

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF JAINS IN  
KARNATAKA: A STUDY OF DIVERGENCE BETWEEN  
DIGAMBAR AND SVETHAMBAR JAINS**

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## **Introduction:**

Jainism is an original and ancient Indian religion which goes back to the pre-Aryan period of primitive currents of religious and metaphysical speculation. The images, seals and other finds amongst the discoveries at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro disclose splendid representative specimen like the images of *Risabha*, the bull, the first Tirthankara with his emblem, the swastika which is the emblem of *Suparsva*, the 7<sup>th</sup> Tirthankara and a seal containing a script deciphered as Jinesvara.

Jainism does not recognize the authority of the Vedas, and its fundamental principles are different by nature from those in each of the systems of the Vedic school. The Rigveda and Yajurveda refer to *Risabha*, *Suparsva* and *Neminatha*, the first, the seventh and twenty-second Tirthankaras respectively. It is a Pre-Vedic religion which flourished in India even before the advent of Aryans to India.

## **Inscriptions:**

It is an established fact of history that many rulers in ancient Bihar and the territories around were either patrons or followers of Jainism. Chetaka, the ruler of Lichhavi, was a Jain and he gave his sister to Siddhartha. Mahavira was born of this wedlock. Some of the members of the Nanda dynasty were Jains. So was Chandragupta Maurya who later followed Acharya Bhadrabahu to the south. The Kalinga territory was occupied by Jains since the time of Parsva. It is, therefore, natural that there should be some reminiscences of Jainism in that part of the country.

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### **Jainism and Buddhism:**

Jyoti prasad Jain has mentioned a number of references which show that Jainism is older than Buddhism. Prof. Hermann Jacobi has referred to the common misconception of Jainism being an offshoot of Buddhism and dispelled all doubts when he said: “*The Jains being non-Brahmanical have worked upon popular notions of a more primitive and cruder character, e.g. animistic ideas in this country*’ (Jacobi)

### **Jainism in Karnataka:**

Jainism existed in Karnataka before 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. During 2<sup>nd</sup> century Shrutakevali Acharya Bhadrabahu along with 12,000 Munis migrated in to Karnataka from Bihar due to severe drought and famine over 12 years in that region. He was a Guru of King Chandra Gupta Maurya. After renunciation, the King too had come to south India along with thousands of followers. As an evidence to this, there are inscriptions on the hills of Chandragiri Betta at Shravanabelagola in Hassan district. These followers belonged to *Digambar sect of Jains*. Those who did not come with Bhadrabahu muni and followers of the leader Sthulabhadra Acharya formed another sect of Jainism in North India called ‘*Svetambers.*’

Bhadrabahu took *Sallekanavrata* (voluntarily inviting death) in Chandragiri (chikkabetta.) Later several Munis moved to other places such as Koponangar (Koppal) Laxmeswar, Lakkundi (in Gadag Dist). Chintamani Attimabbe, a Jain lady belonging to Digambar sect had constructed many Jain temples and published Jain literature on mass scale and distributed freely to readers under’ *Shastradana*’ (Literature donation). She was wife of Minister in the then rulers of Chalukya dynasty and gave Patronage to Ranna poet at Vengi place now it is Annigeri in present Gadag district.

## **Statement of the Problem:**

Constitution of India provides certain special safeguards for the welfare of minorities (both religious and linguistic minorities) under articles-29 and 30. In Karnataka State, religious minorities are protected under section-2(d) of the Karnataka State Minority Commission Act of 1994. The Act considers Muslims, Christians, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs and Zoroastrians (Parsis) as religious minority communities in the State. Most of the minorities of Karnataka are backward.

Religious minorities in Karnataka constitute 16 percent of the state population (2011) spread over 30 districts in the state. Muslims account for 12.92 percent, Christians 1.88 percent, Jains 0.72 percent, Buddhists 0.16 percent and others such as Sikhs and Parsis 0.32 percent in the state. Out of sixteen percent of minorities, 80 percent belong to Muslims followed by Christians at 12 percent, Jains at 5 percent and the remaining 3 percent belong to other minorities in the state of Karnataka

Though Karnataka is a progressive State and has liberal policies for minorities, no significant changes are noticed in their socio-economic conditions. The reasons for this situation are lack of education, inadequate skill development, inbuilt incapacity of deprived people to rise to the occasion and take appropriate action to avail the benefits from government schemes and programs. These are obviously the symptoms of their social backwardness leading to economic backwardness.

## **Objectives of the Study:**

The specific objectives of the present study are to:

- i) give a demographic picture of Jain community as per 2011 Census both at Centre and state level,
- ii) review the socio-economic conditions of Jain community in the light of the survey reports in the state. (*viz., Rehaman Khan, Abdul Aziz of NLSIU*),
- iii) identify the factors responsible for divisions among the Jain community especially Digambars and Svetambars in the country and explore the reasons for continuing divergence between the two sects,
- iv) examine the causes of divergence that continue to exist among Jains, and
- v) to assess the magnitude of the problem of divergence and suggest appropriate measures for reducing the divergence.

## **Review of Literature:**

Studies on Jainism and its emergence, its principles, patronage of Kings and past rulers can be found in plenty. The book on Jain Doctrines and Jain philosophy could be found in “ *Compendium of Jainism*’ written by former Justice T K Tukol published by Karnataka University, Dharwad in 1980. A book written by Jyoti Prasad Jain: *Jainism, the oldest living religion*, published by *Jain cultural research society*, Benaras spells out Jainism’s existence even before Buddhism and Hinduism in India. Hermann Jacobi’s work on *Studies in Jainism* ‘Sahitya Samsodhaka Karyalaya, Ahmadabad and A.N. Upadhaya’s *Paramatma parkas of Yogindudeva* published by Sirmad Rajachandra Ashram, Anand and the work of Forlong, J.R.G., *Shorter Studies in the Science of Contemporary Religions* are all connected to the history and philosophy of Jainism. However, the work of M.D. Vasantraj, *Jains in Karnataka - Sharvanabelagola-A survey*, Prasaranga, Bangalore university 1983 shows how Jainism in Karnataka has been a popular religion.

## **Research Gap:**

None of the above studies has thrown light on the socio economic conditions of the Jain community in the state. The socio-economic aspects of Jain community can be traced to the surveys undertaken by the Karnataka state Minority Commission and the Ministry of Minority welfare, Government of Karnataka. Government of Karnataka recognized this community as a Minority community as early as 1994 even though the Central Government recognized Jains as minorities only in 2014. However, a research study by R G Desai as ICSSR Senior Fellow at ISEC, Bangalore during 2103-15, made an attempt to throw some light on the efforts of the Karnataka State Minority Development Corporation(KMDC) Ltd., to improve the socio-economic conditions of these sections in the state of Karnataka.

Based on the population of the state, the share of the resources to be utilized by KMDC in the ratio of 80 : 12 : 5 : 3 percent for Muslims, Christians Jains & Sikhs respectively was explored and the report was submitted to ICSSR, New Delhi. Whether the present system is capable of delivering the services for these minorities or is there any need for a change in the policy prescription were the pertinent questions attempted by him.

In the present study, the issues of socio- economic conditions of Jains in general and divergence between the Digambar and Swetambar sects in particular have been attempted from the point of demography, location, social and economic conditions, causes for divergence and suggested measures to reduce the divergence.

## **Research Methodology:**

There have been commissions and committees which have generated some data relating to socio-economic conditions of minorities. The Karnataka state Commission for Minorities, particularly K Rahman Khan Commission

report of 1995 presents a lot of information about the minorities. The present study drew some conclusions from the said report as well as from the report of the Centre for the study of Social Exclusion and inclusive policy of National Law School of India University on *Socio- economic conditions of Religious minorities in Karnataka- a study towards their inclusive development*(2015). Census reports and the reports of NSSO were also referred to. Evaluation studies carried out by researchers at ISEC and NLSIU were also consulted.

### **Demographic changes as per 2011 Census:**

At the National level, a lot of demographic changes have taken place by religious communities between Census of 2001 and 2011. The Census results of 2011 are presented in Table-1.1 which reveal the following facts.

Table -1.1 All India Percentage share of Population by Religious Communities between 2001 and 2011 Census.

Sl. No.	Religion	Population In crores	2011 percent	2001 percent	Decadal growth between 2001-11
1	Hindu	96.62	79.80	80.50	16.8
2	Muslims	17.22	14.22	13.40	24.6
3	Christians	2.78	2.20	2.30	15.5
4	Sikhs	2.08	1.72	1.90	8.4
5	Buddhists	0.84	0.70	0.80	5.4
<b>6</b>	<b>Jains</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>0.40</b>	<b>6.1</b>
7	Others	0.79	0.68	0.70	6.1
8	Not Stated	0.29	0.30	-	-
	Total	121.09	100	100	

Source: Govt. of India population Census reports 2001 and 2011

Jains at the national level are mostly found in six states such as Maharashtra (1.2 percent), Gujarat(1 percent), Delhi (1 percent), Rajasthan (0.9 percent), Madhya Pradesh (0.8 percent) and Karnataka (0.7 percent) accounting for 56 percent of the total Jain population of 45 lakhs in the 2011 census. There are two sects of Jains- Svetambar and Digambar; while the

members belonging to the first sect are mainly into business, the latter are into agriculture and petty business. Poverty is high among *Digambers*. Hence *Digamber* Jains in Karnataka are given the backward tag of III B category as for reservation of jobs and seats in educational institutions.

In Karnataka most of the Jains are concentrated in eight (out of thirty) districts of the state viz. Belgaum, Bangalore Urban, Dharwad, Bagalkot, Mysore, Daksina Kannada Haveri and Shimoga, where more than 56 percent of them have resided in these districts and the rest have spread over in all other districts which is evident from the Table-1.2. Compared to other religious minorities, Jains are educationally advanced among all minorities in the country due to higher literacy rate among both males and females.

### **Divisions in Jain community:**

A L Basham states in his book *The Wonder that was India:* ‘‘Out of this migration arose the great schism of Jainism, on a point of monastic discipline, Bhadrabahu the elder of the community, who has led the emigrants, has insisted on the retention of the rule of nudity, which Mahavira had established. Sthulabhadra, the leader of the monks who had remained in the North, allowed his followers to wear the white garments- *‘the schism did not become final until the 1<sup>st</sup> Century A D.*’’ Mrs Stevenson also said that the division became final in AD 79 or 82.

Table-1.2

Jain Population in Karnataka (District wise) in descending order as per 2011 Census

Sl. No.	Districts	Population Figures	Percentage to Total Jains in State
1	Belgaum	1,78,310	40.50
2	Bangalore Urban	83,090	18.87
3	Dharwad	29,037	6.59
4	Bagalkot	25,198	5.72
5	Mysuru	14,419	3.27
6	Dakshin Kannada	10,397	2.36
7	Haveri	9,837	2.20
8	Shimoga	9,234	2.00
9	Bijapur	8,665	1.96
10	Bellary	8,044	1.80
11	Davangere	6,417	1.45
12	Gadag	5,993	1.34
13	Hassan	5,820	1.30
14	Tumkur	5,067	1.20
15	Gulburga	4,865	1.10
16	Chickmagalur	4,710	1.06
17	Udupi	4,534	1.02
18	Raichur	4,156	0.94
19	Chitradurga	3,778	0.85
20	Mandya	3,607	0.81
21	Uttar Kannada	3,624	0.82
22	Koppal	2,898	0.65
23	Kolar	2,494	0.56
24	Yadgiri	1,579	0.35
25	Bangalore Rural	1,045	0.23
26	Chikkaballapur	975	0.22
27	Ramanagar	859	0.19
28	Bidar	680	0.15
29	Chamarajnar	492	0.11
30	Kodagu	250	0.05
	State Level	4,40,230	100- 00

Source :Govt of India, Religious census 2011.

Though there never were any fundamental doctrinal differences between the two sects but the division continues even to this day. This is due to the language followed by them. While the Digambers in Karnataka perform puja in

local language and perform it with the help of Purohit, Svetambars of North India perform puja themselves in Hindi language without the help of Purohit.

There are four stages to attain renunciation by Muni and to become nude. A Gent has to undergo the stages of (1) *Sravaka* (2) *Khsullaka* (3) *Iyalaka* and (4) *Muni Deexa as Muni*. Sravaka becomes Khsullaka wears Langoti for some years and at a later stage he works under Muni sangh as a disciple and after knowing the capacity of the Khsullaka to control senses and longer fast as well as the learning of the Jain Agamas etc., the Head Muni gives him the Muni patta. Then he becomes Nude and take food in hand given by shravaks, walk on bear foot, lives in Tyagi houses built by sravakas sometime in the Jain Matts, Nudity indicates total renunciation from the worldly things but his duty is to teach (called Swadyay) more about the scripts, principles and thereby propagate Jainism.

Similarly the lady also has to pass through four stages 1) Sravaki 2) Kshullki 3) Aryaki and 4) Mataji. Sraavaki will have to be always in the Muni Sangh and follow her Guru but always have to wear white dress, keep fast, read scripts and deliver lectures but she cannot become nude as she is not Muni but Mataji.

### **Sub-Sects among the Digambars and Svethambars:**

The sub-sects in Digambars are Terahapantha, Bispantha and Taranapantha. Some minor sects in South India emerged on the basis of occupations such as Panchamas, Bogara, chaturtha etc. Similarly, there are sub sects in Svethambars such as Murthipujakas, Sthanikwasi and Terapanthi.etc. These sects emerged due to different approaches in practicing puja and also due to Some Munis preaching differently to the sravaka. Jainism does not believe in Idol worship but because of Hindu influence and the patronage of Kings and early Rulers they started building Temples and Matts. In Karnataka, the

profession followed gave rise to sects. For example, agriculturists were called as Jain Chaturthas, Bangle sellers became Bogar Jains, and jewellery sellers became Javari Jains and so on.

Whatever may be the number of divisions, all schools are unanimous in recognizing the Tirthankaras and the principles preached by them. *The differences are superficial in that they pertain more to form than to the substance of theology, ethics and metaphysics of the Jain religion .*

### **Divergence between the two sects:**

Divergence is analyzed from different angles such as demographic, social and economic conditions of both sects of Jain community in the state of Karnataka. This is based on important sources of survey reports such as the report of the High Power Committee on Socio- Economic and Educational survey 1994 on *Religious Minorities in Karnataka* under the chairmanship of K Rahman Khan MP, submitted in 1995, and the second report submitted by Prof .Abdul Aziz and others of National Law school of India University *Religious Minorities in Karnataka* submitted to the Department of Planning Government of Karnataka during 2015-16.

### **The Demographic and Educational Divergence:**

The Svethambar sect Jains continuously migrated from North and settled down in cities and towns of Karnataka and their main profession continues to be business, trade and commerce. But the Digambar sect Jains are natives settled in villages and small towns. Their main profession is agriculture and allied services as well as petty business. As per the 1995 report,( Rahman Khan) the number of Digambar sect Jains who lived in rural area were 76.11 percent as against 13.43 percent Svethambaras . It indicates that 86.57 percent of Svetambaras stayed in urban area and carried their trade, and

business. While Digambaras continued to be cultivators, laborers and petty businessmen in the rural and semi urban areas.

In the first survey ( Rehaman Khan) the total number of Jain families covered was 83 percent. The number of Digambar households were 44,412 and Svetambar households were 10 146, in the state of Karnataka. The sex ratio also differed between the two sects. while it was 907 females per 1000 male population for Digambaras, the Svetambaras had 888 females per 1000 males.

As far as literacy is concerned, the highest rate is with Jains among the religious minorities in the country or State. But , there is a difference between the two sects of Jains. While Digambaras have a 83.86 percent literacy rate . Svetambaras have 86.93 percent. This difference is due to their respective location and profession .

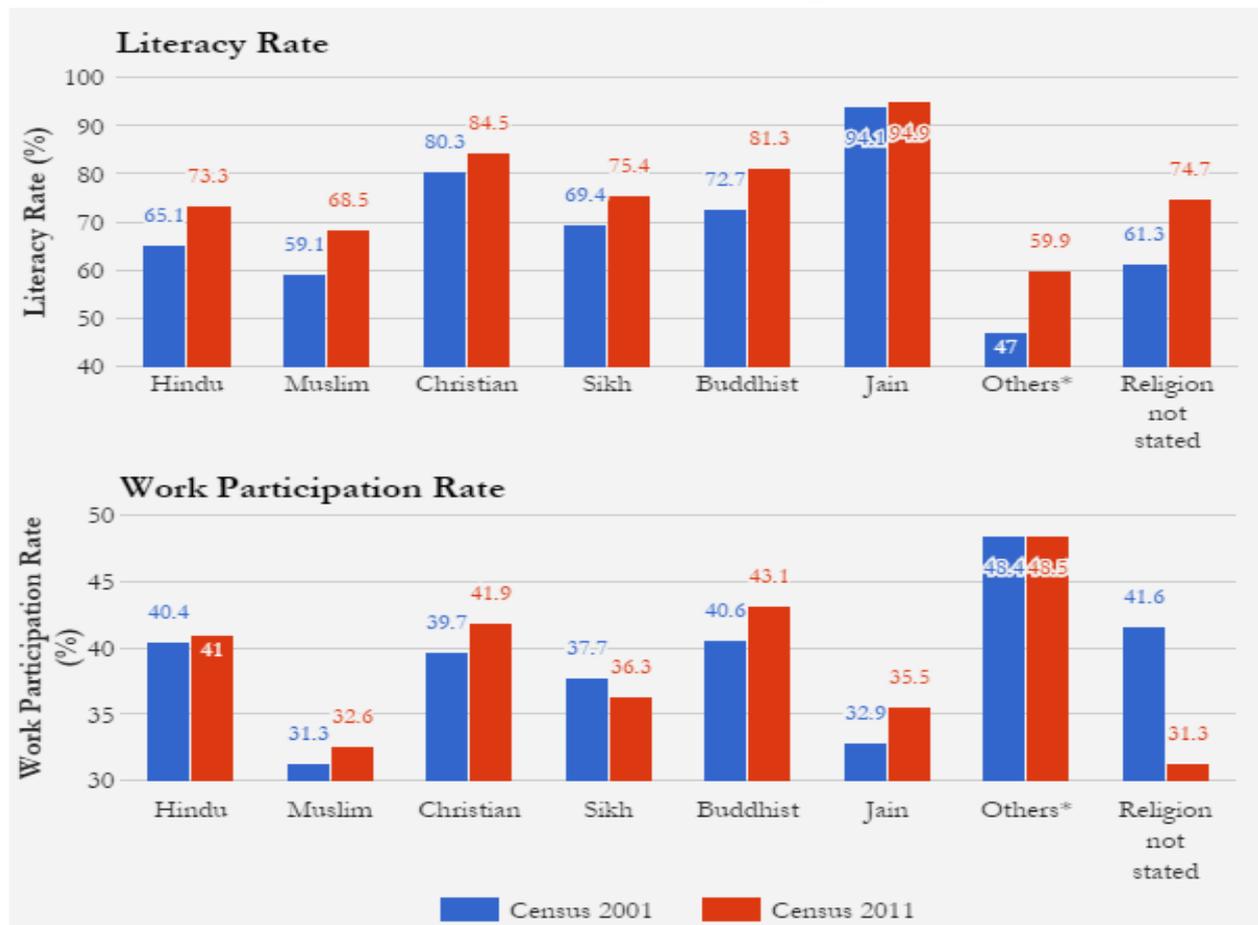
A pathetic situation is revealed by the 1995 report (*Rehman Khan*) about widows. Among all minorities, Digambar sect has the highest number of widows with 11.93 percent followed by other religious groups such as Christians 11.23 percent, Muslims 10.17 percent and the least per cent of 6.42 among Svethambar Jains. As per 2016 survey, the number of widows among the digambar Jains are 8590 as against 760 of Svetambaras.

However, the figures of 2011 Census are encouraging in terms of both literacy and work participation rate but figures are related to combined two sects of Jain community. According to the data presented in the Lok Sabha on July 21, 2016, the literacy rate in India rose by 8.2 percentage points over the decade, from 64.8 percent in 2001 to 73 percent in 2011. Minorities have shown considerable improvement in terms of literacy rates and work participation ratio over a decade as per Census 2011. Despite improvement, Muslims still lag behind other communities with a literacy rate of 68.5 percent, compared to Hindus (73.3 percent), Christians (84.5percent), Sikhs (75.4 percent) and Jains

(94.9 percent). Muslims, who comprise 14.4 percent of India's population, rank at the bottom of the higher-education ladder.

FIGURE-1.1

### Jains Have Highest Literacy Rates, Muslims Lowest Work Participation Rates



Jains reported the maximum improvement in work-participation rate by 2.6 percentage points, from 32.9 percent in 2001 to 35.5 percent in 2011. Jains were followed by Buddhists (2.5 percentage points), Christians (2.2 percentage points), and Muslims (1.3 percentage points). While Sikhs have seen a decline of 1.4 percentage points in work-participation rates, from 37.7 percent in 2001 to 36.3 percent in 2011 and Hindus have seen a marginal improvement by 0.6 percentage.

### Economic Divergence:

Divergence in the economic field is very wide between the two sects of Jain community. Seventy percent Svethambara Jain families had an annual income above Rs.10,000 during 1994-95, as against 34 percent Digambar families. It is interesting to see that families having income upto Rs.6,000 are 29 percent among the Digambers while it is only 14 percent among the Svetambers. As per the Rehman Khan report, the households below the poverty line are 50 percent among the digambers while it is 21 percent for Svetambers.

Table-1.3 Community-wise Percentage of Households According to Income Group

Community	Households below poverty line with income of Rs.6000	Households below income of Rs.10,000	Households income above Rs.10,000	Number of households
Muslims	55	71	29	834917
Converted Christians	43	56	44	52373
Other Christians	35	50	50	95116
<b>Digambar Jains</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>44412</b>
<b>Svethambar Jains</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>10146</b>
Sikhs	36	46	54	973
Buddhists	65	74	26	1231
Parsees	24	32	68	398

Source: From the Report of Rahman Khan, 1995, page 20.

From Table 1.3 it is evident that the Svetambar Jains are clearly having higher income compared to Digambar Jains. This might be due to the profession they are engaged in. This difference still continues even today. Another possibility is the location or residence. It is evident from the Survey-2015 that Digambar Jains have the highest rural population at 79.9 percent and Svetambers have the lowest rural population at 20.1 percent. In fact, over a period 1995 to 2015 the Digambar Jain rural population has increased from 76.11 percent to 79.9 percent.

There is a North-South divide among Jains. The major difference is that Svethambers are migrants from Rajasthan, Gujarat, and UP while most of the

Digambaras are from the South. Majority of Digambaras speak Kannada while majority of Svetambaras speak Hindi/Gujarathi/ Rajasthani.

### **Type of Schools Studied:**

Digambar Jain students of 10<sup>th</sup> standard and below, who studied in Government schools with Kannada medium are 59.18 percent and those who studied in English medium are only 0.98 percent. Students who studied in Private schools with Kannada medium are 12.37 percent and those who studied in English medium 7.48 percent.

On the other hand, the students of Svetambar sect who studied up to 10<sup>th</sup> standard in Government schools with Kannada medium are 17.22 percent and with English medium 5.13 percent, and those who studied in Private schools with Kannada medium are 3.62 percent and with English medium are 45.64 percent.

The differences between the two sects of jains are very clear. Thus, the pass percentage in primary and secondary education is higher among Digambaras compared to Svetambaras. On the other hand, the higher pass percentage is noticed in the SSLC, PUC and higher education level in respect of Svetambaras. This indicates that Svetambaras jains spent more money for higher education, specially the technical and professional education. The pass percentage in professional courses for Svetambaras is 2.19 percent as against 1.02 percentage among the Digambaras.

### **Implications of the study:**

- 1 It is evident that both the sects of jains are worshipping the same Tirthankar idols, their ultimate aim is to imbibe the principles of Jainism in the form of '*Panchanuvrat*' -*truth, non-violence, non-stealing, aparigriha (non-possession of worldly things) and Brahmachary (celibacy)*

- 2 Jains strongly believe in the three gems of Jainism viz Right Faith, Right knowledge, and Right conduct called Rathnathrayas. In their holy scripture *'TATHVATRA SUTRA'* there is a sentence which sums all the three gems as *SAMYAK DARSHAN, JNAN, CHARITRANI MOX MARGAM.'*
- 3 Whatever may be the number of divisions, all schools are unanimous in recognizing the Tirthankaras and the principles preached by them. The differences are superficial in that they pertain more to form than to the substance of theology, ethics and metaphysics of Jain religion
- 4 The Svethambar sect Jains continuously migrated from North and settled in cities and towns of Karnataka and their main profession continues to be business, trade and commerce. But most of the Digambar sect Jains are natives settled in villages and small towns. Their main profession is agriculture and allied services as well as petty business.
- 5 Divergences are very wide between the two sects of Jain community in terms of income, assets and even education. While the pass percentage in primary secondary education is high among Digambaras than Svetambaras, higher pass percentage is noticed in the SSLC, PUC and higher education level in the case of Svetambaras. This indicates that Svetambar jains spent more for higher education, specially for technical and professional education.
- 6 The divergence is explored on the basis of locality, profession and residence. Since digambaras live mostly in rural areas and depend on agriculture and petty business, it is needless to say that there is wide gap between them and Svetambaras in Karnataka.

## **Suggestions :**

In order to reduce the divergence among Jain community and to upgrade their socio-economic conditions, the following tentative suggestions may be considered.

1. The division of the community was started early by the then religious heads called Acharyas such as (BadhraBahu Muni, SthulaBadhra Muni). Now it should be corrected by the present religious leaders called *Bhattarakas*. They are heading Jain Matts at different places. They should evince interest in uniting both the sects by organizing more frequent meetings among them and performing Aaradhanas, poojas and building temples.
2. Digambara sect Jains should change their profession and location as early as possible. Though this is happening in the rural areas, its pace is very slow.
3. Most important thing is digambaras should learn languages of Hindi, along with the local language of Kannada and come to the main stream of the society. Since Svethambaras are more flexible, they readily adapt to the changing circumstances, learn the languages of the region they live in and carry out their trade, business and commerce smoothly.
4. Skill development is a must for digambara jains. They will have to learn different skills. In this regard help may be sought not only from government but also from rich Jain philanthropists.
5. They should unite by shedding their sub-sects such as Panchamas, Chathurthas, Bogars, Banajigas etc. The Jain Associations and Committees of Basadi's (temples) should strive hard to unite them.

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