

Humcha – A Jaina Centre of Karnataka (India)



History

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ABSTRACT

Karnataka ruled by many dynasties and it has a rich cultural heritage in India. These dynasties contributed to enrich the history and culture of the region. The ruling dynasties and their feudatories were encouraged literature and religion. The Kannada literature was flourished by the Jaina saints and scholars. Jainism flourished from the period of 4th century A.D., by the Ganga rulers. The Santaras, the feudatories ruled from seventh century A.D. Humcha in Shimoga district was their capital city and was one of the great Jaina centres of Karnataka and was the original home of the Bhattaraka order. The Santara chiefs were the staunch followers of Jainism and made various grants for the promotion of the Jaina faith and built many Basadis. The present paper throws light on Humcha and the growth of Jainism.

Introduction

Karnataka state in the Indian sub continent is the region of rich cultural heritage. Shimoga is one of the most prosperous districts of Karnataka state. The district is an area of lavish natural scenic splendours, lush greeneries, alluring dense forests with exciting flora and fauna, captivating hills, a proud history of achievements, many magnificent monuments, artistic and cultural heritage of a high order. The district has many historical centres of tourist importance. The region is a place of different cultures, languages and religions. From the ancient period the Jainism patronised by many ruling dynasties and many Jaina *Basadis* are built in the different places. Humcha is a small village in Hosanagara *Taluq* situated at a distance of 60 Kms. south-west of Shimoga city. In many inscriptions, Humcha called as Hombucha, Pomburchcha etc. The place is played a vital role in the development of Jaina philosophy and doctrine from the 6-7th century A.D and it was a great Jaina centre of Karnataka. The present paper is based on epigraphical sources and throws light on how Humcha became a popular centre of Jainism.

History in Brief

Humcha was the capital of the Santaras, a feudatory family of many ruling dynasties in Karnataka. It is situated at the foot of the Bilesvar Hill, which indicates the site of a large town. The Hombucha means a golden bit. According to mythological story attached to it, Jinadatta, a founder of the dynasty, was asked by goddess Padmavati to touch her image with the bit of horse, which on his doing so was instantly changed in to gold and brought him good fortune. Hence he established his own ruling dynasty.

The district is ruled by many dynasties from the days of the Mouryas. It was the home of the Satavahanas and the Kadambas of Banavasi. The Chalukyas of Badami and Kalyana, the Rashtrakutas, the Hoysalas, the Yadavas of Devagiri and the Vijayanagara dynasties and many chieftains were ruled the area from the different places (Venkatesh, 2000, p, 86).

The Santaras, an important feudatory line came in to existence in the 7th century A.D., they had Potti- Pomburchchapura (modern Humcha) as their capital city. Then it was called as Santalige-1000. Its founder was Jinadatta of Ugravamsa. It is said that he came from Mathura with the image of a Jaina goddess Padmavati. Later he overcome a local chief and extended his authority from Govardhanagiri in Sagar to Kalasa in Chikmagalore. An inscription dated 1077 A.D. refers that Nanni-Santara is highly honoured by the Chalukyan king who came half way to meet him and placed him at his side on his throne (E.C.VII, Nr. 36). Their capital city became a centre of Jainism, where they erected several *Basadis*. *Traailokyamalla* Vira Santara and Bhujabala Santara are mentioned as having freed the principality from trouble some claimants in 1062 and 1066 A.D. They appear to have been entrusted, for some time, with governance of a wide area of Banavasi and Nolambavadi tracts. From three elaborate epigraphs, all assigned to 1077 A.D. refer that Chittaladevi, grand daughter of Rakkasa-Ganga and was married to Kaduvetti

(a Pallava Chief), erected *Basadis* at Humcha, the most important among them is *Panchakuta Basadi* known as *Uruvi-Tilakam* (glory of the world). The Santara principality is described as a land of plenty. In about 1209 A.D., the Santaras transferred their capital city from Humcha to Kalasa in Chikmagalore and later (in the 14th century) Karkala in South Kanara, when they called themselves as Veerapandayas and Bhairarasas. The Santaras of Humcha were the staunch followers of the Jainism. Here we can be had some details on their grants and endowments made for the promotion of Jainism.

Jainism in Humcha

Many facts regarding the advent of Jainism in Karnataka, its widespread growth, the patronage it received from the ruling dynasties, its popularity, its contribution to the development of Kannada literature etc., are important factors to know the growth of Jainism. According to the statement of Haribhadra, the region of Malkhed was inhabited by the followers of the Svetambara doctrine when Padalitacharya, an eminent divine of North India, visited the place in about first century A.D. (Mys. Archg. Report, 1923, p, 10-11). We need not discredit this testimony on the ground that it comes from a literary source of later period. This price of information is sufficiently supported by the authority of an early epigraph. An epigraph of the reign of Kadamba Mrigesavarma refers to the grants made to the Jaina gods and the Jaina recluses (Desai, p, 99; I.A, VII, p, 37). Thus from the early days Jainism patronised by the many ruling dynasties like the Kadambas, the Gangas of Talkad, the Rashtrakutas, the Hoysalas of Dorasamudra etc. Many of the feudatories of the ruling dynasties were also granted freedom to follow their own religions. Like the Santaras, feudatories of the many dynasties were also freed to follow their own religion Jainism.

Humcha became a centre of Jainism from the centuries and it is well known for Jaina *Matha*, which built by the monks. The *Matha* has several *Basadis* like Parshvanatha, Padmavati, *Mathada Basadi*, *Bogara Basadi* and *Jattingaraya Basadi*. These temples are headed by pontiffs and important among them are Acharya Samanta Bhadra, Vidyanandi, Vishalakirti and Nemichandra.

Truth, goodness, beauty, non-violence and happiness are the ultimate values and objectives of life and which are the important factors of all religions including Jainism. Jainism is the religion of equality, fraternity and universal peace. Therefore it might be encouraged by the ruling classes of ancient India. As that the Santaras, feudatories of many ruling dynasties encouraged the religion and extended their royal patronage, which enjoyed as the state religion. Protection of Dharma was considered to be the foremost duty of the king. The kings, chiefs, officials and rich individuals were pious by nature and charitable disposition. An inscription dated 892 A.D. refers that the ruler Tolapurusha Vikramaditya Santara, the Santara Chief erected Kalla Basadi at Humcha and made some grants to it (E.C. XV, No. 108, p, 172a). The most renowned king of the Santaras, Vira Santaradeva, and ruling Santalige-1000, during his reign Jainism reached its zenith. An inscription dated 1062 A.D., refers the chief Vira Santa-

radeva, Nokkayya-setti and his teacher Divakaranandi-Siddhanta-Ratnakaradeva. It that the Pattanasvami Nokkayya-setti gave one hundred *Gadyanas* of gold and obtained Molakere from the above chief and granted the same along with the village Kukkan-davalli to the Pattanasvami-*Jinalaya* that he had built. This grant was handed over to Sakalachandra Panditadeva, after releasing it from all taxes. It is also said that the above Nokkayya Setti had made a *Mahura*, the Images of gold, silver, coral, precious stones and the five metals etc. He had built many tanks like Santagere, Molakere, Ugure stream to enter the Pagimagala tank of Saulanga by giving one hundred *Gadyanas* of gold and it also refers Mallinatha, the author of this record (E.C., XV, No. 106, p. 169b). It is clear that the construction of tanks regarded high religious activities of those days. Bhujabala Santaradeva, a chief, under the Chalukyan king, made grants to Bhujabala Santara *Jinalaya* at Humcha (E.C. XV, No.107, p, 15c).

In ancient India women also played an important role in the political, administration, religious, economic and social spheres. They were granted liberty to perform in the various fields of their interest. The record dated 1062 A.D. refers that the king Vira Santara built the Nokkiyabbe Jina temple and praises Chagaladevi, the wife of the above king. Chagaladevi made *Makara-Torana* in front of the above *Jinalaya*, the family goddess of her husband. She also constructed god Chagesvara temple at Balligave and made some grants to it. It also praises Arasikabbe, mother of Chagaladevi (E.C., XV, No.94, p, 156d). An epigraph dated 1077 A.D., of the reign of Nanni Santaradeva, the Santara chief was ruling Santalige-1000 kingdom gives detailed genealogy of this chief. Further it is giving the account of the Santaras, in order to set forth the descent of Viramahadevi, the wife of Vira Santara, a detailed history of the Gangas is also given in the record. This is one of the elaborate Santara inscription where in referred one Chattaladevi, probably, daughter of Rakkasa Ganga, who was married to the Kadava (Pallava king) Kaduvetti. She seems to have lost her son Goggi and became a widow, on which she attached herself to the four sons of her sister, who was married to the Santara king, but was dead, speaks of them as her own, and in association with them she erects the Jina temple at Humcha. The principal of these was the *Panchakuta* or *Pancha-Vasadi*, known as *Urvvi-Tilakam*, glory of the world. It is also said that they laid the foundation stone pronouncing the name of Srivijayadeva, her teacher. The above Chattaladevi is also said to have completed the works of merit such as erecting *Basadi*, temple, excavating tank and well etc. It further records the grant of land by Nanni Santaradeva, Oddmarasa, Barmmadeva and Chattaladevi, after washing the feet of the *Acharya* Kamalabhadradeva, for the repairs and conducting worship in the *Basadi*. According to one more inscription, queen Chattaladevi erected *Mana-Stambha* at Humcha and made some gifts and it also eulogises the contemporary Jaina sages (E.C., XV, No.84, p,133e).

Many of the Santara kings and queens made enormous gifts for the promotion of the Jainism. An inscription dated 1147 A.D. records the erection of the northern *Pattasale* of the Panchakuta *Basadi* at Humcha by the chief Vikrama Santara, Pampadevi and her daughter Bachaladevi. These three are said to be the lay disciples of Ajitasena Pandita known as Vadibhsimha. It further refers to the rule of Pampadevi and Srivallabhadeva. It also records that, after erecting the above *Patasala* the king Srivallabhadeva made a grant, after washing the feet of Vasupujya Sidhantadeva and refers Madeya, who engraved the inscription (E.C. XV, No.82, p, 125f).

Jaina Ascetics in Humcha

The ancient institution at Humcha is the original home of this seat of faith. It is headed by Bhattaraka Devendrakirti. In 1048 AD, the king made a donation to a Bhattaraka of Balagara-gana at Balligame near Banavasi. Thus, the Bhattaraka seat at Humcha may be one of the oldest of its kind. The most widespread Bhattaraka order has historically been the Mula Sangh-Nandi Sangh-Balatkara Ganasaraswati Gachchha order. It has seats at *Surat, Idar, Ajmer, Jaipur, Chittor, Nagaur, Delhi, Gwalior, Chanderi, Sironj* and many other places. There are perhaps hundreds of thousands of Tirthankara idols, spread across the country from Surat to Decca (in Bangladesh), and bearing inscriptions mentioning this order. Most of these idols were installed by the Bhattarakas of this order in the past seven or eight centuries. Many of these Bhattarakas were great scholars and prolific authors. Srivijaya Bhattaraka, Siddantadeva, Hemasena, Pushapsena, Ajithasena (Vadibhasimha), Dayapala, Vadividyananda, Sreyamsa Pandita and other ascetics played a major role in building Humcha (E.C. XV, Nos. 80, 82, p, 125, 133g). Vadividyananda is considered as the foremost among the Jain ascetics to propagate Jainism around the region. He visited the Vijayanagar Kingdom, Sangeethapura, Bilagi and other places for the propagation of Jainism.

Conclusion

The Santaras were ruled the region from Humca, known as Santalige -1000. As capital city, Humcha was the seat of Jainism. They were the feudatory rulers of many ruling dynasties of Karnataka. Though, they patronised their own religion, and not bigoted in the matters of other religions. The *Bhattaraka* seat at Humcha was founded in the 8th century AD, during the reign of Jinadatta, who was a founder of the Santara line, encouraged Jainism and Jaina scholars. In addition to that they built many temples and *Basadis* and important among them are *Manastambha, Parshwanatha Temple, Padmavathi Basadi, Jain Mutt - Panchakuta Basadi etc. the Santara rulers were also made grants of land, gold and other gifts for conducting worship, offerings and religious activities in the temples at Humcha.*

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