

NAMES AND NUMBER OF JAIN CASTES/COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

(A Bibliographical Essay Based on the “People of India” Project)

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Abstract

By way of presenting a bibliography on Jain castes/communities derived from the People of India Project, this article attempts to find out the names and number of the Jain castes and communities in contemporary India. It was thought useful to divide the Jain population in India in terms of four zones as most of the Jain castes are found in the states of the western zone followed by the northern zone. It is argued that unlike the previously known or documented lists of the Jain castes/communities the list proposed in this article is more reliable as well as empirically generated.

Introduction

This article profiles the background details and a bibliography on the Jain castes/communities in India based on the reported findings of the Anthropological Survey of India-sponsored **People of India Project** that was conducted during 1985-92. The findings of this survey were published in the book form in forty-two volumes; for some reason the one on Madhya Pradesh could not be published. The project identified and briefly profiled 4,635 “communities” across India belonging to different religious denominations including Jainism. The profiles, each ranging from about 2,000 to 3,000 words, are uniformly written covering various aspects of the “community”, such as origin, history, population, education and occupation, family and marriage, life cycle rituals, dietary habits, socio-cultural and religious practices, receptivity to modernization, development and social change, etc.

Before we go further it would be useful to know what is generally meant by the terms caste and community. A community is defined as a group of people with shared characteristics like religion, culture, or location and can also include members of different castes. A caste can be defined as a social group whose membership is determined by birth. It is often an endogamous social division of a society or community that can define a person’s occupation, status and patterns of social interaction. While not all communities are caste, all the castes are communities. Seen in terms of these definitions of caste and community, it must be clarified here that in most cases the social groups profiled in the People of India Project happen to be the castes or the tribes and not the communities, except when the local population of a religious minority (e.g. Christian, Jew, Jain, Sikh) is too small to be grouped into one or more castes.

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Thus, the Jain populations in different states/union territories are profiled either as caste(s), or “Jain” community; two exceptions being Sarak in West Bengal and Tamil Jain in Tamil Nadu.

The profiles were authored by noted social scientists, mostly anthropologists and sociologists, and were organized state-wise. The valuable material on the contemporary Jain castes and communities remains largely unknown to a vast majority of scholars. Focusing on this information gap, this bibliographical article provides the names and number of the Jain castes and communities along with some information and an additional bibliography on the subject. Before we go further a brief look at the caste system among the Jains would be in order.

Jain Caste System

Although Jainism does not sanction the caste system, the Jain community has been divided into several castes and sub-castes since the early medieval period. Also, contrary to the Hindu view of *varṇa*/caste system based on birth, the Jains’ conceptualization of the same is based on karma or division of labor, although in practice an individual’s caste is determined by their ancestry. The caste system among the Jains is not as rigid as among the Hindus.

The major Jain castes in North India are Agaravāla or Agravāla, Osavāla, Śrīmālī, Poravāḍa, Khaṇḍelavāla, Paravāra, Huṃḍa or Hummaḍa, Golāpūraba, Golālāre, Nemā, Jaisavāla, etc. In the Deccan and South India there are four major Jain castes, namely Śetavāla or Saitavāla, Caturtha, Pañcama and Bogāra, and three small castes, Upādhyāya, Kāmbhoja and Harada (see Sangave 81-101). North and South Indian Jain castes differ in many respects: (i) unlike only seven castes in South India, their number is relatively large in the north; (ii) while some of the North Indian castes are divided between the Digambara and Śvetāmbara sects, all the South Indian castes are exclusively Digambara; (iii) unlike many North Indian castes which have been divided into Visā and Dasā, there is no such division in the Deccan Jain castes; (iv) unlike most North Indian Jain castes whose members have been relatively prosperous because of their engagement in big business, trade and professions, their counterparts in the south are relatively poor and have been involved in cultivation and petty trade; (v) whereas most North Indian Jains depend on Brahmins for making birth charts, solemnizing marriages, etc., Deccan Jains have their own Jain priests to do the same; (vi) each of the four castes in the Deccan has its own Bhaṭṭāraka or religious head or Svāmī who has final power to fine or excommunicate any caste member (Sangave 93-94; Jain, Jains in India and Abroad: A Sociological Introduction 15-16).

Since about the mid-19th century, the number of castes in the Jain community had been listed at eighty-four (84) (Wilson 345; Sangave 111-112). 84 Jain castes were identified not only in the entire community but also in a single regional-linguistic area, namely Gujarat (Sangave 115-16). Further on, the Śvetāmbara Jain Directory compiled in 1909 had listed only 38 Śvetāmbara Jain castes in Gujarat (Sangave 122-23). Another source provided a list of 91 Jain castes in the Deccan region (Sangave 117-18). The All-India Digambara Jain Directory of 1914 listed a total of 87 Digambara Jain castes (Sangave 119-21). The same Directory detailed the following distribution of 194 Digambara Jain castes and sub-castes according to British Provinces and Indian States: (i) United Provinces: 23; (ii) Bengal-Bihar: 13; (iii) Rajputana-

Malwa: 48; (iv) Punjab: 7; (v) Central Provinces: 39; (vi) Bombay: 45; (vii) Madras-Mysore: 19 (Sangave 124-30).

It is not known what criteria were used to identify these many castes, some of which must be overlapping in various provinces. Against the backdrop of the conventional documentation of Jain castes, it can well be stated that the People of India Project's identification of about 100 Jain castes and/or communities is not only more definitive but also the latest comprehensive academic exercise on the subject. Of these about 70 can be defined as castes and the rest as the communities.

The People of India Project profiled about 100 Jain castes/communities which were identified in various states and union territories. The largest number of Jain castes numbering 18 were found in Madhya Pradesh followed by 17 in Maharashtra, 17 in Rajasthan, 12 in Gujarat, 4 in Uttar Pradesh, 3 in Delhi and one in Karnataka (Table 1). Some castes such as Agravāla, Khandelavāla, Osavāla, Poravāla, Paravāra, Golāpuraba, Golālāre, etc. are found in more than one state/union territory, mainly on account of internal migration within India since the medieval period.

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Eastern India

Andaman & Nicobar Islands

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

Arunachal Pradesh

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

Assam

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

Bihar (including Jharkhand)

Mukhopadhyay, Ashok Kumar. "The Jains." *People of India: Bihar (People of India State Series 16)*. Eds. Surendra Gopal and Hetukar Jha. Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India and Seagull Books, 2008, pp. 398-401.

Manipur

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

Meghalaya

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

Mizoram

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

Nagaland

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

Odisha

Roy, Rita. "The Jain." *Odisha (People of India State Series 35)*. Ed. S. N. Tath, D. B. Mondal, and Biswanath Sarkar N. K. Das. Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India and Seagull Books, 2012. 729-33.

Sikkim

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

Tripura

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

West Bengal

Datta, Archana. "Sarak." *West Bengal (People of India State Series 43)*. Ed. Tilak Bagchi and R. K. Bhattacharya Shekhar Bandyopadhyay. Kolkata: Anthropological Survey of India and Seagull Books, 2008. 1143-1149.

Northern and Central India

Chandigarh

Bhalla, V., and Achla Sood. "Jain." *Chandigarh (People of India State Series 17)*. Ed. V. Bhalla and Swaran Singh. New Delhi, 1997. 68-72.

Delhi

Channa, V. C. "Aggarwal." *Delhi (People of India State Series 20)*. Ed. T. K. Ghosh and Surendra Nath. New Delhi: Anthropological Survey of India and Manohar Publisher and Distributors, 1996. 12-24.

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Haryana

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Himachal Pradesh

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Jammu & Kashmir

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Madhya Pradesh (including Chattishgarh)

(The Madhya Pradesh report has not been published and therefore it is not possible to provide the bibliographical details of the Jain castes of Madhya Pradesh).

Punjab

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Uttar Pradesh (including Uttarakhand)

Lal, P. N., and N. P. Srivastava. "Agarwal." *Uttar Pradesh (People of India State Series 42)*. Ed. Amir Hasan, B. R. Rizvi, and J. C. Das. New Delhi: Anthropological Survey of India and Manohar Publisher and Distributors, 2004. 63-66.

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Southern India

Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana)

Saheb, S. A. A. "Jain." *Andhra Pradesh. Pt. 2 (People of India State Series 13)*. Ed. D. L. Prasada Rao, N. V. K. Rao, and S. Yaseen Saheb, vol. 2. New Delhi: Anthropological Survey of India and Affiliated East-West Press, 2003. 708-11.

Karnataka

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Kerala

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Pondicherry/Puducherry

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

Tamil Nadu

Kalam, Mohammed A., and Zubeeda Banu. "Jain." *Tamil Nadu. Pt. 1 (People of India State Series 40)*. Ed. R. Thirumalai and S. Manoharan. New Delhi: Anthropological Survey of India and Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd, 2003. 492-96.

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Lakshadweep

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

Western India

Dadra and Nagar Haveli

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

Daman and Diu

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

Goa

(No Jain caste/community was reported)

Gujarat

Samanta, D. K. "Bhavsar (Jain)." *Gujarat. Pt. 1 (People of India State Series 22)*. Ed. R. B. Lal, P. B. S. V. Padmanabham, Gopal Krishan, and Md. Azeez Mohidden. Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2003. 209-13.

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Major Jain Castes in India

Although the Anthropological Survey of India, the sponsor of the project, identified and profiled 4,635 social entities they called "communities", a vast majority of them are in fact castes. In case of the Jains too, this is true. Jain castes with distinct names were identified only in those states where the Jain population was sufficiently large; in smaller states, the Jain population was grouped under the title "Jain", implying the notion of the community. The Jain communities in different states/union territories of India should not be conceived of as uniformly constituted groups. In fact, each of them has a unique identity and they differ from each other in terms of migration history, sect/sub-sect, caste composition, occupational and economic status and overall social identity within the regional linguistic context of that particular state/union territory.

To sum up, of the then existing 32 states and union territories, while only seven (07) reported multiple Jain castes, 11 reported at least one Jain caste or community each, and the remaining 14 reported not a single Jain caste or community. The names of the major Jain castes on the basis of the People of India Project are presented in Table 1, and the names of the states with or without Jain communities are provided in Table 2.

Table 1: Distribution of Major Jain Castes and Communities by States/UTs during the Late 1980s:

State/UT		Names of the Jain castes	Total no.
1.	Madhya Pradesh (including Chhattisgarh)	The introductory write-up on Jains by the director of the Project (Singh 1327-38) reveals the number of Jain “communities” in the state as 18. The proper names of these communities which are actually castes are not mentioned but a list of exclusively Jain castes does include Samaiya, a sub-sect in Digambara Jainism whose members mainly reside in M. P. This sub-sect formed in the 16 th century had been composed of six castes: Asati, Ayodhyavasi, Charangare, Dosake Parwar, Chowsake Parwar and Golalare. These entities also figure in the list. In fact, Asati is not an exclusively Jain caste; it is mainly a Hindu caste. Other Jain castes likely to be present in M. P. are: Golapurava, Parwar, Kharaua, Khandelwal, Jaiswal, Oswal, Porwal, Saraogi, Vinaika, etc.	18
2.	Maharashtra	Agarwal, Bannore, Bogar/Bogara/Kesara, Chaturtha, Dhakad, Dosake, Gangerwal, Gollalare, Khambhoja, Khandelwal, Narsingpura, Newa, Oswal, Palliwara/Padmavati, Pancham, Porwal, Saitwal, Shri Shrima	17
3.	Rajasthan	Agarwal, Chitoda, Godha, Golalare, Golapurab, Humad, Jaiswal, Khandelwal, Lavania, Lodha, Mat heran/Mahatma, Narsinghpura, Oswal, Pareek, Porwal, Saitwal, Sarogi	17
4.	Gujarat	Bhavsar, Godha, Golalare, Golsinghare, Humad, Kharaua, Lamechu, Mewada, Narsingpura, Oswal, Porwal, Srimali	12
5.	Uttar Pradesh	Agarwal, Khandelwal, Oswal, Porwal	04
6.	Delhi*	Aggarwal, Khandelwal, Oswal (Jain)	03
7.	Karnataka*	Bogar (Jain)	01
Total			72

Source: Calculated by the authors from the references cited above

*Besides caste(s), Delhi and Karnataka each had a Jain community. The total here does not include these two community groups.

Table 2: States and UTs with or without Jain Communities during the Late 1980s:

States/UTs with and without Jain Communities	Number of States/UTs
1. States/UTs with Jain Communities Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chandigarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal	11
2. States/UTs without Jain Communities Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Goa, Lakshadweep, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Pondicherry, Sikkim, Tripura	14
Total	25

(Source: calculated by the authors from the references cited above)

Concluding Remarks

Defining Jains as a religious community, the director of the People of India Project Prof. K. S. Singh in his introductory remarks says: “In the project forty-two exclusive Jain communities have been studied.” Then he goes on to mention ten other communities (eight Hindu, one Buddhist and one Sikh) of which the Jains happen to be “an important segment”. In the very next paragraph, he writes: “One hundred Jain communities have been studied” (Singh 1327-28). Our findings from the project add up the number of Jain castes/communities to 97. The numbers apart, the selection of groups as communities is also objectionable. This we have already seen in the case of Madhya Pradesh where Samaiya, a sub-sect in Digambar Jainism, and its constituent six castes have all been accorded the status of “exclusive Jain communities”. Moreover, a well-known Jain caste Golapurab or Golapurava, mainly due to its spelling difference in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, is counted as two “exclusive Jain communities”. And finally, a major Jain caste, namely Parwar, which besides Madhya Pradesh is also heavily concentrated in Lalitpur and Jhansi districts of Uttar Pradesh does not figure in the list of Uttar Pradesh.

To sum up, the previously known or documented lists of Jain castes in India were neither fully reliable nor comprehensive. On the contrary, the list provided by the People of India Project, despite some drawbacks in it, is the first ever empirically generated list and gives a better idea of the names and number of the Jain castes and communities in contemporary India. Since the completion of this project during the early 1990s a period of over three decades has lapsed and the Jain population has also increased from about 3.2 million in 1981 and 3.35 million in 1991 to an estimated 4.5 million in 2021 (Appendix II). As per 2011 census data the Jains were enumerated in all the states and union territories of India (Jain, “Jain Population and Demography”). It is therefore expected that the number of Jain castes and/or communities

would show a marginal increase in the number of Jain castes in the forthcoming caste census, especially in the north-eastern states. In the context of the caste census, it must be pointed out here that a very significant proportion of Jain population, particularly the youth, is ignorant about their caste identity. Thus, in a sociological survey of the Jains residing in six major states (Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu) it was found that 23.5% of the respondents mentioned Jain as their caste, and 36.2% of them had no response on this count (National Report: A Sociological Study of Jain Community (Survey 2017-2019) 58). Simply put, about 60% of the Jain population in the country appear to be unaware of their caste identity. Needless to say, all our efforts ought to be made by the Jain community to apprise its members of their caste and cultural identity.

Appendix I

People of India Project Reports: Publication Details:

V. 1. Introduction -- v. 2. The scheduled castes. rev. ed. -- v. 3. The scheduled tribes -- v. 4-6. India's communities -- v. 7. Identity, ecology, social organization, economy. Development process and linkages: a quantitative profile -- v. 8. Communities, segments, surnames and titles -- v. 9. Languages and scripts -- v. 10. The biological variation in Indian population -- v. 11. An anthropological atlas -- v. 12. Andaman and Nicobar Islands -- v. 13. Andhra Pradesh -- v. 14. Arunachal Pradesh -- v. 15. Assam (2 v.) -- v. 16. Bihar -- v. 17. Chandigarh -- v. 18. Dadra and Nagar Haveli -- v. 19. Daman and Diu -- v. 20. Delhi -- v. 21. Goa -- v. 22. Gujarat -- v. 23. Haryana -- v. 24. Himachal Pradesh -- v. 25. Jammu and Kashmir -- v. 26. Karnataka -- v. 27. Kerala -- v. 28. Lakshadweep -- v. 29. Madhya Pradesh -- v. 30. Maharashtra -- v. 31. Manipur -- v. 32. Meghalaya -- v. 33. Mizoram -- v. 34. Nagaland -- v. 35. Odisha -- v. 36. Pondicherry -- v. 37. Punjab -- v. 38. Rajasthan (2 v.) -- v. 39. Sikkim -- v. 40. Tamil Nadu -- v. 41. Tripura -- v. 42. Uttar Pradesh -- v. 43. West Bengal.

Appendix II

Table: Distribution of Jain Population by States/UTs, 1981, 1991 and 2011:

Area	1981	1991	2011
India	32,06,038	33,52,706	44,51,753
Maharashtra	9,39,392	9,65,840	14,00,349
Rajasthan	6,24,317	5,62,806	6,22,023
Gujarat	4,67,768	4,91,331	5,79,654
Madhya Pradesh	4,44,960	4,47,111	5,67,028
Karnataka	2,97,974	3,26,114	4,40,280
Uttar Pradesh	1,41,549	1,68,389	2,13,267
NCT of Delhi	73,917	94,672	1,66,231
Tamil Nadu	49,564	66,900	89,265

Chhattisgarh	*	43,213	61,510
West Bengal	38,663	34,355	60,141
Andhra Pradesh	18,642	26,564	53,849
Haryana	35,482	35,296	52,613
Punjab	27,049	20,763	45,040
Assam	†	20,645	25,949
Bihar	27,613	11,332	18,914
Jharkhand	‡	11,717	14,974
Odisha	6,642	6,302	9,420
Uttarakhand	§	7,870	9,183
Kerala	3,605	3,641	4,489
Nagaland	1,153	1,202	2,655
Jammu & Kashmir	1,576	†	2,490
Chandigarh	1,889	1,531	1,960
Himachal Pradesh	1,046	1,206	1,805
Manipur	975	1,337	1,692
Puducherry	277	470	1,400
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	372	529	1,186
Goa	462	487	1,109
Tripura	297	301	860
Arunachal Pradesh	42	64	771
Meghalaya	542	445	627
Mizoram	11	4	376
Sikkim	108	40	314
Daman & Diu	140	212	287
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	11	17	31
Lakshadweep	-	-	11

(Source: Jain, Jain Population and Demography, 2011 157)

Notes: * Included under Madhya Pradesh. † No census conducted. ‡ Included under Bihar. § Included under Uttar Pradesh.

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