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Ādarsha Sādhu: An Ideal Monk

A. J. Sunavala

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ĀDARSHA SĀDHU

AN IDEAL MONK

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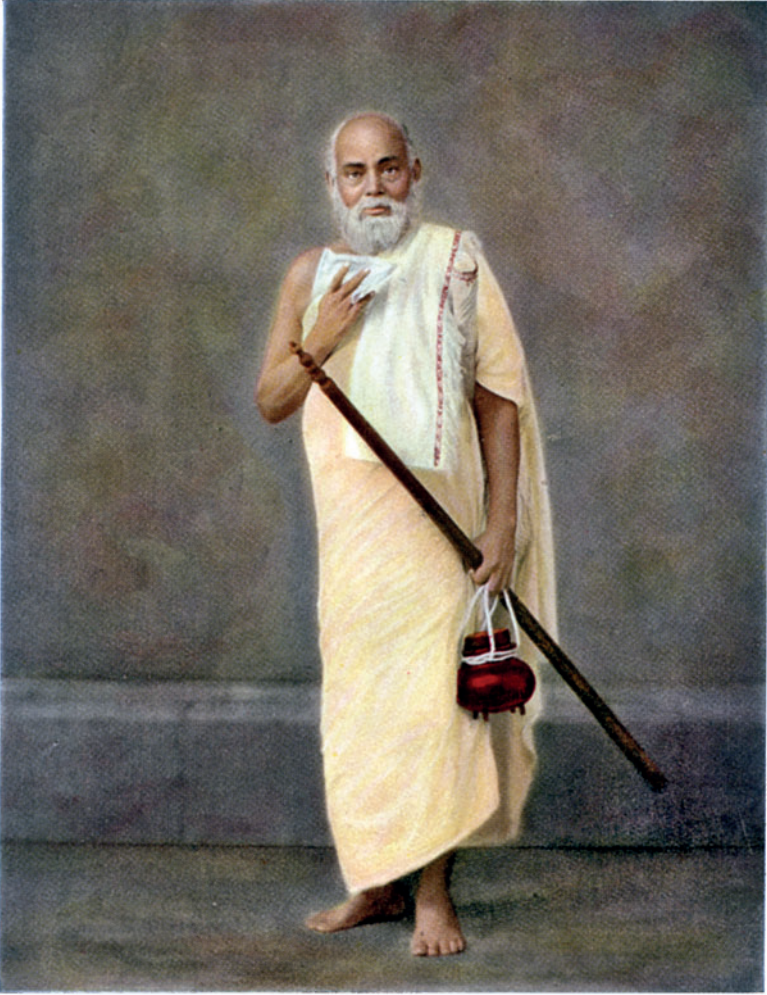
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SHĀSTRAVISHĀRADA JAINĀCHĀRYA
SHRĪ VIJAYA DHARMA SŪRI

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ĀDARSHA SĀDHU

AN IDEAL MONK

BY

A. J. SUNAVALA, B.A., LL.B.

With a Prefatory Note by

F. W. THOMAS

*Boden Professor of Sanskrit to the
University of Oxford*

and a Foreword by

SYLVAIN LÉVI

Professeur au Collège de France

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PREFATORY NOTE



THE subject of this interesting memoir held a position of great distinction and influence among the Jain community; and the reader will himself have the feeling of being in contact with a man of original force and character. But a few words may still help us in appreciating the significance of Vijaya Dharma Sūri's work.

There are not a few Jain *Sādhus* in India, presiding over their large or small communities, instructing and edifying their disciples, studying their canonical texts, publishing editions of them or original works relating to them. Such pious and learned men have never been wanting among the Jains. Nor has there been a lack of loyal supporters who have liberally contributed what was desirable for the erection and maintenance of shrines and institutions or for literary enterprise. The practice of the community, which encourages a gradual assimilation of the laity to its ascetic leaders and which accords to the Sheth, or influential layman, a recognized position, has in this respect borne abundant fruit. But an inquirer would probably find that at the present time the cultivation and support of literary enterprise is unusually active among the Jains; and he would hardly be mistaken in attributing this in a large measure to the example of Vijaya Dharma Sūri.

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Apart from the purely personal qualities depicted in the memoir, the singular force of character, and sincerity of conviction, the dignified, unaffected mildness and friendliness, which characterize the saint, we shall, no doubt, be right in selecting his open-mindedness and wideness of outlook as his most distinctive traits. Not only have his activities been, as shown in the memoir, of a many-sided character, but he has extended a cordial welcome to western personalities and methods, facilitating in many ways the work of scholars and himself complying with their critical principles. In this way he has come to be regarded as the true mediator between Jain thought and the west; while his own literary labours have been recognized in the highest quarters by election to honorary membership of societies and by grants of titles of distinction. This does not at all imply an abatement of faith in his own religion: on the contrary, the serenity of his assurance is the real basis of his receptivity. Himself an unsparing observer of the rules of his order, he is free from pedantry in his demands upon others; and, while exercising a remarkable and far-reaching authority, he will be found rather pleading and reasoning with his disciples and friends than laying down the law. No wonder if similar graces reappear conspicuously among his devoted followers.

The Jain doctrine and community are ancient, having an unbroken continuity from an early period

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of Indian religious thought. They are marked by rationality and consistency of principle, ethical outlook, and ascetic practice. In the present period of transition such traits are a strong equipment: the qualities of representative leaders such as Vijaya Dharma Sūri will contribute to a further expansion of the community.

The author has not laboured to include every interesting particular in the life of the teacher—it was not his purpose to do so. A reader anxious to learn more may find something to his purpose in the accounts mentioned at the end of Chapter III and also in the late Dr L. P. Tessitori's *Vijaya Dharma Sūri: A Jain Āchārya of the Present Day* (Calcutta, 1917).

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FOREWORD



WHEN I am going to write these lines dedicated to the memory of Vijaya Dharma Sūri, he appears once more before my eyes as I saw him on the last days of August, 1922, lying on his sick bed, soon to be turned into a death bed, excruciated in his body by physical pains, a martyr in agony, and maintaining nevertheless a complete control of his own self, with a friendly smile on his lips and in his eyes, anxious to welcome at his best his, perhaps untimely, guest, clear and bright of mind as on the happiest day. What I heard from him came to my ears as the whisper of a soul, already unbound, speaking to another soul. His voice was not broken, nor feeble, but smooth and plain and harmonious. And what was he speaking about? The highest and deepest principles of his Jaina faith, not in order to extol them above any other Indian or foreign creed, but to indicate in a spirit of fair appreciation the part of eternal truth represented by the teaching of the Arhats and Jinas in the common striving of all religions against the dark side of human nature. Oh! that his exaltation of *Ahiṃsā* could have been heard, and listened to, over the whole world, and first of all by these scholars who, having read, edited, translated Jaina texts, believe themselves to be conversant with Jainism! True it is that, if the spirit vivifies, the mere

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letter kills. Science, if not used for the benefit of mankind, is the worst weapon in the hands of man. With the Sūri, science was, as well as religion, one means more of bringing together men in larger and ever-growing units. He had practically grouped around himself all scholars interested in the study of Jainism, putting at their disposal the inexhaustible store of his knowledge, and supplying them ungrudgingly with all requisites for furthering their researches. Jainism had been used for centuries to live in a kind of splendid isolation. Vijaya Dharma rent asunder that voluntary confinement, and took Jainism again into the general stream of human thought. With him a new era opens in the life of Jaina creed. Before him, Jainism, in the eyes of Western Indologists, was something quaint, strange, singular, antiquated, rather obsolete, playing no part in India's spiritual awakening; it may be sufficient to refer to chapters treating of this matter in classical books on the religions of India. To-day, owing to him, Jainism is attracting more and more attention, more and more sympathy. Mahātmaji's vindication of "Non-violence", whatever may be Gandhi's personal faith, is a public homage paid to the everlasting inspiration of old Jainism by the most representative man of Young India.

The author of this book, Mr Sunavala, must be congratulated on the way he has performed his task. He has deeply felt the charm of the Muni's sweet

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nature, and the image he has drawn retains the attractive features of the original. Many-sided as he was, Vijaya Dharma Sūri could not easily be grasped by one man. Others may rather emphasize his greatness and power of mind; here we have the Sūri as he could be seen by a devoted friend.

SYLVAIN LÉVI

Paris, October, 1933

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