaṇam*, and so on. (Sundiran and Tanakkoti 1959, pp. 47–9)

Around 1927, Sripal joined the South Indian Humanitarian League, a group initiated as the South Indian Jeeva Rakshaka Prachara Sabhai, by All India Congress Committee President Srinivasa Iyengar in 1926 at Sowcarpet in Chennai in the presence of a Jaina monk. As part of the South Indian Humanitarian League (SIHL, henceforth), Sripal conducted a sustained campaign against animal sacrifices in temples⁴¹ through lectures, pamphlets, posters and so forth. At the same time, he

⁴¹ It is important to distinguish this campaign from the contemporary Right-Wing initiated campaign against cow slaughter and ban on beef-eating in the country (as in years 2015–2016). For one, the discourse of Sripal was based on the ancient Jaina opposition to Vedic-brāhminical ritual-

associated himself with Periyar and his Suya Mariyathai Iyakkam (Self-Respect Movement) in the late 1920s and also contributed essays to Periyar's magazine, *Kuṭi Aracu*. From the late 1920s, he conducted campaigns across Tamil Nadu against animal sacrifice. He even sat on a fast at the Tiruvottiur temple. He was given the title 'Jeevabandhu' on Mahāvīra Jayanti in April 1943. Later, he had also won the 'Prani Mitra' honour at the hands of the then President of India, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed. A report in the English daily, *The Hindu*, dated 28 July 1937, under the heading, 'Buffalo sacrifice given up at Palayamcottah temple festival' (Tinnevely) mentions the mails sent to Sripal by Gandhi and Nehru:

As a sequel to the agitation carried on by T. S. Sripal, the buffalo sacrifice in connection with the tenth day festival of the Ayirattamman temple at Palayamcottah was given up today. As has been already reported in these columns there has been for sometime past a campaign against this sacrifice. Gandhiji sent a message stating that "sacrifice of animals in the name of religion is remnant of barbarism".

And Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote, "I am grieved to learn that it is proposed to offer animal sacrifice in temples. I think that such sacrifices are barbarous and they degrade the name of religion. I trust that the authorities of the temple will pay heed to the sentiments of cultured people in this matter and refrain from such sacrifices". (Sundiran and Tanakkoti 1959, pp. 91–92)

Two other newspaper reports may also be mentioned here, in this connection, in *The Hindu* and *Times of India*, respectively:

The Hindu (14 August 1939): "Under the auspices of the Young Men's Progressive League, Mr. Sripal of the South India Humanitarian League spoke yesterday on "Animal Sacrifice". Mr. B. S. Murthy, Parliamentary Secretary to Government, presided...The Chairman in his concluding remarks assured the gathering that the government would do everything it could, to further their interests and advised them to continue to carry on propaganda against cruelty to animals. A resolution was then passed condemning animal sacrifice and requesting the Government to adopt legislative measures to put an end to it". (Ibid, pp. 99–100)

Sunday Times 26 April 1942—Animal Sacrifices in Temples stopped at many places:

The fifteenth annual report of the South Indian Humanitarian League, Madras, makes impressive reading. Started fifteen years ago, the League aims at completely eradicating animal sacrifice from our country. It fights for complete prohibition and strives to ameliorate the condition of the depressed class. Last year, the League succeeded in stopping animal sacrifices at various temples. This they did by lectures and distribution of leaflets. The League is to be congratulated for this good work, they are doing and it deserves the encouragement and help from all who regard animal sacrifice and drink as evils. (Ibid, p. 190)

In November 1947, the Chennai Upper House introduced the Animal Sacrifice Abolition Bill, and on 21 January 1949, it was made a law. Sripal's efforts in this, along with support from leaders in the Congress and others, seem to have been instrumental in the intervention of the state in the issue.

ism. Sripal did not include Islam or Muslims in this discourse, and his campaigns were restricted to 'Hindu' temples (as he referred to them, too) across Tamil Nadu.



Fig. 4.2 An old photograph—Karunanidhi felicitating Jeevabandhu Sripal at the library in Tirupparambur



Fig. 4.3 An old photograph inside a book at the library showing Sripal and others of the South Indian Humanitarian League at a meeting with the Nayapuram (and Lakshmpipuram) Adi Dravida Valipar Sangam (a union of Adi Dravidas) to urge them to stop animal sacrifices (Photograph taken with due permission from Aruhakirti *avarkal* at Tirupparambur)



On behalf of Animal Welfare Board,

On 25-2-1975

Honourable President of India Sri. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed

presented

"PRANIMITHRA AWARD" & GOLD MEDAL

to

Jeevabandhu T.S. Sripal

in recognition of his valuable

services rendered in entirely stopping animal sacrifices

dedicated to God and Godness.

Fig. 4.4 Sripal being awarded the Prani Mitra award in recognition of his services from the then President of India, Dr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, in February 1975 (From the book, *Jeevabandhu T. S. Sripal Avarkaḷin Nūrrāṇṭu Viḷā Niṇaivu Malar (1900–2000)*, Tamil Samanarkal Sangam, Madurai, 2000)

I have visited the office of South Indian Humanitarian League and I went through the Annual Reports of the Institution. Faithful to the great teachings of Jaina religion, the most reasonable and the noblest of all Indian religious systems, the South Indian Humanitarian League has done splendid service to humanity, to ignorant and superstitious masses, teaching them, patiently explaining them what sanctity of life means. The central place in their apostolic activities has to be given to Jeevabandhu Sripal, one of the best men I have ever met, with a broad and loving heart. I am proud of his personal friendship.

25.2.1957

Dr Kamil Zvelebil
 Dr. Kamil Zvelebil
 Oriental Institute of Prague,
 1. Czechoslovakia

(மொழிப்பெயர்ப்பு)

தென்னிந்திய ஜீவரக்ஷக பிரசாரசபைக் காரியாலயத்திற்கு யான் சென்று அதன் ஆண்டு அறிக்கைகளைப் படித்துப் பார்த்தேன். இந்திய சமயங்களிலே எஜன சமயம் உயர்ந்த கொள்கைகளுடன், பகுத்தறிவிலும், பண்பிலும் மிக மேன்மையுடையதாய் விளங்குகிறது. தென்னிந்திய ஜீவரக்ஷகப் பிரசாரசபை எஜன சமயக் கொள்கைகளில் தலை சிறந்ததாகிய உயிர்களின் மேன்மையை போதித்தும், பொறுமையோடு விளக்கம் செய்தும், மாவிட வர்க்கத்திற்கும் அறியாமை மூடநம்பிக்கை ஆகியவைகளில் முழிக்கிடக்கும் பாமர மக்களுக்கும் சிறந்த சேவையைச் செய்திருக்கிறது. இச்சீரியத் தொண்டுகளைச் செய்ய ஜீவபந்து டி.எஸ்.ஸ்ரீபால் அச்சபையில் முதலிடம் பெற்றுள்ளார். நான் சந்தித்துள்ள சிறந்த நல்லோர்களில் ஜீவபந்து ஸ்ரீபால் அவர்களும் ஒருவராவர். அவர் பரந்த நோக்கமும், உயர்ந்த அன்பும் படைத்த உள்ளமுடையவர். அவருடைய நட்பு எனக்கு ஏற்பட்டதற்கு யான் பெரிதும் பெருமையடைகின்றேன்.

(Sd) டாக்டர். கமில் கவலெபில்.

ஜீவபந்து T.S. ஸ்ரீபால் அவர்களின் வாழ்க்கையைப் பற்றிய குறிப்புகளும் தொண்டுகளும் . . .

Fig. 4.5 Copy of a letter written by Dr. Zvelebil to Sripal in 1957 praising the South Indian Humanitarian League (Source: Jeevabandhu T. S. Sripal Avarkaḷin Nūṛṛāṇṭu Viḷā Niṇaivu Malar (1900–2000). Madurai: Tamil Samanarkal Sangam, 2000)



Fig. 4.6 One of the descendants from the family of Sripal, Jayankondan, at the same library, newly renovated (Year 2015)



Fig. 4.7 Some of the books (still some eclectic collection) in the library (2015)

4.16 Varying Interpretations of the Animal Sacrifice Issue

Interesting to note in this connection is a debate that ensued over Chief Minister Jayalalithaa (in the year 2003) instructing that fine and severe penalty be levied on those that violated the ban on animal sacrifices in temples in Tamil Nadu. The debate saw opinions of various kinds from intellectuals and dalit activists and scholars, and it was then that I was also interacting with the Tamil Jains. It was interesting to capture their opinion on this renewed state effort to ban an activity that they saw as the fruits of T. S. Sripal's (including others), in the first place. In this context I discuss an article by M. S. S. Pandian (2005), written in that time, addressing the issue from a time when Sripal joined the Humanitarian League. In this article there are points that I will locate the Tamil Jaina identity in, something that is missed entirely, because, again, it looks at the 'dominant', to critique the dominant viewpoint. In August 2003, Jayalalithaa, the then Chief Minister of Tamilnadu,⁴² had commanded strict enforcement of the ban on animal sacrifices following the sacrificial ritual involving killing of 500 buffaloes in a village temple. While some praised her for bringing into force the long forgotten law, and others praised her without quite knowing the law had been put in place in 1949, many among the Tamil academic circles wrote interesting opinions on the issue. The debate ranged from linking her new-found zeal to negation of dalits' identity and ritual context to saying that it signified the Hindu Right's attempt to grant sanction to 'brāhminical Hinduism'. Sadly, though, it had been forgotten in the whole debate that Vedic ritualism, on which brāhminism is based, had itself been central to the idea of animal sacrifice in rituals. And in the course of time, influenced by religions such as Buddhism and Jainism, besides other socio-cultural changes over time, brāhminism and vegetarianism somewhere began to be seen as linked. Or so it seemed, from most of the opinions generated by the move of the state government. In this context, Pandian (and others writing in the newspapers then) gave a different kind of historical perspective to the whole debate. He saw in this move a past which I am discussing here.

According to Pandian,

Following the formation of the South Indian Jeevarakshana Sabha, a Jain organisation, in Madras in 1926, there were active campaigns to stop animal sacrifices in temples in the Tamil-speaking areas. The Jains were actively supported by the Śaivites. For instance, Thiru. Vi. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar, a Śaivite and an ardent nationalist, used his journal *Navasakthi* to oppose animal sacrifice. There were joint meetings organised by the Jains, Śaivites and the rationalists to campaign against animal sacrifice. These joint campaigns by rationalists and religionists produced a vast corpus of literature on why animal sacrifice had to be stopped....⁴³ (Pandian 2005, p. 2314)

⁴²Who died (in state) in December 2016.

⁴³It may be noted here that the association Pandian refers to here, according to Sundiran and Tanakkoti (cf.cit), was started by a Congressman in the presence of a Jaina monk and was not originally a 'Jain organisation', as Pandian refers to it. But yes, people such as V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar (Tiru.Vi.Ka) actively supported the same. Tiru.Vi.Ka, incidentally, also supported the Jains in their claim to authorship of certain Tamil textual traditions.

Pandian's engagement with this legislation starts from the Śaivite veḷḷāḷas, some of whom were prominent in the debate. The Jainas—who were missing even in the assembly debates on the Bill, as one shall note—are missing even in his analysis. Apart from mention of Sripal, in the context of those who were talking on the issue in the late 1930s, there is little else. It may have been interesting to locate even communities such as the Jainas in the discourse to see differences within the discourse. But Pandian locates the discourse in a totally different paradigm: that of emerging modern Tamil consciousness and the way it perceived ritual practices and, thereby, communities, in Tamilnadu.

He writes

In order to understand how animal sacrifice was represented in the *Śaivite public discourse*,... [it is important to understand] Maraimalai Adigal (1876–1950), a versatile scholar of Tamil and Śaivism and an important public figure in colonial Tamil Nadu. Here I shall primarily focus on one of his key texts, *Veḷḷāḷar Nāgarīgam* (Veḷḷāḷar civilisation), which was first published in 1923... Characterising hunting and nomadic material cultures, he noted, "Before knowing [the techniques of] cultivation and the ways of using them, people lived in great difficulty without enough food and proper clothing... One can directly observe even today the difficult state in which the hill people and the forest dwellers lead an uncivilised life of hunting." However, such an uncivilised regime full of scarcity, economic hardships and other debilitating qualities of life, drew to a close as the Veḷḷāḷars (upper-caste, non-brāhmin Śaivites) discovered modes of settled agriculture... This was indeed a critically important move for Maraimalai Adigal. The recently schematised *Śaiva Siddhānta* (philosophy of Śaivism), which to him was the highest achievement of the Tamil mind, had as one of its central tenets non-killing (read vegetarianism), and hence the claim to compassion and munificence. Thus, Adigal's sequencing of Tamil history developed an identity between the Veḷḷāḷars, their traditional occupation of settled agriculture and Śaivism as the civilisational apotheosis of history... Within his sequencing of history, the Aryan brāhmins had remained in a state of barbarism in the past while the Veḷḷāḷars were building a civilisation based on settled agriculture... In keeping with their uncivilised status, the religious-moral universe of the Aryan brāhmins had also remained unrefined. They worshipped 'minor' deities such as Varuṇa and Indira, offered them inebriating drinks, and persisted in "the performance of bloody sacrifices so much so that as time went on, their conduct became more and more revolting to the delicate feelings of the humanitarian Vellalars"... The Tamil Jains who campaigned for the ban on animal sacrifices in temples, also shared such an understanding about the deities of popular Hinduism. He, however, insisted, "It is essential that those who follow the Saivite moral of non-meat-eating should mix only with others who also follow the same moral. If they have to mix with meat-eaters... they should do so only after converting them to Saivism..." In September 1950, the Madras legislative assembly debated a bill to abolish the sacrifice of animals and birds in Hindu temples. The bill was a result of a long-standing and sustained campaign against animal sacrifice in temples by the Tamil Jains led by T. S. Sripal and had the open support of the then chief minister of the Madras state O. P. Ramaswami Reddiyar, a follower of Vadalur Ramalinga Adigal who preached non-killing as part of his Śaivism. *Whatever be the sources of their definitions of Hinduism, a section of the legislators was categorical that animal and bird sacrifices could not have been, or be part of true Hinduism....* (Pandian 2005, pp. 2314–2315. Emphasis mine)

Thus, non-killing, or vegetarianism, which was essentially a Jaina tenet—which is why the Jainas were involved in the whole campaign—seems to have been missed out as a Jaina tenet and is called a universal 'Hinduism'. This is an interesting aspect of the debate. Either that the debate in the Assembly had nothing to do with Jaina

part of the campaign against animal sacrifices (it has become a Śaiva Veḷḷāḷar campaign) or it does not come to the notice of Pandian while referring to the debate, since he too is seeing this through the Śaiva veḷḷāḷa discourse. Then Pandian moves on to other ways of perceiving religion and engaging with religion, which is not linked to the present scope of my study. But, I use this debate to understand as to how the Jaina religion failed to make that connection with certain communities (precisely on the ground on which the debate stood) and where Purāṇic religion ‘adjusted’ itself to allow for these practices, even if on the fringes, as it were. But the significant point is, that if Vedic religion inherited the practice of animal sacrifice (that is, towards seeking benefits of whatever kind), and Buddhism and Jainism essentially were born as a counter to these practices, the same practices in the contemporary context signify the cultural expressions of the marginalised (dalits, tribal communities), sanitised of the Vedic antecedents, as it were. Where, in this process, do religions such as Buddhism and Jainism figure? That is, if we talk of addressing this for a purely theoretical understanding, alone. Critiques, too, are formulated within the parameters of a ‘universal Hinduism’ (read brāhminism, read thence, as vegetarianism). And this is where one has to locate the question of community and identities in the contemporary context. There is perhaps need to ‘seek’ the ‘secular’ and the ‘religious’, outside of the ‘Hindu’ discourse, altogether. Religion, in this sense, seems to be equated with ‘Hindu’ and hence the problem; hence one of the ways is to counter the dominant paradigm, looking at these issues from discourses that became marginal: the Jaina discourse on non-violence, for instance. Jainism is only one example. There was also the materialist school, or even the Ājivika sect, with their own perceptions on cultural forms and processes. If those histories are also retrieved, in a contemporary debate of the above kind, it could give refreshing insights.

The interesting aspect is the striking similarity in the Śaiva veḷḷāḷar story of social construction, which matches completely with that of the Jainas and the story of the first *tīrthankara* Ṛṣabhanātha’s social construction. The Jaina story can be seen in the *Triśaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacarita* and other works:

The form of nature began to change at great speed. The bounties of nature, such as the *kalpavṛkṣa* trees, etc and other kinds of conveniences, began to disappear gradually. The yield of fruits, roots, tubers, crops, etc declined and became inadequate...Reassuring the twins, Ṛṣabhanātha said, “Now *karmayuga* (a time of effort or action) has commenced on this earth, as a result of which you have to work hard to manage your lives.”...He taught *asi* (art of government or military occupation), *masi* (writing) and *kṛṣi* (farming) and a hundred crafts. Among the craftspeople, he first taught pottery, then weaving for clothes, architecture for constructing homes, and thereafter painting; and for hair and nails, the craft of the barber. From these basic crafts, there emerged a hundred kinds of other crafts in groups of twenty. According to this story, because of this, “people were strong and hardy, they laboured hard. They ploughed fields and the fields were a verdant lush green. Man hitherto dependent purely on nature, danced in joy looking at the outcome of his sweat and labour. King Ṛṣabhanātha, his sons and daughters, and the craftspeople and artists trained under them, were determined to build a world as beautiful as paradise itself...”⁴⁴

⁴⁴Acarya Sri Hastimal ji, *Jain Dharma kā Maulik Itihās*, Jain Legend, Vol.I, Samyakjnana Pracaraka Mandala, Jaipur, 2011, pp. 48–49.

Emeneau records a similar story in the Jaina tradition:

The Jain parallel that has been found is in Hemacandra's *Trīṣaṣṭisalākapuruṣacaritra* 1.2.924- 984, the section on the establishment of customs by Rṣabha, the first of the line of Jinas. Previously, wishing-trees had provided people with all they desired. Now these trees had become extinct and the people ate all sorts of vegetable food. At first it was uncooked and indigestible. Rṣabha instructed them to crush and skin the food, but it was still indigestible, then to wet it with water, but with the same result. Then he instructed them again: "Follow the former procedure, put the herbs in your hands and put them in the heat under the arms, then eat them with pleasure." The food was still hardly digestible. At this time a fire started from the rubbing of tree-branches. The people were told to cook their food in the fire, but in their ignorance they burned it up. The lord then moulded clay on an elephant's forehead protuberance and instructed the people in cooking food in pots similarly formed. (Emeneau 1947, pp. 2-3)

4.17 The Caste Question

The subject of caste in the Tamil Jaina and Śaivite conflict is a complex and interesting one to focus on, considering that most of the Tamil Jains are from the veḷḷāḷa social group themselves. It may be worthwhile to consider the processes which led to some of them becoming staunchly Śaivite in their inclination, entering the bhakti paradigm and abusing members of the religious group that was once their own. It would be equally significant to understand the reasons for the popularity of Jaina religion among the veḷḷāḷas, at one point, which later transformed into acceptance of a belief-system that was essentially antithetical to theirs. The suffix 'Jain' was not used by all the members of the Tamil Jaina community until recent times. The suffix 'Jain' which few of them have begun to use in official documents, one figures, comes from an increasing need to associate with the pan-Indian, pan-Jaina identity, since they are in a minority and are realising it. At the same time, they hold fast to their Tamil identity. There were a few among them who used both suffixes, 'Nayinar Jain' after their names. But within the Jain fold, they are quick to distinguish themselves as Tamil, with certain customs that they consciously practise in the knowledge that these are not part of the 'north' (*vaṭanāṭu*) Indian Jaina culture. The need to use the suffix Jain, perhaps, also signifies a community's response to the domination (culturally, symbolically, socially) of the Purāṇic, brāhminical Hinduism, which continues, even in contemporary times, to subsume (or in a 'softer' term, 'incorporate') all hitherto marginal cults and practices in its fold. There is also, in them, an inherent need to be distinguished from the category, 'Hindu'.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Though not related to this point, in particular, and though this point needs further study and substantiation, while Jains in the north (especially Rajasthan, Gujarat) have tended to show allegiance to the Hindu Right in politics, the Tamil Jains (based on one's interaction with them) almost totally rejected the Hindu Right when it came to voting. And this comes from their consciousness of the Hindu Right representing Vedic brāhminism and, by extension the Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava persecution they were subjected to, and their past links with the Dravidian movement, precisely to state their opposition to brāhmin ascendancy and Śaivite appropriation of their textual tradition and

There appears to be a status quo in terms of caste equations so far as the Jainas, vis-à-vis the other castes, are concerned. Although there is no place for caste in the 'pristine' Jaina religion, the story of the birth of occupational divisions as conceptualised in the story of Rṣabha seems to be of later origin, basically addressing the inevitability of the caste factor in Indian society as a whole.⁴⁶ There seems an acceptance of caste, outside, if not within the Jaina system, in terms of general social relations. Very little or nothing has been written on the concept of caste among the Tamil Jainas. It is believed that since Jainism, per se, did not believe in caste and hierarchy, it may not be necessary to look at caste. Were the Jainas really immune to segregation and caste inequalities? Did they remain aloof? Considering the long period of the survival of Tamil Jainas among a largely agricultural community, as a community they must surely have had to negotiate their space within the larger social parameters, caste being one such crucial, and to a large extent, overwhelming dimension.

Caste, as Gurukkal remarks, was

The most potent discursive instrument that stabilised the relations of production... accommodating in its fold a variety of economically stratified functionaries of hereditary trades. As agrarian expansion advanced, human settlements (*ūr*) originally bound by kinship got integrated as agrarian localities (*nāḍu*) which subsequently acquired great political significance in the monarchical system. (Gurukkal 1996, p. 331)

This being so, when it comes to the study of processes of change that affected the Jaina community, caste never seems to occur as a matter justifying any attention. So far as the Tamil Jaina agricultural community is concerned, in the present context, for those who could afford, lower castes generally worked on their farms. Those who cannot afford costs of farm-hands, of course, do their own tilling. Lower castes (from non-Jaina religious groups) were not allowed into Jaina temples in the past; one was informed. While this may be one aspect of their caste relations, there are other aspects to it, as well. While one of the aspects that needs to be noted is the way the Jainas perceived themselves vis-à-vis the other castes (the lower castes), and the other is the way they retained clan/jāti 'markers' with their Jaina identity. Both these aspects are reflected in the following points that Thurston notes about the Jainas in Tamil Nadu.

Tamil language, broadly. This point, however, needs further working on and is based on conversations one has had with them in the course of field visits and reading some of their works on literary appropriation, etc. Moreover, voting in India is a very complex phenomenon, where personal beliefs do not always inform the voting pattern. Not everyone who votes for the political Right, for instance, harbours the Right-wing ideology. Many permutations and combinations work here.

⁴⁶Mentioned elsewhere, the story of four occupational divisions devised by Rṣabha, which were meant to be simply occupational divisions without corresponding hierarchical arithmetic, which made it different from the Hindu understanding of caste- and descent-based work. The Jaina castes originally did not have anything to do with heredity and birth in a caste. Thus, there is nothing in the story that says an agriculturist's son cannot be anything else or a trader's son cannot be anything but a trader, for instance. But the essence of divisions and occupational divisions in society has some semblance to the Hindu claims of caste being based on occupational divisions.

Speaking on the Jainas' social taboos, he records that 'The Jainas are careful to avoid pollution from contact with outcastes, who have to get out of their way in the road, as I have noticed myself' (Thurston 1909, p. 426).

[There are] more than half of them in Wandiwash taluk and the rest in Arcot and Polur... They have most of the brahman ceremonies and wear the sacred thread, but look down upon brahmins as degenerate followers of an originally pure faith. For this reason they object generally to accepting ghee or jaggery, etc. from any but of their own caste. They are defiled by entering a Pariah village, and have to purify themselves by bathing and assuming a new thread.... (Ibid, p. 427)

However, it may be noted that the Jainas themselves affirm to a very different understanding of this 'exclusion': anybody from any community, not strictly adhering to the tenets of Jainism about non-killing (*kollāmai*, especially in matters of diet), becomes 'impure' and polluting. The stories of persecution that the Tamil Jainas narrate touch upon their understanding of the other castes and communities.

Thurston notes that, for the Jainas, 'The usual caste affix is Nainar, but a few, generally strangers from other districts, are called Rao, Chetti, Das or Mudaliyar' (Thurston 1909, p. 427).

The men use the title of Nayinar or Udaiyar, but their relations in Kumbakonam and elsewhere in that direction sometimes call themselves Chetti or Mudaliyar. The men...in general appearance resemble the Vellalas...The women dress like Vellalas and wear the same kind of tali...and other jewellery.... (Ibid, p. 431)

However, these 'markers' were not all too visible in the census conducted in that period. Referring to the Madras Census Report, 1891, Thurston notes:

Out of a total of 25,716 Jains, as many as 22,273 have returned both caste and sub-division as Jaina. The remainder have returned 22 sub-divisions of which some such as Digambara and Svetambara are sectarian rather than caste divisions, but others like Marvadi, Osval, Vellalas, etc. are distinct castes...Some Jains have returned well known castes such as their main castes, for we have Jain Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Goudas, Vellalas, too...At the Madras Census 1901, 27,431 Jains were returned. Though they are found in nearly every district of Madras Presidency, they occur in the largest number in the following—South Canara—9,582; North Arcot—8,128; South Arcot—5,896.... (Ibid, pp. 419–20)

And in his opinion, "The Jain community now holds a high position in Tindivanam taluk and includes wealthy traders and some of quite the most intelligent agriculturists there" (Ibid, p. 431).

As to why they returned their surnames as 'Jains' may be a question that is related to the manner in which the census officials posed that question to the community, in the first place. But in a sense, it does reflect the community's need to be identified as 'Jaina' first and foremost, as being distinct from the 'Hindu' category of the British, considering that in this period there were also a number of cases coming up in legal matters wherein the Jainas were trying to get their status changed from 'Hindu' to 'Jain'.

The people who took to the Jaina faith were mostly the *veḷḷāḷas*. Though Sangave speaks of a sect of 'Jain brāhmaṇas', it is not to be taken to mean, literally, the

brāhmiṇs, who were earlier converts to Jainism; he means the priestly caste. He takes the idea of 'brāhmaṇa' as being closely connected to the temple and ritualistic process and transposes it to the Jaina community, without differentiating. For, if anything, unlike the brāhmiṇs, the so-called "Jaina brāhmaṇas", who are actually the *arcakas* in his case, are not considered the highest category among the Tamil Jains. They depend, to a large extent, on the donations of the community to their religious establishments, the *maṭham*, the latter taking care of their needs, in most cases. The *veḷḷāḷas* who took to Jainism did not leave their own caste identity behind. Caste then, was a firmly established social truth that remained, while the religious doctrine they adopted was far away from the regular caste hierarchy born from the Vedic religion. The Jains have their own explanations; where they believe it is occupational and is not caste 'in the brāhmiṇ sense of caste'. Yet, it is there. In discussions on caste in Tamil Nadu, perhaps, there is a need to bring under closer scrutiny even the so-called 'heretical' or 'heterodox' sects and understand how caste as a basic layer of identity functions in these communities.

For Jainism to gain a strong foothold, state patronage did help. On the other hand, brāhmiṇism and Sanskritic Hinduism seemed, at least on the face of it, more 'accepting' (?) of the local tribal/folk rituals and practices, despite the larger ideology of separation on the basis of concepts of purity and pollution and descent.

The Tamil Jains also aver that the reason for them not allowing people from certain (lower) castes into their temples is qualitatively different from the reason adopted by the brāhmiṇs (according to them). It is not a question of treating them differently on the basis of birth, since their religious belief itself is based on *karma* and transforming of the individual self through observation of certain principles; hence there is no question of exclusion, the kind practised within brāhmiṇism.

For instance, Sripal states that, "In the Jaina tradition there are four occupational groups—*arasar* (ruler), *antaṇar* (learning), *vaṇikar* (merchant), *veḷḷāḷar* (agriculturist)..." (Sripal 1957, p. 39).

According to Tatia

(The) credit for accommodating the Hindu caste system as a worldly institution goes to the ingenuity and literary skill of the ācārya Jinasenā (c.800). Jinasenā's efforts to "jina-ise" certain pan-Indian social norms were by no means confined to the issue of caste. (Tatia 1994, p. xxxviii)

Jaini writes

The caste of the *kṣatriyas* came to be established when Rṣabha assumed the powers of a king and held weapons in his arms. The *vaiśya* and the *śūdra* castes arose subsequently as he invented different means of livelihood and people were trained in diverse arts and crafts. (Jaini 2000, p. 340)

Sangave points out that, 'It has been very emphatically stated by Jain research scholars that the castes found in Jaina community at present appear to have come into existence after the 10th century A.D because Jaina books prior to 10th century A.D do not refer to castes' (Sangave 1980, p. 316).

But, he says, 'It is not definitely known how the various castes, sub-castes have originated' (Ibid, p. 322).

Mallinatha Shastri writes

Brāhmiṇs, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas adopted Jainism. People of lower castes neither adopted this religion nor was it easy for them to do so, since Jainism was strict about the question of eating meat, adhering to ahimsā....Only the higher castes could adopt it...Lower caste people are used to drinking, eating meat, which was allowed in other religions...Jaina religion, thus, was only able to remain (secure) in the hands of a few.... (Shastri 1994, p. 133)

It is difficult to agree with his point on the brāhmiṇs (not necessarily the Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas) accepting the Jaina faith (or converting as it may). Difficult considering the fact that in that period, which favoured them—in social, economic and political terms—why would they have the need to adopt a 'heretical' faith, especially one (besides Buddhism) which had come out in the strongest terms against Vedic, brāhmiṇical ritualism? Moreover, in the Tamil context, brāhmiṇs have been nearly always most vociferous in denouncing all other faiths. With Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava bhakti concept becoming more popular and accepted among the brāhmiṇs, there was open denouncing of the Jaina and Buddhists. Moreover, the Jaina tradition has always had an uncomfortable relationship with the brāhmiṇs, or so it would seem in many of their textual traditions speaking of the brāhmiṇs in very low light. In one of his essays, Jaini refers to one of the Jaina textual traditions and its perception of the origin of brāhmiṇs as a social group; this is the context of the Jaina ācārya Jinasenā's response to brāhmiṇical (Vedic) hegemony:

Exploiting fully the rich potentialities in the legend of Rṣabha, the first *sarvañā* (omniscient one) Jinasenā sought, as it were, to write new history of the world, presided over by a Jain Brahma, who pronounced a set of Jain Vedas, instituted a Jain division of the castes and duties, and proclaimed a series of Jain *samskāras*, complete with Jain rites and litany.... (Jaini 2000, pp. 339–340)

At the same time, he points out that Jinasenā believed that 'There is only one jāti called the *manuṣyajāti* or the human caste, but divisions arise on account of their different professions' (Ibid, pp. 339–340).

'manuṣyajātir ekaiva jātinamōdayōdbhava

vrttibhēdahitād bhēdac caturvidhyām ihaṣnutē. (Ibid, p. 348)⁴⁷

Further

Jinaseṇā claims that the Vedas are not what the Brāhmaṇs chant at the slaughter of the sacrificial animals, but the Dvādaśāṅgapravacana or the scripture of the Jains, pronounced by the Ādideva...[Through his Ādipurāṇa thus] Jinaseṇā not only criticised the Brāhmaṇical doctrine of the creator and his creation (*īśvaraḥṛtatavavāda*) but openly challenged the authority of the Vedic scriptures, rejected the divinity of the Vedic gods, repudiated the efficacy of the Brāhmaṇical rites and rituals, and above all ridiculed the claim of the Brāhmaṇs to a superior social rank.... (Ibid, pp. 339–340)

⁴⁷ Note 47, quoting from *Ādipurāṇa*, XXXVIII, 45.

The blatant conflict between various systems has been recorded and often mentioned in works of many scholars. This being so, the Jaina community's response to this conflict has not been adequately addressed. Mayilai Sini Venkatasamy did not mince words in expressing his opinion that the sole cause of the decline in the popularity of Jainism in Tamiḷakam was the rise of 'Hinduism' through the 'bhakti' movement (Venkatasamy 1954, p. 57).

Venkatasamy also reasons that the Vedic religion incorporated the pre-existing Dravidian gods and goddesses of the Tamil people, such as Murukan, Koravai and Tirumāl into its fold. So, while the Vedic religion, Jainism and Buddhism had all 'entered' the Dravidian land, culture and society (and were not endemic there), the Vedic religion managed to incorporate the Dravidian ritual context, including that of animal sacrifice, etc., while the other two did not (Ibid, p. 58). Dravidian gods and goddesses thus became bound to Vedic gods and goddesses through relationships constructed between the two—as daughters, sons, consorts and so forth (Ibid, p. 59). And festivals, such as Dīpāvali, Śivarātiri, etc., were essentially Jaina festivals which were later incorporated in the Hindu religion (Ibid, pp. 79ff).⁴⁸ This last point was also something the Tamil Jains I had met invariably spoke of.

Beyond all this, by far, the most pronounced and stark critique of caste within Tamil Jainism occurs in the Tamil Jaina text, *Nīlakeci*,⁴⁹ of which I have done a fairly detailed study elsewhere. The author of this text dated is not known; only the commentator is known to be one Samaya Divākara Vāmana *muṇivar*, a Digambara Jaina monk. The text is one of the minor *kāvyas* (a *cirukkāppiyam*) of the Tamil literary corpus. Chakravarti dates it to ca. fifth century CE. But there is no general consensus on the date. *Nīlakeci* is a counter-text to the Buddhist *Kuṇṭalakeci*.

Zvelebil writes

There is no internal evidence for the date of Kuṇṭalakēci. But all the "Five Great Epics" precede the so-called "Five Small Epics". One of these, Cūlāmaṇi, may be safely dated in the beginning of the 10th century. Hence, Kuṇṭalakēci must have belonged to an earlier period, probably the 9th century. Also, it is earlier than Nīlakēci. Thus, since Nīlakēci can be dated approximately 950–1000 AD, Kuṇṭalakēci's date may be ca. 900–950 AD. (Zvelebil 1992, p. 72)

However, I tend to agree with Chakravarti's dating because the religious schools that are discussed within it belong to that time period. If the text was composed only during the tenth century CE, as some scholars opine, then what is the reason that there is no debate (within it) with the Śaivite tradition when we know of the antagonism between the two? Why did the author of the text not feel the need to at least engage with the criticisms levelled against the Jaina tradition by the votaries of the Śaivite bhakti tradition, especially when they were dealing with persecution unleashed in its wake, already, in the preceding centuries?

⁴⁸For the Tamil Jains, *Dīpāvali* commemorates the attainment of *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra, while *Śivarātiri* signifies the attainment of *nirvāṇa* of Ṛṣabha.

⁴⁹There are two editions of this work available: A. Chakravarti's, originally published in year 1936 (with an English summary) and reprinted by the Tamil University, Thanjavur, in 1984 and one by Po. Ve. Somasundaranar in 1973.

The central character, the protagonist of this work, *Nīlakeci*, is Nīli, who was the most dreaded *pēy* of Paḷayaṇūr (South Arcot), who later becomes a Jaina philosopher, Nīlakeci, after her providential meeting with a Jaina monk at the temple of Kālī. She then debates with other systems of thought prevalent then, which are the Buddhist, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Bhūtavāda (the materialist school), Vedic and Ājīvika. In her debate with the Vedic teacher, Pūṭikaṇ, Nīlakeci is faced—for the first time in her debating journey—with the question of her caste when he calls her a *śūdra*, saying how dare she question him about the Vedas. To this, she gives an angry and detailed response, of which I only cite a few pertinent points⁵⁰ which, I believe, reflects a scathing denunciation of the caste system within the Jaina tradition of the ancient Tamil country. For instance, Nīlakeci tells the Vedic teacher, Pūṭikaṇ, that just as there is no knowing, from even a detailed analysis of the appearance, odour, taste and touch of the faeces of a person who has defecated the previous night, whether it is shit of a high born or a low born, the text is examined by its content, and not by the birth-status of its author (Verse. 830). Here, Nīlakeci, who, says that her knowledge should not be measured on account of her caste status. Interestingly, the term used is *mēṛkulat-tārō ṭiḷintava-r eṇpatu* [whether higher caste or lower born...].

The use of scatological examples (as in the *Vetavātaccarukkam*) is a subtle use of the satirical, and Nīlakeci pours forth all these (and more) examples, quoting from the *Mahābhārata*, especially, in response to the caste question, when she was called a *śūdra* and therefore ineligible to question the Vedas or debate the teacher from this school of thought, which infuriated her.⁵¹ She also ridicules the idea that Brahma created the four castes from his body parts (Verse. 834).⁵² Chakravarti translates this and a subsequent verse, as follows:

You arrange the creatures into four grades of importance according to their sources from the body of Brahma. Arranging people according to the four castes of lower and higher would be meaningless when you remember that all of them are created from the very same body of Brahma. But you cannot justify this classification on the ground that what proceeds from the head must be certainly higher than what proceeds from the feet; for a member of the body of Brahma has neither greatness nor smallness in/by itself.... (Chakravarti 1984, p. 317 of English summary)

Only after a long argument establishing the futility of caste and social status, and her questioning the fact that the Vedas have no author, does Nīlakeci move on to the other important issues, namely, animal sacrifice in the Vedic ritual. The prioritisation of this debate is an important element.⁵³ It is apparent that this early critique of

⁵⁰ The details of some of the debates in the text are part of my forthcoming book; hence I do not dwell on them here.

⁵¹ Starting from Verses 829–830 onwards.

⁵² 'Saying that it is wrong to say that the bad and good deeds

Of one birth follows in the next, that these are based on karma,

Isn't it bewildering that while you say that *śūdras* and other castes emerged from Brahma's own body parts, what makes the *śūdra* low caste and ineligible?'

⁵³ Unfortunately, the issue is more or less brushed aside in books on *Nīlakeci*, few that exist.

the caste system within the original Jaina tradition gradually dissipated into various kinds of compromises or negotiations with the hegemonic, and this kind of critique was not to be found in later discourses.

4.18 Conflicting Identities, Construction of Self: The Tamil Jaina vis-à-vis the Brāhmin and the Śaivite; the Self-Respect Movement

The reasons for conflict and contestation come from the political and economic concerns, as well, such as land, power, etc., in turn intrinsically linked to ideology and religious systems. The reasons have to be seen not merely in religious antagonism but in the larger ownership and control of resources, manifesting only partially in the nature of religious antagonism and conflict. Between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, there is also an effort to codify the Purāṇic myths, and by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, brāhminical sacred centres (in the Purāṇic pantheon)—again, the centres patronised by the ruling classes—have their own *talapurāṇams*, treating of divine visitations and sacredness of tanks, temple lands and so forth. While initially, the Jaina and Buddhist religious establishments contested for support from ruling classes (and the laity) it shifted to the Jaina-Śaiva (and to a limited extent, Vaiṣṇava)-brāhminical conflict. The persecution stories of different time periods signify the ways in which the Tamil Jainas constructed their identity vis-à-vis the other(s). The Śaiva bhakti bards, the Cenji/*cakkili rājā*, the person who brought out the HMV record, figure among those ‘mainstream’/powerful others who victimised the Tamil Jainas. When a community is in the midst of pressure and cannot confront, it finds it easier, perhaps, to succumb. The conversion of Jainas to Śaivism, going by the *nīr-pūci-nayinār* story, may have been partly out of fear and partly to protect their (landed) interests and to be part of a tradition that promised to promote their interests or to protect them.

In modern scholarship (works of Sripal, Chakravarti) which emerged from within the Tamil Jaina tradition (in case of Chakravarti, it was more from a liberal evoking of ‘modern’ ideals), the issue of Jainas with a rightful share, as participants and partakers of a common history of Tamil Nadu, becomes central. It is not just about the history of religions but about literature and language and political history. This scholarship comes from nationalistic and, at times, liberal enlightenment discourse and a sense of belonging to a larger universal ‘Tamil’ tradition and culture. Sripal seems to tackle the Jaina identity question both by resorting to writing and publishing books, keeping acute sense of the trends in Tamil literary criticism about ‘Jaina’ works, organising talks and oration on/of Jaina literary texts, as well as engaging with State and legislation. In the colonial period, it is with getting the colonial administration to ban copies of a supposedly abusive record on Jainas, while post-independence, it is to campaign for the legislation on banning animal sacrifice in temples. But the discourse on sacrifice was way different from the Śaivite and

brāhminical discourse. It revolved around the opinion that these rituals were instruments of oppression created by the brāhmins, 'misleading' the lower castes and were, in the first place, part of a system that helped create and sustain the interests of certain caste. Interestingly, too, Sripal did not address Islam with this logic. And he considered Islam a system with its own set of beliefs and practices.⁵⁴

This entire campaign focussed on the 'Hindu' temples in several villages in Tamilnadu. However, the Madras Animals and Birds Sacrifice Prohibition Act 1950 brought forth controversy and debate in contemporary times as well and revolved around the issue of caste and cultural practices, most essentially. It is interesting to see that in the 1930s and 1940s, the same campaign looked at the issue from the perspective of 'redeeming', as it were, the oppressed castes and people from 'superstitions' and 'blind beliefs' and had few advocates from among those who were at that point involved in constructing a discourse against brāhminical hegemony, on the one hand, and constructing an idea of a nation that would 'break the shackles' of ritualism and 'blind faith' it perpetrated. It is important to look at the Dravidian movement and Self-Respect Movement (Suya Mariyathai Iyakkam) vis-à-vis the Tamil Jaina community in the modern context, considering that in close connection to these developments, the Tamil Jaina scholars were writing about Jaina Tamil literature (Chakravarti's *Nīlakeci* with English translation in 1936; Sripal's writings). Somewhere, both the Tamil Jaina identity consciousness (rather, revival) and the discourse on Tamil against Sanskritic culture (within the Tamil Dravidian movements), addressing language and caste, seem to have converged at some level. Tamil Jainas have tremendous respect and regard for Bishop Caldwell. They also keep referring to Ellis and Beschi (the Italian missionary). They are aware of the contributions of these figures to Tamil language, but Caldwell is important to them, because of his book, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Languages* which came out in 1856, wherein he pointed out the distinct evolution of Tamil as a Dravidian language, without Sanskritic influence/association. He, in fact, further asserted that brāhmins had nothing worthwhile to give to the Tamil literary tradition. He also noted the contribution of Jainas to the same. Now it is not too difficult to see where and why the 'convergence' happened. Caldwell's book had also given food for thought as well as a basis for the Dravidian movement—Tamil and Tamilness—devoid of Sanskritic influence of the north, brought in by the brāhmins. This idea was the basis for the convergence. But herein also lay a critical and difficult point: that Sanskrit was perceived as brāhminical, of the brāhmins. But Sanskrit was also being used by the Jainas, and there could have been another way of constructing this language and literary tradition, removed from its brāhminical associations. But this did not happen. And was not, at that point, the central focus of the Dravidian movement and the anti-brāhmin movements. Sanskrit, equated with

⁵⁴ In this sense, for the Jainas, anything that involved killing of animals is anyway denounced in their system. While with the 'Hindus' they found spaces and ways to enter into a debate on the same with the hope of converting them (since Jainism had brought in people into its fold through convincing), perhaps they left certain systems out of their discourse: Christianity and Islam, for instance, which for them were anyways based on beliefs that were nowhere near the Jaina doctrine of non-god-ness.

Sanskritism, in terms of ritual tradition of the brāhmins, was the focus of the discourses. In the Jaina case, however, even though there was, within the Jaina tradition, the use of the Sanskrit language, it was Tamil that the Tamil Jains took recourse to, in constructing their place in Tamil history. In the case of Tamilakam, Tamil writings predated Sanskrit, and the Jaina caverns with Tamil-Brāhmi inscriptions gave them a firm basis for this understanding. It was not a tradition looking to the 'north' for sanction or sanctity.

Pandian has noted that Caldwell's 'reading of the Tamil language, culture and past was appropriated by the Veḷḷāla elite in negotiating their new found marginality' (Pandian 1994, p. 89).

And that, '...A number of Vellala elite scholars like P. Sundaram Pillai, V. Kanakasabhai, Nallaswami Pillai and Maraimalai Adigal contributed to the shaping of the early 'Dravidian' ideology...' (Ibid, p. 89).⁵⁵

There were certain larger historical processes at work within which the Tamil Jaina identity consciousness needs to be located. In the 'Aryan-Sanskritic'-*'Dravidian-Tamil'* lay the convergence, and the influence of the contemporary discourse was evident in some of Sripal's writings. For example, where he equated the Dravidian to Tamil, and Jaina, and called the Jains 'Dravidian' or *'Drāvida mētaikaḷ samaṇarkaḷ'* (Samaṇas were Dravidian intellectuals) or *'Ādi kāla Tamil makkaḷ'* or *'Drāvidaḷ Jainarkaḷ'* (Sripal 1975, pp. 133–135). He spoke of the *'tāi molī'* (mother tongue) and mentioned P. Sundaram Pillai, who was part of the Dravidian movement discourse. The Dravidian movement looked at brāhminism as not being rooted in the Tamil soil, and the brāhminical mythic constructs, such as Agastya coming down from the north to 'civilise' the south,⁵⁶ amply supplemented

⁵⁵ The thought of looking at the Dravidian movement and ideology happened 'late' in my course of research, essentially from the conversations on Sripal with the Tamil Jains. His time period, too, coincided with the building of a 'Tamil public' in and some of these discourses; and went on until early post-independence. In his organising of numerous talks, lectures and recitation of texts, as well as his role in the independence movement, there seemed a connection to a strong Jaina identity. But few, or no scholars, have referred to the Tamil Jains and their involvement in any of these movements in the modern period.

⁵⁶ One such story is narrated in the *talapurāṇam* of the temple in Tiruvāṇṇakuṭi (one of the six sacred centres of Murukaṇ worship in the *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*), the modern-day Palani, which is situated 40 miles from Dindigul in the Dindigul district. Śiva had apparently given the two hills, Satyagiri and Śivagiri, to the sage Agastya as a 'consolation' for the fact that Agastya could not attend the divine wedding of Śiva and Umā, as Agastya had to go to the south to do a 'balancing act', as all the gods and goddesses were present at the wedding, and that could have resulted in the earth tilting to one side. Agastya, in turn, gave Iḍumbaṇ (believed to be the teacher of the demon Sūrapadma), the hillocks for safekeeping. A tired Iḍumbaṇ placed the hillocks at Paḷaṇi, but was unable to move them from there. A fight ensued with the little boy Murukaṇ and Iḍumbaṇ was killed. But Agastya intervened and so did Iḍumbi, Iḍumbaṇ's wife, and he was restored to life, and commanded to serve Paḷaṇi Murukaṇ. Iḍumbaṇ has a shrine dedicated to him below the Palani hills, called Iḍumbaṇmalai, and tradition goes that any visit to Murukaṇ's temple here has to be preceded by a visit to Iḍumbaṇ. The ritual of carrying *kāvaḍi* (a wooden pole with an arch over it), on shoulders as offering to Murukaṇ, is apparently said to have origins in this myth of Iḍumbaṇ and was perhaps a local ritual practice which also got incorporated into (or appropriated by) the composite cult of Murukaṇ.

this belief. The Jinas perceived themselves as part and parcel of Tamilakam (which they were) and hence the importance attached to the language. Both these discourses had a common 'other' to contend with. Interestingly, a veḷḷāḷa identity (Śaiva)—as distinct from the brāhmiṇ and other non-brāhmiṇ identities—also seems to be emerging in the Dravidian movement's discourse.

Maraimalai Adigal (or S. Vedachalam Pillai, 1876–1950) launched the Tamil Purist Movement (*Taṇittamiḷ Iyakkam*) in 1916 which battled Sanskritic accretions in Tamil language... [He] pursued his project to a great measure, within a Western/Enlightenment framework... [and] developed a specific sequencing of history which typologised occupations as signs of progress or otherwise (Pandian 1994, pp. 84–90).

And from here, what will follow—in terms of Maraimalai Adigal's perception of history and his perspective on Dravidianism—is something that is both intriguing and interesting from the point of view of the Tamil Jaina perspective on the Śaiva veḷḷāḷa (*nīr pūci nayaṇār*) origin story. However, it should be noted that one isn't ascribing this Tamil Jaina category to Maraimalai Adigal, which is within their narrative. But it is indeed interesting, at the same time, to find reflections of the Jaina notions of the occupational categories (as assigned by Ṛṣabha and the reasons thereof), ideas of non-killing (*kollāmai*) and other ideas which the Jinas believe the Śaiva veḷḷāḷas retained, even after adopting the Śaiva religion, either during or post-bhakti movement, or much later. At another level, one is also looking at how different communities in Tamil Nadu constructed different identities and origin stories vis-à-vis the brāhmiṇs and brāhmiṇism, and constructed a relatively 'pure' Dravidian history. Interestingly, E.V. Ramasamy 'Periyar' was closer to the Jaina identity question, when he attacked the Śaiva bhakti bards' excesses, which is supposed to have upset Maraimalai Adigal and his supporters. The Self-Respect Movement in that sense and the Tamil constructs of a history of Tamil Dravidian identity seem to fall within a common discursive paradigm, which I shall come to, later.

Back to Maraimalai Adigal, whom Pandian paraphrases:

"Before knowing...cultivation...people lived in great difficulty without enough food and proper clothing...Then, such a regime full of scarcity, hardship and other negative qualities of life, drew to a close as the Veḷḷāḷas discovered and refined the modes of settled agriculture... (and when they did that)...the murderous act of killing animals for food⁵⁷ ceased, compassion and munificence, based on sharing the surplus harvest of paddy, pulses, and other crops to the starving ones, thrived...". (Pandian 1994, p. 91)⁵⁸

The Jaina concepts of *kollāmai*, non-violence, compassion and *dāna* (of *śāstra*, medicines, food, etc.) can also be found in the following statement. According to Maraimalai Adigal:

Śaiva Siddhānta...had one of its central tenets non-killing (read vegetarianism)...His sequencing of history developed an identity between the Veḷḷāḷas and traditional occupation of cultivation and Śaivism as the apotheosis of history.... (Ibid, p. 91)

⁵⁷ Let me mention, in passing, that in Tamilnadu today, vegetarian food/food culture is referred to as 'śaivam'. In restaurants, people understand 'śaivam' to mean 'vegetarian'.

⁵⁸ Emphasis mine. Pandian quotes from Maraimalai Adigal's *Veḷḷāḷar Nāgarīgam*.

It is important to note here an alternate construction of veḷḷāḷa identity from within that community. I am looking at the way multiple community identities emerged and found the need to assert themselves and their contribution to Tamil society and history; they either converged, against a singular other, or contested with each other for their own distinct sociocultural, political space. Pandian states that

Maraimalai Adigal continued to maintain the temporal distance between the Veḷḷāḷa and brāhmiṇ in terms of his teleological scheme. In other words, the brāhmiṇ was the usurper of power and the power that he exercised was illegitimate. Such a construction of the self and the other was indeed a discursive means for the disempowered Veḷḷāḷas to contest the pervasive authority of the brāhmiṇ in colonial Tamilnadu. (Ibid, p. 93)

For the Tamil Jainas, the ‘other’ (they distinguished themselves from and felt victimised by) were the Śaivas and the brāhmiṇ, and the Śaiva and brāhmiṇ identities at times seem juxtaposed or an extension of each other. On the whole, the entire discourse in this period together seems to have created a distinct Tamil cultural society *sans* the brāhmiṇ. Maraimalai Adigal’s perspective may also be seen as representing a community influenced, at some point, by some of the Jaina ideas on the construct of occupations, non-killing and so forth.

Meanwhile, Pandian says, the Self-Respect Movement initiated by Periyar

Could...address a wider range of issues by problematising a number of inferiorised identities. The newly opened up terrains of conflict was what ensured the Self Respect Movement a basis for mass mobilisation. Different subordinate social groups such as Ādi Dravidas, śūdras, women and labouring poor could, thus, articulate their grievances through the Movement. (Pandian 1994, p. 99)

To these sections, one might add a minority group such as the Tamil Jainas, too. Perhaps it involved, and engaged, attention of all those groups who were building a case for their marginalisations in Tamil history and culture. In our case, the Tamil Jainas must not be seen in a vacuum, unaffected by these broader movements.⁵⁹

John Walton has argued that

Narratives make claims for the virtues of their individual and institutional authors, often as counterpoint to rival claimants. They characterise the past in certain ways for the purpose of shaping the future.... (Walton 2003)

The Self-Respect Movement of Periyar *did* that. It was a counter-narrative for Tamil language history and a very important movement which allowed communities (such as the Tamil Jainas, as well) to hope for a recovery of self. This movement was one of the most fantastic contributions, more radical than any modern postcolonial historiography allows for, since it set forth a new discursive process that broke away from older paradigms. A large part of modern scholarship has managed to sufficiently engage with brāhmiṇical ideology—either critically or otherwise—including some contemporary writings which focussed on Tamil language itself being mostly derived from non-brāhmiṇical sources. While some have sought to

⁵⁹This idea—of looking at the Tamil Jainas in terms of these modern identity movements in Tamilnadu—needs further work. It is an idea that is being posited.

'sanitise' the language of its brāhminical associations, where need be—coming as they did from the political consciousness derived from anti-caste movements in Tamilnadu, as well as from modern dalit consciousness—not much has been said about the Jainas within this varied authorship discourse. It thus leaves out a major category of diverse communities that partake of the language Tamil in Tamilnadu, including even the Buddhists, for instance, who appear nowhere in even modern and post-modern scholarship (barring those who have worked with Buddhism as an offshoot of Ambedkar's thought process within the national movement⁶⁰) on the Tamil linguistic discourse.

The inscriptions of the rock-cut caves and natural caverns, as one found in conversations with the present-day Tamil Jainas, are more important to them in establishing their antiquity and identity related to their '*tāi-moli*' (mother language/mother tongue). The question of Tamilness was being raised—language becoming the central focus—while also protesting against the brāhmins and Sanskrit, at the same time.

The Śaiva veḷḷālas, according to the Tamil Jainas, were Jainas in the past, who had been victimised into entering the Śaivite religious order. On the whole, the entire discourse in this period together seems to have created a distinct Tamil cultural society sans the Brāhmin.

The need to reaffirm the contribution of Jainas to Tamil language and literature is perceptible in most of these efforts, besides keeping track of Jaina texts being appropriated by the Śaivites of the time (which was happening, to a large extent). Tamil language was a very important 'identity marker' for the Tamil Jainas in asserting their place in Tamil history and contemporary Tamil cultural complex.

4.19 The Missing Tamil Jainas: Tamil Language and Literature Discourses

One of the major gaps in historicising Tamil language has been the denial of any kind of association of either the Jainas or the Buddhists in this discourse; I will just show here the writings of two renowned scholars as to what they say about Tamil and where they draw their discourse from.

Sumathi Ramaswamy writes, that

Prior to the nation's birth, Tamil was valorised not because it ensured communication between its speakers, enabled the schooling of the citizenry, or facilitated the governance of the populace. Instead...it was held in awe for its demonstrated ability to perform wondrous miracles and command the all-powerful gods...An overriding concern, then, at least as illustrated by the vast extant corpus of Tamil literary works that have survived into modernity, appears to have been to ensure that Tamil secured not so much the love of its speakers, but the devotion of the gods.... (Ramaswamy 1998, p. 67)

⁶⁰ Of course, Anne Monius' 2001 book seeks to 'imagine' a space for Buddhism in the Tamil language landscape, although in a different context.

A linguistic history beginning with such a premise is problematic. Validating this contention, she says

I enter this magical world in which the language cavorts amongst the gods through a poem entitled *Maturaic Cokkanātar Tamil Viṭutūtu*, “Tamil Dispatched as Messenger to Cokkanātar in Madurai”. The poem features Tamil as a messenger sent by a lovesick heroine, the narrator, to her lover, the lord Śiva, in his manifestation as Cokkanātar in the southern city of Madurai... This text thus inaugurated a new practice of the sustained praise of Tamil, which picks up tremendous momentum in this century with the emergence of the nation. (Ibid, pp. 67–68)

But what about the Jaina and Buddhist links with Tamil?

Sumathi does not take up for discussion the very early association of the Buddhist and Jaina faiths with the language and its development in the context of these (already documented) communal tendencies, and in fact, neither of these needed to ‘cavort with the gods’ to make their linguistic point. More problematic is her choice of a later Śaivite revivalist poem to construct her discourse. She says, further on, that

There were those, such as the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava poets-saints of the late first millennium, who insisted on the parity between the two, as literary and salvational languages. (Ibid, p. 70)

She means Tamil and Sanskrit, respectively. It is important to dwell on her discussion at length here:

The power and potency of divinities and royalty is constituted through the elaborate clothing and ornamentation that adorns their bodies and transforms them symbolically into suprahuman beings... At a narrative level, this transformation is enabled by the elaborate structures of praise and panegyric which are mounted around such figures. I adopt this argument for the linguistic imaginary within which Tamil emerged as a subject of discourse in the centuries prior to nationalism, an imaginary in which the language rarely stood, naked and unadorned. Instead, it was “clothed” in various embellishing epithets that recalled its numerous virtues and accomplishments.... (Ibid, p. 72)

The entire discourse is couched in the Śaivite-Vaisnavite bhakti metaphors, so there is no question of even wishing to find out if at all there might be (and there certainly was) a secular, ‘non-adorned’, idea to Tamil as a language or a non-deified yet celebratory approach to the language as in the Caṅkam period. There isn’t any discussion on *Tirukkuraḷ*, which underwent a long process of debate and being a work of a didactic nature within the Jaina idiom, which continues to be taught in schools across Tamil Nadu even to this day. In her understanding, there seems to be a straight, linear evolution of Tamil from the Śaivite, Vaisnavite god-filled ambience to that of a nationalistic ‘imaginary’ of modern times.⁶¹

⁶¹A casual glance at her Tamil readings (at the end of this article) reveals the origins of such a discourse. For example, A. Chidambaranar, 1964. *Akattiyar Vaṇalāru*, [Story of Agastya] Madras: South India Saiva Siddhanta Publishing Works; Ilankumaran, I. 1988. *Iḷakkana Vaṇalāru* [History of Grammar]. Madras: Manivacagar; Namasivaya Mudaliyar, C. R. 1910. ‘The Tamil Tongue’, Saiva Siddhanta Publishing Works; Suddhananda Bharati. 1970. *The Grand Epic of Saivism*. Madras: South India Saiva Siddhanta Publishing Works.

A discourse in a similar vein is seen in Yocum (though, of course, an early work):

For about three centuries immediately preceding the rise of Pallava power at the end of the sixth century, South India seems to have experienced a "dark age" of political confusion. A mysterious group called the Kalabhras, nearly unanimously referred to as being evil, evidently held power at least toward the end of this period. In spite of the political instability, there was ample literary activity in Tamil, much of it Jain and Buddhist inspired, which indicates the growing influence of those religions at that time.... (Yocum 1973, p. 5)

The linkage of political instability and the term 'evil' with Buddhist and Jaina is significant. Incidentally, Tamil Jaina popular imagination credits the Kalabhra period as having been liberal towards both the Buddhists and the Jainas. Perhaps the 'dark'-ness was an alternate reading.

Further,

First and most obviously, the bhakti poets appealed to the common man by using the vernacular, Tamil, rather than Sanskrit... These poems (could be) sung over and over again, not only at the temple but while performing everyday routine tasks... Māṇikkavācakar wrote a series of remarkable hymns to be sung while doing certain daily mundane activities, e.g., while bathing in the tank in the morning...while picking flowers...The continued popularity of these hymns is indicated by their current wide-spread use by Tamil villagers whose daily routine has changed little from that of their forbears of more than a thousand years ago. (Ibid, p. 6)

So far as the last point above is concerned, 'Tamil villagers' are not a universal category. It would be indeed hard, or impossible, to find a dalit Tamil 'villager', or someone from the tribal communities, in whose everyday, the *Tēvāram* would find any place.

Yocum contends, that 'It is doubtful that *Jain and Buddhist monasticism ever deeply affected the Tamil masses...*'. (Ibid, p. 8)⁶²

But the strangest part of all is that Yocum's exegesis takes off from *Cilappatikāram*, which he agrees came centuries before the bhakti poetry. He seems unaware of or is disinterested in its Jaina authorship.

Zvelebil has noted that

Militant Hinduism was for a long time—in fact, even in relatively recent times—very hostile to Jaina and Buddhist literature, and this enmity may have been responsible for the disappearance of entire works, either Buddhist, such as *Kuṇṭalakēci*, *Vimpicārakatai*, etc., or Jaina, such as *Valaiyāpati*, the Jaina *Rāmāyaṇa*, etc. (Zvelebil 1992, p. 6)

Further, in a footnote (no. 43), he adds that 'When Swaminatha Iyer began his enormous work of rediscovery and editing classical Tamil literature with the publication of the magnificent Jaina epic *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* (1887), he was fiercely attacked by militant Hindus' (Ibid, p. 46).

There was also an entire Śaivite scholarship in the modern period, historicising the Nāyaṇmārs and Alvēars, where they would cite instances of the animosity between these sects and the non-Hindu religions of Tamil Nadu. These scholars also had a particular scholarly lineage, which Zvelebil has written about. I will just cite

⁶² Emphasis mine.

one example here of the nature of that historical writing, which was also influential in the larger society.

P. Sundaram Pillai writes,

For all the Saivas, and particularly for the non-Brahmanical Tamil Saivas, Tirujnanasambandha is the highest authority and his works have all the sanctity of the Vedas... The hymns of Sambandha, together with a few other songs, are in fact known as the Tamil Vedas. These hymns and songs are compiled and arranged into eleven groups, or Tirumurai by one Nambi Andar Nambi, a Brahman priest of Tirunāraiur in the Tanjore district... Of these eleven collections, or Tirumurai, the first three contain the hymns of Sambandha, and the next three those of a Velala saint, called Appar or Tirunavukkarasar, an elder contemporary of Sambandha, and an earnest and pathetic writer, whose thorough renouncement of Buddhism seems to be have been the first of the irreparable reverses which that religion experienced in southern India. (Pillai 2004, pp. 1–2)⁶³

In/as a footnote, he makes the following qualification:

Under the term Buddhism, I include all forms of anti-Vedic heresy that prevailed in this age. Though they differed among themselves, all the schismatics, known variously as Kshapanas, Bauddhas, Jinas, Theras, Sakyas, Arugar, etc., were at one in rejecting the authority of the Vedas. Useful pieces of interesting information may be gathered from the Devara hymns concerning all the sects of South Indian Buddhists. (Ibid, p. 2. Below)

Later, Pillai says:

The life of Sambandha begins and ends with miracles [as per *Periyapurāṇam*]. But in spite of these supernatural elements, it is impossible not to see in him a powerful historical personality.⁶⁴ If the downfall of Buddhism, at least in the Tamil districts, can be ascribed to one individual more than to another, that individual is Jnanasambandha. That he looked upon the final overthrow of the Jinas and the Buddhists as the one object of his life will appear from every one of his numerous hymns, the tenth verse of which is uniformly devoted to their condemnation (Ibid, p. 8).

Zvelebil has traced Pillai's Tamil traditional (in the tradition of '*gurus*') genealogy as follows:

Uraiyūr Vidvān Muttuvīra Upātiyāyar—Nakai Nārāyaṇacāmi Piḷḷai—P. Sundaram Piḷḷai (author of *Maṇḍṇmaṇṇiyam*), 1855–1897. (Zvelebil 1992, p. 266)

A closer scrutiny of these genealogies would reveal also the nature of scholarship emerging from the scholars.⁶⁵ But none of these facets of history have been given due consideration in discussions—such as the ones I highlighted above—on the politics of Tamil language and literature in most mainstream scholarship.

⁶³ It is interesting that this book, which was published in 1909, was reprinted in the year 2004. I found this book in the most unexpected places: the IAS, Shimla, tucked in a shelf with other academic works on Śaivite-Vaiṣṇavite hymns and Tamil literature.

⁶⁴ Who, he points out, 'rolled back the tide of Jainism in the south, lived and laboured in the 7th century of the Christian era' (2004, p. 65).

⁶⁵ Unless, of course, there occurred a 'historic chance' in their own lives (such as one in Swaminatha Aiyer's life), which might produce a different kind of story of Tamil language and literature, which I shall come to, later.

Coming to the concept of *bhakti*—and the idea or concept of devotion to an idol or set of idols—the Jaina or Buddhist religions did not lack their share of it. The idea of the ecstasy and emotion arising from a relational idea of *bhakti* need not be seen necessarily as the invention of the *Nāyanmārs* or *Alvārs* and may have had precedents in the nature of worship of communities outside the *Purāṇic* ethos. At the same time, within the Jaina religion, there is an equal sense of 'ecstasy' and emotional expression involved in religious expressions in their temples, not necessarily in relation to the *tīrthankara*, but certainly to the *yakṣi*, hailed by the Tamil Jaina women as *ammaṇ* (mother), as I have noted earlier. At the same time, one has to see the expression of sadness, tears or joy in worshippers when they reach atop the mount at Sravanabelgola or when they narrate the stories of both, Bāhubali and the first *tīrthankara*, *Ādi tīrthankara* or *Ṛṣabhanātha*. Similar cases could be cited for adherents of other faiths with respect to their ideas of god or even non-god. John Cort, too, points out that *bhakti* is not necessarily a Hindu idea.

Perhaps, the idea of an emotional bond with a personal god-head has been made too much of a Śaivite or Vaiṣṇavite ('Hindu') experience. In the latter case, it ends up being a eulogy for an assumed 'liberal' or 'liberating' innovation within the Hindu tradition, which it was not. One of my first-hand experiences at witnessing the emotional outpouring of '*bhakti*'—the kind of ecstasy that is referred to in the idea of union with the god and the *bhakta* in the Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite hymns—was at Sravanabelgola when an elderly woman Digambara Jaina from Haryana walked up with me (many years ago), asking me to hold her hands, to the mammoth statue of Bāhubali. The moment she reached the idol, she clapped her hands and cried and wondered aloud as to how much pain this 'lord' had to go through, withstanding so many adversaries and adversities. She wondered at the creepers entangling his naked body and, yet, what an image of peace he was; peace gained from attaining liberation from worldly attainments. She cried as she narrated the story of that 'lord' on the hill. The manner of her narration and her emotional investment in the pilgrimage and the reaching of that 'pinnacle of *nirvāṇa*', as it seemed, could have been the '*bhakti* moment' of any other religious paradigm, where such an emotional expression is allowed for.⁶⁶

John Cort points out, with instances within the Jaina tradition, that

Archaeological, art historical, and literary evidence tells us...that the cult of images was part of the Jain tradition from an early date, certainly from an early enough time that the argument that it was borrowed from the Hindu tradition has been discredited. But a cult of images does not automatically indicate a theology of *bhakti*. One could argue that the image cult is ideologically marginal to an ascetic and mendicant core of the tradition. One could further argue that *bhakti* and image worship were primarily lay practices in which the mendicants participated to a limited extent as a necessary part of their interaction with the laity, in other words, that mendicants had to install images and compose hymns in return for the material support of food, shelter, clothing, and other necessities provided by the laity... *Bhakti* has been an important aspect of both Jain practice and Jain doctrine from the earliest levels for which we have evidence, but previous scholarship has ignored this presence in its portrayal of the Jains and so has distorted that portrait.... (Cort 2002, pp. 65–66)

⁶⁶ This was in October of the year 2003.

And

Bhakti is not extraneous to some ascetic core of the Jain tradition but is clearly and unambiguously integrated into central areas of both Jain practice and Jain doctrine. The proper understanding and practice of bhakti is a matter of debate within the tradition, but the appropriateness of its presence is not contested. There is, therefore, no basis for arguing that bhakti in the Jain tradition is merely a later importation from the Hindu traditions.... (Ibid, p. 81)

Further, he says, that, ‘On the Digambara side...there is also a discussion of the āvaśyakas in the second or third century C.E. Niyamasāra (77–158) of Kundakunda...’ (Ibid, p. 72).

The Digambara Kundakunda has a lengthy discussion of bhakti in his Niyamasāra. Kundakunda seems less optimistic about the role and benefits of bhakti...since bhakti according to him is a practice within the realm of worldly relative knowledge (vyavahāra naya), but nonetheless he does not dismiss bhakti out of hand. Kundakunda also expands the objects of bhakti to include the three jewels of right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct—that is, the fundamentals of the Jain path... (Ibid, pp. 77–78).

4.20 Authorship and Identity: Tirukkuraḷ and Others

I continue here with my discussion on the politics of selective interpretations of Tamil language and literature histories.

Sumathi Ramaswamy mentions the Tamil savant, U.V. Swaminatha Aiyer, whose tireless efforts to bring many palm leaf manuscripts out into the open through printed editions have given us a wealth of literature we may have otherwise lost. She writes

By his own reckoning, Swaminathan’s life took a dramatic turn on 21 October 1880, the day he met Ramaswami Mudaliyar, the *munsif* (civil judge) of Kuumbakonam...Quizzed on the depth of his knowledge, Swaminathan...proudly rattled off the names of numerous texts that he had learnt by heart. Ramaswami Mudaliyar however was unimpressed. ‘What is the use of knowing all this...These are all later works. Do you know any of the ancient ones?’ he asked. A week later he handed Swaminathan a manuscript of the ancient epic poem *Cīvācacinṭāmaṇi*, which he had never seen...’. (Ramaswamy 1997, p. 209)

Strangely, she fails to mention that *Cīvācacinṭāmaṇi* is a ‘Jaina’ Tamil epic.

Almost all the contemporary Tamil Jinas I met told me this story of the providential meeting of U.Ve.Ca (Swaminatha Aiyer) with Ramaswami Mudaliyar of Kumbakonam. They had pride in the knowledge (a historical truth) that a Tamil Jaina manuscript, after all, introduced Swaminatha Aiyer to the wealth of the entire ancient Tamil literary corpus.

Sumathi adds that, “[Aiyer] had to labour hard...to understand *ancient world-views* quite alien to his Śaiva and Brāhmaṇical upbringing...” (Ibid, p. 211. Emphasis mine).

And yet, she does not mention that these ‘worldviews’ was either (for a large part) a Jaina or Buddhist.

Speaking of the same incident, however, A. K. Ramanujan wrote

Aiyar⁶⁷ was confident he could read anything in the Tamil of any period. Yet...he could not understand much of the manuscript... He knew the words but they seemed to mean something he couldn't guess at. He didn't know the stories. Familiar names referred to unfamiliar characters... He had by now gathered that it was not a Hindu text at all, but a Jain text, the *Cīvācacinṭāmaṇi*, and he began to make inquiries about it. A friend told him one day that there was a Jain community a few streets away from where Aiyar lived. Why not go there and find out whether anyone in that community knew the text? So they went to visit a rich and influential Jain gentleman. Even as they entered the house, Aiyar noticed mango leaves and decorations on the door frame. Signs of a happy ritual occasion. He asked the gentleman, 'Did you have a special feast or holiday today?' The Jain gentleman replied, 'No, sir, we were reading this sacred text, the *Cīvācacinṭāmaṇi*, for the past six months with our teacher. We finished it today. So we are celebrating the end of our reading with a happy ceremony.' This entire community knew the text that Aiyar had been labouring over for months...As Aiyar began to look into the commentaries, he found two works by Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar, the first skimpy, and the second full and detailed. When he asked his new-found Jain friends about them, they told him the legend they all knew, one that must have seemed like reverse *deja vu* to Aiyar. Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar had first written a commentary on the *Cīvācacinṭāmaṇi* on his own, but the Jains of the time had said in response to it, 'You don't understand a thing about this text or the Jain tradition.' He had taken their criticism to heart, gone to a Jain village and passed himself off as a Jain, to do fieldwork...After a period of this kind of learning...he wrote a new commentary, full of well-earned detail. Now the text had to be rediscovered again in the nineteenth century and seen in a new light by Aiyar... He devoted the rest of his long life to roaming the villages, rummaging in private attics and the storerooms of monasteries, unearthing, editing and printing them. (Ramanujan 2006, pp. 187–189)

The story of U.Ve.Ca's discovery and publication of the *Cīvācacinṭāmaṇi* is given in his autobiography, *En Carittiram*. He records faithfully his pain and struggle from the moment of discovering the manuscript to the final printing of it and the help extended to him by various people, including a whole lot of Tamil Jains. But strangely enough, what is skipped out in most of the scholarship around Tamil literary history and the history of the production of manuscripts is this role of the Tamil Jains and their names.

This lacuna is visible even in the work of V. Rajesh (2014), who refers to U. Ve.Ca's autobiography, but does not elaborate on these finer points of the discovery of a manuscript that belonged to a community and tradition which was, at that moment, struggling to preserve Tamil manuscripts in their possession which contained some of the most important literary gems. In fact, most of the Buddhist and Jaina works were recovered in this period thanks to the community's own habit of preserving manuscripts either in their homes or at the *maṭham* at Melcittamur and at a few of their temples. *Cintāmaṇi*, as noted earlier, was a text that was usually 'performed'/recited in some of the Jaina homes as part of a family tradition. U.Ve.Ca writes in his autobiography that he visited the Cittamur Jaina *maṭham* in his quest for the *Cintāmaṇi* manuscript and collected numerous manuscripts authored by the Tamil Jains. He went in search of the Tamil Jains who would help him understand the text. In this quest, he met up with Candiranathar Cettiar and Vidur Appasami

⁶⁷ Different scholars spell the last name differently: Aiyer, Aiyar, Iyer...

Nayinar. Candiranathar Cettiar explained to U.Ve.Ca the story of *Cintāmaṇi* and some important aspects related to the text. He also told him that the Jainas recite the text. U.Ve.Ca went to the house of Gunapala Chettiar, at whose place his wife explained to him several facets of the Jaina religion and life. It was after all these efforts that he returned to Salem Ramasami Mudaliyar, who then became convinced that U.Ve.Ca has now understood the text's greatness and that by publishing it he would be doing the greatest favour ever.

As for the Buddhist epic *Maṇimekalai*, U.Ve.Ca had to undertake detailed study of Oriental scholars on Buddhism to understand it—scholars such as Rhys Davids, Oldenberg and Monier Williams. There are similar stories of his discovery of manuscripts, including the Jaina *Peruṇkatai*, which show the involvement and encouragement of Tamil Jainas, a fact that is never considered of any consequence to scholarship on Tamil literary history or on Tamil knowledge production processes. U.Ve.Ca learnt that Thanjai Virushabhadas Mudaliyar had a palm leaf manuscript and started on a journey to collect these. Virushabhadas used to offer worship to *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*; he told Aiyar that it should not be removed from his prayer room and even if it was, he would not give it to a non-Jaina, which, he said, was against his tradition.... Aiyar began his reading of *Cintāmaṇi* with 23 palm leaf manuscripts of the text he had collected. The full text edited by Aiyer finally came out in 1892 (Kacirajan 1985, pp. 1–17).

I shall get back to this story and as to how I chanced upon this part of U.Ve.Ca's life (even before I had read about it elsewhere) a little later here.

4.21 *Tirukkuraḷ*: A Contested Site/Text

The Tamil Jainas have at various points in modern history been claiming authorship of Tamil literary tradition. *Tirukkuraḷ*, an early Tamil didactic treatise comprising 1330 short verses addressing secular issues, became an important text claimed by many communities as their own. Chakravarti, Sripal and others asserted that the author of *Kuraḷ* was Eḷācārya, or Kundakundācārya, a Jaina monk. The *Kuraḷ* author's origin stories are interesting. The first couplet—'*akara mutal eḷutellām āti pakavaṇ mutarṛē ulaku*' ('all the syllables/words, commencing from the letter 'a' originate in Ādi bagavaṇ)—was interpreted differently by Jainas and non-Jainas. One of the legends (which became mainstream) associated with the author (Vaḷḷuvar, and not Eḷācārya of the Jainas) is that he was born to a Brāhmin named Pakavaṇ (Bhagavan) and a low caste ('pariah') named Āti.

Sripal says, in a general remark

20th century (found) scholars debating about the authorship of *Kuraḷ*. The author of *Kuraḷ* was a Jaina. Others say he was not. But his work has universal ideals so the authorship there cannot be fixed to a religious association. The work has secular ideals. Many communities claim him as theirs. (Sripal 1975, p. 11)

Until very recently, debates have centred on the author's 'low-caste' origins. Stuart Blackburn has written that

Clearly for Tamils the *Kuṛaḷ* was a contentious classic—it has received more commentaries (ten) than any other Tamil text—but it also became important for European missionaries and British civil servants as well, who were comforted by its non-idolatrous teachings and translated it many times. It was also the first book printed from the College of Fort St. George and it was later prescribed for primary, secondary and higher education.... (Blackburn 2000, p. 452)

[The] undated *Tiruvalluvamālai*...contains the earliest textual reference to the 'Legend of *Tiruvalluvar*'...The 'garland' consists of 53 short verses attributed to as many poets, mostly of the *Caṅkam* period, but also a disembodied voice (*ācarīr*) of the goddess of speech (*nāmakal*) and *Siva* in the form of a poet...The commentary to this verse, written at the beginning of 19th century (by *Navalar*) then goes on to explain that the author of the *Kuṛaḷ* was named '*valluvar*' because he was generous (*vaṇmai*) in 'presenting the esoteric wisdom of the *Vedas* to the world'. (Ibid, p. 456)

It is a question of perspective, however, that for his analysis on *Kuṛaḷ*'s authorship, Blackburn uses the 11th edited version (of 1924/1925) of *Tiruvalluvamālai* by *Arumuka Navalar* and no other editions. *Arumuka Navalar* was a writer from *Jaffna* who was a *Śaiva* revivalist associated with *Śaiva Siddhanta*, and he compiled many editions of ancient Tamil literature with a *Śaivite* tinge.

Zvelebil has remarked that

Religious fanaticism was responsible for revisions, additions and interpolations, effected by some Tamil editors of the 19th century...*M. C. Venkaṭacāmi* quotes instances of alterations, interpolations and additions motivated by religious ideology:...a *Śaiva* editor of the *Jaina Cūṭāmaṇi nikaṇṭu* was responsible for a number of changes, e.g. for the removal of an invocation to *Arukaṇ* though it occurs in eight manuscripts, and for the insertion instead of an invocation to *Gaṇapati*. It is possible that even an ancient revered classic like the *Tirukkūṛaḷ* did not escape [this fate].... (*Zvelebil* 1992, p. 36)

The Tamil Jainas have their own sharp critique of this movement. Speaking of the appropriation of *Jaina* texts by other communities, *Sripal* wrote of 'People of other communities, converting *Jaina* texts into their own' (*Sripal* 1975, p. 23).⁶⁸

And he goes further to state that

Fundamentalists [of other religions] are destroying *Jaina* literature by their entering into it in many ways. *Maṇṭala Puruṭar*, the author of *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu* was a *Jaina* according to many scholars... [He] has written about Tamil history, religions, vocations, etc in the 12th *nikaṇṭu*. Most informed scholars are aware that *Maṇṭala Puruṭar* who wrote the *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu* was a *Jaina* monk... Many *Jaina* monks took keen interest in composing *nikaṇṭus*, mathematics texts, and musical treatises in Tamil and preserved them. In the same way, *Maṇṭala Puruṭar*, in his twelfth *nikaṇṭu*, has written about Tamil history, religions, occupations, etc. In one of the songs, he mentions the six religions (that were present in the Tamil country):

ārusamayaṅkalenpā vana naiyāyikato
turayum vaicēṭikam mēlulla lokā
kuyilimīmāca meṇru kurittavai yaṅri nalla
neṇiyula arukaṇ puttam nīṭiyēṇretu maṇṇē

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 23.

He mentions Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsa, Lokāyata, Buddhism and Jainism⁶⁹ ...Yalpanam Arumukam Navalar (in later periods), in order to induce Śaiva thoughts into this text, printed his own edition of *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu* where he removed the parts (of the original text) and scripted his own two songs in this printed version. (Ibid, pp. 37–39)

Sripal adds that, ‘It will be impossible not to feel pain or even shed tears for anyone with love (*ārvam*) towards Tamil language and Tamil literature, if they realise the manner in which some religious fanatics today are pushing themselves into Jaina literature and destroying it’ (Sripal 1975, pp. 38–39).

Incidentally, this book (by Sripal, above) has an Introduction by the DMK chief, Dr. Mu. Karunanidhi. Karunanidhi remarks here that if the Jaina literary works were to be removed from the world of Tamil literature, the Tamil literary world would look barren. And this statement of his found its way into the Tamil Jaina community memory; one is unlikely to come out of any Tamil Jaina home without hearing this statement or a reference to it.

It may be significant to look at Arumuka Navalar’s background here:

[He] was born on December 18, 1822 at Nallur in Jaffna as the last child of a rich family of Śaiva veḷāḷa community. He had his early education at the feet of two Tamil paṇḍits, Cenātirāya Mutaliyār and Caravaṇamuttu Pulavar, and subsequently joined a well-known English school at Jaffna run by the Methodist Rev. Peter Percival. At the age of nineteen, he was appointed by Percival teacher of Tamil and English in the school, and asked to translate the Bible into Tamil...While translating the Bible, Arumugam had the opportunity to acquaint himself in detail with Judaism and Christianity, but at the same time studied fervently Tamil literature and Śaiva religious classics. Soon he developed aversion towards Christian missionary activities and resolved to wage war on Christianity in the name of Śaivism. He began publishing pamphlets and holding speeches attacking missionary activities. Naturally, this brought him into conflict with his school authorities, and he was sacked. Since then he devoted the rest of his life to the propagation of Śaivism and Tamil learning... He established a number of schools for Tamil and Śaivism, and printing presses at Jaffna, Chidambaram and Madras; some eminent scholars came out as students from these schools. [Ponnampalam Pillai, Capāpati Navalar, Ci. Vai. Tāmotaram Pillai, Catācivam Pillai, A. Kumārasvāmi Pillai, Kācivāci Centil Nat.Aiyar]...Navalar became the spearhead of Śaiva revivalism both in Sri Lanka and in Tamilnadu, and the guardian of ‘pure’ and ‘pristine’ Śaiva tradition...Among his editions the most important are Maṇṭalapuruṭar’s lexicon, *Cūṭāmaṇi Nikaṇṭu* with commentary (for the first time in print, 1849), the standard medieval grammar, *Naṇṇūl* with commentary (1851)..., the text of *Tirukkuraḷ* with *Parimēlaḷakar*’s detailed gloss (1861)... (Zvelebil 1992, pp. 154–156)

Surely, the legend of Vaḷḷuvar’s birth was tinged with the religious perspective that he brought with it. The legend, as it were, is also part of a certain revivalist enterprise that came to the fore, and there were a large number who took sides of the Jains saying the author of *Kuraḷ* was a Jaina. Kalyanasundaram Mudaliyar (Tiru. Vi.Ka), R. K. Shanmugan Chettiar, S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, Mayilai Seeni Venkatasamy, R. K. Parantamanar, Madurai Kavirāja Panditar and later Mu. Karunanidhi, associated with Dravidian politics, were of the opinion that *Tirukkuraḷ* author was a Jaina. Ramaswami Ayyangar had pointed out that the author of *Kuraḷ* was a Jaina because

⁶⁹ Incidentally, these six systems are also mentioned in the Tamil Jaina poetic treatise, *Nīlakeci* where the protagonist, Nīlakeci, debates with teachers of these systems of thought.

of the term used therein: '*malarmicai yekiṇāṇ*' ('he who walks on lotus'), for a *tīrthankara*. He pointed out that, 'Eḷācārya, the Jaina sage... [was] the author of *Kuraḷ*; [he was] also called Kundakunda [and] belonged to the 1st century AD' (Ayyangar 1922, pp. 41–43).

A. Chakravarti wrote

The book contains three great topics—*aṛam* (dharma); *poṟuḷ* (artha); *iṇbam* (kāma). The Jaina commentator of the Tamil work *Nīlakeci* freely quotes from the *Kuraḷ* and whenever he quotes he introduces the quotation with the words "as is mentioned in our scripture" (the expression *emm-offu*). From this it is clear that the commentator considered this work as an important Jaina scripture in Tamil.... (Chakravarti 1974, p. 37)⁷⁰

Tamil writer K. N (Kaa Naa) Subramanyam says

The first decad of the *kuraḷ*s making up the introduction to the *Kuraḷ* and in the nature of an invocation, seems to clearly indicate that the poet of the *Kuraḷ* was a Jaina and was saying as much in vocabulary as in ideas, that his was only the Jaina idea of god-head. When we force the verses to take on other religious connotations or appearances, we have to define the meaning in farfetched way and no familiar conventions. I have seen a pamphlet which roundly says that the god of Tiruvalluvar was a Christian god, particularly Jesus Christ, to whom the dharma cakra is given, to whom are said to belong the eight qualities, who walked on flowers, etc. etc. It could be so interpreted, but only by a little bending of truth while the Jaina interpretation of god as the *tīrthankara* and the *siddha* can come with the least difficulty almost on the face of it. (Subramanyam 1987, p. 81)

Further, '*Kuraḷ* is not merely a moral text, but a moral text that was different in tone and temper from ethical enunciations of the time and age to which Valluvar belonged' (Ibid, p. 24).

The contestation between an undivided category called 'Dravidian' or of the *Kuraḷ* as a Tamil text vis-à-vis Sanskrit (Blackburn 2000, p. 452) was not the only major one so far as *Kuraḷ* was concerned. Though Blackburn does mention that various identities were proposed for the author of *Kuraḷ* such as Jaina, Buddhist, crypto-Christian, Brāhmin, half-Brāhmin and so on, he does little to dwell on the most long-term debate of all that started in the nineteenth century and continues till date, namely, that of the *Kuraḷ* being Jaina or non-Jaina. This debate would be also important to understanding the social context of the Dravidian movement: the communities that participated in the discourse on Tamil, per se, and attempts at its appropriation by higher castes, the Brāhmins, or the Brāhminised, with active support also coming in from some of the Śaivite *veḷḷālas*. Blackburn locates the entire discourse on *Kuraḷ* as 'a discourse between Europeans and Tamils' which resulted 'in a consensus, a mutually convenient congruence between Tamil concerns about cultural difference and European notions of moral history that produced a narrative of Tamil literary history which continues to exert its influence today' (Blackburn 2000, pp. 452–453).

It thus disregards, or chooses to ignore, the entire movement within the Tamil context where the debate arose, so as to say that the debate itself arose from the European interest in the *Kuraḷ* and with their efforts to publish the same. That the

⁷⁰ He dates the *Kuraḷ* to the first century CE.

Europeans ‘discovered’ the *Kuraḷ*, may have, in one sense, been catalytic in bringing to the fore these many claims to ‘owning’ the author of the *Kuraḷ* by many communities, but that would be just a continuum of earlier periods of appropriation/‘incorporation’ of texts, symbols and idioms that happened in the Tamil history. And he does acknowledge also, that, ‘The Tirukkuraḷ, written after the Sangam poems but before the bhakti movement, was a contentious text in Tamil literary history long before Europeans came to India...’ (Ibid, p. 478).

Yet, he fails to locate the discourse on *Kuraḷ* beyond the Tamil-Sanskrit dichotomy, when he avers that

In Valluvar’s triumph at Madurai, the outsiders’ need to view (south) India as an ancient and fallen, yet redeemable culture matched the need felt by many Tamil intellectuals for a literary history that rescued a pure Tamil from a decadent Sanskrit. (Ibid, p. 478)

And this was not the only divide that symbolised the contest over *Kuraḷ*. But that the Jainas, who participated in the contest in a more sustained manner than most, do not figure in Blackburn’s hypothesis, is the question. Thus, it is difficult to accept Blackburn’s proposition—with respect to *Kuraḷ* here—that

In Valluvar’s low birth, the Europeans discovered a hero of their own making; in his...teaching, the European’s pursuit of an acceptable Indian religion coalesced with a Tamil desire to imagine a past independent of Brāhminical control, rituals and texts. (Ibid, p. 478)

Missing in his proposition, is the question, as to which editions/versions of the *Kuraḷ* were Europeans he names—Caldwell, Kindersley, Ellis, Mackenzie, et.al—reading. He does mention that F.W. Ellis, Collector of Madras and linguist, ‘produced a partial translation of the *Kuraḷ* with extensive notes, probably in 1819, *but curiously makes no mention of Valluvar’s birth or legend*’ (Ibid, p. 458).⁷¹ Besides finding it ‘curious’, he does not dwell on the ‘why’ of it.

4.22 Brāhmanical Reading of Parimēlaḷakar

Interpretation of texts by commentators is discussed by Norman Cutler.

Historically, Parimēlaḷakar’s commentary, written in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, has by far been the most influential of the Tirukkuraḷ commentaries... In his exegesis of Tirukkuraḷ concepts such as varṇāśramadharmā, karma, mokṣa and other tenets of Brāhmanical Hinduism frequently function as a template for interpretation... As a follower of Foucault would put it, Parimēlaḷakar spoke the language of the hegemonic discourse of his era.... (Cutler 1992, p. 553)

In a foreword in English, written in 1943 (September) to a book by Sripal published in 1957,⁷² ‘Rao Bahadur’ A. Chakravarti noted that

⁷¹ Emphasis mine.

⁷² *Iḷaṅkovaṭikal Samayam Yātu?* (Tamil), Parry Nilayam (Broadway), Chennai.

It is rather painful to learn that there is an organisation, ostensibly working in the name of revival of Tamil culture but intended to tamper with important Jaina classics in Tamil so that they might appear as works by non-Jaina authors. It is also painful to note that rich and influential people are backing up this movement. The same thing occurred in South India during the period of revivalism and unfortunate Jaina ascetics were barbarously murdered in the name of religion for the simple reason that they were condemning the Vedic sacrifice in uncompromising terms, since it was conflicting with their own principle of ahimsa... That the same spirit should be prevalent in serious form even in the 20th century is extremely deplorable... the same religious hatred is at the back of this movement which pretends to be working for the revival of Tamil culture but indulges in the base form of *literary plagiarism*... It is not necessary to point out how detrimental this spirit would be to the peaceful development of social democracy... If the Tamil scholars are really actuated by the revival of ancient Tamil culture with the object of bringing about social and political betterment of South India, they must never forget the obvious truth that cultural development without intellectual honesty would be a mere myth... And let us hope also that there will be a real and true revival of ancient Tamil culture which is the pride of South India. (Sripal 1957, pp. viii–ix)⁷³

Note that he is talking of a revival of 'Tamil culture', as a universal concept. Also interesting is the use of the terms, "social democracy" and "literary plagiarism" by Chakravarti. And in this universal Tamilness, it is important to establish the (Tamil) Jaina identity. Protest against Brāhmin (or 'Hindu') dominance—by this time the term 'Hindu' is used in some of the Tamil texts written to counter these claims of authorship by Jains and those supporting their point of view⁷⁴—was also part of the 'Tamil' Jaina identity consciousness, which was also building up in a new way.

4.23 'Cintamani Navalar' Leads Me to a Tamil Text

The importance of discovery of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* fills the narratives of the Tamil Jaina community. The first time I heard the story was from the late '*Cintāmaṇi Nāvalar*', Santhakumar Nayiṇār-Jain at Mottur. Also called Cintamani '*tātā*' by some, 'Nāvalar' was one of the titles conferred on Santhakumar, and he was—when I met him—perhaps the last living exponents and orators of the epic, *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. His life revolved around his recitations of this phenomenal text, or rather, this text was the centre of his existence. There was an entire story of how it became his life's central point. I must note this that his relationship with the text *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* was so deep, like a familial bond, almost, that the moment he would mention the text and recite from it, tears would flow from his eyes, even as he would narrate each story associated with the text and how the text 'came back' to him. That later 'coming back' of the text is also part of the history of publication of Tamil texts such as

⁷³ The dateline of the Foreword is '9 October 1943'. Emphasis, wherever, mine.

⁷⁴ Mayilai Sini Venkatasamy uses the term '*[H]indu matam*' extensively (sometimes interchangeably for Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava bhakti movement) in his reference to the Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava and Jaina religious conflict.

these in a particularly important time for the Tamil Jinas within the Self-Respect Movement context and the efforts of people of their community, such as Sripal, who worked consistently to bring out printed editions of manuscripts and reprints of older books, on Tamil literature as well as Jaina history in Tamil Nadu. It was Sripal who started the public recitation of texts like *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, thereby changing its contour from being a performative text within the family and community context on to the larger public arena in a time when similar events were organised around Śaivite texts.

At the same time, these events were not intended to create a Jaina community around them, but to showcase the Tamil identity of the *samaṇars* and their rightful place in the history of Tamil literature. Since he had been associated with the Self-Respect Movement, Sripal also took from it the idea of delinking Tamil literary classics from the Śaivite claims, as well as from a closed and narrow idea of religion. In events such as public recitations and debate forums on texts like *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, there was an effort to allow for the audience to savour the language Tamil, and in these events many non-Jaina Tamil scholars of repute were invited as key speakers. The idea was to build a Tamil 'speech community' which would also realise that the texts that were authored by Jinas be an intrinsic part of the larger Tamil speech community.

So, 'Cintamani Navalar' Santhakumar was one of those young men who happened to meet Sripal at one such gathering without intending to be there in the first place. But he was then mentored and chosen to take up recitation and discoursing of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* at such public events. In course of time, Santhakumar became perhaps the only visible orator and discourser of this epic in Tamil Nadu. Several titles (*paṭṭams*) were conferred upon him. But it should be noted, at the same time, that the public 'spectacle', in a sense, of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*'s recitation and discoursing events brought to the fore the very existence of this text and added to its popularity (also as one of the most visible texts authored by a Jaina, the other being *Cilappatikāram*), but internally, within the community, the recitation of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* continued as a ritual practice among Tamil Jaina families. So, in this case, this was not the case of 'loss-of-text-and-subsequent-recovery'. It was, rather, a public and political affirmation of the text and of the deeper relationship between Tamil *samaṇarkaḷ* and Tamil language and literature.

About Santhakumar, Ryan writes, in his notes to the translation of a passage⁷⁵ from *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* (Cutler and Richman 1992):

The passage translated...was sung and commented on for me by N. Santhakumar Jaina, modern day reciter and explicator of the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* and other Jain texts, at his home in Mottur village, near Arani, North Arcot District, Tamilnadu, in November, 1988. I wish to acknowledge his inspiration in my selection of this passage for translation.... (Cutler and Richman 1992, p. 76)

⁷⁵ The passage where the child Cīvakaṇ is born; Vijayai, his mother, leaves him, and he is picked up by a merchant, in the forest.

4.24 Moments from My Encounter with a Tamil Jaina Memory and Reading U. Ve. Ca's Autobiography

Santhakumar sang that afternoon for me one verse from *Cūḷāmaṇi* and the following *patikam* from *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, even as he narrated his story, which I record below⁷⁶:

Thirty-seven Tamil *pulavars* (scholars) have said that there is no other work like *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* in this magazine titled, *Cintāmaṇi Corpoliṻu Niṇaiṻu Malar*. At Kanchipuram, under the auspices of the *Kanchi Jaina Tamil Ilakkiya Manram* (Kanchi Jaina Tamil Literature Society/Forum), T. S. Sripal had organised this recitation of *Cintāmaṇi* by a *pulavar* named Venugopala Pillai. He belonged to the Yadava caste, but his knowledge of the Jaina text was deep. He performed *Cintāmaṇi* for three consecutive years. Sripal used to organise many such discourses. I went and heard that discourse once, and that is how a desire to read this text again was born in me. Though I must tell you that I was born in the village Naval, which had about thirty Jaina houses and our village people were highly knowledgeable about Jaina *dharma* and literature. Since I was born into a house steeped in this kind of tradition, I was aware of many Tamil texts since childhood. After marriage, I settled down in Chennai; I was crazy about cinema those days and especially about Thyagaraja Bbagavatar ['M.K.T.', or M. K. Thyagaraja Bhagavatar, the musician-actor of Tamil cinema of the time]—he was god for me. Once he played in the movie, *Haridasan* [Haridas, released in 1944], which ran at the Broadway Theatre for three years, I saw that film repeatedly; that is just how crazy I was! One day, I asked my wife to get ready for a show we were to watch together. Meanwhile, my brother came home and took my wife to listen to a discourse by Meenatchisundaram Pillai on *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, which they used to attend regularly. I was so angry that day that I scolded my wife. She told me, 'you come and listen to the discourse at least once; if you do not like it, there is no need to go there again'. The following Sunday when I went there, Meenatchisundaram Pillai was giving the discourse. I had already read *Cintāmaṇi*, but that day, it was like being reminded of the things I knew. I went to Sripal's office (which I never ever did before that, even though I knew it existed) and asked for a copy of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*; there were these learned people sitting close by who laughed at me, saying a text they had not yet understood, in spite of it being part of their curriculum, how will a man like me, who had never been to college, understand? Sripal told them, 'who knows this same man will someday become an exponent of *Cintāmaṇi*'? I used to carry it with me, and read it anywhere and everywhere. One day, Sripal organised a recitation ceremony at the Natarāja Kalaikalakam at Tiruvallikeni [Triplicane] with three people enacting (reading out) three characters: Caccantaṇ, Vijayaimādēvi, and Cīvakaṇ. He just asked me to be present there, without saying anything much. When I went there, I learnt that he had put my name up there to speak for/as Cīvakaṇ! He asked me to sit on the dais with others; I was perspiring with nervousness. After the two (characters) spoke, it was my turn. I had found the other two lacking in a proper understanding of the characterisation of Vijayai and Caccantaṇ and that gave me some courage. When it was my turn, I first critiqued the first two people and then spoke for/as the character, Cīvakaṇ. Everyone in the audience appreciated my performance. Later, at Kanchipuram I was conferred the *paṭṭam* '*Cintāmaṇi Nāvalar*'. Other *paṭṭams* like '*Jaina Tilakam*' and '*Tiruttakatēvar dāsaṇ*' (at Mannargudi), '*Cūḷāmaṇiccūṭar*' and others, followed. At Madurai, I recited the *Cintāmaṇi* for an entire month. Yalpanam Damodaram Pillai once asked me to recite *Cūḷāmaṇi*. For forty years, I went everywhere I was invited to recite *Cintāmaṇi*, *Cūḷāmaṇi* and *Cilappatikāram*; I used to take even my family members there

⁷⁶ October 2003, at his home in Mottur.

and never bothered about money; who cares about money when one has got the opportunity to speak on our own [Jaina Tamil] texts?...

By the way, there is a history behind the organising of the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* discourses, too. Two miles from the Tamil Jaina village called Tirupparambur (Tiruppanamur) was the village Cittanamur, settled by non-Jaina people. It was the usual practice here to conduct discourses on the *Mahābhārata*. Apparently, numerous people from many villages would attend these discourses. Sripal and other Tamil Jaina friends of his also attended one of these events. And it occurred to Sripal that there should be similar public performances/discourses on *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, *Cūlāmaṇi*, *Nāladīyār* and other Tamil Jaina texts, including *Tirukkuraḷ*. So for the first time, he organised one in his village Tirupparambur, followed by Karandai and Kanchipuram. The first such recital of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* was held outside the reading room he had established in his village, by Nalli Agastiappa Nainar. Others like Baladeva Nainar, Krishnasamy Nainar, and Candanakirti Nainar also took part in these events, which became quite popular over time, and brought out into the open several Tamil Jaina texts and their significance.⁷⁷

Incidentally, James Ryan had recorded the entire *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* recited by Cintāmaṇi Navalar (as the latter told me) which had apparently been rendered into a compact disc. But Santhakumar did not have a copy of it, nor did I get the chance to get hold of the same, though the search continues. It makes it more pertinent now that Santhakumar is no more. I was informed that he had died (after his wife, too, passed on) in very trying circumstances, in abject poverty and utter neglect, having given his life to the propagation of one singular Tamil text, called *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. I will end with this verse that he also recited, as a tribute to ‘*en gurunāthan*’ (my guru, as he referred to him), Sripal. The verse is as much about a person who was brought home to a text as about the language Tamil (too), coming back to him, which he translated for me (in simple Tamil) thus (which I render into English):

I was someone without any knowledge, or home, or shelter; such a one as I was given life and energy through knowledge and given a home. And he gave *Tamil to my tongue* and showed immense grace...⁷⁸

So, Cintāmaṇi Navalar it was, who first told me the story of U.Ve.Ca’s providential meeting with Ramaswamy Mudaliyar of Salem, which virtually opened up an entire world of Tamil Jaina literature for the man, whose labours brought to light several important Tamil writings, which were until then ‘confined’ as palm leaf manuscripts, stored in people’s homes, or in temples, or monastic institutions across Tamil Nadu.

⁷⁷ For this account of Sripal introducing the public performance of Tamil Jaina texts, see Mohana Sundiran, Ka. Ci. Thanakkoti, eds., *Civapandhu T. S. Sripal Avarkaḷin Vāḷkkaiyum Tōṇṭum*, 1959, pp. 49–51.

⁷⁸ I found it strange that what he says for Sripal, in terms of giving ‘Tamil’ to his tongue [‘...*en nāvil naṟṟamiḷāy nalanataruḷāy nānapēṛē*’, which were his words], somewhere was similar to what U.Ve.Ca said regarding Mudaliyar making him enter the expansive realm of ‘Tamil’. Emphasis mine.

Fig. 4.8 Cintamani Navalar, Santhakumar Jain of Mottur (October 2003)



Fig. 4.9 Cintamani Navalar with his life companion (October 2003)

4.25 U.Ve.Ca's Tamil Jaina Encounter

I shall not get into U.Ve.Ca's larger life story here, which can be found in the works of by several scholars.⁷⁹ My concern is with the Tamil Jaina work that makes a particularly important turning point in a Tamil scholar's life history. In many ways, what the Self-Respect Movement was raising was an important question about who owns a language and how to locate that politics. That the Tamil Jains became part of this politics—on this question—was on account of the fact that they understood, perhaps, by way of lived experience, the loss of their tongue and their texts to Śaivite propaganda twice in historical time: with the tirade of bhakti bards, such as Appar and Nānacampantar, and later with the revivalist stream in the modern period. The latter stream had sought to remove two communities/traditions (Buddhist and Jaina) entirely from the history of Tamil through propaganda focussing on both the *language* Tamil (as being a pristine, pure, ancient language, where the Buddhists or Jains, or perhaps many others did not belong) and what, according to them, was 'Tamil' *religion/culture*. This 'Tamil' religion, for them, was reflected in the Caṅkam literature which the Tamils created, with no contribution from anyone other than the Śaivite tradition, which for them was the most ancient tradition of Tamiḷakam. In U.Ve.Ca's sharing of finding *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* and the way he described the entire episode, one can see an alternate paradigm and an expression totally disconnected from the fanatic Śaivite rendering of Tamil language and religion.

U.Ve.Ca's discovery (or rather, recovery) of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* was also a socio-logical exercise, or became one, unwittingly, perhaps, as he realised the significance of how close a text is to a community and to recover the meaning of that text (in spite of being a Tamil *pulavar* or high scholar) mere words lead you nowhere; you need to 'recover' the community itself. He had not known of the existence of the Tamil Jaina community (as it seems from the manner in which he has written of this experience) for had he known of them, he would have known of their literature, as well. Thanks to Salem Ramasamy's curt remark, U.Ve.Ca was not only going to learn of a new set of Tamil Jaina literary corpus but also enter the world of an entire community. The Tamil Jains would later become his friends and also help him understand their texts and also pitch in to print them. His providential meeting also helped document, through print, an entire historical time.

In a sense, one finds U.Ve.Ca also making a kind of sarcastic comment on the literary traditions he had known until the day he met Ramasamy Mudaliyar, which were all (given by the names of the works he cites with great pride) 'Hindu', 'brāhminical' and most of them Śaivite. So his knowledge of Tamil language and literature (or his self-professed scholarship of it all) was knowledge within that paradigm, and knowing Tamil was—in his time—akin to growing up with literature of a particular milieu where there weren't any non-'Hindus'. He does not mention religion in this story of his life, but one is just extrapolating the milieu of his learn-

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Zvelebil (*Companion to the Study of Tamil Literature*), 1992; Ramanujan (*Poems of Love and War*), 1985.

ing based on what he writes of the texts he had until then known and read deeply, thinking that was Tamil literature.

Zvelebil writes of the general 'tenor' of the historical time, as follows:

A certain indifference with regard to pre-devotional Tamil literature changed at a certain period, round 1750, to open hostility. A taboo was imposed on the study of pre-*bhakti* literature as being irreligious, even immoral. The two men most responsible for the spread of this deplorable ideology were Cāmināta Tēcikar, the author of *Ilakkaṇakkottu* (late 17th-early 18th cent.), an overbearing Sanskrit enthusiast who claimed that "Tamil is dependent on, and inferior to, Sanskrit", and Civañāna Cuvāmikal. In his work *Ilakkaṇakkottu*, Tēcikar tried to establish a kind of censorship, and an *Index librorum prohibitorum* maintaining that a pious Śaivite must not read Jaina, Buddhist, or even Vaiṣṇava books; he enumerated as forbidden texts *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, *Cilappatikāram*, *Maṇimēkalai*, *Caṅkappāṭṭu* (i.e. the classical 'bardic' poetry) etc., and wrote that those who read books like *Pattuppāṭṭu*, *Eṭṭuttokai*, *Paṭiṇṇēkkīlkaṇakku*, *Irāmaṇkatai* etc., and study a grammar like "that scrap of *Naṇṇūl*" should regard their time as wasted [Tamiḷ *vāṇāḷ vīṇāḷ kaḷippār*]. Similar ideas were expressed by Civañāna Cuvāmikal (d. 1784 or 1785) who prohibited the study of such works as *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, *Cilappatikāram*, *Maṇimēkalai*, *Cūlāmaṇi* as "unworthy of good Śaivites and Vaiṣṇavites". His student, the poet T. Kacciappa Muṇivar (d. 1788, 1790 or 1799), having found out that his pupils like to read Jaina epics, composed his strongly Śaivite *Taṇikaippurāṇam* to counter the Jaina influence. The prohibitive attitude towards the study of pre-devotional, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava literature influenced a number of generations of Tamil poets and scholars. Even the greatest traditional Tamil savant of the 19th cent., Miṇṇāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai, shared in this view to a great extent, and as a rule did not instruct his pupils in pre-*bhakti* texts (Zvelebil 1992, p. 35).

Ramanujan, too, writes that

Eighteenth century Hindu scholars, devout worshippers of Śiva or Viṣṇu, had tabooed as irreligious all secular and non-Hindu texts, which included the classical Tamil anthologies. They also disallowed the study of Jaina and Buddhist texts, which included the twin Epics. (Ramanujan 1985, p. xv)

Further, he reasons that,

One reason for the complete absence of Buddhist manuscripts in the Tamil area (with one famous exception, *Maṇimēkalai*) is that no one preserved them or copied them after the Hindu Śaivites and Vaiṣṇavites triumphed over Buddhism. Jain manuscripts survived very well, because of a ritual practice called *Śāstradānam* observed by the rich: the ritual called for giving new copies of old religious manuscripts to scholars on occasions like weddings. Regarding the expense, the Christian scholar Rev. P. Percival said that he bought a palm-leaf manuscript for ten pounds before 1835; when it was printed later, he could get it for two and a half shillings...The story of Caminatha Aiyar dramatises the transition of palm-leaf to print, from a period of private sectarian ownership of texts to period of free access to them. (Ibid, pp. xvii–xviii)

Meenakshisundaram Pillai, incidentally, was U.Ve.Ca's teacher and what follows is the discussion on how the latter chanced upon Tamil Jaina texts he had never known the existence of.

It is important for me to translate this entire meeting with Salem Ramasamy Mudaliyar as given in *En Carittiram* in order to bring out the value of that story to the larger discourse on Tamil and on the politics of ownership or patronage and nature of hegemony built over the language at different times and in some of the present-day scholarship that does not seem to realise whose hegemony is reiterated and who is or what—in/of history—is excluded each time there is talk of Tamil publication, Tamil *bhakti* and Tamil religion. Though this is just one instance of the Tamil Jinas, the politics of language is a deeper and general question, where one needs to understand the marginalisation of several dalit and tribal communities' languages and literature (oral or written), their contributions wiped out or negated, in the making of the 'classical' within a singular religious paradigm.

The story occurs in Chapter 88, titled '*Enṇa pirayōcaṇam?*' I am paraphrasing nearly the entire section below:⁸⁰

I kept spending my time going to college to teach, and returning home. In this time, one Salem Ramasamy Mudaliyar from Ariyalur came to Kumbakonam as *munsif*... His friendship opened up a new path in my life. I realised how expansive Tamil literature/literary realm is. Not having stopped at experiencing the joy of understanding the sweetness of the Tamil language through the *antātis*, *piḷḷaitamiḷ*, *ulā*, *kōvai*, and many *prabhandams* and *purāṇams*, I further rejoiced in the grace of the more ancient and respected Tamil texts and earned a name for making way for others to partake of that same happiness that I had experienced. Mudaliyar hailed from a very big *miṭṭā* zamindar family of Salem... He had a good command over Tamil literature, music and the northern language.⁸¹... There was a custom at the Thiruvavaduthurai *maṭham*, that whenever a new officer joined in Kumbakonam, they would send a few people over to meet that person and also invite that person for events and festivals such as *guru pujai*, and so on... The same happened with Ramasamy Mudaliyar... Ramasamy Mudaliyar used to discuss with the Thiruvavaduthurai Thambiran not only matters pertaining to the *maṭham* administration, but also its educational activities. In the course of a conversation, Sivasubramanya Pillai informed Ramasamy of Swaminathaiyer, the Tamil teacher at the Government College, Kumbakonam. Ramasamy expressed interest in meeting him... Later, Subramanya Desikar mentioned to me that the new *munsif*, Mudaliyar is extremely knowledgeable in Tamil and that I must meet him... It was a Thursday (21-10-1880) when I went to his house to meet him. I told him that I was teaching at the college and also that I had studied at the *maṭham*... He spoke to me like I was some stranger in whom he had scant interest. I thought to myself, 'he is behaving this way because he has a position of power; had he really been a Tamil scholar, would he talk to me this way?'

⁸⁰ U. V. Swaminatha Aiyer 2014 (ninth edition). The book was first published in 1950. In all, pages 528–549 of the book deal with the issue being discussed here. Wherever I am paraphrasing, it is from the pages 528–534 and pages 535–543 and from the chapters *Enṇa Pirayōcaṇam* (88), *Jaina Naṇparkaḷ*, *Cintāmaṇi Araycci*, *Eṭṭu Pirati*, *Teriyāta Vicayaṅkal*, *Cantiranāta Ceṭṭiyār*, *Viḷaṅkiya Vicayaṅkal*, *Pavya Jivaṇ*, *Camuttira Vijayam Ceṭṭiyār*, *Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar Urai*, *Cintāmaṇi Nayam*, *Nāṇ Koṭutta Vāḷku* (89), *Aṇṇar Paḷakkamum Ārāycciyum*..., *Cintāmaṇi Eṭṭu piratikaḷ*..., and *Cintāmaṇi Nayam* (Chapter 90). All of these deal with the subject of *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* and his 'Jaina' friends.

⁸¹ Does not specify which northern Indian language; just says *vaṭamoliyilum*. Could be, perhaps, Hindi or Sanskrit.

He then asked me, 'Who did you learn under?'

I replied, 'Under Mahāvidwān Meenatchisundaram Pillai'.

I hoped there would be some sort of excitement in him the moment he heard Pillai's name. Even if he did not give me respect because of my job, I thought he would open up to a scholar such as Meenatchisundaram. But he showed no initiative to engage, and was measured in his speech. I made up my mind that if a name like that of Meenatchisundaram causes not a flutter of excitement, all this talk about this man having great respect for Tamil must be fake. However, his questions did not end. He asked me, 'What all have you learnt?' I decided to astonish him and rattled off names of all the texts I had learnt—'*Kuṭantaiaṇṭāti, Maṛaicaiaṇṭāti, Pukalūraṇṭāti...*, *Aḷakaraṇṭāti, Kamparaṇṭāti, Mullaiaṇṭāti, Mīnāṇṭāciyammai Piḷḷaittamiḷ, Muttukumārasuvāmi Piḷḷaittamiḷ, Akilāṇṭa Nāyaki Piḷḷaittamiḷ, Cēkkilāṇṭar Piḷḷaittamiḷ, Tirukkōvaiyār...*; twenty *antātis*, twenty *kalampakams*, fifteen *kōvais*, thirty *piḷḷaittamiḷs*, twenty *ulās...prabandhams*, etc.' His face showed not a tiny grain⁸² of amazement.

'What is the use of having studied all these?' he asked me, suddenly. I was terribly disappointed. I wondered if he must be someone dazed by English education, which is why he is asking such a question. Still, I did not give up. I started off on the *purāṇams* I had studied—'*Tiruvilaiyāṭar Purāṇam...*, *Māyūrapurāṇam, Kantapurāṇam, Periyapurāṇam, Kuṟṟālapurāṇam...*' Yet, he was unmoved, like a stone sculpture. '*...Pirapulinka līlai, Civaṇṇānapōtam, Civaṇṇānasittiyār Urai...*' I mentioned these texts as well. Even then he was not convinced. But, of course! I forgot the main one; had I said that earlier, he would have been brought in line. So I said, 'I have read the entire *Kamba Rāmāyaṇam* at least two-three times. I have heard some lessons of certain *kāṇṭams* from Pillai.'

Ramasamy Mudaliyar said, 'alright, is that all?' I was thoroughly dejected. I thought: such disregard even for *Kamba Rāmāyaṇam*? Such indifference! What is there to say beyond this? But he wasn't ready to let me go. He questioned me further. He said, 'it is alright to have read all these later period texts, have you read any of the older texts?' I didn't understand in what connection he was asking me such a question. Did he count all the texts I studied under Pillai that I mentioned? Aren't *Kantapurāṇam, Periyapurāṇam*, etc. old texts? Isn't *Kamba Rāmāyaṇam* an old text too? I started thinking which old texts was he referring to?

I said, 'So many of the texts I counted are older works'.

He said, 'Have you read works far older, the original ones?'...

'Which texts are you talking about, I do not know', I told him.

'Have you read *Cīvakācintāmaṇi? Maṇimekalai?* Have you read *Cilappatikāram?*

I hadn't read those texts, nor had my teacher read them. I had not even seen these texts ever. However, it amused me that in spite of that entire list of works I had studied, he is making such a big issue out of just these two-three works I have not read! I said, gravely, 'I did not find those texts; if I did, I have the courage to study them, too.'

The man who, until then, spoke to me so disinterestedly, suddenly stopped to look at me for a moment and said, 'I shall give you the texts; will you study them and be able to teach?'

⁸²The analogy is that of a grain as tiny as a mustard seed—*kaṭukaḷavu viyappuk kūṭattōṇṇavillai*.

'Not a doubt there; surely will do so', I said, daringly. I was certain, that with my knowledge and intelligence I will be able to understand those texts.

'Alright then, I shall keep *Cintāmaṇi* ready for you to read. Do come by often', he said...

The next time I met him, he treated me with a lot of love...He gave me a paper-print of *Cīvākacintāmaṇi* and said, 'Study this, and then we shall commence the lessons'. He then told me the story of how he came upon that printed copy. He said, 'I have always desired to read old books such as *Cīvākacintāmaṇi* and others. None of the scholars I met in this land have read these old texts; I could not find even the palm leaf manuscripts of these. I told one of my friends, A. Ramachandraiyaer, who was *munsif* of the village Srivaikuntam about this. He asked several people, but to no avail. Once in a village close to Srivaikuntam someone from a family of traditional bards appeared as witness in a family dispute matter to my friend's office. He told my friend that his ancestors had several palm-leaf manuscripts. Post-investigation, my friend went along with the witness to his home and asked if there were any palm-leaf manuscripts and when they said they had, he asked for the manuscript of *Cintāmaṇi*. Since he was in a position of authority, his efforts bore fruit. That poet found the palm-leaf manuscript of *Cīvākacintāmaṇi* and gave it to my friend, who bought it for Rs. 35 and sent it across to me. I got that made into this paper print copy. Having procured this with such difficulty, it was impossible to read it. When I was studying in college, the first four parts of this text formed part of our syllabus. It was printed by one of the Englishmen. It had more of English than Tamil. Desirous of reading the original text, I enquired from every scholar I met but none of them had gone beyond the study of *antātis* and *piḷḷaittamiḷs* and *purāṇams*. So I was pretty fed up. Among books, this is an excellent one. It was a model for *Kamba Rāmāyaṇam*. If you can read it and explain, it will be beneficial to you and joyful for me.'

I paid great attention to whatever Mudaliyar had told me. I thought if someone like Pillai, who had read and explained so many Tamil texts had not read *Cintāmaṇi*, would I be able to read this new text and explain its meaning so easily? I was slightly apprehensive about it. A thought occurred, 'could there be a distinct text as ancient as this Tamil one, in Sanskrit or Telugu? May be it needs some research? If one reads this Tamil text carefully, would it be difficult to understand? The question thrown at me as to what is the use of having read so many texts if I have not read this one, made me wonder exactly what is there in this text, after all? Let us see; it was this courage that pushed me. I left Ramasamy Mudaliyar's house saying 'I shall read the text and get back.'

In Chapter 89-*Jaina Nanṭparkaḷ*,⁸³ U.Ve.Ca continues with his experiences with the text:

I started reading the *Cīvākacintāmaṇi* copy given to me by Ramasamy Mudaliyar; it had the commentary of Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar. I understood it to be an epic on the life of Cīvakaṇ and I also realised how beautiful a composition it was...This *Cintāmaṇi*, which was older than all the other texts I had until then studied, initially, was a lesson for me in humility.

The very first verse of *Cintāmaṇi* is:

Mūvā mutalvā vulakammoru mūṇru mēttat
tāvāta viṇpaṇ talaivāyatu taṇṇi neyti
ovātu niṇṇakuṇattoṇṇitic celvaṇṇepa
tēvāti tēva ṇavaṇcēvaṇi cērtu maṇṇē

⁸³ Aiyer 2014, pp. 535–543.

About this, U.Ve.Ca writes:

This verse says nothing that cannot be understood. However, I found in that verse something new, for all the other texts I had read start with Vināyaka invocation or Catagopar *kāppu*, which was not present in this text. There is no use for these invocations in a Jaina *kāvya*. I saw it initially as a new kind of invocation to god. I could not get the import of the words '*mūvā mutalvā vulakam*'. I read the commentary by Naccinārkkinīyar... The commentary read, 'the three worlds without neither beginning nor end'. Used, as I was, to the idea/concept of this world being transient, this concept seemed new. I kept reading on...⁸⁴

For 5 months, Mudaliyar and U.Ve.Ca read the text even while collaborating with each other on terms and meanings that they each understood in the text. The name, *Kaṭṭiyaṅkāraṇ* (not having understood that it was someone's name), was interpreted by U.Ve.Ca as *kaṭṭiyakāraṇ* (meaning panegyrist), but Mudaliyar would tell him it was actually the name of the minister of Caccantan. He thought the name, *Kōvintaṇ*, was that of the deity, Krishna. There were other terms and names that did not make much sense to him. He thought since this was a Jaina text, it would be important to get the real meaning of the terms and concepts therein from the Jaina community. U.Ve.Ca asked one of the people who used to attend his classes, one Ramalinga Pantaram, to find out if there were any Jaina families around. He was told indeed there were a few, settled near the Ramaswamy temple, who were influential, and many of them were educated. He decided at once to go and meet them. The next day, he went along with Ramalinga Pantaram to the Jaina street. He writes

There he took me to the house of someone he knew well, named Cantiranatha Cettiyaṛ. Outside the house a *mākkōlam* was laid out⁸⁵ and mango leaves were tied up on the doors as decorations. I thought some special event was happening in the house and went in. There were several people gathered there. Ramalinga Pantaram pointed Cantiranatha Cettiyaṛ out to me and later introduced me to him... I enquired if there was anything auspicious happening in his house. He said, "*Cintāmaṇi* was completed today; we are celebrating that occasion." I was surprised. Here we had come to ask him about *Cintāmaṇi* and he says, '*Cintāmaṇi* has been completed!' Realising that reciting *Cintāmaṇi* was part of their tradition, I asked him if they had been reading *Cintāmaṇi*. He said, 'yes, I listened,⁸⁶ while he recited.' He showed a man who he said was 'from Vidur village in Tindivanam taluka. He is well-versed in Tamil and the northern language and Prakrit Jaina scriptures and their commentaries. There is none like him. His name is Appacamy Nayinar.'⁸⁷ I felt he had come there specifically for me. I had wished to learn about the subject and the subject expert was right there in front of me. And that same subject is being celebrated as an occasion. I felt his

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 535.

⁸⁵ The pattern drawn with rice flour on the floor at the main entrance of a house; in Hindi, *rangoli*. *Mākkōlam* is a special pattern drawn on special occasions, with wet, usually freshly pounded rice flour.

⁸⁶ *Śruti* or listening to scriptures is an important part of the Jaina ritual paradigm.

⁸⁷ Who retired as Principal, Government College Kumbakonam and father of Rao Bahadur A. Chakravarti Nayinar, says the footnote in the book *En Carittiram*. This is the same Chakravarti who brought out *Nīlakeci* with English summary in 1936. He taught Philosophy at the Government College, Kumbakonam.

was god's doing... I asked him [Appacamy Nayinar] as to how many days he had been staying here. He said 'for the last six months this recitation has been going on'. I thought 'we wasted these six months'. I told him about my reading of *Cintāmaṇi* and asked him as to who this Kōvintaṇ [in the text] was. He said, fairly casually, he is Vijayai's brother; Vijayai is Caccantaṇ's wife. I enquired about some more things and got insightful answers... Cantiranatha Cettiyaṇ, too, told me some things and also told me the story. Since that day, Cantiranatha Cettiyaṇ became my good friend. I learnt that just like our people recite the *Rāmāyaṇam*, the Jainas recite *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. It was through the orators of *Cintāmaṇi* that one of its commentaries came about, as they said. In the course of prevalence of Maṇipravāla and communal discourses, conflicts arose. I would feel pained when I would hear these accounts from Cantiranatha Cettiyaṇ. (Aiyer 2014, pp. 537–539)

Cantiranatha Cettiyaṇ would clarify doubts and correct U.Ve.Ca often. As he writes:

So far as *Cintāmaṇi* is concerned, Cantiranatha Cettiyaṇ was a virtual dictionary. After completing the recitation of *Cintāmaṇi*, Appacamy Nayinar stayed in Kumbakonam for a few days and left for his village. But he would come once in a while to Kumbakonam and stay and whenever that happened I would get a comprehensive account of Jaina tradition and Jaina concepts. I asked my Jaina friends the reason for there being two versions of the palm-leaf manuscripts of *Cintāmaṇi*. I was told that when Naccinārkkkiṇiyaṇ wrote the commentary the first time [and] he read it out to the Jainas, they found some aspects therein which went against their tradition. So he went to the Cittamur maṭham saying that he was a Jaina and stayed there, studying the Jaina tradition and texts and then wrote a new commentary, thereafter. The special commentary is the version which was written later on...I also learnt for the first time the history of *Cintāmaṇi* author, Tiruttakka Tēvar. Ramasamy Mudaliyaṇ continued to take lessons from me on *Cintāmaṇi*'. (Ibid, pp. 539–540)

Incidentally, when I first visited the Tamil Jainas in the year 2003, some of them had narrated the same account to me, which I recounted on reading U.Ve.Ca's account. This episode of Naccinārkkkiṇiyaṇ's sojourn in the Cittamur village seems to be part of their community memory, as well, transmitted over generations. U. Ve.Ca also learnt about the Jaina concept of *samavasaraṇam* by seeing a picture of the same in the house of the Jaina Gunapala Cettiyaṇ. He notes that more than Gunapala Cettiyaṇ, his wife was steeped in knowledge of the Jaina tradition. He writes

In that house, seeing the image of camavasaraṇam, I asked a few questions which he answered to the extent that he knew, and then directed me to his wife, saying she was the sister of Dharani Chettiyaṇ, who was well-versed in Jaina doctrine.'

Apparently, at one point she called Aiyer a *bhavya jīvaṇ*—great soul—and U.Ve. Ca writes that when he heard that, he felt "as elated as Naccinārkkkiṇiyaṇ must have felt when his commentary gained the approval of the Jainas in his time. She also gave me the certificate that I have all the eligibility to do research on *Cintāmaṇi*...". (Ibid, pp. 540–541)

U.Ve.Ca also obtained some Jaina texts from Samuttira Vijayan Cettiyaṇ:

Today, engaging with the Jaina friends, over time, I am able to appreciate the greatness of *Cintāmaṇi*. I believe that this text is a touchstone for all the classical Tamil *kāvya*s. My mind is captivated by the depth and beauty of the words in it.... (Ibid, p. 541)

உ

திருத்தக்க தேவரியற்றிய

சீவகசிந்தாமணி மூலமும்

மதுரையாசிரியர் - பாரத்துவாசி

நச்சினார்க்கினியருநாயும்.

TAMIL இவை

சென்னை, ப்ரெஸிடென்ஸிகாலேஜ் தமிழ்ப் பண்டிதராகிய

உத்தமநாபுரம்,

வே. சாமிநாதையரால்

நாம் நூதனமாக எழுதிய
பலவகைக்குறிப்புக்களுடன்

சென்னை:

ப்ரெஸிடென்ஸி அச்சுக்கூடத்திற்

பதிப்பிக்கப்பெற்றன.

இரண்டாம் பதிப்பு.

பிலவங்களுடைய மரக்கழிவே.

1907.

லிஜை ரூபா கூ.

[Copyright Registered.]

Fig. 4.10 The front inner flap of the book, *Cīvakacintāmaṇi: Mūlamum* (*Maturaiyācīriyar—Pārattuvāci*) *Naccinārkkiniyaruraiyum*, by 'Chennai Presidency College Tamil Pandit' Uttamatānapuram Ve. Cāminātaiyar (This was the second edition brought out by the Presidency *Accukkūṭam*, in 1907)

While they were reading the section, *Kāntaruvadattaiyārilampakam*, Ramasamy Mudaliyar resigned from his position and decided to practice law in Chennai, and, apparently, before moving there with his family, he extracted a promise from U. Ve.Ca that he would gather some more manuscripts of this work and not let it go waste and that he would bring them all out in print. He told U.Ve.Ca, 'There will be no bigger favour than that' (Ibid, p. 543). U.Ve.Ca. procured some more manu-

scripts from various places and, with the help of his students, collated them and compared their contents. The deeper he delved into *Cintāmaṇi*, he realised that this work was beyond all the others he had read so far. With a lot of effort, overcoming personal hardships, U.Ve.Ca finally brought out the printed version of *Cīvācācintāmaṇi* in the year 1887. It was the debut print of the ancient Tamil texts brought out by him. It was followed by the printing of the Caṅkam *Pattuppāṭṭu*, *Cilappatikāram*, *Puranānūru* and so forth. But it will remain part of history that his first tryst with an ancient Tamil work was a Tamil Jaina text and that it is laced with his active engagement with the Tamil Jaina community:

In 1907 December, he brought out the second edition of *Cīvācācintāmaṇi*, wherein he mentioned the help he had received from Appacamy Jain. In 1942 October, Dr.U.Ve.Ca's son, Ca.Kaliyanasundaram brought out the fourth edition of *Cīvācācintāmaṇi* also mentioning Vidur Appacamy's family and Appacamy's son, A. Chakravarti, who helped in this endeavour... This family from Vidur has also been supporting the cause of education, supporting the government school in their village and has also started a hostel in Tindivanam.⁸⁸

While this was one narrative of Tamil and one of its intrinsic links to a community, as narrated by two people in different historical times, there is yet another, as cited below:

Once upon a time, long before the rise of the modern nation, a language named Tamil wandered about in a world inhabited by divinities and extraordinary beings. This was an enchanted world of miraculous events and wondrous deeds, where the dead were brought back to life, and deserts transformed into fragrant groves; and where verses in Tamil cured fevers, stopped floods, and impaled enemies. It was a world in which poets, because of their mastery of Tamil, lorded over the gods themselves, and in which celestials vied with each other to win the affections of the language. There were even those who insisted that devotees of Tamil could look forward to a life amongst the gods, while its enemies were destined to languish in hell... I enter this magical world in which the language cavorts amongst the gods through a poem entitled *Maturai Cokkanāthar Tamil Viṭṭūtu* ("Tamil Dispatched as Messenger to Cokkanāthar in Madurai"). The poem features Tamil as a messenger sent by a lovesick heroine, the narrator, to her lover, the lord Śiva, in his manifestation as Cokkanāthar in the southern city of Madurai. (Ramaswamy 1998, pp. 66–67)

In its very title, it excludes any discourse or paradigm which allows for no gods or goddesses; it allows for no atheistic connection with language. It speaks for the language of the victors, not the ones who were persecuted or indicted, not the ones

⁸⁸ *Ālayam Toḷuvatu Cālavum Naṇru*. In the course of my tour of the Tamil Jaina villages as a PhD scholar, I came across the ancient Jaina temple at Pundi, in the Arani taluk of North Arcot region in Tamilnadu. The booklet mentioned above, printed in 1994, was given as *śāstra dānam* by J. Samudra Vijayan and Raja Lakshmi Ammal of Vidur (its author is not mentioned). It contains invocatory verses to the *yakṣis* Padmāvatī and Jvālāmālīnī, *yakṣa* Pīrammatevar (Brahmadeva) and a few other verses meant for recitation in a Jaina temple, besides verses on Sarasvatī. I had come across a shrine dedicated to the *yakṣi* Kūṣmāṇḍinī within the temple complex, and as I opened a half-closed door of this small shrine, a book fell into my hands, making the whole event seem quite magical in that time and place. It was donated on the occasion of a *pratiṣṭhā mahōccavam* at the temple. The esteemed scholar, Chakravarti, was one of the ancestors of the person who donated this book. Incidentally, this small booklet also contains interesting information in its preface about the contributions of this particular Tamil Jaina family from Vidur towards keeping alive the dedication to Tamil Jaina literature.

that were at the receiving end of that impalement (and of course it does not speak for the ones completely outside the pale of the written word and whose own ideas of language may have come from their non-written constructions of the world). Tamil Jaina presence is not known, or if known, is of no consequence to scholars who have written about book printing and publishing of manuscripts in Tamil:

The text inserts Tamil into the enchanted world of wondrous miracles in which the various deities live and operate. Where a loyal Śaiva hagiography had constituted Śiva as the principal performer of such magic, the Tamil *Viṭutūtu* displaces that primordial lord's agency and offers Tamil, in his stead, as the worker of miracle. So, drawing upon various miraculous episodes from Campantar's hagiography, the text insists that it was Tamil which transformed male palm trees into female... it is Tamil—not Śiva—which straightened out the hunchback of the Pāṇṭiya king and cured the raging fever that racked his body... (Ibid, p. 83).

These miracles center around Campantar's encounters with Jainas in Madurai, and the conversion of the Pāṇṭiya king from Jainism to Śaivism, as recounted in his hymns as well as in later texts like the *Periya Purāṇam* and *Tiruvīlayāṭal Purāṇam*. In Campantar's own recounting, it is Śiva who helped him overcome the Jains. "Since Cokkan of holy Ālavāy dwells within me, I will easily defeat those Jaina rogues". (Ibid, p. 83, below, *fn.* 21)

She adds

The indictment of Jainism is even more scathing, and draws upon the stories of encounters between Śaiva poets and Jaina monks from an earlier millennium... Such hostilities between Śaivism and Jainism, dating to the sixth to eighth centuries, are re-presented now as a battle between Tamil and Jainism. So, Tamil, incarnated as Campantar, challenged the spread of heterodox religions (*paracamayam*) and established the "true religion" [of Śaivism] in the Pāṇṭiya country...; it is Tamil that impaled on stakes those wicked Jains (*cākkiyar*)⁸⁹ who scorned it; it is Tamil that transformed the poison that they fed [to] Appar to be turned into ambrosia; and so on... Such memories of Śaiva-Jaina hostility were clearly anachronistic in the Tamil-speaking countryside of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Jains were a marginal presence at best. (Ibid, pp. 80–81)

The last statement is barely true because even if their numbers were small, the Tamil Jainas were very much part of the Tamil-speaking countryside, with active memories of their own persecution, and, at the same time, had their own Tamil texts preserved in their institutions and homes. Let me get to another level of discourse with Tamil where Tamil Jainas are missing.

A. R. Venkatachalapathy writes

It is not surprising that Maraimalai Adigal's books, which were most often addressed to a Śaiva veḷḷāḷa audience should have been bought by so many 'Pillais' and 'Mudaliyars', 'Chettiars', especially those involved in the banking business in Burma, who too, were patrons of his works.... (Venkatachalapathy 2012, p. 212)

It must be said here that many Tamil Jainas were also keenly pursuing what Maraimalai Adigal wrote because of their own community story about the Śaiva veḷḷāḷas and also because of their keen interest in reclaiming Jaina texts, rendered as Śaiva, by the revivalists. So, some of these 'Mudaliyars', 'Chettiars', etc. are also

⁸⁹ She translates *cākkiyar* as Jains, whereas the term refers to Buddhists.

likely to have been Jaina, since some of them retained their caste titles in official records. It would be interesting to delve into this aspect of the readership and audience. Similarly, Chalapathy gives a long list of caste titles of who he calls Tamil Readers (1923–1930) which he has sourced from Adigal's Address Book, no. 2, which is as follows:

Pillai (215); Mudaliar (61), Chettiar (92); Brāhmiṇs (35); Gounder (27); Yadavar/Konar (3), Padayachi (2); Reddiar (12)...Udaiyar (14)...Muslim (13); Christians (22)'. (Ibid, p. 212)

There is no mention of either Jainas or Buddhists in this list. These communities, by default, do not exist in the readership discourse in Tamil; if Adigal believed so, then one should critically examine as to why later-day scholars and historians should be accepting that claim at face value. Most works on Tamil seem to begin with, or revolve around, the mainstream Śaivite revivalist movement. Even if some of them do so critically, yet, it is important to bring some critical enquiry into where their vantage point lies. Chalapathy is one of those rare, eminent scholars who continue to write with equal felicity in Tamil and English, and his books in Tamil are as popular as the ones in English, so his readership is both Tamil and English. Some of those Tamil readers of his books, perhaps, may be the Tamil Jainas. That apart, the fact that, had U.Ve.Ca not met the Tamil Jainas, there would have been no 'printing' or 'publication' (with the active support of Tamil Jaina patrons) of the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, or *Cilappatikāram* or *Nālaṭiyār* and others, which also would fall within the provenance (or 'province') of the book in Tamil Nadu. But these facts do not get even a footnote space in his book, which mentions several other works. I must mention here that I would have missed out on a large volume of books (printed) in Tamil, had I not met the Tamil Jainas, who are essentially readers of Tamil, and not so much into English (which is the preserve of a very few among them, even today), and many of these books are also written by non-Jainas, on Jainism and Tamil literature, while a good number of books are penned by Tamil Jaina authors. There are some printed editions from original palm leaf manuscripts found in their homes and the *maṭham* and the temples. Printing books is an intense activity among the Tamil Jainas, and you will not find a single home without books, which will be handed over to you without hesitation. Should these 'provinces' of the book, too, be accounted for, when someone writes a kind of a 'universal' account of how the 'Tamils' (as a universal category, sometimes, or only some sections, representing the 'Tamil') read or printed?

In a context that is similar—in terms of a discourse that is non-Śaivite (in fact, Buddhist) and connected with Tamil literary tradition and hence significant—Pandian discusses Pundit Ayothee Thoss (or Ayothee Thoss Panditar, as referred to in Tamil, 1845–1914), who was 'a scholar of Tamil classical literature, a well-known practitioner of *siddha* medicine, and a commentator on contemporary politics...'. (Pandian 2007, p. 103)

He had become a Buddhist after a trip to Sri Lanka in 1898. Pandian discusses how Thoss 'constructed a Tamil Buddhist past' (Ibid, p. 105):

...A bunch of palm-leaf manuscripts disclosed to him the details of what he claimed to be the Parayars' true past—a past that was Buddhist. While travelling in Coimbatore District, Thoss had come across this bundle of palm-leaf manuscripts, including a collection of 570 stanzas named *Naradia Purana Sangai Thelivoo*. According to Thoss this text contained an account of the Dravidian past written by the sage Aswakosa. Thoss does not tell us how he came across these manuscripts.... (Ibid, p. 107)

Further,

With persistent intellectual labour, ingenious and idiosyncratic interpretation of etymology, and remarkable flights of imagination Thoss's exegetic journey through numerous Tamil texts—such as *Thirukkural*, *Chilappatikaram*, *Manimekalai*, *Tholkappiyam*, and *Nannool*—yielded him further evidence of Buddhist presence in the Tamil country and strengthened the account of Aswakosa that he had unearthed... According to him the Buddhist monks were known as Brāhmiṇs in Sanskrit and as *anthanars* in Tamil. We need to remember here that the word *anthanar* refers to Brāhmiṇs in the common parlance of the Tamil region... Thoss argued that when the Buddhist monks attained the inner eye of wisdom, they began wearing the *poonool* (the sacred thread) given to them through the *upanayanam* ceremony... He also interpreted popular 'Hindu' festivals as originally Buddhist festivals. In his rendering, Pongal-Bhogi emerged as a celebration of the nirvana of Buddha; Mahasivaratri his renunciation; Deepavali the discovery of oil by Buddhist monks. Thoss thus claimed that 'different elements of the Indian religious traditions, including what appears to be specifically Brāhmiṇical such as *upanayana*, *vrata*, *yagnya*, temple, idols and *mutts* were originally Buddhist...' (Ibid, pp. 109–110).

As Aloysius argues, 'The mobilised mass [under Thoss's Buddhism] became the foot-soldiers of the Dravidian movement under the leadership of E. V. Ramaswamy....' (Ibid, p. 120)

There were these alternative renderings of Tamil past, and the Tamil Jains, too, had their own, including the celebration of Dīpāvali, Śivṛātri, etc. which I have already noted. Pongal and *navarāttiri*, too, become Tamil Jaina festivals. The strange aspect is that of the *pūṇṇūl*, the sacred thread, which, according to the Tamil Jains, refers to the *ratnatrayam* which is right faith, right conduct and right knowledge. And according to one of them, many communities in Tamil Nadu, not just the Brāhmiṇs, wear the *pūṇṇūl*. It may be an interesting exercise to sieve through these different renditions to see where exactly the basic thread for these emerges from; there are commonalities—the anti-Brāhmiṇ, anti-Sanskritic tradition discourse. But for the Tamil Jains, the importance lay in keeping the argument as historically rooted as possible without giving recourse to mythic imagination, and hence, the importance of collecting 'evidence'—inscriptional, textual and so on. But it may be further interesting to compare the Tamil Buddhist and Tamil Jaina trajectories separately because both religions faced a similar attack, and while one survived into minority-ness, the other needs to be explored and sought out to become visible in historical discussions.

In a relatively comprehensive account of the Śaivite revival movement in Tamilnadu and Maraimalai Adigal's life and ideology, Ravi Vaithees writes

There were at least two key intellectual developments or 'moments' that had an important bearing on the nature and character of the neo-Śaivite revival in Tamil Nadu. The first was the ideas set in motion by colonial and missionary Orientalist philological researches on South Indian languages that began to posit a separate, non-Indo-Aryan linguistic genealogy for South Indian peoples and cultures... The second moment was the clever deployment of this essentially linguistic breach between the 'Aryan' and the 'Dravidian' to contend that the dominant religious tradition prevalent in the Tamil South, namely, Tamil Śaivism and Śaiva Siddhānta, was the unique product of the Tamil Dravidians and not, as previously assumed, an essential and integral part of the pan-Hindu tradition. In so doing, these discourses were clearly disrupting an earlier vision of a less regionally, racially, or caste-bound Śaivite or Śaiva Siddhānta tradition. The second key moment, then, involved the identification and resurrection of a distinctive Dravidian religion, which came to be identified as Tamil Śaivism or Śaiva Siddhānta.... (Vaithees 2015, pp. 26–27)

These two 'moments' were significant for the Tamil Jains in different ways: that there was a Dravidian language quite apart from Sanskrit, in which their ancestors and the monks (and perhaps nuns) wrote extensively, from the earliest times in Tamil history to which they made the largest volume of contribution (apart from the Buddhists, in which Hindu or Brāhmiṇs had no role to play), and the second moment was virtually their nemesis, which they have been fighting ever since, where they believe their texts were appropriated to give a Śaivite rendering and the earlier Śaivite effort to vanquish the religion and the people adhering to Jainism being a bitter and painful memory for them.

Vaithees writes

The neo-Śaivite revival in Tamil Sri Lanka had begun as early as the 1840s and is generally associated with the life and work of the major Jaffna Śaiva-Veḷḷāḷar revivalist, Arumuga Navalar (1822–79)... This Jaffna revival originated as a reaction against tremendous Christian missionary challenges to the religion, culture, social order, and world-view of the dominant castes of Jaffna. It was led primarily by the dominant and numerically strong non-Brāhman Veḷḷāḷar castes there. The principal focus of the Jaffna revivalists was the propagation of a temple-based, strictly Āgama-centric, Śaivite-Tamil revival and the elimination of all that was considered heterodox—'impure' practices that had supposedly accreted over the years. Towards this goal Navalar along with many of his followers established Śaivite organisations and schools, and began to collect and publish in print form many of the important Śaivite-Tamil works with commentaries in clear and accessible Tamil prose... In spirit, methods of organisation, propaganda and educational work, this militant Jaffna-centered Śaivite-Tamil revival reflected much of the method and spirit of its Protestant Christian adversaries.... (Ibid, pp. 22–23)

Vaithees has noted that

Navalar and many of his followers, though their central sphere of activity was in Jaffna, nevertheless had strong links with important Śaivite centres and *mutts* on the Tamil mainland and often established parallel schools and publishing houses there... Arumuga Navalar... had established parallel Śaivite schools near Chidambaram and printing presses in Madras by the 1860s... This Jaffna-centered Śaivite-Tamil revival that had begun as early as the 1840s began to exert an influence on the Tamil mainland by the late nineteenth century.... (Vaithees 2015, pp. 23–24)

Incidentally, there was a far closer association that some members of the Tamil Jaina community had, in the later new Śaivite movement of Ramalingar.

About Ramalingar, Sripal wrote, for instance

He wrote five *tirumuṟais*...;he studied deeply the Jaina, Buddhist, Vaiṣṇavite texts, of which Jaina doctrine attracted him most...Being inspired by Jaina ideas, he created a middle way, blending *saṁmārgam* with *bhakti mārgam*, while critiquing blind beliefs, caste discrimination, where religion [was used] to make money and fool people into conducting rituals... In his sixth *tirumuṟai* he brings out the middle path...Speaking on *ahimsai/kollāmai*, keeping in mind lord Vṛṣabha tīrthankara, Ramalingar wrote:

kollā neṟiyē kuruvaruḷ neṟiyēnap
palkā leṇakkup pakanta meycivamē

About Śiva being his teacher and the origin of the idea of *kollāmai*. (Sripal 1965)⁹⁰

Sripal, apart from being associated with the Self-Respect Movement, had also associated himself with Ramalingar Adigal's Samarasa Saṁmārga, and from 1929 he became associated with the movement as an important campaign person and workforce.⁹¹

About Ramalingar, Vaithees writes

Although Ramalinga had begun his spiritual career as a 'traditional' Śaivite saintly figure, he had soon abandoned the more conventional and ritualistic aspects of Śaivism for a much more universalist philosophy that he articulated through what he called the principle and practice of *Jeeva Kāruṇyam* that advocated compassion for all living beings, their equal treatment, as well as the practice of non-violence and vegetarianism. In keeping with this philosophy, Ramalinga began to condemn many of the extant social practices of the time and most importantly that of caste discrimination.... (Vaithees 2015, p. 200)

Meanwhile, reverting back to the issue of textual politics of the time, in general, Sripal refers to U.Ve.Ca, when he points out that:

U.Ve.Ca shows in his *En Carittiram* that he had seen a palm-leaf manuscript of *Valaiyāpati* (the major Jaina work which figures in the five *peruṅkāppiyam*). He had not then thought of studying it, but when he went there later, he could not find it. How did *Valaiyāpati* disappear? (Sripal 1975, pp. 45–46)

Referring to which, U.Ve.Ca had originally written:

I did not manage to find *Kuṇṭalakeci* and *Valaiyāpati*...When Pillai [Meenatchisundaram] was around, I had seen the palm leaf manuscript of *Valaiyāpati* in the Tiruvavaduthurai *maṭham* library. I was not that interested in old texts in those days... But when I became keen on reading old texts and went back there again, I could not trace *Valaiyāpati*, though I made a thorough search of the library. I searched in many places across Tamilnadu. When I realised these were lost, I was pained. Having seen *Valaiyāpati* with my own eyes, I had let it get out of my hands! (Aiyer 2014, p. 626).

About publication of classical Tamil texts, V. Rajesh writes

⁹⁰ 'Jaina Samayam Irāmaliṅka Cuvāmikaḷum', in *Salem district Saṁmārka Sangha Manatu Malar*, 1965; reproduced in *Sri Jeevabandhu T. S. Sripal Avarkaḷiṅ...*, Tamil Samanar Sangham, Madurai, 2000, p. 115.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 46.

A sense of cultural pride and Tamil consciousness was felt by the English-educated middle class during the last quarter of nineteenth century Madras with the publication of the classical Tamil literary works that were earlier confined to a tiny scholarly community and within the orbit of sectarian monasteries... An edition of the *Sivakasintamani* with a commentary by U.V. Swaminatha Iyer was published in 1899 by V. N. Jubilee Press, Madras. 350 copies of the Jain epic were printed for the purpose of the BA examinations of 1900... The production of classical Tamil works as textbooks for the university examinations continued every year. (Rajesh 2014, pp. 225–226)

Of course, Rajesh makes no mention of the involvement of Tamil Jains in the printing and publication exercise of Tamil classics, many of which happened to be Jaina (and Buddhist) works.

There was also an effort on part of people like Sripal to publicise the issue of appropriation and selective interpolation of Tamil (Jaina) literature while staying within the larger political movements of the time, and this they did through constant printing of books, essays and newer editions of Tamil classics, with critical, textual analysis. One instance of the way Sripal went about bringing the Tamil Jaina historical-literary lineage (for them the historical is very much about the literary tradition, in many ways) into the 'public' is mentioned in a volume on his life story.

One of the prominent Tamil scholars, Venkatasamy Nattar, wrote a commentary and foreword to *Cilappatikāram*, wherein, he mentioned that Ilaṅkovaṭiḡal was a Śaiva. Sripal read the *Cilappatikāram*, and its commentary by Atiyārkunnallār, consulted several eminent scholars, and made efforts to speak on the subject at various gatherings. The first of his speeches was given at Tondaimandalam Tuluvelalar High School where he spoke about *Cilappatikāram* in great detail, showing various kinds of evidence within the text to prove its Jaina authorship. He brought out all these talks in the form of a book titled, *Ilaṅkovaṭiḡal Samayam Yātu?* (What was Ilaṅko's Religion/Doctrine?). It was sent to Prof. A. Chakravarti, who consulted Neminatha Mudaliyar, and the Thanjavur District Jaina Sangha published the book in 1943. Several copies of it were sold, giving Sripal a place in the Tamil literary circles. A second print was brought out by Parinilayam, Chennai, in 1957. Sripal brought to the notice of people that the Ādi Pakavaṇ in Tirukkuraḷ is none other than the first *tīrthankara* Ṛṣabha. Sripal addressed public meetings, wrote extensively, and gave a textual analysis, on the Jaina authorship of *Cilappatikāram*. Later, Sripal brought out the book, *Ādi Pakavaṇum Ācārya Vinobājiyumu*, highlighting the basic tenets of Ṛṣabha *tīrthankara* and the ideals of the *Bhoodan* movement, which consisted in non-possession and distribution of property for common good, which was what the first *tīrthankara*'s life preaches.⁹²

In Pandian's discussion on the animal sacrifice issue, which I have discussed earlier, Sripal comes across in the form of a singular identity of one who preached 'Hindu' vegetarianism. But Sripal had all these other facets and identities. Moreover, the paradigm from which he was approaching animal sacrifices (as being a Vedic infusion and being part of the brāhminical religion and blind beliefs) was not the

⁹² Jeevabandhu T. S. Sripal *Avarkaḷin Nūrrāṇṭu Viḷā Niṇaivu Malar (1900–2000)*, Tamil Samanarkal Sangam, Madurai, 2000.

paradigm of caste and animal sacrifice as being a cultural part of it. Which is why, perhaps, even Periyar expressed support (as shown), for it fit well into his campaign against blind beliefs and irrational rituals of the Vedic, Sanskritic, brāhminical religious paradigm. But in the contemporary moment,⁹³ the issue has become part of a different kind of attack on pluralism and diversity in food culture and religious freedoms enshrined in the Indian Constitution. And the discourse of that time (in which these prominent figures operated in the public space) cannot be applied to the present.

Finally, I shall end this segment by saying that the manner in which 'Tamil' as a language exists in the accounts of the Tamil Jainas is fascinating. It has aspects of the oral, and it is about the written. The aspects of the oral are contained in the memory they have preserved across generations, spanning several centuries, regarding every single account of textual history and authorship. The accounts pertain to different time periods, and sometimes the time periods seem to switch between centuries. But the most important aspect is that the language Tamil (as a linguistic tradition) is also their memory. In keeping alive the *memory of a language*, they keep alive their own *identity*. The *memory of the language* and its various accounts over centuries (how texts were composed, how they got lost, how these were appropriated, communally coloured, etc.) stay alive in their self-perception, of what being a Tamil samaṇar should mean. The accounts of the community in different villages regarding U.Ve.Ca's discovery of 'their' text did not come through a reading of his biography (which many, I noted, did not possess) always, but was part of the almost performance-like remembrancing 'acts' that one recorded everywhere. And, in fact, had I not met them, this important piece of information and U.Ve.Ca's own history of collecting texts would have remained unknown to me and may have perhaps come to me in a quaint manner sitting in one library and most probably by sheer chance. But it was best for me that it came to me in this fascinating manner, through the villages in Tamilnadu, going back and forth from one family to another, with people having 'so much to tell'.

The Tamil Jaina community is just one example of a community being largely wiped out from the mainstream discourse on Tamil, and it would be a far more meaningful exercise to think of writing histories of how different communities (religious, social, class-based) relate to, own up and historicise a language and their contributions to it or their engagement or discontents with a language, or history of the language, in mainstream discourse, how far have they been included or excluded from the same and what is the politics behind that inclusion or exclusion. This can

⁹³ Such as the entire discourse on beef ban, etc., where a certain kind of religion-state power is exercised on a matter otherwise considered a 'personal' space: food culture. In Sripal's discourse, interestingly, it was the animal sacrifice which was aimed to be banned, not eating habits of entire communities. Perhaps there is need to critically examine this in a political context. However, it is interesting that, even in the times of state patronage to Jainism in Tamilnadu in the ancient past, we do not come across edicts in the Tamil country forcing people to turn vegetarian. In the present context, we do see the active entry of some Jaina monks of the north in these discussions in the media and promotion of these state-enforced bans. These issues call for a deeper sociological understanding.

only come about through an engaged and located community history, where you read community histories through community narratives and contextualise it against historical time and by locating meanings in language and tradition for different communities. This is applicable for writing language histories of marginalised castes, and tribal communities, as well, who are forced not to belong, on account of their not having written records, or texts. But the question is: if a community with the largest number of written texts and a reasonable amount of state patronage at one point in the past can live a marginalised existence today in many ways, what can be said for some tribal communities and dalits without the written records?

Perhaps, the ‘power of the written word’ does not apply uniformly to all contexts. Or, perhaps, unless accompanied by a powerful construction of hegemony (of religious, political and cultural ideas or systems, which rule over, and also overrule, at times), the written word does not, on its own, inhere power.

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Chapter 5

On Mapping the Layers of Community Histories: Some Concluding Remarks

Abstract In the long history of Tamil Nadu, where all doctrines were perhaps taking from a common layer, what is crucial is to study the nature and extent of the power (the hegemony) and the magnitude of domination. The Jainas developed two (parallel, perhaps) levels of addressing this question: metaphysical contemplation and a very basic discourse with the commoner. They lived on, and have lived, to this day in Tamil Nadu, though marginalised, but the Buddhists perhaps moved out of the contested space forever. Instead of ‘concluding’, there is a space for opening up further discussions on ways in which to understand (and write, or ‘read’) the history (or layers of history) of a minority (marginalised—in different senses) community or several such communities.

Keywords Mapping • Singular • Murukaṇ • Tirumurukāruppaṭai • ‘Remembrancing act’ • Living community

‘Conclusion’ is a term that ‘closes’ more than it ‘opens’—spaces for further interpretations—and a term that should rather not be used by historians, continually reinterpreting pasts. But if there is something that I have indeed ‘concluded’ based on my learning from this entire journey, it is that state patronage may not be the only yardstick to write the history of Jainism in Tamil Nadu and there is an entire lived history of a ‘living community’ in the villages which urges one to probe into many layers of that history.

There may have been the good, bad and worst phases in the lived history of the Tamil Jainas, but the terms ‘rise’ and ‘decline’/‘fall’ do not explain those moments. I have tried to seek processes of the community’s movement through historical time: there are the early occupations, popularisation of the Jaina doctrine among the Tamils; marginalisation, thanks to the popularity of bhakti, at one point, or the excesses of a certain Cenji ruler at other and; finally, a stage where even a mere term, ‘Tamil Jaina’, evokes questioning glances. They are virtually hidden, largely, in any writing of the modern period in Tamil history, with its interesting and dynamic socio-political movements. This, in essence, is what ‘persecution’ must be seen to have done to a community: forcing it to the fringes. And that can be the history of any marginalised community in the history of modern India. I have merely used a

different entry point to the study of the Tamil Jinas, and the Tamil Jaina community (in Tamil history) is only one example.

The tide of *bhakti* had its own impact on Buddhism and Jainism, and in this period, many seem to have converted to Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava faiths. And the inscriptional records do not speak a word about this phase. The question can be posed in two ways: why did they not mention this persecution? Would an inscriptional record meant as a donation to the deity or a monastic institution mention such an event? Perhaps the answer lies in looking at modern periods of communal violence in India and to look at their 'evidence' in official records of the time.¹

I have noted before that in most later period inscriptions recording donations to Jaina temples, caves and monastic institutions, the grants seem to come from individuals and, in some cases, from village community representatives; even though they mention the regnal years of the ruler, they do not come directly from the ruler. And there is yet another interesting element—if we study closely the time of the inscriptions (from the ones I have managed to look at pertaining to the villages I went to)—that there seems to be a lull in grants in a certain period which again picks up post-eighth/post-ninth centuries CE. It would require a deeper and more detailed study of the language of the inscriptions, their provenance and their time period, to be able to get an answer as to why the inscriptions do not mention persecution. Or, are there inscriptions that do mention persecution at all, in the way the people remember these events? Considering that I do not claim to have studied the entire corpus of inscriptions across the length and breadth of Tamil Nadu for all the periods, I shall leave that question unanswered. But instead of sticking to those questions, I chose to ask many other questions, about the Tamil Jaina community in the villages from people who are yet to find representation in the historical works on Jaina religion and society in Tamil Nadu. Tamil books, pamphlets and articles, to a large extent, make up for the lacuna that exists in English works; but even there, there is as yet no comprehensive account of the people in the villages, and their lives.

Though it is an accepted fact that many Jaina (and Buddhist) centres were turned into Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite centres of worship, or settlements, we need more studies on this aspect of forced or gradual non-forced change and the hegemony established of one kind of religious paradigm. Quite a few of the early Jaina centres, incidentally, interestingly, over a period, as I noticed, became centres of Murukan-Subrahmanya, this god himself retaining only a fraction of his early identification with Tamil-ness, as the god of love, and companion of Valli, the daughter of a hunter-gatherer chieftain in the hills of Tamil Nadu.

I have learnt about different ways in which to perceive the very concept of persecution. But there are again layers to it, which may have been missed out in previous works on the Jinas. For persecution is not merely about the blatant episodic physi-

¹ Sometimes, when they do enter the official records, these records are also successfully overwritten with glorious chapters to cover up for those events which ask uncomfortable questions of us. At these times, people's memories of those events serve as a set of archives. One can think of Partition memories, holocaust memories, communal carnages and their memories.

cal violence (of impaling the Jaina monks on stakes, which some, like Sripal, even say may not have actually happened) but is about the mention of it, time and again, in the *Tēvāram* corpus, with Appar's and Nānacampantar's verses highlighting it. It may have been also a forewarning to people to stay away from religions such as Buddhism and Jainism. Violence need not be physical alone to have its impact. Taking out processions which ritually enact the above idea (of impalement and killing) can be equally violent. The violence of the concept can, and should be, seen in other senses, as well. It must be seen in the way an overarching edifice is created to the exclusion of certain communities in the understanding of the past.

I have noted the Śaiva veḷḷāḷa tradition and the possibility of understanding the same through the views of the Tamil Jainas who have their own versions of how some of them 'converted to' Śaiva veḷḷāḷas. And importantly, to look at this conflict within the larger paradigm of agrarian conflict and possible economic reasons for the story (of the conversions), which has become a 'remembrancing act' of the community across generations. Something has to have happened at a scale that leaves its mark on the community memory. I have also discussed the idea of looking at 'pain', sites of pain as sites of identity in these episodes of remembering, which can be used even in case of other minorities who have had episodes of communal violence or structural violence which aim to wipe out their histories or their self-locations.

Persecution has to be seen in ways that the community senses it: the letter to M. K. Gandhi, for instance, from a barrister in London, regarding a remark made on Jaina monks; Sripal viewing the ritual enactment of abuse of Jaina women in celebrating the Śaiva bard, Nānacampantar; in the way the temples in Arpakkam and Maḡaral were converted into Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples (with a sculpted figure of Mahāvīra lying outside the temple precincts even to this date, in a place settled by a handful of Tamil Jainas); or in the HMV record episode. It has to be seen in the stories constructed about the Jainas, in the Śaiva *talapurāṇams*, as much as in the stories the Jainas narrate about a certain king who forced them to flee, or convert. It has to be 'read between the lines', so to speak, where 'hard evidence' does not help. And sometimes if the hard evidence itself represents a select section, there are further problems.

And marginalisation has to be seen in the fact that modern interpretations of movements in Tamil politics seem to negate a community which keeps reiterating its distinct identity and wishes inclusion as a Minority or backward class, because the mirror through which some of the scholarship looks at the community, is of the affluent Jaina businessmen of Chennai, or other towns, or the affluent Jainas elsewhere. Thus, a subtle point of political importance gets missed out: that the Tamil Jainas identified at one point with the social-political movements in Tamil Nadu, against both brāhminism and Śaivism. The point of Jaina identity and Tamil language was something one learnt through the travels in the Tamil Jaina countryside. The language, and the region, builds the community's identity, as much as its being Jaina in a pan-Indian Jaina sense.

The pressure of survival makes the community respond in interesting ways, as well. Literature and literary contributions never seem to die, through this entire period. They continue to publish with a remarkable regularity and interest, till date.

But contestation occurs in edited volumes of Tamil literary texts, coming with their own colouring. I have referred to the debate on the Kuṛaḷ. I have also focussed in detail on the discovery/recovery of the Tamil Jaina epic, *Cīvakaṇṭāmaṇi*, and its publication in print form in the late nineteenth century. This is one episode in history that does not get discoursed enough, especially in terms of the involvement of Tamil Jainas in the whole ‘movement’ of this epic from palm leaf manuscript to print, even if that occurs as a significant point in U.Ve.Ca’s own memoir and is etched in the Tamil Jaina community memory and even if U.Ve.Ca refers to the Cīttamur Tamil Jaina community’s disapproval of a commentary of the text by Naccīṇārkkīṇiyar, who had to rewrite the whole thing again. The fascinating aspect of this story is how it is retold by the people across generations; it is equally fascinating to think that the ancestors of the same people—who told me this story in Melcittamur—may have narrated that story to U.Ve.Ca. So, there is a long link between the story-tellers and between someone discovering a text in late nineteenth century, seeking a community in order to understand it, and someone like me going back on those paths, to retrieve a community and its memory. As it happens, in a different context, A. K. Ramanujan had noted that, ‘One of the earliest texts Aiyar edited was a poem of about the sixth century... The text was *Tirumurukāṇṇuppaṭai*, a “Guide to Lord Murugan”’ (Ramanujan 2006, pp. 189–190). It is quite a remarkable coincidence that my own journey into the Tamil Jaina history, began with (through) Murukaṇ’s sacred centres, carrying along with me, the *Tirumurukāṇṇuppaṭai*! The cult of Murukaṇ, the subject of my MPhil historical enquiry indirectly led me to a hidden past of those sacred sites, the rock-cut caves and caverns with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions of the Jaina establishments of the early centuries BCE.

In the long history of the Tamil country, in reality, where all doctrines were perhaps taking from a common layer, it is the nature and extent of the power (the hegemony) and the magnitude of domination which is crucial to a study of these processes. After all, all religious philosophy has had to address itself, ultimately, to the struggles of the everyday and develop practices and rituals to this end. The Jainas developed two (parallel, perhaps) levels of addressing this question: meta-physical contemplation and a very basic discourse with the commoner which helped them survive, possibly, with certain negotiations.

I would like to refer here to a translation of the story in the Prabhāvaka-carita of Prabhācandra:

[This text] tells of conflict between Brāhmaṇ intellectuals and the great 12th century Jaina teacher Hemacandra at the court of the King Kumārapala. ‘Once, during the rainy season Hemacandra gave an exposition about the life of Lord Nemi, in the course of which he told how the Pāṇḍava brothers of the Mahābhārata had renounced the world and become Jaina monks. The local Brāhmaṇs... protested: the Mahābhārata says that the Pāṇḍavas went wandering into the Himālayas at the end of their lives, devoted to Lord Śiva. The king called upon to arbitrate in the matter summoned Hemacandra, and asked (if what he said of the Pāṇḍavas was true, to which Hemacandra replied)—This has been said by our ancient ācāryas... and it is... true their sojourn in the Himalayas is described in the Mahābhārata. But we do not know whether those Pāṇḍavas... described in our scriptures are the same as those... in the work... of sage Vyāsa... (Hemacandra, it is quoted here, then told the king of

an account in the Mahābhārata wherein Vyāsa wrote an episode of Bhīṣma who told his attendants that his body should be cremated at the place where none was cremated before. When they went to do so after his death, the attendants heard a divine voice that said—‘A hundred Bhīṣmas have been cremated here, and three hundred Pāṇḍavas...as for Karna their number is beyond counting’. Having quoted this...Hemacandra said...‘in our minds we believe that among the hundreds of Pāṇḍavas mentioned here, it is possible that some may have been Jainas...’. (Rao et al. 2001, pp. 15–16)

This story is quoted by the authors in the context of (questioning) ‘singularity of a reported story’ (Ibid, p. 15).

And just as the narrator tells the story, it is about finding the Tamil Jainas from among those hundreds of (metaphorical) ‘Pāṇḍavas’: seeking the hidden behind what is the ‘perceived totality’ or the ‘given’ or/of the ‘singular’.

A word about the ‘hard evidence’ and what Karashima poetically referred to as listening to what they ‘whispered’, there was little more to add to the already existing (exhaustive) enormous and excellent scholarship using this material (which still seems to be, tends to be seen as, the material *par excellence* for a historian); except to place it in a context. That of the narratives of the community, juxtaposed against the ‘antiquity’ of their associations with the ‘historical’ existence of their village which these records ‘prove’. The idea was to show a certain sense of historical continuity of the Tamil Jainas and see how they relate to the ‘historicity’ of the place. Do they claim its importance from the existence of these lithic records, or through some other means? Does it mean more that a certain someone from among them attained *nirvāṇa* through *sallēkhana vratam* or that the place had a temple with inscriptions referring to the rule of the Chōlas or Pallavas, or other kings? How far back do they go to give their own histories? How important does the village become in their view?

I have just explored the possibility of understanding people’s perceptions of their antiquity and layers of their connection to their own village in the larger scheme of things. Since I, too, initially looked for ‘historical’ ‘vestiges’ of any kind that would place the community today in the map of importance in the construction of history, I returned with the understanding that perhaps there is a need to go beyond that kind of mapping of community histories based, simply, on the ‘monument’-al presence, affirming those antiquities. Their stories and narratives are equally important.

But there is also a fact about the Tamil Jainas which is fascinating: their sense of history and historicising, almost with a scientific understanding of history, which is reflected in their consistent maintenance of records of their antiquity in the form of news reports, archaeological explorations in ancient Jaina settlements and reconnecting the past to the present in events like the Green Walk or Ahimsa Walk. Each of these signifies a particular inclination of the people who undertake that activity, and in this, the community is not homogenous. There are those who give importance to the historical understanding and preserving of literature and those who are bringing back the ‘original’ doctrine through relatively more ritual exercises and events.

I end here, with a question: can one then ‘conclude’ to give the final statement about issues that urge one to explore so many layers of the ‘text’, and the ‘reading’, at the same time?

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Annexures

Annexure 1: Early and Present-Day Tamil Jaina Villages (and Corresponding Temples for Tīrthankaras)¹

Early Jaina Śrāvaka Settlements as Mentioned in the Epigraphs

1. Vellarai
2. Tondi
3. Ponai
4. Potalai
5. Tidiyal
6. Elaiyur
7. Venpalli
8. Nagaperu (Nagamalai)
9. Patimu
10. Nelveli
11. Naliyur
12. Karur
13. Yarrur (Arrur)
14. Pakanur
15. Kunrattur

[As noted in I. Mahadevan, 2003, pp. 4–12]

1. Agarakarakkottai: Parsvanathar

¹Information provided by member, Samanar Pervoli Iyakkam. Note the prominence of Ādinātha or Rṣabha tīrthankara temples showing the immense popularity of the first tīrthankara, perhaps also signifying a sense of relating to the antiquity and ‘origins’ among the Tamil Jainas, to reiterate a sense of belonging to a really ancient past. Of course, one cannot reduce it to this aspect, merely. Perhaps there are other reasons for this.

2. Agalur: Adinathar
3. Arungulam: Candranathar (?)
4. Anumanthakkudi: Parsvanathar
5. Ananthapuram (Arni): Ananthanathar
6. Annamangalam: Adinathar
7. Ayalavadi: Adisvarar
8. Arni: Adinathar
9. Arnipalayam: Adinathar
10. Arpakkam: Adibhattarakar (Adinathar)
11. Alagramam: Adinathar
12. Esakkulattur: Mahaveerar
13. Elanderipattu: Neminathar
14. Elangadu: Adinathar
15. Elamangalam: Ananthanathar
16. Uppuvellore: Rishabhanathar
17. Eyyil: Chandranathar
18. Etha Nemmeli: Neminathar
19. Odalavadi: Adinathar
20. Erumbur: Adisvara
21. Cuddalore: Adinathar
22. Karantai: Kunthunathar
23. Kallakulattur: Adinathar
24. Kallapuliyur: Parsvanathar
25. Kannalam: Chandranathar
26. Kattu Malaiyanur: Mahaveerar
27. Kappalur: Kunthunathar
28. Kiledayalam: Adinathar
29. Kilsattamangalam: Chandranathar
30. Kilvalayamur: Rishabhanathar
31. Kilvillivalam: Mahaveerar
32. Kundakundanagar: Adinathar
33. Kunnattur: Adinathar
34. Kumbakonam: Chandraprabha
35. Gudalur: Kunthunathar
36. Goonambadi: Mallinathar
37. Kollimalai: Mahaveerar
38. Koilampoondi: Mahaveerar
39. Chakkarapuram (Cengi/Gingee): Ananthanathar
40. Sadupperipalayam: Adinathar
41. Siddarugavoor: Adinathar
42. Sendiyabakkam: Parsvanathar
43. Cheyyar: Parsvanathar
44. Chennai: Chandranathar
45. Sendamangalam: Parsvanathar
46. Sevoor: Adinathar

47. Somasipadi: Chandranathar
48. Solai Arugavoor: Adinathar
49. Tachampadi: Mahaveerar
50. Tachhur: Adinathar
51. Tanjore: Adisvarar
52. Thayanur: Varthamanar
53. Tindivanam: Parsvanathar
54. Tirunarungunram: Appandainathar
55. Tiruparuttikunram: Varthamanaswami
56. Tirupparambur: Pushpadantar
57. Tirumalai: Neminathar
58. Tirakkoil: Mahaveerar
59. Theepangudi: Adinathar
60. Theelar: Trailokyanathar
61. Thennathur: Adinathar
62. Desur: Adinathar
63. Thondur: Mahaveerar
64. Torappadi: Pushpadantar
65. Nallavanpalayam: Adinathar
66. Nallur: Adinathar
67. Naval: Vasupujyar
68. Nelliangulam: Neminathar
69. Nethappakkam: Neminathar
70. Parikalpattu: Parsvanathar
71. Puzhal: Adinathar
72. Poondi: Adinathar
73. Pernamallur: Ponninathar
74. Periyakolappalur: Vrishabhanathar
75. Korakkotai: Vrishabhanathar
76. Perumandur: Adinathar and Chandranathar
77. Perumpukai: Mallinathar
78. Perani: Parsvanathar
79. Peravur: Varthamanaswami
80. Ponnur: Adinathar
81. Manjapattu: Mallinathar
82. Mannargudi: Mallinathar
83. Mudalur: Adinathar
84. Mullippattu: Mahaveerar
85. Melathipakkam: Anantanathar
86. Melcittamur: Simhapurinathar
87. Melmalaiyanur: Vrishabhanathar
88. Mezhiyunur: Parsvanathar
89. Mogappair: Chandraprabhar
90. Vangaram: Rishabhanathar
91. Vandavasi: Mahaveerar

92. Valathi: Rishabhanathar
93. Vazhappandal: Varthamanar
94. Vijayamangalam: Chandranathar
95. Vichhur: Rishabhanathar
96. Virudur: Rishabhanathar
97. Vilukkam: Adinathar
98. Velangadupakkam: Mahaveerar
99. Veedur: Adinathar
100. Veeranamur: Vrishabhanathar
101. Venkunram: Parsvanathar
102. Vembakkam: Varthamanar
103. Vellimedupettai: Ananthanathar
104. Vellai: Adinathar
105. Vempundi: Neminathar
106. Vellianallur: Mahaveerar
107. Kozhipalayam: Neminathar
108. Salukkai: Vrishabhanathar
109. Koozhamandal: Vrishabhanathar

Annexure 2: Jain Temples, Centres in Tamil Nadu ²

1. Kilvayalanur
2. Thellar
3. Thayanur
4. Agarakkottai
5. Karandai
6. Arani Palayam
7. Tindivanam (not an old centre)
8. Ananthamangalam malai (rock-cut caves)
9. Thondur Hill (rock-cut cave)
10. Kovilpatti Kalugumalai (rock—24 tīrthankaras)
11. Nallavanapalayam
12. Peramandur
13. Vizhukkam/Vilukkam
14. Perumpukai
15. Kallakulathur
16. Esakolathur
17. Vijayamangalam
18. Avalurpettai (rock-cut cave)
19. Tirunarungundram (rock temple)

²As per data gathered by the Tirumalai Jaina *gurukulam* (back in the year 2003). The list was based on the photographs of these places that were available at the *gurukulam*.

20. Tiruparuttikunram
21. Madurai Poygaimalai (rock caverns)
22. Arani Mullipattu
23. Vangaram
24. Madurai Karungalakudi (rock-cut caves)
25. Mel Athipakkam
26. Thingalur
27. Cuddalore
28. Tirumalai (rock-cut caves and caverns)
29. Valathi
30. Vellore Kalani (only figure - of Pārśva)
31. Peranamallur
32. Solai Arugayur
33. Kumbakonam (Candraprabha temple)
34. Jinapuram (not old)
35. Thachur
36. Mannargudi
37. Melappandal
38. Kannalam (photograph of tīrthankara has Śvetāmbara iconographic features and in marble)
39. Naval (does not seem old and tīrthankara same as above)
40. Melcittamur (temple, shrine over the rock, Malainathar , built later)
41. Uppuvelur
42. Elangadu
43. Madurai Anaimalai (rock-cut cave)
44. Kappalur (not old)
45. Desur
46. Nedimozhiyanur (marble tīrthankara; Pārśva, not too old)
47. Alagramam
48. Kilsattamangalam (renovated)
49. Madurai Kilavalavu (rock cut and caverns)
50. Eyyil
51. Ethanammeli (looks new)
52. Elamangalam
53. Kattu Malayanur (looks new)
54. Perani
55. Vempakkam (seems new/renovated)
56. Thondur
57. Madurai Kongarpuliyangulam (rock-cut caves)
58. Vallimalai (same as above)
59. Kallappuliyur
60. Cendiyambakkam
61. Thanjavur Karandai
62. Arani Pundi
63. Cenji Hill (rock-cut) Thirunatharkunru (24 tīrthankaras on rock)

64. Pudukkottai Sittanavasal (rock cut)
65. Vidur
66. Tharakkoil (looks new but old tīrthankara figure)
67. Chennai Ambattur (new temple but old icon)
68. Koonampadi (new/renovated)
69. Ponnurmalai
70. Salukkai
71. Chitrarugayur
72. Koodalur
73. Torappadi
74. Ceeyamangalam (rock cut)
75. Valaipandal
76. Othalavadi
77. Nethupakkam
78. Vellodu
79. Somasipadi
80. Ponnur
81. Tenathur
82. Venkunram
83. Viranamur
84. Malappambadi
85. Madurai Kalinjamalai (rock-cut cave)
86. Ayalavadi (new?)
87. Periya Kolappalur
88. Parikkalpattu (new)
89. Madurai Samanar Malai (rock cut)
90. Aranai Sevvur
91. Thensenthamangalam
92. Arani Ananthapuram
93. Koilampundi
94. Nelliyankulam
95. Madurai Alagarmalai (rock caverns)
96. Vandavasi
97. Agalur
98. Tirunageswaram
99. Pudukkottai Anumanthakudi
100. Kilvillianam
101. Deepangudi
102. Erumbur
103. Nallur
104. Tiruppanamur
105. Manjapattu
106. Cheyyar
107. Arpakkam
108. Velliyanallur

- 109. Melmalaiyanur
- 110. Perayur
- 111. Sathuperipalayam
- 112. Renderipattu (new/renovated)
- 113. Biruthur
- 114. Vellai

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