

Jaina Ramayana

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Introduction

The Jaina literature in general is remarkable for its variety and vastness and chronological sequence of events. It is not merely confined to religious tradition, but also throws light on other branches such as geography, history, science and socio-political studies. *Agama* literature is most sacred and authentic literature of the Jainas. Sometimes this has also been referred to as *Sutra* literature. Formerly there were eighty four *Agamas* but only forty five are extant. Jaina literature has been the major repository of the *katha* i.e. story literature.

The narrative literature of Jainism has mostly as its subject matter the life of one or more of its sixty-three great men. The primary place is occupied by the twelve Tirthankaras. The conquest of the six sub-divisions of Bharata-khanda is the main achievement of the Cakravartins. The Baladevas are given the responsibility of getting rid of the tyrants of their times, the Prati-Narayaas. This was done with the assistance of the Narayaas. Thus they form the triples like Rama, Lakshmana and Ravana form one triple while Balarama, Krishna, and Jarasandha form another. These two triples being the last of these nine triples and have inspired most of the narrative poetry.

The Jainas have been prolific composers of Puranas, primarily in Maharashtri Prakrit, Apabhramsa, Sanskrit and Kannada. The Jaina Puranas can be characterized as a post – Agamic literary corpus based upon themes found in the *Agamas*. Unlike the brahmanical Sanskrit *Puranas*, which are anonymous texts, it is possible for us to assign specific authors and dates of composition for the Jaina *Puranas*. In terms of their contents, the Jaina *Puranas* can be described as biographies.

TIRTHANKARAS	NO. OF BIOGRAPHIES(PURANAS)
Neminatha	34
Santinatha	29
Rshabhath	24
Parshvanatha	24
Mahavira	19
Chandraprabha	17
Mallinatha	14
Munisuvrata	12

Source: Purana Perenis: Reciprocity and Transformation in Hindu and Jaina Texts, p.189.

The brahmanical Puranas are extensively preoccupied with the activities of gods and goddesses, whereas the Jaina Puranas are concerned with the lives of specific human beings who lived at specific times in Jaina history. The Ramayana tradition in Jaina literature goes as far back as the Jaina Puranas.

Jinasena was a prolific Jaina writer who lived in the ninth century A.D. Along with Gunabhadra he wrote Mahapurana which includes Adipurana and UttaraPurana. Jinasena flourished during the reign of king Amoghavarsha I (875 A.D.), the Rashtrakuta king. Adipurana contains the story of Rishabha, the first Tirthankara and Chakravartin only. UttaraPurana contains the story of the remaining Tirthankaras. Adipurana contains material on topics such as samskaras, town planning, and duties of warrior and art of governing. Jinasena says that Purana is that which discusses land, time, holy places and the deeds of great men; hence many of the Jaina Puranas are called 'charitras'. According to him Purana is that which contains the story of only one great person, whereas a Mahapurana possesses the accounts related to all the sixty three Salakapurusas.. The Jaina texts on the Rama - biography by far outnumber the Puranic works on any individual Salakapurusa. The Jaina Puranas can be divided into three types in terms of content:-

- Jinacarita -The life of one of the twenty four Tirthankaras or Jinas of present age.
- Ramayana – The Jaina version of the story of Rama.
- Harivamsa – The Jaina version of the story of Krishna.

The authors of the Jaina Puranas have explained the nature of their narratives in detail. They have also explained the purpose for which they decided to compose the said Puranas. Accordingly they call their Puranas as katha. The Sanskrit dictionaries tell us that Itihasa-Purana (history and ancient traditions, legendary sources), Itihasavadah (historical story, legend), Itivratta (occurrence, events, and story) and Katha (a tale, a story, and historical knowledge) are the terms which convey the idea which is embodied in the English word 'history'.

The Jaina Mahapuranas give the biography of all the sixty three salakapurusas or eminent people which includes twenty four Tirthankaras, twelve Chakravartins, the nine each Vasudevas, Baladevas, and Prativasudevas. These biographies became very popular subjects for Jaina Puranic authors. The Panchalakshanas or 'five characteristics' are the defining feature of the Jaina and Brahmanical Puranas. The Brahmanical Panchalakshanas are listed as follows

PANCHALAKSHANAS	BRAHMANICAL PURANAS
Creation	<i>Sarga</i>
Recreation	<i>Pratisarga</i>
Origin of various dynasties	<i>Vansha</i>
Epochs	<i>Manvartaras</i>
Geneology	<i>Vanshanucarita</i>

In *Adipurana*, Jinasena has mentioned eight *lakshanas* or topics which a *Purana* deals with. While the first Jaina *Purana*, *Paumacariyam* contains the story of all the sixty-three of the Jaina heroes, the first text explicitly called a *Mahapurana* is *Caupannamahapurusa-cariya* in 868 C.E. by Acarya Silanka. The topics that enumerate the Puranic character of *Adipurana*, the first major text in this category, and the *Paumacariyam*, which illustrate the thematic nature of the *Purana*, can be listed below as:⁶

ADIPURANA	PAUMACARIYAM
Universe (<i>Loka</i>)	<i>Sthiti</i> (the nature and position of the world)
Country (<i>Desa</i>)	<i>Vamsha – samutpatti</i> (origin of various dynasties)
City or Capital (<i>Pura</i>)	<i>Prasthan</i> (departure of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita to forest)
Kingdom (<i>Rajyam</i>)	<i>Rana</i> (war between Rama and Ravana)
The life of a Jina (<i>Tirtha</i>)	<i>Lavankusutpatti</i> (birth of Lava and Kusa)
Giving alms and donations (<i>Dana</i>)	<i>Nirvana</i> (emanicipation of Rama)
The four conditions of existence	<i>Anekabhava</i> (description of various existences of the Salakapurusa)
<i>Moksha</i>	

There are numerous Jaina *Puranas*. Of these *Puranas*, at least seventeen are Jaina *Ramayana* narratives (see the Table below for details):

- Ten in Sanskrit
- Five in Prakrit
- Two in Apabhramsa

JAINA RAMAYANAS					
Prakrit		Sanskrit		Apabhramsa	
1	Vimala Suri's Pauma-Cariya – Not later than 3 rd Century A.D.	1	Padma- <i>Purana</i> of Ravisena (678 A.D.)	1	Pauma-Cariu of Svayambhu (8th Century A.D)
2	Sanghadasa's Version, Pk. (not later than 609 A.D.)	2	Gunabhadra's Uttara- <i>Purana</i> (9 th Century A.D.)	2	Maha- <i>Purana</i> of Puspadanta (965 A.D.)
3	Caupanna-Mahapurusa-Cariya of Silacarya (868 A.D.)	3	Harisena's Version (931 - 32 A.D.) closest to Valmiki's		
4	Dhurtakhyana of Haribhadra (750 A.D.)	4	Dharma-Pariksa of Amitagati (1014 A.D.)		
5	Kahavali of Bhadresvara (11th Century A.D.)	5	Yogasastra-svopajna-vrtti of Hemachandra		

Jaina Ramayana

*Savita Chaudhary

	6	Trisati-Salaka-purusa-carita of Hemachandra (1160-72 A.D.)	
	7	Satrunjaya-Mahatmya of Dhanesvara (14th Century A.D.)	
	8	Rama-Caritra of Devavijayaganin (1596 A.D.)	
	9	Punyacandrodaya <i>Purana</i> of krisna (16th century A.D.)	
	10	Laghu-Trisati of Meghavijaya (17 th Century A.D.)	

Significantly this table brings out the fact that Jainism, which owed its origin to the reaction against the brahmanical orthodoxy and dominance and used the language of the common people to propagate its tenets initially, was gradually gripped by the brahmanical influence. Hence as is evident from the table, over a period of time the Jainas were increasingly writing Jaina *Ramayanas* in Sanskrit.

It will be of great relevance to mention here that A.K.Ramanujan in his essays has talked about "intertextuality" in Indian literature. A.K. Ramanujan in his essays, "Where Mirrors are Windows," and in "Three Hundred *Ramayanas*" discusses the "intertextual" nature of Indian literature. He says, "What is merely suggested in one poem may become central in a 'repetition' or an 'imitation' of it. Mimesis is never only mimesis, for it evokes the earlier image in order to play with it and make it mean other things". He is of the opinion that the oral and written traditions, the Sanskritic and local traditions mutually influence one another. He suggested that one text becomes the context of others.

Normally, the brahmanical tradition is the central focus, and Jaina *Ramayanas* are merely seen in comparative terms with texts like the Valmiki *Ramayana*. However, after a study of the secondary works on Jaina literature, it is apparent that popular motifs that belong to a shared cultural domain were taken up by the Jaina composers of *Puranas* to help propagate their own religious beliefs and ideas. Hence, the *Ramayana* tradition may be seen as a symbol that acquires a different meaning when seen from a different lens to that of brahmanism. This appears to be validated when we look at the number of Jaina texts belonging to different language traditions that are based on the *Ramayana* narrative, which are separated in time and across region.

The works written in Prakrit language predominate the Jaina *Ramayana* literature from the first century A.D. to eighth century A.D. We have some other Jaina works which have the *Ramayana* story as their subject-matter. These have been listed below:

Author	Title
Bhuvanatunga Suri	<i>Siyacariya</i>
Bhuvanatunga Suri	<i>Ramalakkhanacariya</i>
Somasena	<i>Padmapurana</i>
Dharmakirti	<i>PadmaPurana</i>
Chandrakirti	<i>Padmapurana</i>
Chandrasagara	<i>Padmapurana</i>
Srichandra	<i>Padmapurana</i>
Jinadasa	<i>Padmapurana / Ramadevpurana</i>
Pampa	<i>Padmapurana / Ramayana</i>
Camundaraya	<i>Camundarayapurana</i>
Mallisena	<i>Trisastimahapurana / Trisastisalakupurana</i>
Chandramuni	<i>Trisastilakshanamahapurana / Mahapurana</i>
Vimalasuri	<i>Trisastisalakupurusacarita</i>
Vajrasena	<i>Trisastisalakupurusacarita</i>
Asadhara Pandit	<i>Trisastismriti</i>
Dhanajaya	<i>Dvisandhanakavya / Raghavapandaviya</i>
Merutunga	<i>Mahapuruseracarita / Dharmopadesasataka</i>
Amrasuri	<i>Mahapuruseracarita</i>
Ramachandra	<i>Raghuvilasanataka</i>
Ramachandra	<i>Raghavabhyudayanataka</i>
Meghavijayagani	<i>Saptasandhanamahakavya</i>
Anonymous	<i>Sîta-Carita</i>
Anonymous	<i>Sîta-Carita</i>
Santi Suri	<i>Sîta-Carita</i>
Brahma Nemidatta	<i>Sîta-Carita</i>
Amaradasa	<i>Sîta-Carita</i>
Anonymous	<i>Sîta-prabandha</i>
Hastimalla	<i>Sîtanataka</i>
Harisena	<i>Trisastisara</i>

It has been suggested that there existed two schools or traditions of Jaina *Ramayanas*, one that followed Vimalasuri's tradition and another that followed the Digambara Gunabhadra's tradition, which in turn seems to have been influenced by Valmiki and the *Dasaratha Jataka*. Vimalasuri's tradition is followed by Svayambhudeva, Haribhadra, and Bhadresvara in Prakrit and Ravisena, Amitgati and Hemacandra in Sanskrit. Similarly in Apabhramsa it was followed by Svayambhau. Sanghadasa mainly follows Valmiki, while Pushpadanta follows the Digambara version found with Gunabhadra. K.R. Chandra has opined that Gunabhadra's *Uttarapurana* has traits of *Dasaratha Jataka*, *Ramopakhyana* (the story of *Ramayana* in *Mahabharata*), *Vasudevahindi*, *Paumacariyam* and Valmiki *Ramayana* and still 'it has several elements which are quite peculiar to it'.

According to Romila Thapar the major variant versions of *Ramayana* also reflect 'the incorporation of particular needs'. Thus the Buddhist Dasaratha Jataka retells the story with the major difference that *Rama* and *Sita* are brother and sister, in conformity with the Buddhist origin myths of the Shakyas. Further she adds that in the *Paumacariyam*, the picture of exile changes, for the vast forest in the area of exile often recedes and is replaced by kingdoms, the urban and courtly culture being more familiar to the adherents of Jainism. It has been suggested by P.S. Jaini that it was closeness of laity and ascetics that ensured the survival of Jainism. He opines that unlike Buddhism, the Jainas laid down a code of conduct for the lay adherents which further contributed to the uniqueness as well as survival of Jainism.

When it comes to the study of Jaina *Ramayanas*, comparison with Valmiki's *Ramayana* seems to have been a regular feature. However, it still remains inconclusive whether Vimalasuri borrowed directly from Valmiki's version. The very fact that on certain points the text varies significantly from the latter implies that Vimalasuri had certain other 'popular traditions' at his disposal which he imbibed and transformed to propagate the Jaina version of the epic. The Jaina *Ramayanas* differ in religious affiliations, literary forms and characterization. There is constant and conscious effort on Jainisation of the themes, characters, rituals and name of places.

Let us analyse Prakrit Epic *Paumacariyam* in detail to illustrate the Jaina story of Rama. The earliest of the Jaina *Puranas* took final shape in the composition of the Prakrit Epic *Paumacariyam* of Vimala Suri, which has also been known by names such as Raghavacarita, Ramdevacarita and Ramarvindcarita. *Paumacariyam* of Vimala, the Jaina *Ramayana*, written according to the testimony of the poet himself, five hundred thirty years after the emancipation of Lord Mahavira:

“*Panchevya vasasaya, dusamaye teesvarisasanjutta.*

Veere sidhamuvagay, tao nibandham imam chariyam.”

The linguistic study of *Paumacariyam* has led scholars such as H. Jacobi and K. R. Chandra to place it in the third – fourth century A.D. At the time when Vimalasuri wrote this Epic the Vindhyan region had witnessed “earlier settlements growing into trading centres, cities and the

nuclei of small kingdoms". *Paumacariyam* significantly provides us with historical information on the Gupta–Vakataka period as it mentions Kailakilas and Sriparvatas, Anandvamsa and Kshatrapa Rudrabhuti. These existed in about fourth century C.E. There is also mention of a struggle between Ujjain and Dashapur and the Gupta king Kumaragupta and Mahakshatrapas. It also contains description of city of Nadyavartapur, which is same as the capital of the Vakatakas, Nandivardhara. These factors have further helped in dating the text.

The main details of Valmiki's *Ramayana* viz. the birth of the four sons of Dasharatha, Rama's marriage with Sita, the daughter of Janaka, his departure to the forest along with Lakshmana and Sita, Ravana's kidnapping of Sita, the death of Jatayu at Ravana's hands, Rama's meeting with Sugriva, Hanuman's departure for Lanka, his meeting with Sita, the battle of Lanka, the rescue and banishment of Sita are all described in Vimalasuri's work. Vimalasuri seems to have followed the Valmiki's *Ramayana* in his work, including it's First and Seventh books, which are considered later additions.

It has been suggested by Pollock that the tradition of *Ramayana* has been a tradition of 'contestation' starting at least with the *Paumacariyam*. Vimalasuri without naming the work that he is attacking, mentions various features of the Valmiki *Ramayana* which he regards as unbelievable and so modifies these in his account, such as the monkey nature of the Vanaras, Indra's defeat by Ravana, Rama's killing of the golden deer and of the death of Valin at the hands of Rama. In his account, Vimalasuri omits the episode of the golden deer and makes Valin abdicate the throne after voluntarily handing over the reins of the kingdom to Sugriva. It is Laksmana and not Rama who kills Ravana, and the entire episode pertaining to Sita's fire-ordeal after the capture of Lanka is omitted. The purpose of many such changes or divergences is to exonerate Rama from killing even animals. Even Ravana is turned into a devout and pious Jaina whose only weakness is his passion for Sita, which is in keeping with the popular Jaina understanding of the evil influences of women.

In addition, various episodes are introduced to buttress Jaina emphasis. There are also certain actual discrepancies from the original. Shatrughna is the son of Kaikeyi, and Janaka and his wife Videha have twins Bhamandala and Sita. Khara who is brother of Ravana and Dusana, a friend of Khara, in Valmiki *Ramayana* are made one individual in Jaina *Ramayana*, who is the husband of Ravana's sister Chandranakha, but on the other hand Indrajit is differentiated into two sons of Ravana, Indrajit and Meghavahana.

Ravana, we are told belongs to the Meghavahana lineage, hence the epithet *akashamargi*, 'he who travels through the sky' finds mention in this Jaina Epic. His claim to historicity is attested by Jacobi in his analysis of the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela which does mention a dynasty of Megha kings ruling in the Vindhyan region around Christian era.

Vimalasuri according to his own testimony in the later part of the *Paumacariyam*, was a disciple of Vijaya and grand-disciple of Rahu, who belonged to the Naila or Naagila kula, which seem to

have originated from the preceptor Vajrasena. Nothing is known regarding the home of Vimalasuri, but from the detailed and eulogistic description of Mathura, it appears that he may have been a monk of that city.

Some historians have argued that even the earliest extant Jaina version is in fact a modified representation of Valmiki's *Ramayana*. This is the earliest extant non-canonical literary Svetambara work. Vimala introduced a new dimension i.e. conformity with what actually occurred. Vimala traces the origin of the story to Lord Mahavira to invest it with sanctity and authority. The earliest extant Jaina adaptation of *Mahabharata* is the *Harivamsa Purana* of Jinasena (783 A.D.) in Sanskrit.

The earliest extant Jaina *Purana*, *Paumacariyam* is written in Maharashtri Prakrit, composed probably in conformity with the Jaina belief that Prakrit was the sacred language in which the words of Mahavira were preserved. As has been stated that this was the first Jaina *Ramayana*, hence herein I will be presenting a detailed historical analysis of the epic, which in the process will also unveil the way this thesis is going to be framed.

Paumacariyam is divided into one hundred and eighteen cantos or chapters, which consist of a total of eight thousand six hundred and fifty one *gathas*. The first thirty five cantos or chapters are called *Uddeshas* and the rest *Parvans*. The first twenty four describe the illustrious beings who according to Jaina universal history flourished before the time of Rama. The chapters twenty five to eighty five i.e. a total of sixty one, form the main part of the *Ramayana*. The last thirty three chapters contain the events following banishment of Sita, death of Lakshmana, Rama's renunciation and attainment of *moksha*.

Vimalasuri commences his work with salutation to the *Tirthankaras* and declares that he will be narrating the story of Padma as it has come down traditionally. This was an attempt at establishing Jaina identity hence the name Padma but the author does mention Rama as well in many places. He mentions his name and speaks of the form and the style of his work. The main story commences with chapter 22 while the chapters preceding it contain the biographies of *Tirthankaras*, the origin of various dynasties, the early career of Ravana and the story of Anjanasundari. Interestingly, Vimalasuri's entry into the epic in *Paumacariyam* begins with Ravana's geneology. The author touches the various aspects of Jaina ethics, philosophy, mythology, doctrine of Karma, and the past and future births of various characters. Vimalasuri is also credited to have written the first ever Jaina *Mahabharata* titled *Harivamsacarya*. This *Harivamsacarya* unfortunately is lost. At the end of *Paumacariyam* he gives his own lineage but does not tell us whether he belonged to any particular sect. Vimalasuri states that *Paumacariyam* was in the form of a list of names and was handed down in regular succession from teacher to his disciple. Here there is a concerted effort to project the text as an oral tradition which has been in existence as far back as the time of Mahavira and that Vimalasuri is merely the transmitter.

'Namavaliye nibaham aayeriyaparamparayam sabam vachama paumachariyam'.

According to the author it was first told by Lord Mahavira to Indrabhuti Gautama, thereby investing it with sanctity and authority. Vimalasuri says that the *Ramayana* stories are certainly full of lies, absurdities, and contradictions. He thinks that the absurdities related about the lives of Rama, Ravana, Kumbhakarna and others are not worthy of belief. To remove all such inconsistencies and incredible elements found in the popular *Ramayana* stories he undertook the composition of the *Paumacariyam*. The author says that he is presenting faithfully the life of Rama as proclaimed by Mahavira himself. It is significant to note that he is attributing the authorship of *Ramayana* to Lord Mahavira.

Vimalasuri uses the plot of King Shrenika to unveil the reasons for writing *Paumacariyam*. It is stated that King Shrenika went to Ganadhar Gautama and asked him to tell the true story of Rama: “*Paumchariyam mahayasahyam ichami parifudam soum uppaeaya pasidhi kushthavadiha vivriya.*”

The king is seen as an ideal that the common man looks up to and follows. Thereby he endows *Paumacariyam* with royal and political authority apart from its religious sanction. From a few verses of the second chapter we can understand his attitude towards the brahmanical version: “I wonder how the monkeys could kill the powerful Rakshasas, who were versed in different sciences and who had complete faith in the Jinas. We are further told by the native chronicler that all the Rakshasas consumed flesh and blood... further heard that Ravana after vanquishing Indra in the battlefield brought him in chains to the city of Lanka. But who can conquer the mighty Indra... Rama's killing of the golden deer and of Valin... such contradictory sentences are found everywhere in the *Ramayana*”.

The main details of Valmiki's *Ramayana* viz. the birth of the four sons of Dasharatha, Rama's marriage with Sita, the daughter of Janaka, his departure to the forest along with Lakshmana and Sita, Ravana's kidnapping of Sita, the death of Jatayu at Ravana's hands, Rama's meeting with Sugriva, Hanuman's departure for Lanka, his meeting with Sita, the battle of Lanka, the rescue and banishment of Sita are all described in Vimalasuri's work. Vimalasuri has followed the 'Valmiki's *Ramayana*' in his work, including its first and seventh books, which are considered later additions by scholars like H. Jacobi. But as stated earlier mere similarity of broad facts do not concern us much here.

Vimalasuri seems to be concerned about morally elevating his characters. Hence, he passes over Kaikeyi's intrigues as a concerned mother's tactics to prevent her son from becoming an ascetic. Later in this paper I shall deal with this in detail. Vimalasuri's conception of Rakshasa's and Vanaras can be seen as a major departure from the established norms. In the text Rakshasas are not man-eating demons and are portrayed in a good light as devout Jinas.

Almost all the *Ramayanas*, with the exception of the *Adipurana* of Jinasena and *Pandavpurana* of Subhacandra, include the Vidyadharas in their dynastic lists, who were a distinct race and give its genealogical accounts in detail. Of the nine Prativasudevas, the first eight are descendants of

the Vidyadhara race. The dynasty of Vidyadharas at Lanka came to be called Rakshasas after a celebrated king named Rakshasa. Vidyadharas of Kiskindhapura received the name Vanaras because of their custom of wearing pictures of monkeys as symbols or totems on their banners and crowns. The portrayal of Rakshasa and Vanaras as Vidyadharas and not as demons and monkeys as in the Brahmanical *Ramayana* seems to be the author's attempt at giving a historical and 'realistic' interpretation. The author was inspired probably by the legitimate purpose of representing the Jaina faith as superior to the Brahmanical traditions by removing from the legend of Rama, elements which the people may have found difficult to swallow.

In the *Ramayana* of Valmiki, Sita is called daughter of the Earth as she was found by King Janaka while ploughing. Vimalasuri calls her the daughter of Janaka and Videha who is born in a natural manner. According to the author Bhamandala and Sita were born as twins of Videha and Janaka in the city of Mithila. This again implies that the author is attempting to make his work more 'realistic'. We are constantly reminded of the kind of audience he is addressing. He is using a popular language to write the *Ramayana* story in order to reach the laity and attract the common man. It is important to mention here that in *Paumacariyam* Bhamandala was lost and was reunited with his parents only when he came for Sita's swayamvara. He was enchanted by her beauty but when he was told about his past birth he came to know about his real relationship with Sita.

Vimalasuri gives a realistic interpretation for 'Dasamukha' or the 'ten-headed' Ravana. He goes on to weave a story that Ravana used to wear a necklace in which his face was reflected in nine gems which his mother hung around his neck. Hence Ravana came to be called the 'ten-headed' one. Vimalasuri states that Ravana visited a Jaina shrine on the Meru mountain where he took the vow that he would never seek another's wife, thereby portraying him as a devout Jaina. Further, in the *Paumacariyam* Ravana defeats Indra of the Vidyadhara dynasty and not the lord of the gods. Thus the nature of the treatment of the character of Ravana, and the general account of the Raksasa and Vanara families in the Jaina versions of the story can be explained when we analyze the purpose and emphasis. Vimalasuri also purges the epic of exaggeration, which he vows to achieve at the outset of the Epic.

In the *Paumacariyam*, Kumbhakarna is a religious minded individual. He is well trained in various arts and his sleep is timely. The author does not mention any abnormal traits in him. He is shown to have taken a vow to daily perform worship of the Jinas. Kumbhakarna here is portrayed as religious minded individual without diabolic traits. In canto eight it is specifically mentioned that Kumbhakarna was really a pious man and that the heretics have misrepresented him. This is significant because of the suggestion that Kumbhakarna is misrepresented by virtue of his being a Jaina. The author casts the aspersion that this is done by those who are not Jainas and belong to other religious traditions.

In *Paumacariyam*, Kaikeyi is represented as a mother who tries to prevent her son from becoming

an ascetic; hence, she demanded that he be allowed to accede to the throne. She does not demand Rama's exile; in fact, Rama himself volunteers to go to forest out of love for Bharata who he knows would not accept the crown in his presence. In *Paumacariyam*, Kaikeyi asked only for one boon, that too when she saw that both her husband and son were renouncing the world. The author states that in order to avoid this situation she decided to seek the boon. With the help of this boon she prevented her son, Bharata from becoming an ascetic. The author also states that Kaikeyi accompanied Bharata to the forest to bring Rama back and requested him to occupy the throne as Bharata was a novice:

Rajjam kerehi niyayam, Bharaho viya sikkhanio te;

Mahila sahavacavala, adihapehi sahavamailla;

Tam me Khamahi puttaya, jam padikulam kayam tujjha.

The above reference clearly suggests that Vimalasuri is portraying her in good light. This can be linked to the fact that later in the *Paumacariyam*, Kaikeyi becomes a Jaina nun. Hence, the author deliberately keeps her away from the sin of sending Rama to the forest.

Paumacariyam begins with the King questioning Gautamacharya about the 'True *Ramayana*'. Vimala is credited with bringing in 'element of historicity' to the epic tradition. Rama is stripped of any divine pretensions, Sita is the natural daughter of Janaka and Raksasas are called Vindhyaadharas and so on. It is with a view to removing all absurdities, anomalies, inconsistencies and incredible elements in the *Ramayana* narratives in circulation that Vimala undertakes the composition of *Paumacarya*. For the sake of endowing sanctity and legitimacy to his project, Vimala states that he is presenting the life of Rama as was proclaimed by Lord Mahavira himself. This study is an attempt to unfold the influences and motivating factors at the time of the composition of the *Paumacariyam*. The very first factor that leaves an impression on the content of the book is the author himself. The very fact that Vimalasuri is a Jaina, is amply reflected in the Epic. Vimalasuri attempts to provide the Jaina followers with characters they can look upon as 'ideals' by borrowing from a common cultural pool so as to pull them away from other religious sects.

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