



## Footprints of Jainism in Laos, Vietnam and Sri Lanka.

### KEYWORDS

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#### Necessity of religion -

Scholars have described Laos, Vietnam and Sri Lanka as characterized by two realities: religiosity and poverty. The majority of people in the region adhere to or are deeply influenced by, the great religious traditions of Asia, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Taoism as well as a variety of diverse popular traditions. In short, the overwhelming majority of the poor lives-in a rich religio-cultural context. Given the essence of diversity in Asia, it is clear that there will be no easy solution to the situation of injustice, poverty indignity or oppression. It is also the case that diverse religions understand the root cause of human operation in different ways. Jainism, in accordance with the teachings of the lord Rishabhadeva to Mahaveera, names human sufferings as the chief problem to be overcome through the path of enlightenment.<sup>3</sup> Lord Buddha did also on same lines.<sup>3</sup> Hinduism and the other faith, traditions too have distinct approaches to solving the perennial problems of the society.

**The present population** in this trio (Laos, Vietnam & Sri Lanka) have different religions. The main of these religions can be stated as follows -

- Hinduism - 5 + 10% population in trio countries.
- Buddhism- 60 + 75% population in trio countries.
- Other - 35 + 15% population in trio countries.

#### Hinduism -

The fusion of Brahmanism and early beliefs of the vedic traditions gave birth to Hinduism. Its concepts were probably formulated at the beginning of the Christian era. Hinduism is the dominant religion in India today<sup>1</sup> followers believe in a universal world spirit called Brahma and Worship. It has many deities.

#### Buddhism -

This religion began in India as a reform movement against Hinduism. By the second centuries of the Christian era two strains of Buddhism were defined - Mahayana and Hinayana or Theravada. Both of these were transmitted to south East Asia. Mahayana Buddhism, known as Greater vehicle, may have reached by way of the kingdom of Srivijaya (Indonesia) and Funan where it was practiced in the century. The Theravada strain spread gradually from Sri Lanka to main land southeast Asia by way of Burma and Thailand between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries and is practiced in those areas today.<sup>4</sup> Hinayana Buddhism, known as the Lesser vehicle, adhered to conservative principles serving the original doctrines and expressed them through the Pali Language.

By the seventh century tenth from animism, Brahmanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and related cults were synthesized to inhabitants of the ideological and aesthetic ideals of the inhabitants of the mainland. The coexistence of these different principles was a unique aspect of religious practice. One belief or another always dominated but the supremacy varied and it was rarely at the exclusion of others, Buddhism, for examples was influenced by Hindu cult practices and also absorbed image of animistic spirits into its doctrines. While Buddhism rejected some of the doctrines of Brahmanism it borrowed a few of the Hindu deities.

#### Jainism -

All previous scholars grouped the principles or cultural activities of these trio countries under Hinduism or brahmanical guise. Recent researcher from these lands try to establish that what is called animism is to be divided. The group of soul worshiper have a ultimate goal of Nirvan as found in Jain literature. The original habitats might be Jain and immigrant formed Brahmanism.

In Chin'es literature, we find that neighboring territory of China has dense forest and people living in these territory were naked, uncivilized etc. In Indian literature these territories are "suvarn deep." So the trade through road, sea is contented from prehistoric time. The Jain literature states that the Champapur was the capital city of Champa region. The 12<sup>th</sup> tirthankar Vasupujyaji was born at Champapur. King Vasu and queen Jayadevi's son born on 14<sup>th</sup> day of vadi (krishana) phalgun (March-April). His fine great events (Panch Kalyanak) were celebrated at Champapur. He avoided to marry and left the throne in search of enlightenment. He got sixty six (66) main disciples (Gandhar) 2.15 lakhs male 4.36 lakh female followers.<sup>2</sup>

The existing Bhagalpur city in India is established as Champapur from 10<sup>th</sup> century probably. *But the description of the city in Nayadhanmakaha*, a Jain conical book states that the *Champapur* or *Champanagari* has vast costal area and there was<sup>1</sup> big trade link with foreign countries by sea route. This description is matching with existing Vietnam. The northern limit of Champa was the prot of *Vinaya* now Binh and southern limit was the port town of *Panduranga* now phan-rang. Champa was touching the frontier of Funan, Jain literature name *kashyapdwipa*. According of Chin's meaning of Phunan is sea. In the begging Champa state had four independent states all situated on the coast and these are *Vinaya* (modern vinh or Binh) *Indrapura* (modern flue) *Vijaya* (modern pinh-Dinh) and *Panduranga* (modern phan-rang). The modern city Ho-Shi-minh city or Saigaon was ancient town of *Hastinanagar*. It was in *kashyapdwipa*.<sup>7</sup>

*My-Son* served as the religious and cultural centre of Cham civilization (which may basically a Jain civilization) in the central Vietnam as well as the burial place of the Kings and religious leaders. There are about 72 temples and tombs at *My-Son* which are dated to the period between 4<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. This is longest *in-habituated* archeological site in Indo-china. But majority of its architecture was destroyed by U.S. carpet bombing during single week of Vietnam War.

### 3) Nation wise search –

Coming to nation wise detailing we will precede to Laos. The Laos is land locked country bounded by Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar and China. India and Laos shared a common cultural heritage over the centuries.<sup>3</sup> Lao produced significant Hindu and Buddhist temples. These temples have deities from both the religions i.e. Hindu and Buddhist. *Vat Vishannu*, *Vat Mono-Ram* etc. at *Luang-Prabang* has many Hindu idols. *Vat Phu* complex is a holy place where cult of Shiva in form of Linga flourished. Besides Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism were also developed.

Since trade was the most important factor for immigrants. The immigrants from Indian trader community spread Jainism not in strict dogmas but mingled with local community keeping some distance with locals. They worshiped Tirthankar's images which are alike Buddha. As the trader subsided by Hindu kings, Jainism vanished from the land. But the principles preached by Jain monks remains in the land. There are several points to be studied for ethnographical consideration. Linkages for art and architecture, History, Social performance such as festivals and Textile etc to be reviewed.

### Sri Lanka -

It is republic and a unitary state governed by presidential system. Sri Lanka officially the Democratic Socialists republic of Sri Lanka is a country of the southern coast of Indian subcontinent, known till 1972 A.D. as Ceylon. It is an island surrounded by India Ocean. It is located in the path of major sea route not in modern time but from ancient time as described in various literatures from India, China and Europe.

Sri Lanka has been centre of Jain religion and culture before entrance of Buddhism in the land i.e. before second century A.D. According to Jain literature there were temple of Jain Tirthankaras built by Rawana and others up to the rule of king Vattagamini alias Dattagamini (3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D). The king demolished all temples and massacred Jain people at his time of celebration of victory. The Sinhalese community forms the majority of the population. The Tamilian is second ethnic group in the island. The country has one of the longest and colourful histories of over 3000 years, in the world. The rich culture can be attributed to its ethnic diversity.

The Adam's peak is a famous mountain in lower Sri Lanka. According the measurements made by leiu. Malcom (the first European to who ascended the peak) its area is 74x24 feet at top. It is the object of worship of the natives.<sup>1</sup> Natives called it as Siripad, the sacred impression in stone. The Jain literature in India described it as foot prints of Tirthankar Adinath or Rishabha. This is first Tirthankar of time series. The Buddhist literature quotes this peak as "Sumant Kuta." The Hindu literature quotes this peak as Shreepad i.e. foot prints of Lord Vishnu. In short name of this peak is changed as per will and wish of the con-

queror of the land. It is said that when Jain lost the power, Hindu king named this peak – Shreepad and when Buddhist came to power they renamed as Sumant Kut. When British came to power they renamed as Adam's peak. Now the person of the land they may be Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian celebrates various festivals of their deities from fullmoon day of December to May every year with peaceful manner. It is the place of unity of human being. He bestows his head with diversity of religion in mind.

### Conclusion –

These three countries are considered here as representative of South-East-Asian Countries. The South East Asia is term which came into general use during the Second World War. It includes the mainland states of Burma (Myanmar) Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaya together with two great island groups comprised in the Republic of Indonesia and Philippines. However the Philippines do not come directly into South-East, Asian history until their conquest by Spain late in the sixteenth century.<sup>5</sup> The research carried out before independence of these nation by French and British Pundit contains the term "farther India." "Greater India" or "Little China." These terms under estimate the local culture and importance of the indigenous ones of the area. The new independent researchers have their own strongly-marked individuality. The art and architecture which blossomed so gorgeously in Angkor (Cambodia) Pagan (Myanmar) Borobudur (Java) and the old Kingdom of *Champa* are strangely different from that of Hindu or Buddhist of present India. For the real key to its understanding one has to study the indigenous cultures of the peoples who produced it.<sup>4</sup>

When South-East, Asia felt the earliest impact of Indian culture, it possessed a civilization of its own. There was i) Cultivation, ii) Domestication of the ox, cow & buffalo, iii) The importance of woman and of descent by the natural line, iv) animism, v) The worship of God of the soil, etc in South-East Asia before the entrance of Hindu Kingdom. In Jain conical books, though they written in 1<sup>st</sup> Century we find that all above points are preached by Tirthankar Rishabhadev for entire Bharatkshetra. More research is a dire need of the time for investigating the foot prints of Jainism.

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