

CHAPTER-VI

BAHUBALI COLOSSUS OF SRAVANA- BELAGOLA

1. BAHUBALI 'S LIFT AND HIS IMAGE

Sravana- Belagola is Known all over the world for its colossal image of Bahubali or Gommatesvara which is regarded as one of the wonders of the world. This marvellous image was caused to be erected on the vindhyagiri hill in the year 981 A.D by chamunda –Raya. But the legendary accounts say that this magnificent image of Bahubali was already there on the hill in a concealed manner and that chamunda- Raya discovered the image and consecrated it in a proper way. Hence to Find out the real facts it is necessary to know the original story of Bahaubali 's life, the traditional account of Bahuali's image and the historical evidence about the actual installation of image at sravana Belagola in the last quarter of the 10th century A. D.

Bahubali, the first Jaina saint to attain liberation in this ' avasarpin kala', i.e., the descending half arc of time , was the son of Lord Rshabha, the first Jaina Tirthankara, who flour-ished at the dawn of civilization and taught mankind the first lessons of a cultured life. Lord Rshabha-deva, the son of Nabhiraja and Marudevi, was a patriarch king of Ayodhya. Lord Rshabha-natha had many sons.among whom Bharata and Bahubali were very prominent.Bharata was the crown-prince and he

succeeded his father to the throne of Ayodhya. By his prowess Bharata became the first universal monarch and due to his profound impact on the country, India came to be known as " Bharatavarsha", i.e., the land of Bharata. Bahu-bali was given the kingdom of ' Asmaka' from south India which he ruled from its capital seat at podanapura. In this way after dividing his kingdom among his sons, Lord Rshabha- deva retired to the Himalayas and adopted the Jaina ascetic way of life to teach mankind the path of salvation.

In course of time king Bharata was moved with an intense desire to establish his power as chakravarti ', i.e., Emperor. Bharata had in possession a wonderful ' chakra', i.e., discus, which could not be withstood by any warrior in fight. With the help of this ' chakra', Bharata conquered all the countries in the six continents known at that time and returned to his capital Ayodya. But the ' chakra', did not enter the capital. Bharata then took this as a sign that there was still another territory on earth which had not been conquered by him, and, after reflection, came to the conclusion that there was only the kingdom of Asmaka, ruled by his brother Bahubali, which had not been subdued by him. Bharata then declared war on his brother Bahubali and with his entire army marched towards podanapura, where Bahubali also had gathered his army and was prepared to meet his brother Bharata on the battle-field. When both the armies were about to attack one another, the ministers of both the brothers stepped forward, prayed to their Lords not to fight and said, " O Lords ! both of you are divine personalities and your bodies are invulnerable. Why should these innocent soldiers be massacred and driven to the jaws of death? You may kindly decide your superiority by a dual combat", Ultimately the spirit of ' Ahimsa,' i.e. , non –violence, triumphed over ' Himsa', i.e., violence, and both the contending brother Bharata

and Bahubali, who were also naturally averse to any form of injury to any life, agreed to decide their question by three methods of righteous fight, viz.,

(i) 'Drishti-yuddha', i.e., looking at each other without winning, (ii) 'Jal-Yuddha', i.e., throwing water on each other's face, and (iii) 'Malla-yuddha', i.e., wrestling. In all these three combats Bahubali became victorious and his army shouted with applause. Thereupon, Bharata lost his temper and resorted to his all-powerful 'chakra', with which he strove to kill his brother. But even this 'chakra' could do no harm to Bahubali. No doubt Bahubali remained unhurt, at least in body, yet in his heart he was surely grieved. Though Emperor Bharata felt humiliated, Bahubali was not elated in spite of his victory. Bahubali pitied his brother's aggressive nature and the selfish ways of the world. He asked his brother to take over his kingdom and rule over it, renounced the world forthwith and adopted the life of a naked Jain ascetic. Bharata made obeisance to Bahubali and returned to Ayodhya. Bahubali, as an ascetic, was deeply engaged in meditation and was so much immersed in 'Dhyana', i.e., self-concentration, that he became absolutely unconscious of the external world. An ant-hill grew up at his feet, and even creepers wound themselves around his legs and hands. Subsequently, Bahubali obtained absolute knowledge and became the 'kevali', i.e., the Omniscient. All human beings on the earth, animals and birds gathered around Bahubali to pay homage and to hear His teachings. No less a person than Emperor Bharata became one of Bahubali's ardent devotees. Showing the Right path to the erring world, Bahubali became a Perfect soul and attained 'Nirvana', i.e., Salvation, on mount Kailasa. Later, the devotion of Bharata was so intense that he erected a standing colossal image of saint Bahubali in his memory at Podanapur. The image was 525 bow-lengths in height. In course of time the region around the image

having become infested with innumerable 'Kukkuta- sarpas' (The 'Kukk-uta-sarpa' is a fowl with a serpent's head and neck. It is the emblem of Goddess Padmavati) or cockatrices, the statue came to be known as 'Kukkutesvara'.

2. TRADITION ABOUT BAHUBALI'S IMAGE

The knowledge of this colossal image of Bahubali erected by Emperor Bharata at Podanapura created an intense desire in the mind of devoted Chamunda –Raya to see it . As a result, Chamunda- Raya set out in search of it. But on his way at Sravana –Belagoala he was informed in a dream that the journey was beyond his power owing to the distance and inaccessibility of the region, and that the same image of Bahubali would manifest itself on the larger hill at Sravana-Belagola by performing a particular feat. Accordingly, when Chamunda –Raya did the feat, the colossal image of Bahubali became visible on the summit of the vindhyagiri hill at Sravana- Be legola.

This traditional account of the discovery of the image is extremely interesting and has been given in detail by some classic works in sanskrit and kannada languages like :

1. 'Bhujabali- sataka' of 1550 A.D. written in Sanskrit by Doddaiya of Piriya-pattana,
2. 'Bhujabali –charite' of 1614 A.D. written in Kannada by panchabana of Sravana –Belagola,
3. 'Munivamsabhyudaya of about 1680 A.D. written in Kannada poems by chidananda-kavi,

4. 'Gommatesvara- charite' of about 1780 A.D. in kannada by Ananta-kavi,
5. 'Rajavali –kathe' of about 1838 A. D. in kannada by Devachandra, and
6. 'Sthala-purana' of 19th century A.D. in Kannada.

A well –known kannada poet, Panchakbana, in his 'Bhujabali- charite ', gives the tradition about the image in detail. It states that Rshabha-deva or Adinatha had two sons, Bharata by his wife Yasasvati and Bhujabali or Bahubali by his other wife Sunanda. Bhujabali married Ichchhadevi and was the ruler of Podanapura. Owing to some misunderstanding there was a battle between the two brothers, in which Bharata was defeated. Bhujabali , however, renounced the kingdom and became an ascetic. Bharata had a golden statue, 525 'marus' * in height, of Bhujabali made and set up. Only the gods worshipped the image, the region having become inaccessible to human beings due to 'kukkuta-sarpas' which infested it. A Jaina teacher, named, Jinasena, who visited southern Madhura, gave an account of the image at Podanapura to Kalala-Devi, the mother of Chamunda –Raya, who vowed that she would not taste milk until she saw Gommata or Bhujabali. Being informed of this by his wife Ajita-Devi, Chamunda-Raya set out with his mother on his journey to Podanapura. In the course of the journey, he stopped at Sravana-Belagola, went up the smaller hill to pay homage to Parsvanatha of the Chandragupta –Basti and to the foot –prints of Bhadrabahu, and descended. The same night goddess Padmavati and god Brahma appeared to him in a dream and said , " Around the god at

Podanapura to a considerable distance ' Kukkuta-sarpas' keep guard and will not allow anyone to approach. It is not therefore possible for

A ' maru' or 'vyara' is the measure of length equal to the space between the tips of the fingers of either hand when the arms are extended.

You to see him. Pleased with your devotion, he will , however, manifest himself to you on the summit of the larger hill .Purify yourself and discharge a golden shot from your bow from the smaller hill and the god will instantly become visible." The mother Kalala-Devi, too, had a similar dream. The next morning chamunda –Raya purified himself and standing on rock on the smaller hill, facing south, discharged from his bow a golden shot to a boulder on the larger hill. As soon as the shot struck the boulder and head of Gommata revealed itself. When afterwards the officiating priest placed a diamond chisel on the boulder, and struck it with a jewel hammer, the layers of stone fell off and the full image became visible. Then with the help of sculptors chamunda –Raya caused to be made the 'Patala gamba ' with Brahma to the right , the 'Yaksha-gamba ' with Brahma in front, the upper storey, the ' Tyagada-pillar' with Brahma, the entrance known as 'Akhandabagilu' carved out of a single stone, and flights of steps here and there. He then made elaborate arrangements for performing the 'abhisheka' or anointment of Gommata. He also founded a village at the foot of the hill and granted for the god a large number of villages (68 named) of the revenue value of 96,000 'varahas' and named the village as 'Belagola ', He obtained renown by founding this 'abhinava'. i. e., modern Podanapura.

Similarly , the work " Bhujabali-Sataka" composed in sanskrit verses by Doddaiya gives the tradition with a little variation. It states that in the city of Madhura in the Dravida country there was a king , named Rajamalla, who encouraged the spread of Jaina tenets, and was the worshipper of simhanandi, belonging to the Desiya gana. His minister was called Chamunda-Raya..One day , when the king sat with his minister in the royal court, a travelling merchant came there and told them that in the north there was a town called Podanapuri, where there was an image of Bahubali, also called Gommata, established by Bharata. Hearing this, the devout Chamunda Raya resolved to visit the shrine of the image ,and going home narrated the tale to his mother Kalika-Devi, whereupon she also wished to go with him to the sacred spot. Chamunda-Raja then went to his spiritual preceptor, Ajitasena, who revered Simhanandi and made a vow before the latter that he will not drink milk till he sees the image of Bahubali. Accompanied by Acharya Nemichandra, his mother and numerous soldiers and attendants, Chamunda-Raja started on his pilgrimage and reached the Vindhyagiri in Sravana-Belagola. In the night the Jaina Goddess Kushmandi (the Yakshi attendant on Neminatha, the 22nd Tirthankara) appeared in a dream to Chamunda –Raja, Acharya Nemichandra and kalika –Devi and told them that it was very difficult to go to Podanapuri but on that very hill there is an image of Bahubali , formerly established by Ravana, which will be visible if the hill be cleft by a golden arrow . According to the dream. On the next morning, Chamunda –Raja stood on the hill with his face towards the south and let loose a golden arrow from his bow. Immediately the mountain was cleft in twain , and an image of Bahubali became visible. Chamunda-Raja then established and consecrated the image and granted lands for the worship of this image.when king Rajamallaheard of this affair, he

conferred the title of "Raya" on Chamunda-Raja and granted further lands for the regular worship of the image .

Further, the 'Gommatesvaca- charite' of Ananta- Kavi tells us that On Chamunda-Raya shooting arrows the image fo Gommata revealed itself to him. He got it touched up and improved by sculptors and then had it consecrated.

Moreover, according to " Sthala –purana* also, the image of Bahubali was already in existence at Sravana –Belagola. It states that " Chamunda-Raya. King of Dakshina Madhura, and the descendant of Jaina Kshetri Pandu, set out with his family , escorted by an army of infantry, cavalry , elephants, and charriots, with a view of visiting the god Gommatesvara (500 'bilu' high) at Podana –pura, and the 1254 other gods in the smaller temples scattered throughout the surrounding country. En route he came to Sravana-Belagola Kshetra' having heard a good deal about the god Gommatesvara (18 'bilu' high). He repaired the ruined temples and among other ceremonies had that of sprinkling the god performed. He appointed siddhacharya as Guru of the Matha, to conduct the daily , monthly, annual and other processions. He established in the Matha a Chatram

* for English translation of " Sthala-purana'' , vide copt. J.S.F, Mackenzie; " sravana Belagola", Indiam Antiquary, vol. II May 1873, pp129-133. Where food, medicine, and education were provided for pilgrims...For this purpose certain villages, giving an annual revenue of 1,96,000 pagodas, were made over to the temple.''

On the same lines in a kannada work ‘ Rajavali-kathe’, witten by Deva-Chandra in 1838 A.D.,the old storly is repeated, with variations in detail .It states Chamunda –Raya was a feudatory chief of king Rajamalla. His mother learnt from Adi-purana, when this work was being read to her, that in Podanapura, there was an image of Bahubali Thereupon she set out with her son to see to this image .But on her way on the hill where Bhadrabahu Svami died, she dreamt one night that Padmavati appeared to her and said that there is an image of Bahubali on that very hill , covered by stones , which was for merly worshipped by Rama aod Ravana and also by the latter’s wife Mandodari . On the next morning an arrow was shot and the image of Bahubali became visible.

The Kannada poetic composition " Munivamsabhyudaya' of Chidananda-Kavi written in 1680 A.D. also refers to god Rama in this connection and furnishes the information that Rama and sita brought the images of Gommta and Parsva form Lanka and were worshipping them respectively on the larger and the smaller hills of Sravana-Belagoa. It further states that unable to lift these images up, they left them there and went their way.

Thus, in the legendary accounts of the Jainas, we find that Chamunada- Raya was not the peron who caused the image of Bahubali to be made, but that there was already an image of Bahubali on the hill at Sravana-Belagola which he established and consecrated in the proper way .The high priest at sravana Belagola had also stated, according to these traditions, that "in ancient times, an image of Bahubali was at this place, self formed form earth, under the shape of Gomata Isvara Svami which Ravana,the monarch of the Rakshasas, worshipped to obtain happiness’’,

3. INSTALLATION OF BAHUBALI IMAGE

The traditional accounts about the Bahubali image maintain that the image was already there on the Vindhyagiri hill at shravana – Belagola from ancient times in a concealed form, that Chamunda –Raya came to know about it about it through divine suggestion and that Chamunda –Raya merely discovered the image and started its worship. But these legendary contentions cannot be accepted as true, because in the book concerned we find only a collection of traditions handed down from mouth to mouth, with variations arising from such a course. Again, the dates of many works containing these traditions cannot be definitely ascertained. But from their style it can be inferred that they were composed long after the establishment of the Bahubali image and that they were written in the form of narrating stories of a fictional nature. For example, it is stated that the book 'Rajavali –kathe' is "a compendium of Jaina history legends and chronology, drawn up early in the present century for Deviramma, a lady of Mysore royal family, by Devachandra of the Jaina establishment at Maleyur". (vide Lewis Rice : "Inscription at shravana –Belagola" (1889), Introduction, page 3). Similarly, the work 'Sthala-purana' was intended merely to be a collection of legends and fables. To mention one among many inaccuracies in 'Sthalapurana' we may refer to the statement that "Chamunda –Raya was the king of Dakshina Madura and the descendant of Jaina Kshatriya Panda", The historical fact is that Chamunda-Raya was only the minister and not the king.

It is obvious that in these works Chamunda- Raya has been depicted as merely the discoverer of the image, since the writers of these works desired to ascribe to the image a greater antiquity, causing the image to be considered as an object of deeper veneration.

But this major contention of these traditional accounts that Chamunda-Raya discovered the ancient Bahubali colossus at Sravana-Belagola cannot be accepted as historical truth in the absence of other kinds of evidence of a reliable nature. On the contrary there is ample historical evidence based on inscriptions, literary works and other reliable sources to prove that Chamunda –Raya did not discover but did install the Bahubals colossus. This historical fact can be seen form the following records:

Inscription No. 234 : This lengthy inscription , dated 1180 A.D. is carved on a stone on the left of the Boppana which categorically states that " Chamunda –Raya resolved to erect such an image himselif and with great effort succeded in getting this statue and set up."

2. Inscription No.254: This lengthy incription , dated 1398 A.D ., has been carved on the right pillar in Siddhara –Bastisituated outside the enclosure on the Vindhyagiri hill and clearly states that " In that city (i.e.Sravana –Belagola),excelling the city of Gods, had Chamunda –Raya , with devotion and effort, auspiciouly set up on the mountation , for emancipation , the lord Bhujabali –Gummata, incomprehensible to performers of sacrifices.”

3. Inscription No. 175: This inscription is dated about 983 A.D .,and has been carved on the right side and near the feet of Gommatesvara. This inscription in the kannada language states that :-

'marthi

e., Chamunda –Raya caused (this image) to be made.

4.Inscription No. 176: This inscription , dated about 983 A.D., has been carved below inscription No.175, is in Tamil language ,is the translation of inscription No, 175 and is written in Grantha and vattelutu scripts, It states;-

marthi

i.,e., Chamunda –Rajan caused (this image) to be made.

5. Inscription No. 177 : This inscription , dated about 1117 A.D., has been carved below inscriptinn No. 176 and is written in kannada language. It states:-

marthi

i.,e., Ganga-Raja caused the enclosure to be made .

6. Inscription No. 179: This inscription is dated about 983 A.D., and has been carved on the left and near the near the feet of Gommatesvara. This inscription is in Marathi language, is written in the Deva –Nagari script and states that :-

marthi

7. Inscription No. 180: This inscription , dated about 1117 A.D. has been carved below the inscription No, 179 , is in Marathi language and is written in the Deva-Nagari script. It states that :-

mathi

i., e., Ganga-Raja caused the enclosure to be made .

The inscriptions Nos. 179 and 180 have got great historical and cultural importance since they contain complete sentences- in Marathi laguage and since they are considered as the oldest inscriptions in Marathi language.

Further, the inscriptions Nos. 179 and 180 written in Marathi language are nothing but the translations of inscriptions. Nos 175 and 177 respectivly written in the Kannada script.

8. work entitled ‘Gommata-sara’ : The fact Chamunda Raya made the image of Bahubali by his own efforts has been supported by the well-known work named " Gommata –saraKarma-Kanda’,composed by Acharya Nemichandr ,the preceptor and therefore the contemporay of chamundra-

Raya, wherein the verses 968 and 969 state that "Let the aphorisms consisting of the Gommata compendium , the Gommata Jina ,on the summit of Gommata Hill and the Dakshina (southern) Kukkuta Jina constructed by Gommata –Raya, be victorious." Let is clear from these verses that the image of Gommatesvara caused the hill on which it was situated to be called Gommata Hill, and that Acharya Nemichandra uses the word "vinimmiya", i., e., "constructed by Chamunda –Raya", Further, it is evident that image established by Chamunda –Raya came to be called the 'Dakshina ,i.,e., Southern Kukkuta Jina' so as to disitinguish it from the image of Bahubali which was established by Emperor Bharat in podanapura and which came to be known as 'Kukkutesvara', when dregons sprung around it. Moreover, Chamunda –Raya ,by having this image constructed, came to be called as Gommata-Raya.

9. Story of humbling the pride of Chamunda –Raya: There is one story connected with the image of Gommatesvara which describes how the pride of Chamunda –Raya for establishing such a huge colossus and for arranging its first anointing ceremony at so vast an expeense of money and labour was completely humbled by goddess Padmavati in the form of an old women named Gullakayaji.

Form these evidences it can be categorically maintained that it was Chamunda –Raya who had the image of Bahubali or Gommata constructed . for such a great act he himself came to be known as Gommata –Raya, which would have been hardly possible, had it been the fact that he merely discovered the image .Acharya Nemichandra, the preceptor of Chamunda Raya, must have been present at the time of the establishment of this image (for even in ' Bhujabali charite' it is mentioned that Acharya Nemichandra was present on this occasion), and consequently the words of

Nemichandra, supported as they are by various inscriptions, must be accepted to be conclusive on this point.

Thus it is quite evident that this colossal image of Bahubali was carved out of a great rock which stood on the top of the Vindhyagiri hill at Sravana-Belagola as otherwise it would have been impossible to transport a granite mass of such huge size up the hill side to the height of 470 feet from the level of the ground below. The Sthalapurana, mentions a local legend that Maya, the carpenter of the giants, at Ravana's request, was the sculptor of this image. (vide 'Indian Antiquary', vol, II May 1873, pp 129-130). Of course this legend cannot be relied on. But it is stated in the 'Mysore Gazetteer' that among the famous sculptors of South India at that time, viz., Baligrama, Charana Hampa, Maliyanna, Nagoja and Arishta Nemi, the image of Bahubali was sculptured by Arishta Nemi alias Arrito Nemi. People also believe that Arishta-Nemi was the sculptor of this image. There is also a popular belief that Arishta-Nemi, the sculptor, was a Jain monk. Any way it appears that the work was completed by 980 A.D. Even though Arishta-Nemi actually executed the work of sculpture it may be specifically noted that it was Chamunda-Raya who not only first conceived the idea of having a colossal image of Bahubali out of the standing rock on the top of the Vindhyagiri hill at Sravana-Belagola but also supplied the details to be shown on and near the image. Obviously in this conception about Bahubali's image Chamunda Raya was greatly influenced by the most vivid and memorable description of Bahubali given by the great Kannada poet Pampa in his masterpiece 'Adi-purana', composed in 941 A.D. In this popular work the poet Pampa had painted in words a truly magnificent picture of Bahubali. And it was Chamunda-Raya who gave a

tangible shape to this word –picture of Bahubali and thus made a permanent contribution to world civilization.

2. He caused to be built as kailasa the completely ruined Jina temple of Kalavita at Bankapure.

3. He granted lands, purchased after payment of much gold ,to provide for gifts, to Jaina sages at holy place Kapana or Koppal, near Hampi, the capital of vijayanagar Empire .

4. He caused to be erected a splendid Jina temple, from the base to the pinnacle, the original holy place of Kellanagere, formerly founded by the Gangas, of which by lapse of time only the name remained.

5. He caused to be built five more Jina temples at the same place, viz. Kellangere.

6. He constructed the famous temple of Chaturvimsati –Tirthankaras at Sravana –Belagola in the year 1159 A.D King Narasimha I gave the name of " Bhavya –Chudamani –Basti" to this temple as he was very much impressed by seeing this temple and the King also granted for its upkeep the village Savaneru. The temple is popularly known as "Bhandari-Basti" since Hulla – Raja was also ‘Bhandari’ or treasurer of King Narasimha I.

Thus this trinity of ministers, Chamunda-Raya, Ganga-Raja, and Hulla-Raja, enriched the old traditions of Sravana-Belagola by their valuable and lasting contributions.