

1.3 The Future of Jainism - Sixth Ara

Jains believe in God, and they build temples for Gods. Some scholars believe that Jains are presumed to have borrowed the notion of temple, Idol, worships etc. from Hinduism. However, there are certain examples in which the idols were found to have been tracing back to first century. The Hindu way of worship- such as *Arati* (Moving a lamp in front of Idol) bathing and decoration of Idols, offering flowers and fruits to the Idols, and singing the devotional songs etc. are some of the ways which have been introduced in Jainism since 8th century. This influence could be result of adopting of good practices from others, or it could be because of trying to reconcile with the opponents to lessen their opposition. It is believed that a Jain Saint (Monk) *Jinesenā*, having perceived the dangers inherent in interacting with Hindu majority; co-opted some Hindu practices in Jainism.

The temples, the idols, the rituals and the ascetics –all play very important role in building the community feelings in short run; but play more significant role in supporting the religion to survive for many years. These have remained a binding force for the followers.

The greatest binding force of Jainism is *Navkar* or *Namaskar Mahamantrā*. It is most sacred Jain Prayer. It is prayer in which respect is paid not to any individual or even *Tirthankara*, but to all spiritual leaders-

1. *Arihant* Those souls who have gained total victory over themselves and have shown the path to *Mokshā*
2. *Sidhā* Perfect, Pure and liberated Soul.
3. *Acharyā* The head of religious order.
4. *Upadhyayā* Teachers of the scriptures.
5. *Sadhus* All ascetic monks and nuns.

This *Namaskar Mahamantrā* is indeed a great Mantra known to all Jains, chanted respectfully by all Jains, considered to be very sacred by all Jains, and considered to be a perfect *Mantrā*, A *mantrā* of all *mantās*.

The future of Jainism is also related to monks and nuns. They have no material possession of their own. They even do not stay at one place for longer time. Their '*Aparigrahā*' vow forbids them from doing so. Even in most difficult circumstances, they move on foot-bare feet they walk longer distances. On their way, they stay only in place of temporary shelter- *Upashrayā*. Wherever they go, they give religious discourses to Jain householders, and imparts information about philosophical intricacies of Jainism. The Jain men and women highly revere these monks and nuns. This reverence on one hand and dependency to know philosophical intricacies of religion on the other on Jain monks and nuns by the lay followers is the great ray of hope for this religion to survive.