

JAINA CENTRES IN ANDHRA

Dr. G. Jawahar Lal, M.A., Ph.D.



Shri Bharatvarshiya Digamber Jain
(Tirtha - Samrakshini) Maha Sabha

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Former Director:

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**Shri Bharatvarshiya Digamber Jain
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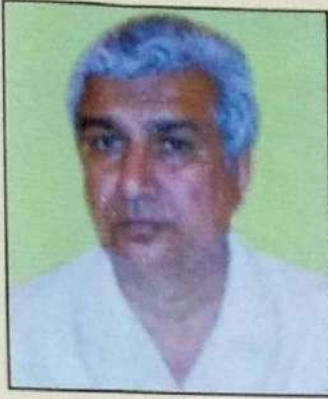
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Shri Bharatvarshiya Digamber Jain (Thirtha-Samrakshini) Mahasabha is a National Organization with its headquarters at Lucknow. It has branches in every state also. Its main aim is not only to preserve the Jain Monuments and restore the ruined Jain-basadis, but also to bring out a series of monographs on Jaina Centres or Tirthas of different states to make the public realise the rich Jaina-Culture. The present publication, 'Jaina Centres in Andhra', is the first of that series. We are extremely happy to take up this revealing work of Dr. G. Jawaharlal, former Director, Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute, Govt. Of A.P., Hyderabad., for publication.

Andhra Pradesh, was, it may be termed, as the cradle of Jainism. Jaina traditions and works make us believe that Lord Mahavira preached his doctrine in Kalinga and journeyed to Maisolia (i.e., modern Machilipatnam, in Krishna district). The archaeological finds namely remains of stupas, label inscriptions at Vaddamanu in Guntur district and Guntupalli (i.e., Jilakaragudem caves) in West Godavari District and Satavahana coins in front of a Jaina-cave at Kapparaopet in Karimnagar district, force us to believe that the Jaina tradition recorded in Haribhadriya Vritti, which takes the origin of Jainism in Andhra to the Pre-Mauryan period, has some semblance of truth in it. The present book also makes it crystal clear as to how the Jains dominated the political and cultural life of the Andhras from the early times up to the 14th century A.D. Dr. G. Jawaharlal who is a prolific writer on the subject and is well known to the scholarly world through his innumerable articles on Jainism for the past twenty years and his comprehensive work, Jainism in Andhra (as depicted in Inscriptions) published in 1994.

We are grateful to Dr. G. Jawaharlal for sparing his 2nd work, Jaina Centres in Andhra, to us for publication which we take as a unique privilege. It provides lucid and succinct account of the Jaina Centres or Tirthas in Andhra. In the end, we fondly hope that Dr. G. Jawaharlal would continue his studies in Jainology and explores new vistas for bridging the missing links in the history of Jainism in India.

Hyderabad
20-10-2001

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SMT. BASANTI DEVI

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RITESH JAIN	-	

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The members of the Pahade family are known for their benefactory works like the construction of Temples, Dharmasalas, Guest-houses and many Jina-kshetras. They are all devout disciples of Venerable Jyana-mati Mataji of Hastinapur, and thus they are all blessed by all Jinacharyas for their pious deeds.

DEDICATED

To My Parents

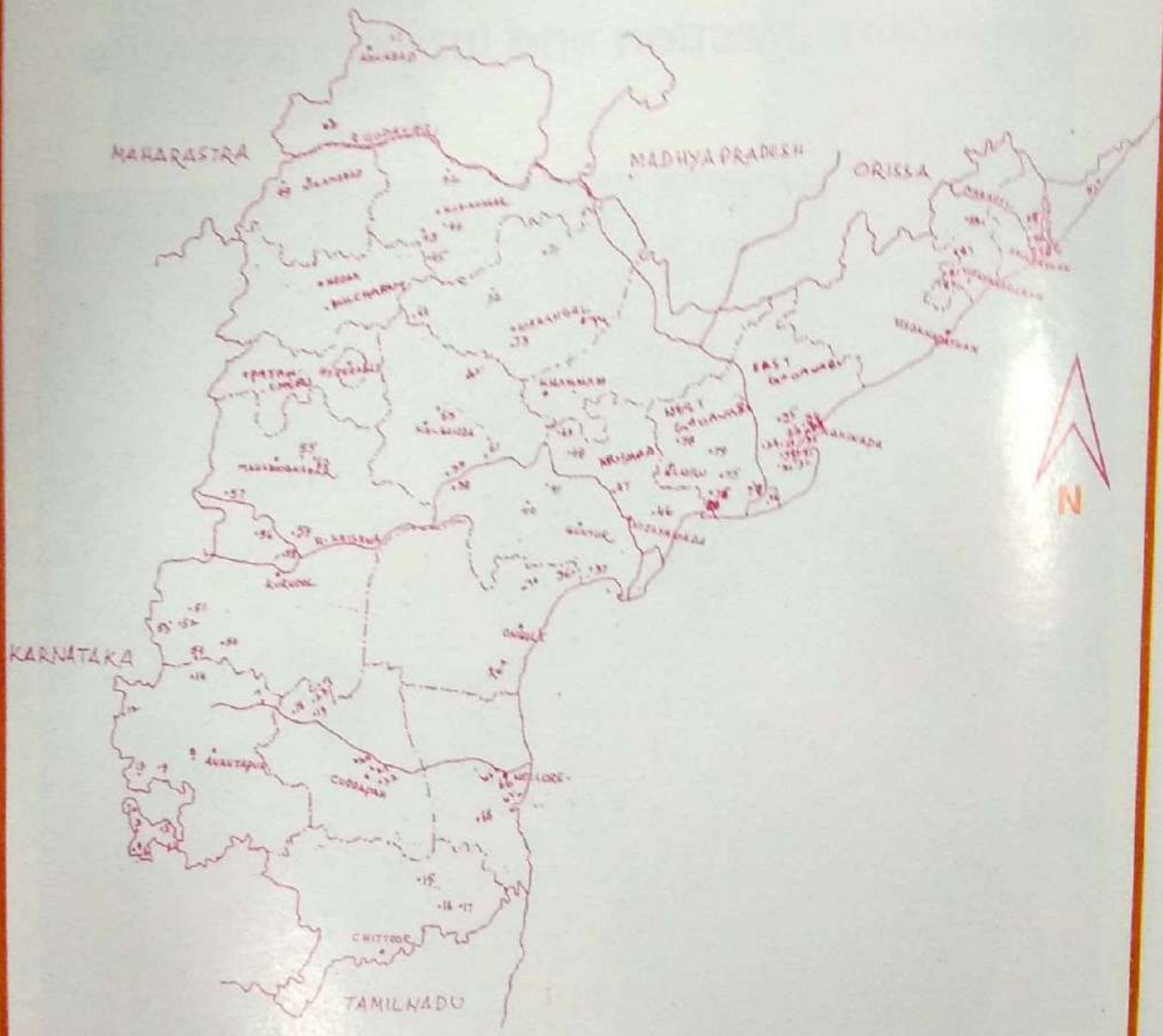
in reverent affection and intense gratitude



(Smt. G. Satyavatamma & Late Sri G. Appa Rao)

JAINA CENTRES IN ANDHRA

(list given at the end)



PREFACE

The State of Andhra Pradesh occupies a rather much insignificant position in the long history of Jainism, although, its impact was wide spread, like the other heretic faith (viz) Buddhism. Till recent past, the subject received much less attention at the hands of scholars and thus stands neglected. However, few attempts were made here and there dealing with various aspects of Jainism such as art, architecture, monastic orders, etc. My recent book, "Jainism in Andhra" published in 1994 is the only book, first of its kind, dealing with Jainism comprehensively.

In regard to the beginnings and role of Jainism, its advent can be placed in the Pre-Mauryan period i.e. 5th-4th C.B.C. if we are to rely on the information furnished by Haribhadriyavritti, Dharmamrita of Nayasena, Brihatkatha of Harisena and Kalpapradiya of Jinaprabhasuri. However it is unfortunate that there are no clear archaeological evidences, to support the above view. The recent discovery of a hitherto not known site, (viz) Vaddamanu in Guntur district, Guntupalli (West Godavari District), Malkonda (Prakasam district) and Kapparaopet (Karimnagar district) yield a number of structural remains, fragmentary pillars and sculptures, broken label inscriptions and other antiquities which fill this gap, and provide for the first time authenticated data to prove the influence of Jainism in Andhra since atleast pre-Christian times. Thus the evidence supplied by literature stands supported. Robert Sewell was the first to explore and report innumerable Jaina relics, distributed in various districts of Andhra. Today even those few centres remain neglected and uncared for, which call for preservation and conservation.

Jainism, unlike Buddhism, reached its pinnacle of glory, during medieval period, between 10th -12th C.A.D. with the support of the ruling elite and masses as well, including the rich mercantile community. In Jaina literature, sacred places of pilgrimage are referred to as tirthas or tirthakshetras which were sanctified by the holy Tirthankaras. The rapid growth in installing Jaina idols and increase in building basadis or shrines led to the increase in the rise of sacred centres.

Normally Jaina Centres fall into four categories. They are (1) Kalyana Kara Kshetra (centres associated with the Birth and other great events in the lives of the Tirthankaras) Siddhakshetras (where the saints attained Nirvana) Atisaya kshetras (associated with the performance of miracles) and Kalakshetras (centres adorned with monuments of architectural and sculptural embellishment). Since Jainism is not native to Andhra the first two (viz) Kalyanaka and Siddha varieties are absent. The remaining two find their presence in prolific numbers, of which only select few, known for their importance have been included in the present book. The information furnished in this book is based on personal observation and study. For each centre, a detailed account is provided dealing with all antiquities (viz) structural remains, literary references, inscriptional data and sculptures. This attempt, it is hoped, will provide a complete account about Jainism and its various aspects to the specialists as well as layreaders.

It is my pleasant duty to place on record my gratitude to Shri Nirmal Kumar Sethiji, the President, Shri Bharatvarshiya Digambar Jain (Tirtha - Samrakshini) Mahasabha, Lucknow (U.P.), Shri M.K. Jain, Chennai and its members for taking up my work for publication. I would like particularly to thank Shri Kishore Kumar Jain, Convenor for Andhra Pradesh-Mahasabha for his dynamite initiation taken for early publication of this book. Words are indeed inadequate to express my gratitude to the Venerable Patrons with whose munificence only, the present work has seen the light of the day. It is difficult to express in suitably my gratitude to Prof. Vrishabha Prasad Jain, Lucknow for suggesting a format for this work. I am also grateful to my colleague since long, Dr. N.S. Ramachandra Murthy, Deputy Director (Epy), Archaeology and Museums, Govt. of A.P., Hyderabad for sparing his valuable time in going through the script and offering valuable suggestions. My special thanks to Shri K. Murali Krishna, Proprietor, M/S. Planographers and also Shri N. Brahmaji Rao for printing this work so nicely and timely in a short time.

Hyderabad

(G. JAWAHARLAL)

Date: 20-10-2001



INTRODUCTION

The Jainas constitute to-day a small community in Andhra, but once they commanded great respect among the Andhras. Ancient relics, inscriptions and traditions indicate that many a ruling prince and eminent officials of the state came under the influence of Jainism and fervently followed the path of the Jaina religion. The presence of innumerable Jaina centres speaks abundantly for the powerful and pervasive influence of Jainism had at one time in those parts of Andhra. Even then this topic has not received adequate attention so far. The available books on Jainism do not adequately dwell upon its history in Andhra. In a word, this subject has not so far received the attention it deserves. Hence an attempt is made in this monograph to present in detail the history of the beginning, growth and decline of Jainism in Andhra from the earliest times.

DIFFUSION: Although literary sources are strong enough to show the early entry of Jainism in Andhra, no clear and conclusive evidence is available in respect of its diffusion. However, recent archaeological finds tend to support Jaina literature to some extent.

The entry of Jainism in Andhra can safely be placed in 6th Century B.C., if we rely on the text Haribhadriyavritti, which informs that Mahavira himself preached his faith in the region of Kalinga. It is said in the Avasyakasutra of Haribhadra, that the king of Kalinga at that time, was a friend of Mahavira's father, Siddhartha. Hence, Mahavira thought that his doctrine would be well received in Kalinga and hence decided to preach it there. We are further informed that Mahavira left Sravasti, visited Hathasisa; and then set out for Tosali where from he journeyed to Mosali. According to Scholars the territory of Kalinga comprised the northern districts of present Andhra Pradesh i.e., Srikakulam, Visaka and Vijayanagara districts. Further, Mosali of the Jain literature is identical with Maisolia of the classical writers situated between

the mouths of the rivers Godavari and Krishna i.e. present Machilipatnam in Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh. Though not supported by any recorded evidence, this traditional account suggests that the beginnings of Jainism in Andhra go back to the Pre-Mauryan period i.e. 4th Century B.C. and it might have entered the Andhra country through Kalinga. K.P. Jayaswal basing on 14th line in the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharvela, believes that Mahavira actually preached his Dharma from the Kumara Hill or Udayagiri hill in Kalinga (i.e. the present Orissa) where lie the magnificent Jain Caves of India.

The early spread of Jainism to south India is confirmed by Bhadrabahu-Chandragupta tradition according to which Bhadrabahu took his royal disciple Chandragupta to Sravana-Belgola in Karnataka State. This implies that the popularity and ascendancy of Jainism in South India must have made Bhadrabahu to lead his royal disciple to the South. The Ceylonese Chronicle Mahavamsa records that Jainism was in existence in Ceylone during the 4th Century B.C. Another tradition states that Samprathi, the grandson and successor of Asoka, was a great patron of Jainism and he established Jaina monasteries even in the non-Aryan countries like Andhra and Dramila.

According to another tradition Rshabha, the first Tirthankara had two sons, Bharatha and Bahubali. According to Jains it was from Bharata, the country came to be known as Bharatadesa or Bharatavarsha. We are further told that Bahubali established his kingdom with Podana as his capital. Podana has been rightly identified with Bodhan in the Nizamabad District. Even today Bodhan contains numerous Jaina vestiges. It is known from one of the Sravana-Belgola inscriptions that Bodhan contained a huge idol of Gomata measuring 525 bows high and it actually prompted Chamundaraya to erect such a colossal image of Gomatha at Sravana Belgola.

Jain literature contains many references to suggest the patronage of Jainism by the Satavahanas, the earliest rulers of Andhra. The Avasyaka Sutra refers to a king Salivahana of Paithan, as a devotee of Jinadeva. Jinaprabhasuri in his Kalpapradiya refers to a tradition which informs that in the Satavahana

court at Pratistana, flourished fifty two warriors who built 52 Jain temples named after their own names. Another tradition mentions that a certain Satavahan requested the Jain pontiff to postpone his discourse so that he could also attend it. Thus the traditional accounts make us believe that Jainism had its early footing in Andhra during the Satavahana period.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE: Until recently, the famous Hathigumpha inscription of Kharvela alone is considered as the first and earliest epigraphical evidence to support the early advent of Jainism in Andhra. We all know that Kharvela was a staunch Jaina and belonged to the Maha Meghavahana family, who boldly declared himself as 'bhikshuraja' (king of monks). Since then, the Mahameghavahana family is considered as a devout Jain family. The recently discovered Brahmi inscription of a Mahameghavahana king named Sada at Guntupalli in West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh, revolutionised our views about the nature of Guntupalli caves. Till recently Guntupalli is considered as a sacred Buddhist-kshetra. Now, with the discovery of Mahameghavahana Chief Sada's record at Guntupalli, it becomes clear that the Guntupalli caves were originally of the Jainas and not of the Buddhists as hitherto believed. The neighbouring villages of Guntupalli, (viz.) Asanagudem and Bayyanagudem contain several Jain vestiges. It must be remembered that Jainism enjoyed the privilege of being a popular faith even before Sada ruled in Andhra. Being a devout Jaina, Sada ordered his minister, Chula-Goma to erect a mantapa at Guntupalli only to express his reverence for Jainism. This fact takes the beginnings of Jainism to pre-Sada period i.e. few centuries before Christ.

Another interesting evidence is the thrilling discovery of Satavahana Coins encountered for the first time in front of a Jaina Cave on the hill called Munulagutta near the village Kapparaopeta in Karimnagar District. There, Dr. P.V.P. Sastry collected six coins of Chimukha Satavahana. Further, there are on the flat top of the hill under a cavern four rock-cut beds, resembling those in the Jaina caves noticed in the districts of Madurai and Tinnevely. This discovery of Satavahana coins in a Jain Cave supports the information supplied

by Jain literature that the early Satavahanas patronised Jainism.

The excavations conducted at Vaddamanu (32 K.Ms. away from Guntur) by the Birla Archaeological and Cultural Research Institute, Hyderabad yielded remains of a Jain-stupa and a number of lable inscriptions mentioning names of Jaina teachers and lay-disciples. The material unearthed there is datable from Mauryan to Vishnukundin times from 4th Century B.C. to 5th Century A.D. A total of 15 stone and 214 pot-sherds bearing lable inscriptions were recovered. Though fragmentary they are assignable between C.300 B.C. and 200 A.D. They record donations or gifts made to ganas, ganadharas, sanghas and viharas etc. Among them, one inscription engraved on a rim of rouletted ware deserves examination. It mentions a certain 'Samprati-Vihara-pa' datable to 1st Century A.D. This informs of a donation to the vihara named after Sampati, the grand son of Asoka who was known to have sent missionaries to the lands of Andhra and Dramila for re-establishing Jainism which suffered eclipse under Asoka. Sampati, being a disciple of Suhastin, is well known as Jain-Asoka. Further, a black and red-ware rim of a dish bearing inscription in 2nd Century A.D. Characters records the name 'Jina-Vihara' (Jina-na-vihara-paribhokosama (T.A.)) No doubt, this is the only direct and earliest evidence to prove the Jaina affiliations of the place. The recent discovery of three copper plate grants belonging to King Prithvi-Sri-Mularaja of 5th C.A.D., sheds fresh light on the existence of a Jain-Vihara at Vaddamanu. They mention that a King Mahameghavahana established Vardhamana Vihara, to which Prithvi-Sri-Mula gifted the village of Kaluvacheruvula. Probably, Dr. T.V.G. Sastri is right in stating that the name of the village, Vaddamanu was derived from the Jain-Vihara dedicated to Vardhamana Mahavira. If this surmise were to be correct the viharas here were originally Jain, later on appropriated by Buddhists.

Another early Jain site we encounter is Malkonda hill, near Kandukuru in Prakasam district which contains a cluster of caves. One of them bears an inscription engraved in Brahmi characters of 3rd Century B.C. on the brow



of a projecting boulder of the rock on the hill now called as Parvatiguha. It mentions a gift made by a certain Siri-Viri-Sethi, son of Nanda-Sethi of Aruvaha-kula, to the cavern. Perhaps the donor, Sethi made the cavern suitable for occupation by Jaina or Buddhist monks by way of smoothening the rough surface and carving stone-beds hewn out of the rock. So far no scholar has identified the dwellers of the cavern. But I take it as a Jain cave, for, several such caverns belonging to the early period have been found in the neighbouring Tamilnadu in Madurai, Ramnad and Tinnevely districts. Moreover, the donor here belonged to Aruvala-kula i.e. Aruva-caste. It is a common practice for the Telugu people to apply the term Arava to the Tamils even now. If this surmise were to be correct, record of Malkonda hill not only appears to be the earliest record of the Jains found so far in Andhra, but also the cave itself is the earliest Jain establishment.

Thus the above study lends support to Prof.P.B. Desai's contention that the beginnings of Jainism in Andhra may be ascribed to as early as 6th Century B.C. i.e. during the life time of Lord Mahavira himself. Further the recent archaeological finds also support the evidence of Jaina literature which takes back the advent of Jainism into Andhra to the post-Mauryan period. Further, it is not unlikely that the main tenet of Jainism, i.e. Ahimsa or non-violence was familiar to the people of Andhra and its influence was working in this area even before the gospel of Buddha reached them. Therefore, I am of the opinion that the early prevalence of Jainism in Andhra must have paved way for the propagation of Buddhism in this land soon after.

Though the advent of Jainism in Andhra is ascribable to the centuries before Christ, it seems to have passed through several vicissitudes. Literary sources (viz.) Dharmamrta of Nayasena and the Brhatkathakosa of Harisena lead us to believe that there was at first a conflict between Buddhism and Jainism. Contrary to these literary sources, the Jain legends and traditions inform that after the death of Asoka, a favourable turn took place in the fortunes of Jainism. His successor, Samprati re-established Jainism in the countries

of Andhra and Dramila, Patronised by the early Satavahanas afterwards. Further, the archaeological finds unearthed at Kapparaopet (Karimnagar Dist). Guntupalli (West Godavari District), Vaddamanu (Guntur District) and Malkonda (Prakasam District) are sufficient to show the prevalence of Jainism in Andhra long before the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi (i.e. 7th Century A.D.). The original tenets of undivided Jainism kept their pontiffs, aloof from the public. According to rules, the Jain monks were prohibited from staying in towns and mingle with the general public. As a result the early Jains preferred natural caves and caverns on the tops of the hills, which were difficult of approach, for their stay. Further, the rigid rules prescribed for sravakas and laity namely Mahavratas and anuvratas respectively were also responsible for not drawing the attention of the people. Dr. Hanumanta Rao appears to be right in holding that Jainism, for a long time, had an obscure existence, for which the severe austerity of Jainism and the rigid conservatism of the Jainacharyas were responsible. Jainism profounds a theory of absolute renunciation of the worldly possessions. This resigned life of Jains did not probably attract the people of the land for some time. Moreover, their rigid practice of nudity made them shun public life and hence people preferred Buddhism to Jainism in the early period. Though obscure, it did not lose hold over Andhra.

In course of time, a favourable turn took place in Jainism. In first century A.D. the original Jain Sangh (monastic order) split itself into two (viz.) Digambaras and the Svetambaras. As a result the rigidity of rules was relaxed. The Jainacharyas began to tolerate local practices. Further, the rise of the Yapaniyas encouraged the spread of Jainism. In true missionary zeal, the Yapaniyas introduced several innovations into Jainism and made compromises which attracted popular attention. In a word, what Mahayanists did for Buddhism for its wide spread, the Yapaniyas did for Jainism. They combined the principles and practices of Digambaras and Svetambaras. They propounded that even women and house-holders could attain Moksha. They introduced the cult of yakshi and adopted Tantrism. In this way, they took Jainism very close to the masses. Soon after, the Jains began accepting land

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and monetary gifts from the kings as well as lay-worshippers, to build basadi and alm-houses which resulted in the increase in the popularity of Jainism. These radical changes in Jaina church almost synchronised with the beginnings of the decline of Buddhism in Andhra. Hence, it may not be wrong to assume that, following the discomfiture of Buddhism, Jainism provided an alternative to Brahmanical Hinduism.

EARLY EXPONENTS:

Generally the spread of any religion depended mostly on its preceptors and propagandists, for, they knew the pulse of the people. This was proved to be correct in the case of Jainism, particularly in Andhra, for, during its long history, Jainism in Andhra produced a wide galaxy of authors and teachers. The Jain preceptors and poets rendered yeoman service to the propagation of their creed. They took upon themselves the missionary work of expounding the tenets of the Jain creed through miracles practised by Tirthankaras. Filled with the zeal of propagandists, they were out to show the supremacy of Jainism, by denouncing and ridiculing other faiths. The people of early Andhra, however, must have considered themselves fortunate, on account of the presence, in their midst of eminent exponents of the Jaina law who were ardent apostles of truth and non-violence.

Epigraphic and literary sources inform that a certain Kundakunda, the earliest exponent lived on the hill near Konakondla in the Anantapur District. A damaged inscription from Konakondla states that the place was renowned all over the world as the birth-place of the eminent teacher Kundakunda, the Chief of Mulasangha. His life and activities form an important landmark in the history of Jainism particularly in Andhra. He founded the Balatkara-gana and Saraswati gachha and he was the fourth in descent from Bhadrabahu. He is said to have composed 84 pahudas and travelled all over the country. Now scholars agree in placing Kundakunda during the early part of the 1st Century A.D. Being the author of several canonical works, he must have had a large following. His tours and philosophical disputations infused new blood and vigour into Jainism. An inscription from Sravana Belgola also informs that Kundakunda was responsible for establishing the superiority of Jaina faith all over

Bharatakhanda. No wonder his name acquired popular religious significance and as such, many traced their spiritual lineage from Kundakunda which was then looked upon as a proud privilege by 'Jain Monks'.

Simhanandin is another great figure in the early history of Jainism in Andhra. He became the leader of Saraswatigacchha founded by Kundakunda. He is known to have played a key-role in contemporary politics and his name is connected with the foundation of the Western Ganga kingdom of Talkhad. According to tradition Simhanandin gave refuge to two forlorn Ikshavaku princes, by name Dadiga and Madhava at Perur in Cuddapah District and trained them in the art of state craft. Afterwards Simhanandin made them cut a rock that obstructed their way to royalty and in establishing the Ganga Kingdom. The plausible explanation for the figurative expression 'cutting of the rock' by the princes could be the shift in their religious affiliation (i.e. Buddhism) to locally prevalent Jainism in order to win over the people to their side. This interesting account does not find place in any contemporary records; but several later records and Jain works specifically mention this story. Now scholars are of the opinion that Simhanandin flourished between Circa 295-350 and founded the Ganga Kingdom in A.D. 350. Thus we understand that Simhanandin was the creator of the Ganga Kingdom and a leader of Mulasangha and Saraswati gaccha. If Kundakunda was responsible for gaining popularity among the people, to Simhanandin should go the credit of securing royal patronage to Jainism at the hands of the Ganga monarchs. It also implies that the Jaina-charyas renounced their secluded life and became King-makers by participating in local politics. Since then Jainism enjoyed continuous royal as well as public support from 7th Century onwards. Epigraphical sources reveal that the rulers of Andhra, viz. the Early Chalukyas, the Rashtrakutas, later Chalukyas and their subordinates patronised Jainism.

