FOREWORD

It is obvious that a substantial section of humanity has been living through the ages, grappling with the death, and that all serious philosophical speculations have been revolving as much around life as around death. The Jains of India are among those who paid serious thought to this subject; indeed, their preoccupation with it is so much that without understanding their attitude towards death, it is almost impossible to understand their central philosophy of life. We may even venture to say that none of the major religious systems of the world advocated in as many terms as did the Jains the negative character of life and the positive conclusions for ending existence. Whether one would agree or not with such extremist advocates to hasten towards death, none can deny that death has been haunting all those who are making meaningful efforts to live.

While commending death, the Jains, however, cautioned against throwing away life in a cavalier manner. They emphatically opposed suicide—a death-process involving emotion (rāga) and violence (himsā)—and condemned such an act as spiritual crime, a cowardly course of escapade by the immature and the ignorant (bāla). Their sharp logic identified as many as forty eight types of deaths, grouped under three categories: 1. bāla-marana (childish or foolish death); 2. pañḍita-marana (wise death); and 3. pañḍita-pañḍita-marana (the wisest of wise deaths). The first series, including suicide, is rejected in unequivocal terms; the second, which testifies partial attainment and wisdom, is conditionally accepted and advocated; the third is enthusiastically recommended. The first begets no fruits; the second secures partial rewards; the third releases the aspirant from all bondage, including the cycle of rebirth.

Death was not merely a subject of intellectual exercise for the Jains, it permeated through their social, religious and philosophical sinews and regulated as much the life of monks and nuns in the order as of lay-followers in society. They took utmost care to build up an infra-structure to keep alive this ideal by codifying the procedure of death and also perfecting the process of commemorating those who heroically terminated life. The art of mortifying the body, without troubling the soul or torturing the mind, was identified by several terms, each term accentuating a specified ritual content. Thus emerged the sannyasana-marana (death through renunciation), sallekhanā-marana (through fasting), ārādhana-marana (through worship), pañcapada-marana (through prayer), pañḍita-marana (through
knowledge or wisdom), samādhi-marana (through meditation etc). A choice of any of these, however, did not warrant one to follow a particular procedure, for the ritual demanded simultaneous fulfillment of all these by the aspirant. Those who invited death, without violating the code of conduct and without ever thinking of giving up the valiant fight in the middle, became models for the Sangha as well as the society; their memory was preserved by erecting commemorative monuments.

The codified rules of the art of inviting death, descriptive accounts of deaths embraced by purānic personalities in literary work, historical experiments preserved in lithic records, and interesting archaeological remains, provide rich food for one who seeks to know about those who starved to death. Indeed, the material is vast enough not only to engage all Social Scientists—anthropologists, historians, sociologists, psychologists, philosophers as well as students of religion and art—but also Medical Scientists,¹ (who are obsessed with the problems of terminal cases, suicides and clinical deaths) and legal luminaries, who are torn between the letter of the law and the legitimacy of a convention rooted in the culture and conscience of individuals.² For those who live either under the death—euphoria, or the euthanasia—spell, and who are curious about the Oriental philosophies and practices of voluntary termination of life, this material provides a mission of its own. Whether the Jaina philosophy and practice stimulate us to prolong life or hasten death, whether they are refreshing or revolting, it is necessary for us to know why and how they advocated and accomplished ritual—deaths.

Historical experiments, made from the early centuries of the Christian era, are revealed by a variety of sources. This material should be found in all the

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¹ More literature on Death seems to have come out of the pen of medical scientists and psychologists than out of that of philosophers, theologians and historians, though the share of Indian doctors and psychologists in this appears to be almost nil. Not many Indian historians and sociologists seem to have evinced interest on this subject. In contrast to this, a voluminous body of literature has emerged from the Western doctors, psychologists and sociologists. The notable ones which I have so far come across are: The 'Springer Series on Death and Suicide' in general, and, in particular, of Robert Kastenbaum's *Between Life and Death*, (N.Y.,1979); R. Kastenbaum and R. Aisenberg, *The Psychology of Death*, (N.Y.,1972); Osis and Haraldson, E., *At the Hour of Death*, (N.Y.,1977); Matson, A., *After Life*, (N.Y.,1977); Moody, R., (Jr.) *Life After Life*, (Covington, 1975). Among the most popular paper-backs are Elisabeth Kubler-Ross' *On Death and Dying* (what the dying have to teach doctors, nurses, clergy and their own families), (N.Y.,1970), set against the sayings and songs of Rabindranath Tagore and *Questions and Answers on Death and Dying*, (N.Y.,1974).

² The one obvious example is the work of late Justice Tukol, T. K. —*Sallekhanā is not Suicide*, (Ahmedabad, 1976), where the author is found caught between his personal religion and profession.
major linguistic as well as socio-political divisions, but our present knowledge seems to indicate its heavy concentration in the present Karnataka State. Besides the Ārādhana, Ācāra, and Purānic works in Kannaḍa language, there are hundreds of dated lithic records which detail the experiences of the clergy as well as the laity. Sravaṇa Belgoḷa holds a unique place here, for the history of no other great religious centre in the world seems to have been as intensely shaped by the incidence of death as of this centre. The surviving lithic records at Sravaṇa Belgoḷa provide enough insight into the nature of the Jaina experiments; within a topographical area of about five square kilometres and in the chronological span of about a thousand five hundred years, nearly a hundred and fifty men and women are recorded as having invited death for a variety of causes and in a variety of ways. The centre of action was the summit of a low-lying granite mass, called now Candragiri, but better known to history as the Sepulchral Hill (Kaṭavapra or Kalvappu) or the Mountain of Meditation–unto–Death (samāḍhi–beṭṭa). Whether the death–history of this mountain goes back to the 3rd cent. B.C. or not, there is little doubt that the recorded experience available to us now forms but a tiny fraction of the totality of historical experimentation conducted by a host of simple and pious mortifiers who loved anonymity. Having shunned publicity while living, they seem to have taken all caution to efface every trace of their existence, before dying; because, the one who had found out the frailty of this body, could not attempt to perpetuate the name with which the body was merely meant to be identified. Such mortifiers, who lived eagerly looking for opportunities to invite death, no doubt, felt that neither their life nor their death deserved a niche in history.

The three sections of Inviting Death tell a single, united, story, each section maintaining, at the same time, the importance of its individual plot.

In Section I, the religious history of Sravaṇa Belgoḷa is traced, with the death as its focal point. It begins with the ritual–death of a great monk, and its subsequent course unfolds the fluctuation of its fortunes centring round the incidence of death. The mortifiers flock to the mountain of meditation when it is dreaded by all others; they begin to nervously withdraw from it as the news of the severities suffered by them begin to attract pious pilgrims and prosperous patrons. Then the barren rocks and boulders begin to be covered with beautiful temples, pavilions and free–standing pillars, replacing the care-free spiritual life with monastic norms and societal obligations. The inter-connections between the spiritual values and religious life, the link between clergy and laity, the role of temples and monasteries in popu-

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3 See under the Bibliography.
larising the faith, the interaction between the envious sects and the shallow support from fellow-followers unfold before us, each exerting its influence on the fortunes of those who were seeking death.

In Section II, we find answers to several questions directly connected with the ritual-death: what is meant by ritual-death? how can death be invited? who would aspire to die, for what reasons, and following which of the recommended canons? what are the big names in the history of death? what factors led the advocates of death to postpone and avoid it? how did society take such action over a period of time? These and such other questions find answers here.

In Section III, the memorials erected in honour of those who accepted ritual-death are studied. Like the chhāya-stambhas of the Buddhists, the viragals of warriors and satī-stones of devoted wives, the nisidhi-memorials are a class by themselves. The character and content of the nisidhis are subjected to analytical study neither by art-historians nor by socio-religious historians so far; hence, we have been only knowing them without fully understanding them. Their format, their locale, the pattern of their grouping, the rituals associated with the commemoration, the significance of the term given to them, their variety, etc., are unfolded here.

The supplementaries given under Appendices and Glossary, are intended to take away from the main text the staggering statistical, historical and literary burden and to add, at the same time, strength and solidarity to this inquiry.

My first field-notes on nisidhi memorials go back to the mid 60s, but I hardly wrote about them in my Šravaṇa Belgola Monuments. A decade later, I began to collect more information, partly pursuing my general interest in the Memorial Stones of all kinds, and partly inspired by the suggestion given to me by late Dr. A.N. Upadhye that a quantitative study of nisidhis may throw up a variety of results. A compilation of a catalogue of nisidhis in Karnataka was followed by a short paper on the subject. My studies in Kannada Kāvya-literature, resulting in the preparation of a concordance in about thirty volumes of Jaina purānic works, opened out an unexpected material before me, most of which was directly or

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6 See under the Bibliography.
indirectly connected with the ritual-death. This, along with the details found in the great classic, \textit{Bhagavatī Ārādhana}\textsuperscript{7} and recently compiled \textit{Śrāvakācāra}-texts at Kolhapur,\textsuperscript{8} absorbed me fully in the problem and left me groping in the material since 1980.

The textual material helped me realize the importance of about five hundred and seventy records at Śrāvaṇa Belgoḷa; a combined approach of both these, I thought, may throw an interesting light on this multi-dimensional problem. What started as a small monograph soon transformed itself into two modest volumes—the textual material receiving more importance than the archaeological material in \textit{Pursuing Death}; the archaeological material maintaining its preponderance in \textit{Inviting Death}. While writing both, I have not lost track of my professional obligation to art-history.

I was singularly lucky to get my hypothesis and analysis examined by learned scholars. Beginning with a series of three lectures in the Department of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in History, Mysore University, in 1982, the dialogue was kept up until the beginning of 1985 at various centres in Europe and the United States. The discussion, which followed my lectures in the South Asia Studies Centre, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Institut für Indische Philologie and Kuntgeschichte of Freie Universität, Berlin, Seminary of Oriental Art History University of Bonn, Bonn, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge (Mass.), Department of South Asian Regional Studies, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Department of Art, University of Chicago, Chicago, etc., proved to be of great help to me. These lectures, however, were delivered before the two volumes took their final shape; hence, what is presented here could be substantially different from what I had presented in all these centres.

My personal discussions with my friends, colleagues, and senior scholars were so intense and so frequent, that it should not be surprising if I have unconsciously appropriated and integrated their precious thoughts into this work. I particularly recall the advice, suggestions and criticism offered by Prof. Promod Chandra, Mrs. Mary Carman Chandra, Prof. Gunther Sontheimer, Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, Prof. A.K. Ramanujan, Dr. Carol Bolon, Prof. K. Ishvaran, Prof. Klaus Fischer, Prof. Michael Meister and Prof. Bruhn Kl. Nearly all these also offered me a platform for discussion, looked after me with considerable care, and helped

\textsuperscript{7} Śīvāraya’s \textit{Bhagavatī Ārādhana}, ed. Kailasachandra Siddhanta Sastry, (Sholapur, 1978), with Hindi commentary.

\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Śravakācāraśāstra}, Pts. 1-5, ed. Hiralal Sastry, (Sholapur, 1976-78).
me widen my vision on death by drawing my attention to Indian and non-Indian parallels. It would not have been possible for me to gain this advantage had not USEFI provided me with funds and facilities and had not Mr. N. Pattanashetti, Putrans and Hejmadis taken care of me while I was at New York, Philadelphia and Chicago respectively.

My debt of gratitude widens considerably at home, to my family, colleagues and friends. Prof. Sadanand Kanawalli and Prof. G.B. Sajjan helped me prepare the press-copy; Mr. S.B. Hiremath, Research Associate, has seen it through the press, sparing no efforts to improve its quality. Dr. Ravi Korisettar, besides lending hand to Sri Hiremath, has prepared the Index with great care; Mr. Asok Shettar, Research Fellow, J.N.U. New Delhi, has prepared a comprehensive glossary. The untiring effort of Mr. Lakshmeshwar, of this office, contributed no small degree in expediting the work through the press.

I have not kept track of the number of times I had to change the format of this book, nor do I remember how many drafts were to be obtained before finalising the press copy—perhaps my wife Premalatha must have kept an account of them, for she had taken its entire burden on herself.

Dr. S.G. Desai, Vice-Chancellor of Karnatak University, is specially remembered here; he, enabled me to get this book printed in the Karnatak University Press and published through the Institute of Indian Art History. Mr. H. Gangaiah, Director, Mr. G. B. Manvachar, Deputy Director, and half a dozen devoted and competent workers of Karnatak University Press, are responsible for the quality of this publication.

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