

# Important Ancient Jain Centers of the Coastal Region

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## **Abstract:**

Literature is a very important tool in portraying the history and cultural uniqueness of a nation. Literature is not just entertainment; it becomes a source of explaining the history, character, culture and life of the people of that country. Kannada literature is no exception to this. Since ancient times, Kannada literature has taken various forms and genres according to time and has been helpful in building the cultural history of the context. Seen from this point of view, Sthalapuranas throw light on the ancient culture, customs and traditions of a country. And it is doubtful that they would have produced an equally perfect history. Keeping the original source of the information found there is helpful in engaging in pending fact-finding. Even though the Mahatma of such Sthalapuranas is rarely found in Kannada literature, the 17th century can be said to be an important period in terms of Sthalapurana Mahatmas.

'Mahatme' means greatness, majesty, glory. It should be said that these local mythology mahatmas were created with the purpose of glorifying the importance of a place or a historical person and philosophy. "There is a tendency to view mythological Mahatmas as different from history. Mahatmas were created to celebrate the importance of place, person, and philosophies, based on traditional dominant story genres.

**Keywords:** ancient, Jain centers , coastal region

Such local Mahatmas are found in all religions. To popularize the glory of a place or the importance of historical persons of that place and some customs and ideas is unimaginably based on stories like its own. Such local Mahatmas are found in all religions. Similarly, Jainism can be seen to have created several local Mahatmas of Jainism in order to glorify the historical figures of its religious history and its philosophies or to convey to the people the elements of Jainism. A number of literary works are found depicting such mythological Mahatmas. Here it will be examined how many local mythological facts are available to us including places and historical figures mentioned mainly in Kannada Jain songs.

Kannada Jain songs have played an important role in building the cultural uniqueness of Jainism. These songs give information about the philosophy of Jainism, religious practices, references to historical figures and Jain Kshetras. Hence, these songs, when viewed from the perspective of the local Mahatma, reveal several aspects of the place's character, origin and historical significance. Such local legends are not only stories but also give clues to the historical aspects of that religion.

As in other religions, Carnatic Jainism has many local legends, miracles and legends. A number of miracles can be seen in the context of the prevalent aspect of the temple, the shrine, in the local Puranas. It is seen that the fame of Jainism has inspired devotion, devotion and faith among the people by telling the importance of that place on the minds of the masses. Such featured places are described below.

### **Hombuja:**

Hombuja is located in Hosnagar taluk of Shivamoga district. It is a magnificent historical area in the lap of lush green hills. Also this is a super field. Hombuja has a very ancient history hidden within its body. Several temples and basadis can be seen as traces of the rule of several royal families in this area.

Many historical records mention that Hombuja was known by many names like Pombachchi, Plemberch, Hombuchchi, Homburch, Hombucha, Hombucha, Hombuja, Puncha etc. in ancient times. This area was also a famous religious center of the Jains of Kannada.

There are many monuments, basadis, temples, mathas etc. which represent the cultural uniqueness of this region. It is special that Hombuja, such an Atishaya and Jain religious field, is mentioned in Kannada literature. Especially in Kannada Jain songs, this field is mentioned a lot and the culmination of worshipping, fearing and devotion to the goddess Padmavatiamma can be seen in these songs.

“Varahombuja Puradolu settled  
Charanava of Vara Nirgudi  
For people who remember Nere  
Varamuthu Jagadi Sukhadeva Padmambe  
Are the flowers of Suragi cute?  
Hombuja settled in Puradol  
Rambe is golden for Padmavati  
Padmambe for the first time  
Round Jasmine Mudibare”<sup>29</sup>

Hombujapura Kshetra is the abode of Padmavati Amma, the goddess of the Jains. Padmavati is the Yakshina of the 23rd Tirthankara Parswanath, the great yakshi who cooperated with her husband Yaksha-Dharanendra to protect Lord Paswanath from the horrendous upasarga committed by a wicked man. The most famous and worshiped Yakshini among the Jains is this Padmavatiammava. Amma, who is the idol of girls, has a habit of asking for prayers, prayers and boons to this day. People have sung praises about her greatness in this field. People here say Mahatma about Padmavatiamma like this.

Padmavati Yakshini is from North Madurai. King Einadattaraya takes the image of the goddess Padmavati in his sack and rides his horse towards the south. King Bhagadatta comes chasing this Einadattaraya. Then as King Bhagadatta approached Eenadatta, he immediately said to face the pursuing army the idol of Goddess Padmavati which he had brought as ordered by the sages. Then Einadattaraya does the same. Immediately Bhagadatta's army moves back a hundred yards. He does this again and again and finally surrenders to Bhagat. Then Einadattaraya remembers Padmavati. Then there was a cool area with flowing water. A lucky plant appeared in that place. Immediately Einadattaraya hangs the sack he had brought on the lucky tree and sleeps under the foot of the lucky tree. Then he gets surprised. "I

can't go further from here" the divine voice disturbed his sleep. Fakkane looks awake. He tries to remove the idol of Goddess Padmavati from his sack. Can't move enough or is it bad luck? Goddess Padmavati! Screaming that you have left my hand in this cruel battle, just as I will sacrifice food and give up my life here, then Goddess Padmavati says, don't be sad, my son, this forest will be a beautiful golden field in front of me. When my idol is infected with iron, it instantly turns into gold. Ponnubikasu means gold emerged. Since then this place came to be known as Hombuja. Also, the inscriptions here mention the fact that Jain Acharyas like Bhadrabahu, Sumantabhadra were present here. Temples, basadis, monuments like these are found here. Panchabasadi, Chandranathabasadi, Parswanath Basadi Padmavathiamma's temple, Mathada Basadi, Gudda Basadi, Sule Basadi are all evidences depicting the predominance of Hombuja field and Jain culture.

### **Karkala:**

Karkala is an important taluk center of Dakshina Kannada Eile. It is said that the area is known as Karkallu>Karkala because it is covered with charcoal. In the lap of the beautiful nature of this town, the dome idol fixed on a 300 feet high hill was built by the Pandya king of Bhairara royal family. Built in 1432. In addition to this, it can be seen that it is mentioned in many inscriptions in Kannada literature. Also, in Kannada Jain songs, the song mentions Baahubali, the idol here, and Mathadhipati.

“Dharagadhikam Shri Karkala Puragradolu  
Settle firmly and rest assured  
Guru Lalitakirthi Munipati's waa protects  
Duritahar Bahubali to Eenaraj”<sup>30</sup>

Here we see the Baahubali idol of Karkala and the Jain patriarchs being sung about. Also here Chaturmukha Basadi is a single-door four-door basadi on a large black hill. There are records that this residence was built in 1586. There are big idols of three Tirthankaras in this basadi. Along with it there are small images of 24 Tirthankaras. There is also an idol of the goddess Padmavati. 1 km from Gommabetta. Neminath's Basadi in the distance was built in AD. Built in 1329. In front of this basadi there is a beautiful 54 feet tall pebble stone pillar. Besides, there are several Dananeethi Bhujabala Brahmacharya Shrama Math, Anantashaya temples like the one here. Many Jain dynasties ruled the region. In response to this, monuments, residences, temples, monasteries, almshouses have been built, resulting in cultural uniqueness. can see In case of: Moodbidire in Karkala taluk of Dakshina Kannada is famous as Jain Kashi. Inscriptions, copper inscriptions, literary works, Jain settlements, temples provide clear records to know the history of this region as they are found in abundance. We see Moodbidire called by many names. Moodbidire is identified as Moodbidire by this name because it is the area where bamboo is grown in the east. It has two words Muda+Bidire. This place where bamboo grows is cleared and called Padubire because bamboo grows on the other side to the west. Also, another characteristic to be called Moodbidire is the three Shatkandas of Jains namely 1. Dhavala 2. Jayadhavala 3. It is also addressed as 'Bithara' because the original works of scriptures called Mahadhavala are located here and have been enshrined in Olegary for thousands of years and in ancient inscriptions.

Moodbidha is called Mulabhadri-Shimhavenipura. It is known that it was known as 'Vamshapura', 'Venupura' Kshemavenupura and Pragvenupura in Sanskrit. Vamsa in Sanskrit, venu means bamboo. Considering all the above factors, its history also goes back to the 8th century AD. AD By the 10th-11th

century, Moodbidire had developed into a major Jain centre. Many Jain gurus and poets were born in this area. Jains from all parts of India have built basadis in the names of the 18 Tirthankaras here. Each verse includes a background and motivation. Most of the basadis here are seen to have been built at the behest of various traders and Jain gurus. Each basadi here is named after the merchant who built it. Looking at it like that, this was also a big business area. The main Basadi here is “Guru Basadi.” This basadi has a local Mahatma. When a Jain sage came here in the 8th century, he saw a tiger playing with her and knew that this was a holy place. Then Jainamuni got the name Guru Basadi in this thick forest from the idol of Parswanatha Tirthankar carved there. It was written in AD. Built in 714. Therefore, this basadi is called 'Gurubasadi' and its alternative names are Siddhanta Basadi and Old Basadi. The largest of the basadis is “Tribhuvana Tilak Chudamani.” It is famous as Basadi of Thousand Pillars. It was written in AD. Built in 1429-30. The Jain devotees built a thousand-pillar basadi on the order of Devacharya Wodeyar, the then governor of Mangalore state. The statue of Chandranathaswamy is 61/2 feet tall inside this basadi. Engraved with 5 Dhamas. Every pillar here is fascinatingly diverse. Inside it are several mantaps, mahadwaras, gopurams, sanctum sanctorum etc. carvings are seen in a very beautiful manner.

Major basadis in Moodbidire are 1. Badaga Basadi, 2. Shettar Basadi, 3. Heere Basadi, 4. Gurubasadi, 5. Tribhuvana Tilak Chudamani Basadi, 6. Bettaribasadi, 7. Kote Basadi, 8. Vikramshetty Basadi, 9. Stone crushing, 10. Tippa Basadi, 11. Deramamshetty Basadi, 12. Cholashettibasadi, 13. Madishettibasadi, 14. Byrkatikadi Basadi, 15. Basadi, 16. Padubasadi, 17. Basadi of Shrimath, 18. Basadis like Jain Pathashanti Basadi are found. A number of basadis like the ones here testify that this was a holy religious center as well as a trading center for the Jains. A number of such historic monuments depict the antiquity of Moodbidiri as a cultural city of the Jains.

"Podavigadhika Mudabidya Puradolu Odathi Senior Basadi

Padmavati who is firm and steady is the palisamma of the devotees without giving up”<sup>31</sup>

### **Venur:**

Venur is a famous Jain Kshetra in history. It is located in Belthangadi taluk of Dakshina Kannada state. Venur is a region that falls between the two places of Dharmasthala and Moodbidire. Venuri used to be called "Enuru" earlier. It is a popular idea that the seven towns dissolved and became "one hundred". Aeela, the king of Tulunad, was very important in this field. Venur was their capital. Because of this, it was also a great trading center. Because there are several grounds for the existence of Settikars, Yalames, trade guilds of this name. Another special feature of this town is Sriparswanath Basadi, Kallubasadi, Binani Basadi, Akkamgala Basadi and the fortified Bahubali Murthy. There is a great legend behind the carving of this Baahubali idol.

“There is a 35 feet high single stone idol of Baahubali installed in AD 1604 which is very beautiful. It resembles the Karkala idol. Two side by side inscriptions give clear details about the idol. This idol of Baahubali was erected by Timmaraja, the king of Punjalik on 1526th Shobha Kritu Sam/Dara Palguna Shuddam 10 Pushya Nakshatra Thursday i.e. AD. This inscription states that it was installed in March 1604.”<sup>33</sup>

People here tell stories about the production of Baahubali. This dome is about 5 km from Venur. Carved out of a huge stone at far away Kallani. Even now there are traces of this idol being cut down. There are traces of sculptures, food and stoves. It was a trick to transport this idol from Kallani to Venur amidst dense forest. There are several legends related to the making of Baahubali. Bahubali of Sravanabelgola, Bahubali of Karkala, Bahubali of Venur, Shambhu Kalkuda were sculpted by these descendants. It appears that The many monuments, basadis and idols here are the evidence that Venur is an ancient religious center of Jains. Since there is a Jain Math here, it can be seen that this is a religious area of Jains.

Seeing dome idols in Sravanabelgola and Karkalas, the Kalkuda Mahaparakrama King of Karkala is busy carving idols as per the request of King Aeela in Venur to avenge the cutting off of his limbs. Kalkuda's sound is heard by Karkala. Knowing the cause of the noise, the king came inside the borders of Dandetti Aeela, burnt the temple, basadi etc. and started looting the town. There is a historical legend that after Kalkuda Gommata came with the idol under his arm and hid it in a hoige on the bank of the river, after defeating the king Bhairava in the battle of Kantu Sarvanni, who was the general of Thimmanael, Kalkuda again took the idol out of the hoige pile and placed it on the hill before dawn.

### **Bhangavadi:**

A small town in Belthangadi taluk of Dakshina Kannada state. About 12 km from Belthangadi. This remote place is a Jain holy land, reveling in the lap of nature. Earlier 'Bhangawadi' was ruled by kings of Banga family, hence it is also known as the territory of Banga kings. From time to time, 'Bhangavadi' is called 'Bangadi'. Bhangwadi was a major Jain center and the main center of worship for Jains. There is Srishanthinath Basadi, next to it is Chhauvees Tirthankara's Basadi, and on the other side is Sripadmaprabha Tirthankara's Basadi. There is also an idol of Brahmadev of Sravagunda behind Srishanthinath Basadi. Such an ancient religious center of the Jains is thus mentioned in the Kannada Jain hymns.

“Protection of the great people of Bhangwadi  
Turagaveneri Waiyali Biduvana  
Mangalamurthy Manmathagelidana  
Brahmarayana of Shringaravadadirda  
Kartare to the window of love”<sup>34</sup>

This Jain song indicates that Bhangavadi was an important religious center of Jains and is a song in praise of Sri Brahmaraaya, who is widely worshiped by the people there.

Among the Jains, Lord Brahma is a Yaksha and the practice of worshiping him can be seen in all Jain religious centers. Especially 'Shravangunda' near Bhangwadi is the 'Brahmarayana' superstition. A Jain hymn about such a transcendental realm can be seen mentioned below.

"The one who has fixed his ears  
Leaver of Thuragavaneri Vaiyali  
The bridegroom was father's friend  
The stream is Bhangavadi Brahmarayana  
To the window of Kartare Haseya”<sup>35</sup>

Sri Brahmaraya, who resides in Sravagunda, is worshiped with devotion by the people of this region. In addition, the people here have an unshakable faith that he fulfills their wishes. Because of that, the number of devotees who come here is huge. It is mentioned in this Jain song that this practice of getting darshan of Lord Brahma by doing several Harake Puja Punaskaras is still going on today.

“The giver of children to Manini  
Acclaimed to many countries  
He who is radiant with reflection  
Brahmarayana comes from bliss  
Kartare to the window of love”<sup>36</sup>

Thus, Shri Brahmaraya is the God who fulfills the wishes of the people of this region and gives boons. Shaiva-Jain religious practices merge in Sravagunda and non-Jains also come to this area more and more. People here can be seen exaggerating the Mahatma of Shraavanagunda.

Sravangunda was a deserted area in ancient times. When the Jain sages Shri Charan Munishree came here for penance, a wonderful voice was heard here. Since then he was settled in this area. So he installed Lord Brahma there. Thus there is a temple of Brahma, with a well in its verandah. For that, the devotees filled water from the lake and put the stone ball in front of the god and worshiped it, put the ball in a silver plate and brought it to the bench where Sricharan Munishree stood for penance and as per the words of Sricharan Munishree, Darshanpathre used to float the stone ball in that well for 'three quarters and three hours'. As the ball was floating in the water, thousands of devotees flocked there. Because of that it is a super field.

### **Varanga:**

This Varanga is the oldest pilgrimage site of Jainism. It is an ancient place belonging to Digambara sect of Jainism. AD The 10th century was known as the "Golden Age" of Jainism in Kannada. Varanga was also a stronghold of Jainism during that period. There are many historical references to this. AD An inscription dated 1424 mentions the donation of Vira Pratapadeva Sriramadrayarajaguru Mandalacharya Mahavada Vadeeshwara Vadipitamaha Sakal Vidvajjana Chakravarti Srivardhamana Bhattarakari, Namesvara Swami of Varanga Tirtha (to walk the places left behind for Amrita Padi) as Dharapura. Thus many inscriptions give the importance of Varanga and information about the shrine.

According to the inscriptions, there was a great man named Varanga in this region. Inscriptions refer to him as Sugunasampanna, a great donor and a sacrificer. Even today the priests here remember this Varanga Raya in their prastha vachanas. Hence it is a custom today to call this shrine after this Varangaraya.

There are many Samadhi Jain Grihas on the right side along the road of Nemeshwar Swami Basadi here. These are called Nisidhis. Also, the Samadhi mantaps where the sages took the Slekha vrata and attained Mahaparinirvana can still be seen in this varanga. Here is Gandhara's foot at the top end of Tataka Hill. Gandhara means one who interprets the teachings of Tirthankara. There is a belief that he was doing the work of delivering Jain teachings to all these people.

There are many abodes of Jain sages in Varanga Tirtha area. Prominent among them are the abodes of three Yatis named Nameshwara, Chandranatha and Chaturmukh. The original images in these basadis are said to have been constructed during the Chalukya and Hoysala periods. Architecture was a symbol of religious spirit as well as a reflection of contemporary social heritage. Art and architecture are symbolic of the social and religious life of that time. Accordingly, more than 180 basadis were built in Dakshina Kannada at various times. Especially in Varanga, Someshwara and Chaturmukh Basadis are very ancient. The architecture of this temple is particularly divided into those of Hindu and Jain heritage.

Scholars differ as to when Jainism came to Dakshina Kannada. Dr. Scholars like Salethore, Dr. Ramesh shed a lot of light on this. It is said that this Jainism came to Sravanabelagola from North India in 2nd century AD and may have entered Dakshina Kannada in 3rd century AD.

### **Dharamsthal:**

This field has an ancient history of about 800 years. There are also stories and legends related to the topography and legends of this place. As the name 'Dharmasthala' suggests, it means 'abode of religion'. Thus this place gets significant references related to mythology. This sacred place has existed for hundreds of years, giving impetus to people's faith, removing their sorrows, and filling their lives with hope and comfort. Here indeed Shiva himself is situated in this realm as "Manjunath. Now the deacon Dr. Virendra Hegade is in charge of this field.

Barmanna Heggade couple of Jain heritage lived in this beedi. Initially Sri Chandranath Swami Basadi and Kuduma Nelyadi Bedu at its bottom were the two important places here. At this place, the Burman couple worshiped Chandranathaswamy of Basadi with faith in their religion and philosophy. Kuduma means 'give charity'. Besides, Sahiti Puttige has given the meaning of 'big family'. Belonging to such a family, Barmanna Heggade faithfully followed the vows of Satya, Ahimsa, Aparigraha and spent most of his time in charity, worship and Shilopas. Besides this, he treated all the guests who came to his house with respect. The religious deities who saw the sattvic life of this couple must have been impressed. One day when these deities traveled around the world and settled with a sattvik family, looking for such a holy place with the good intention of upholding truth and dharma, this historical Nelyadi Bedu caught the attention of those religious deities.

This Kuduma was a village surrounded by dense forests. There were more wild animals than people, more trees than houses. When the environmental deities, who were unknown to the outer world, came here, they had sattvic experiences. Ferocious and sattvic animals behaved friendly and restrained. There was happiness, peace and prosperity here. When Nelyadi, dressed as an anthropomorph, came to the beedi, the Hegade couple received them with hospitality and worshiped him with a three-cornered devotional offering of fruits. Satisfied with this, the religious deities decided to settle here. Nelyadi Bedu became the abode of the gods as this couple won their first sattvaparikash by devoting their own house to the abode of deities. This couple died worshiping these deities with lamps and incense.

One day suddenly these deities appeared to the Heggade couple in a dream and told them that they were four powerful deities namely Kalarahu, Kalarkai, Kumaraswamy and Kanyakumari, that they should build separate temples and worship them, and from time to time they should conduct festivals and

events. Accordingly, separate temples were built and festivals were held from time to time so that there was no lapse in religion. Next, to call the Brahmins for its arrangement, he suggested that an idol should be set up in this place where the gods are worshipped. While the Burmanna couple were thinking about this, they sent Annappa to Mangalore's Kadireyambally and ordered him to bring the Shivlinga that he had brought from Kashi. Annappa Swami brought the Linga of 'Manjunath' from Kadira and installed it at the place where the temple is now. There he built a temple suitable for that idol. Next to this, as a Kanyakumari, he built other temples and performed pujas every day. Thus Barmanna Heggade couple, devotees of Chandranatha Swamy, came and settled in Nelyadi Street, Dharma deities, Manjunathaswamy. It is the belief of the people here that all this happened because of the grace of Sri Chandranath Swami. Thus Nelyadi Bedu got its name as the shrine of Srimanjunath.

The holy places like Tirthankaras are found in Karnataka where the history of the coastal region is the history of Jainism; Jain Kendras are the places of pilgrimage of this religion.

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