

Gems from past issues:

Meeting of Minds (April 1990 issue):

TEERTHANKAR MAHAVEER'S TEERTH (Religious Order) - II

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DCJ: Bhagwaan Mahaveer's interpreters (GANADHARS) systematically organized the scriptural knowledge of the Jain religion and composed the Jain scriptures. Will you please describe the classification of the Jain scriptures?

PKS: Traditionally, the scriptures composed by the interpreters are classified into two broad categories: The main volumes (12 ANGA) and the prior volumes (14 PURVAS).¹ The Sanskrit names of the twelve main volumes and their contents are:

1. AACHAARAANG describes the conduct of a monk - the penance of Mahaveer. Its language indicates that it is the oldest scripture.
2. SUTRA-KRITAANG describes the principle of nonviolence and Jain concept of universe. It also contains the refutation of certain other schools of thought.
3. STHAANAANG consists of the discussion of the basic substances of the universe such as living beings (JEEVS) in a schematic manner.
4. SAMAVAAYAANG provides the comprehensive knowledge of the universal constituents and concepts in the light of substance (DRAVYA), environment (KSHETRA), time (KAAL) and experience (BHAAV).²
5. VYAAKHYA-PRAJNYAPTI is the largest of the main volumes and contains 36,000 questions and answers about soul, matter, etc. It is also called BHAGVATI SUTRA.³ It should be noted that in BHAGVATI SUTRA, Bhagwaan Mahaveer responds to each question with the statement "subject to qualification" in view of the Jain principle of relativism (SYAADAVAAD).

¹ Some scholars believe that later the prior volumes (PURVAS) were incorporated in the twelfth main volume (ANGA).

² TEERTHANKAR MAHAVEER AUR UNKI ACHARYA PARAMPARA by Dr. Nemi Chandra Shastri Jyotishacharya, published by Digambar Jain Vidvat Parishad, volume 2, page 11.

³ The Jaina Path Of Purification by Padmanabh S. Jaini, published by Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1979, page 318.

6. JNAATRI-DHARMA-KATHA contains stories illustrating the principles and teachings of the Jain religion.
7. UPAASAKA-DHYAYANAANG describes the code of conduct of Jain householders (SHRAAVAKS) and contains the stories of ten householders who religiously followed Bhagwaan Mahaveer's teachings.
8. ANTAH-KRIT-DHASHAANG contains the stories of ten monks who became omniscient and attained salvation by destroying their karma.
9. ANUTTAROPAPAADIK describes the life of ten monks who attained the status of heavenly beings called ANUTTAR.
10. PRASHNA-VYAAKARANAANG contains questions, answers and stories regarding the five great vows (MAHAVRATS) and sins.
11. VIPAAKA-SUTRAANG explains the consequences of good and bad karma through several stories.
12. DRISHTI-VAADAANG consists of five segments. Its most important segment constitutes the prior volumes (14 PURVAS).⁴ It is believed that these fourteen volumes are of great antiquity going back to the time of Bhagwaan Parshvanath. For this reason, these are called the prior volumes. Bhagwaan Mahaveer's interpreters reorganized this valuable knowledge and incorporated much of it in the main volumes (ANGAS).⁵

CPS: Do all Jains accept the twelve main volumes (ANGAS) and the fourteen prior volumes (PURVAS)?

DCJ: Yes, all Jains, Digambers as well as Shwetambers, agree that Bhagwaan Mahaveer's interpreters composed the twelve main volumes and the fourteen prior volumes.

PKS: It is seen that the subject matter of the above mentioned scriptures overlaps. Is there any other classification of these scriptures?

CPS: All Jain scriptures, including the latter ones, have been classified into the following four areas depending on their contents:⁶

⁴ The Sanskrit names of the fourteen prior volumes are: UTPAADA-PURVA, AGRAAYANIYA, VEERYAANU-PRAVAAD, ASTINAATI-PRAVAAD, JNAANA-PRAVAAD, SATYA-PRAVAAD, ATMA-PRAVAAD, KARMA-PRAVAAD, PRATYAAKHYAAN-NAAMDHYEYA, VIDYAANU-VAAD, KALYAAN-NAAMDHEYA, PRAANAAVAAYA, KRIYA-VISHAAL, LOKABINDU-SAAR.

⁵ The Jaina Path Of Purification, page 49.

⁶ Agam Anuyog Trust (Sthanakvasi Society), Ahmedabad, India is publishing the thirty-two scriptures (AGAMS) classified in these categories under the direction of Pandit Dalsukhbhai Malvania. It does call the fourth category KARANA-ANUYOGA as GANITA-ANUYOGA (mathematical expositions).

- I. Primary expositions (PRATHAMA-ANUYOGA) consist of life stories of important religious personalities and moral stories.
- II. The expositions of aspects of reality (DRAVYA-ANUYOGA) contain discussions of soul, karma, the principle of multiplicity of viewpoints and the like.
- III. The expositions of ethical code (CHARANA-ANUYOGA) describe the code of conduct of monks, nuns and householders.
- IV. The expositions of physical universe (KARANA-ANUYOGA) contain such sciences as ancient cosmology and astronomy.

DCJ: Are all these original scriptures available today?

PKS: As we discussed earlier,⁷ these scriptures were memorized by scholarly monks (SHRUT KEVALIS). Thus the original scriptures were transmitted orally for about 150 years. About 170 years after Bhagwaan Mahaveer's NIRVANA, Acharya Bhadrabahu Swami became the head of the Jain order (SANGH). He is recognized by all Jains, Digambars as well as Shwetambars. During his time, Emperor Chandra Gupta Maurya ruled over India. At that time, a severe famine occurred for twelve years. These are historical facts. Bhadrabahu Swami realized that during those hard times it would be very difficult for the Jain monks to follow their code of conduct (such as daily recitation and study of scriptures, etc.). Therefore, he along with his twelve thousand disciples traveled south and settled there so that they could strictly adhere to their code of conduct. A number of monks stayed in north. They were led by Acharya Sthulibhadra who relaxed some of the rules so that they could survive during the famine.

DCJ: How was the scriptural knowledge affected by these events?

CPS: The last person to know all fourteen prior volumes (PURVAS) (and all twelve main volumes, ANGAS) was Acharya Bhadrabahu (3rd century B.C.). During the famine, portions of fourteen prior texts were forgotten. In fact, Jainism passed through a crisis. Acharya Sthulibhadra realized that much of the scriptural knowledge would be lost if steps are not taken to restore the scriptures. With this end in view, he organized a council of all Jains at Patliputra (Patna in Bihar) to pool together all the remaining knowledge and to restore the scriptural texts. Bhadrabahu was on his way to Nepal and did not come to Patliputra but instructed selected monks who were able to

⁷ TEERTHANKAR MAHAVEER'S TEERTH in Jain Study Circular, Vol. 10, October 1989, page 12, (reproduced in this issue).

comprehend the first eleven main volumes (ANGAS). Although, the twelfth main volume (DRISHTIVAADAANG) and the fourteen prior volumes (PURVAS) were lost in their original form, portions of their contents exist even today in other scriptures. The original as well as subsidiary (ANGABAAHYA) scriptures were put in written form sometime after the Patliputra Council but before the second council, which was held at Mathura in the fourth century A.D. under the guidance of Acharya Skandila. Another council was held concurrently at Valabhi under the supervision of Acharya Nagarajuna. Obviously, there were some differences between the versions of the scriptures prepared at the two councils. These differences were reconciled at the third and last council held at Valabhi that took place about 980 years after Mahaveer's NIRVANA. "Devardhigani Kshamaashraman compiled the final revised versions of the existing scriptures and had it committed to writing in its entirety"⁸ at that council.

PKS: Do all Jains consider these scriptures as "original" ones composed by Bhagwaan Mahaveer's interpreters?

CPS: It is evident from the above discussion that the Jain scriptures recompiled by Devardhigani Kshamaashraman are as close to the original ones as one can expect under the circumstances. The Digambar Jains do not accept them as "original" while the Shwetambar Jains do, although both groups agree that the scriptures have gone through certain revisions and portions of them have been lost. In view of this fact, all Jains should study the scriptures belonging to both the Digambar and Shwetambar traditions.

DCJ: Is this the complete story of the Jain scriptures?

PKS: In addition to the scriptures composed by the interpreters, there are many scriptures composed by various learned Acharyas. These are called subsidiary (ANGABAAHYA) scriptures. The subsidiary scriptures are divided into five categories: Secondary volumes (12 UPAANGS), disciplinary volumes (6 CHEDA-SUTRAS), basic volumes (4 MOOL-SUTRAS), miscellaneous volumes (10 PRAKEERNAKA-SUTRAS) and supplementary volumes (2 CHOOLIKA-SUTRAS). Thus there are 34 subsidiary scriptures. Some well-known subsidiary scriptures are:

(a) DASHA-SHRUT-SKANDH-SUTRA that contains ten chapters. One of the ten chapters of this scripture is KALPASUTRA, which is studied during the celebration of spiritual awareness (PARYUSHAN).

⁸ The Jaina Path Of Purification, page 52.

- (b) AAVASHYAK-SUTRA, which describes the six essential daily, practices, namely, equanimity (SAAMMAYIK), worship of TEERTHANKARS (CHATURVINSHATI STAV), reverence (VANDANA), introspection (PRATIKRAMAN), renunciation of body (KAAYOTSARG) and resolution (PRATYAAKHYAAN).⁹
- (c) DASHA-VAIKAALIK-SUTRA composed by Arya Shyambhav (around 429 B.C.) describes the conduct of monks.
- (d) UTTARA-DHYAYAN-SUTRA contains teachings of Jain religion. It also has stories, dialogues and examples regarding the Jain teachings.

CPS: What are some of the oldest Jain scriptures according to modern scholars?

DCJ: There is obviously some difference of opinion on this point among the various scholars. Dr. Bool Chand Jain writes:¹⁰ Jacobi is of the opinion that the first book (SHRUT SKANDH) of the AACHAARAANG-SUTRA and the SUTRAKRATANG-SUTRA may be reckoned among the most ancient parts of the Jain scriptures. The date of these SUTRAS would be the fourth century B.C. The second book of AACHAARAANG which obviously is a later composition and which does not even fit in with the scheme of writing adopted in the first book, refers possibility, in point of time, to the first part of the third century B.C. when the whole canon was brought under the patriarchate of Sthulibhadra. According to K. C. Lalwani, DASHA-VAIKAALIK-SUTRA was composed around 429 B.C.¹¹ Thus it is one of the oldest scriptures.

CPS: What about the Digambar scriptures?

DCJ: The Digambar Jains mention fourteen subsidiary scriptures. These include DASHAVAIKAALIK SUTRA and UTTARAADHYAYAN SUTRA.¹² According to Digambar sources, when the original 12 main scriptures and 14 prior scriptures were forgotten, Acharyas composed scriptures based on the existing knowledge of the principles of Jainism. Acharya Gunadhar (about 1st century A.D.) composed KASAAYAPAAHUD. It has 233 couplets, each couplet being an aphorism. It presents the theory of karma in relation to the binding

⁹ Repentance by Falgunee Parekh, Jain Study Circular, Vol. 9, July 1988, page 15.

¹⁰ Lord Mahavira by Dr. Bool Chand Jain, published by Jan Cultural Research Society, Parshvanath Vidyashram, Banaras, 1948.

¹¹ Arya Shyambhava's DASAVAIKALOKA SUTRA, translated by Kastur Chand Lalwani, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1973, page vi.

¹² TEERTHANKAR MAHAVEER AUR UNKI ACHARYA PARAMPARA by Dr. Nemi Chandra Shastri Jyotishacharya, published by Digambar Jain Vidvat Parishad, volume 2, page 14.

of deluding karma. Acharya Veersen and Acharya Jinasen II (about 8th century A.D.) composed its exposition (JAYADHAVALA TIKA). Veersen could write about a third of the exposition (equivalent to about 20,000 couplets) and Jinasen wrote the remaining portion. It has been published in 15 volumes. Another extensive work on the theory of karma is SHATKHANDAAGAM composed by Acharya Pushpadant and Acharya Bhootbali who were the disciples of Acharya Dharsen (about 1st century A.D.). It consists of six sections: JEEVATTHAN, KHUDDA BANDH, BANDH SAAMITTA VICHAYA, VEYANA, VAGGANA and MAHABANDH. Acharya Veersen has composed its exposition (DHAVALA TIKA), which is equivalent to 72,000 couplets. The first five sections of SHATKHANDAAGAM have been published in 16 volumes while the last section MAHABANDH has been published in 7 volumes.

PKS: What about the works of some other acharyas?

CPS: Acharya Kundkund (about 2nd century A. D.) wrote eight PAAHUD texts on perception, knowledge, conduct, liberation, etc. He also wrote PANCHASTIKAYA-SAAR (describing the six substances that comprise the universe), SAMAYA-SAAR (containing the basic concepts regarding soul and other substances) and NIYAM-SAAR (providing the code of conduct). Written in 2nd century A. D., MOOLAACHAAR of Acharya Vattker is an important work containing the essence of AACHAARAANG SUTRA. Acharya Nemi Chandra Siddhanta Chakravarti (about tenth century A.D.) wrote GOMMAATSAAR JEEVAKAAND and KARMAKAAND that contain the Jain concepts of soul and the theory of karma. These are based on the scriptures SHATKHANDAAGAM.

DCJ: Will you please describe the scriptures, which are recognized as authentic by both Digambaras and Shwetambaras?

CPS: Acharya Umasvati (about 2nd century A.D.) wrote TATTVAARTH SUTRA. It is a systematic and comprehensive presentation of the principles of Jainism. It describes the seven aspects of reality, the theory of karma and the path to liberation. Acharya Siddhasen Divakar (5th century A.D.) wrote NYAAYA AVATAAR and SANMATITARK, two important works on Jain logic.

PKS: We have presented a brief description of the Jain scriptures. Nevertheless, it shows that the Jain literature is quite extensive. In some cases, scholars have disagreement regarding the chronology and names of authors of some texts. Some minor variations in the facts and interpretation are natural. In spite of this, all scholars agree that the doctrine of Jainism exhibits a remarkable unity. Dr. Padmanabh Jaini, in Jaina Path Of Purification, writes that the two

Jain groups have exhibited "their remarkable unwillingness to depart from their basic doctrines and practices". He writes, "As for arguments between acharyas over minor philosophical issues, these have traditionally been accommodated with the spirit of SYAADVAAD (doctrine of relativism)." He continues, "The basic Jaina doctrines thus show an extraordinary uniformity through the centuries; indeed it is possible to consider them as a coherent whole." In sum, it can be said that all scriptures, Digambar as well as Shwetambar, present the same Jain doctrines.

In modern times, especially in North America, we Jains are educated and professionals. Many of the Jain scriptures are available in English. If we can master medicine, engineering, business, etc., we can certainly understand our scriptures. Jainism does not have any concepts that do not conform to common sense. Thus the Jain scriptures are easily understood. The problem is of developing interest. We should spend some time in self-study (SWAADHYAAYA) of our scriptures. It is an essential part of the practice of Jainism.