

Innovatory Forms of Jaina Images with Special Reference to Some Examples from Tikamgarh in Madhya Pradesh

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Jainism and so also Jaina art and iconography contributed equally to *Bharatiya Kala* and *Sanskriti* but its holistic contribution was never brought out properly. It was wrongly believed that Jaina art has been monotonous, non-worldly or only spiritual having very little sense of aesthetic appreciation.¹ The Jaina temples at Khajuraho (Parshvanatha, Ghantai, Adinatha and Shantinatha temples, c.950 CE - 11th century CE, Chatarpur, Madhya Pradesh), Delvada (Vimala-Vasahi, Luna-Vasahi, 11th-13th century CE, Mt. Abu, Rajasthan), Kumbhariya (Shantinatha, Mahavira and Neminatha temples, 11th-12th century CE, Banaskantha, Gujarat), Jinanathapur (Shantinatha temple, 12th century CE, Shravanabelgola, Karnataka) and all other places reveal that, besides the images of *Vitaragi* Tirthankaras or Jinas, embodiment of spiritual grace and Jaina principles of *Ahimsa*, *Tyaga*, *Sadhana* and *Aparigraha*, enormous renderings of beautiful *Apasaras* and *Nayika* figures or even scenes of dance and music and all other worldly activities including love and sexual congress are carved. Therefore the Jaina temples also keep balance between worldly and spiritual life projected through the figures of the Jinas and other *Shalaka-Purushas* of Jaina tradition and scenes from daily life. I have never seen while studying thousands of Tirthankara images that the two images are exactly the same in composition and other details. They are alike only in reference to *Dhyana* and *Kayotsarga-mudras* of the Tirthankaras, which represent the basic tenets of austerity so intense in Jainism. Thus, Jaina art is not at all monotonous.

During the Kushan period at Mathura several new iconographic forms and features were introduced, which continued in subsequent centuries and which could be seen in the images of Neminatha (22nd Jina) accompanied by the figures of



Fig.1 : Neminatha with Balarama and Vasudeva Krishna
Mathura, Kushan period, State Museum, Lucknow

his cousin brothers Balarama and Vasudeva-Krishna² (Fig.1), Munisuvrata (20th Jina) with *Kurma-Lanchhana* and also having at top of *Parikara* the figure of Neminatha flanked by Balarama and Vasudeva-Krishna (Fig.2)³, Mallinatha (19th Jina) represented as a female Tirthankara (Fig.3)⁴ and Bahubali depicted with features of Jina images.⁵ Such innovatory forms are however not envisaged by any iconographic text. Apparently these images show the changing mindset and social milieu of the Jaina community in visualizing new forms, which never violated the textual injunction and only added new forms and features within the traditional framework. Hence, such forms were the outcome of the need

and aspiration of the Jaina society duly endorsed by the Jaina *Acharyas* and representing also some local tradition.

The Digambara community certainly had taken lead over the Shvetambaras in conceptualizing innovatory forms, the examples of which could be seen at Deogarh, Khajuraho, Siron-Kurd, Ahar, Tikamgarh, Golakot and several other places. The process was vigorous more in Central India including Deogarh (now in Lalitpur district, Uttar Pradesh). In the present paper I shall discuss three such Jaina images found from Mohangarh and Ahar in Tikamgarh district of Madhya Pradesh.

These images are:

1. Parshvanatha with Dharanendra *Yaksha*, Mohangarh (Tikamgarh, Madhya Pradesh), 11th century CE (Fig.4). Another identical image of Parshvanatha with Dharanendra *Yaksha* from Golakot (Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh), 11th century CE (Fig.5) is also known.

2. Bahubali with Bharata-Muni, Mohangarh (Tikamgarh, Madhya Pradesh), 11th century CE (Fig.6).

3. Colossal image of Shantinatha, *garbhagriha*, Shantinatha temple, Ahar, inscribed *samvat* 1237 (=1180 CE, Fig.7).

The first unique image (Fig.4) from Tikamgarh in Madhya Pradesh is of Parshvanatha standing in *kayotsarga-mudra* as sky-clad and as having nine-headed



Fig.2 : Jina Munisuvrat, 12th cent. CE, Agara State Museum, Lucknow, Acc.No.J 776



Fig.3 : Mallinatha, Unnao, 11th century CE State Museum, Lucknow

snake-canopy overhead. The snake coils run downward, covering the entire body of the Jina on the back, which beautifully looks like flowing water. Over his head is shown *trichhatra* and hovering *maladharas*, while in the *parikara* there appear four diminutive standing Jina figures joined by two worshippers with folded hands. Parshvanatha stands on simple



Fig.4 : Parshvanatha with Dharanendra Yaksha
Mohangarh (Tikamgarh, MP), 11th century CE



Fig.5 : Parshvanatha with Dharanendra Yaksha
Golakot (Shivpuri, MP), 11th century CE

pedestal instead of *simhasana*.

What is unique about this image is the figure of Dharanendra *yaksha* which stands by the left side of Parshvanatha and is equal in size to that of Parshvanatha. The tall and ornate *mukuta* and five-hooded snake-canopy overhead are its landmarks. The two-armed figure standing in *svastipada-mudra* is decorated with armlets, bracelets and girdle with hanging loops. The *atibanga-mudra* and the anatomical features are specially attractive. The figure holds water-vessel in left hand, while right one is in *abhaya-mudra*. Dharanendra is always shown in the images of Parshvanatha as the *yaksha*, either on the pedestal carrying snake or even by the side of Parshvanātha but with folded hands and smaller in size as found in examples of Ellora Jaina caves⁶ but never in the manner it is shown in the



Fig.6 : Bahubali with Bharata Muni
Mohangarh (Tikamgarh, MP), 11th century CE

present image. In this image surprisingly Dharanendra *yaksha* has also been provided with *trichhatra*, which was a feature exclusive to the Jina images. Thus the present image of Parshvanatha is unique in the sense that the *yaksha* Dharanendra is given specially venerated position.

An identical and equally beautiful image (Fig.5) showing Parshvanatha standing in *kayotsarga-mudra* with nine-hooded snake-canopy is also joined by the figure of Dharanendra *yaksha* (face being mutilated) holding *akshamala* and

water-vessel. Both the figures are similar in size. The image is found from Golakot (Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh) and the date again is 11th century CE.

The second image (Fig.6) from Tikamgarh shows unique iconic form of Bahubali with Bharata Muni, his elder brother, both standing sky-clad in *kayotsarga-mudra* on simple pedestal. Such image is not known from any of the Digambara or Shvetambara Jain sites. Bharata and Bahubali both were sons of first Jina Rishabhanatha. The story in Shvetambara and Digambara texts⁷ give an identical account. Bahubali, also known as Gommateshvara in the southern tradition, was the second son of Jina Rishabhanatha, born of his junior queen Sunanda. His step-brother Bharata, who became *Chakravartin* succeeding his father, ruled from Vinita (Saketa or Ayodhya), while Bahubali was ruling from Takshashila (or Podanasa or Podanapura according to the Digambara Jain tradition). Soon after the renunciation of Rishabhanatha, Bharata began to subdue

various kingdoms and principalities (of *Bharatavarsha*) and according to the Law of the Disc-weapon (*Chakra*) had the need even to subdue Bahubali and his other 98 brothers. Except Bahubali, all his brothers surrendered their domains and became recluse. Consequently, a fierce duel took place between Bharata and Bahubali for trial of strength in which Bahubali emerged almost as victor. At the final moment of his triumph, the reality of the futility of worldly possessions dawned in Bahubali's mind and he consequently renounced the world for obtaining omniscience and hence salvation from the cycle of existences. As an ascetic, he performed very rigorous austerities by standing in the *kayotsarga* posture for a whole year and finally attained *kevala-jnana*.

To suggest rigorous austerity of Bahubali in texts as well as in visual representations, he is shown as standing in *kayotsarga-mudra* with creepers entwining all along his hands, legs and sometimes even chest. However, snakes, lizards and scorpions are also shown either nearby or creeping on his body. The profound austerity of Bahubali inspired both the Shvetambara and Digambara Jainas and as a consequence his independent images were carved right from 9th century CE, more at Digambara Jaina sites like Prabhas-Patan (Gujarat), Deogarh (Uttar Pradesh), Ellora (Maharashtra), Khajuraho (Madhya Pradesh), Shravanabelgola (58 feet high monolithic image of 983 CE in Hassan district), Karkal and Venur (last three places in Karnataka).⁸

Bharata became *Chakravartin* but after sometime decided to renounce the world and took the path of austerity. He too stood in the *kayotsarga-mudra* with both his hands reaching upto the knees. Bharata possessed *Navanidhis* (nine-treasures) and fourteen *Ratnas* (jewels) which he relinquished at the time of initiation.⁹ The nine treasures have the following appellations - *Kala*, *Mahakala*, *Naissarpya*, *Panduka*, *Padma*, *Manava*, *Pinga*, *Shankha* and *Sarvaratna*. On the other hand, the fourteen jewels comprised the *Chakra*, the *Chhatra* (umbrella), the *Asi* (sword), the *Danda* (staff), the *Mani* (gem), the *Charma* (skin), the *Kakini* (cowries), the *Senapati* (General), the *Grihapati* (steward), the Elephant, the Horse, the *Stree* (woman), the *Purohit* (priest) and the Engineer (or carpenter) (*Mahapurana*, Vol.I, pt.II, 37.73-74). The Jaina works explicitly mention that after rigorous *sadhana*, Bharata as *Muni* also attained *kevala-jnana* and became an object of worship like Bahubali.

The image from Tikamgarh under discussion exhibits Bahubali with Bharata *Muni* standing on his left to show that both of them, due to deep austerity as well as renunciation and *aparigraha*, were accorded exalted position. The image, datable to 11th century CE, represents both Bahubali and Bharata as standing with single parasol overhead, as they are merely *kevelins*. The *shriotsa* on chest and elongated earlobes, curly hair and Ashoka leaves are also shown. Bahubali with entwining creepers is provided with two worshippers with folded hands sitting at the feet, while Bharata *Muni* is provided with seven *kalashas* symbolically suggestive of *nava-nidhis*, renounced by Bharata while relinquishing the world.

The 16th Jina Shantinatha was a *chakravarti* ruler, who subsequently renounced the world and took the path of *sadhana* and finally attained *Kaivalya* and salvation. His identifying mark (*lanchhana*) deer, corresponds with his name Shanti. Before the coming of embryo of Shantinatha in womb of mother Achira, the city of Hastinapur had suffered epidemic, which was pacified soon after the embryo of Shantinatha came into mother's womb. Due to this he was given the name Shantinatha. However, it is fact that the ultimate objective of any *dharma* (religion) and of the discourse of the *Dharmacharya* (Tirthankara or Buddha) is the attainment of peace (*Shanti*), which starts from one's mind and heart and gradually goes to the family, society, nation and entire world. Apparently peace is the ultimate and that only brings all the happiness (*anand*), achievements and finally *Moksha* or *Nirvana*.

This fact of *Shanti* corresponding to the name of Jina Shantinatha was very important and unique, which contributed to the rendering of *Mahapramana* (colossal) images of Shantinatha, particularly at Digambara Jaina sites of North India. Some of such sites are Deogarh (main image in the sanctum of the Shantinatha temple, *samvat* 919=862 CE), Khajuraho (again image in the sanctum of Shantinatha temple, dated 1028 CE), Chandpur, Bajarangagarh, Madanpur and Ajaygarh.¹⁰ These images are datable from latter half of 9th to 12th century CE and are of the height from 12 to 18 feet. Surprisingly but interestingly all such figures have yellowish polish, reminding of polish of Ashokan pillars. The Jina in all such colossi stands in *kayotsarga* as sky-clad. One such unique image of Shantinatha is

known from Ahar (Tikamgarh, Madhya Pradesh), which will be discussed here in some detail. All the huge images of Shantinatha from central India speak of the special popularity of Shantinatha in the region from late 9th to 12th century CE. I could find one cogent explanation for this popularity, which was political turmoil of central India during the medieval period due to foreign incursions as well as internal rift, conflict and conspiracy. Under this situation the peace was the immediate need to restore confidence and strengthen political and social unity and understanding. Hence, the images of Shantinatha were carved and installed as personification of Peace.

The image of Shantinatha from Ahar, dated *samvat* 1237 (=1180 CE) (Fig.7) is unique from several aspects.¹¹ This *Mahapramana* image is installed in the *garbhagriha* (sanctum) of Shantinatha temple and was carved out of a single rock. The image including the pedestal is 22 feet 3 inches in height which is the tallest image of Shantinatha known so far. It is rare experience of Peace and renunciation, while standing in front of this gigantic image of Shantinatha, the embodiment of peace, which gives inspiration to the worshippers. While standing before image one has a rare experience of his or her *laghuta* or *shunyata* (being insignificant) before the 'Idol of Peace'.

The image as usual stands sky-clad in *kayotsarga* on simple pedestal (not *simhasana*), on which an inscription (Fig.8) of nine lines is inscribed, which gives the date (*samvat* 1237) of the image and begins with invocation to *Vitaragi*, that is the Jina or Tirthankara. It also refers to Shantinatha *Chaityalaya* (temple), name of *roopakara* (*shilpi*-Mahamati) and to Grihapati-*Vamsha* (family), which had a wide role in the making of Jaina temples and images in central India. It gives the names of two brothers Jahad and Udaichanda, who caused the carving and installation of this Shantinatha-*bimba* in Ahar temple. Above the pedestal on hanging carpet revolving *dharmachakra* in profile is carved in centre, which is flanked by prancing figures of two deer (*lanchhana* of Shantinatha), suggestive again of peace corresponding to the name of Jina. It may be noted that at a number of places, the figures of two deer are shown on two sides of *dharmachakra* as emblem of Shantinatha. Close to feet a male and a female worshippers are shown with folded hands.

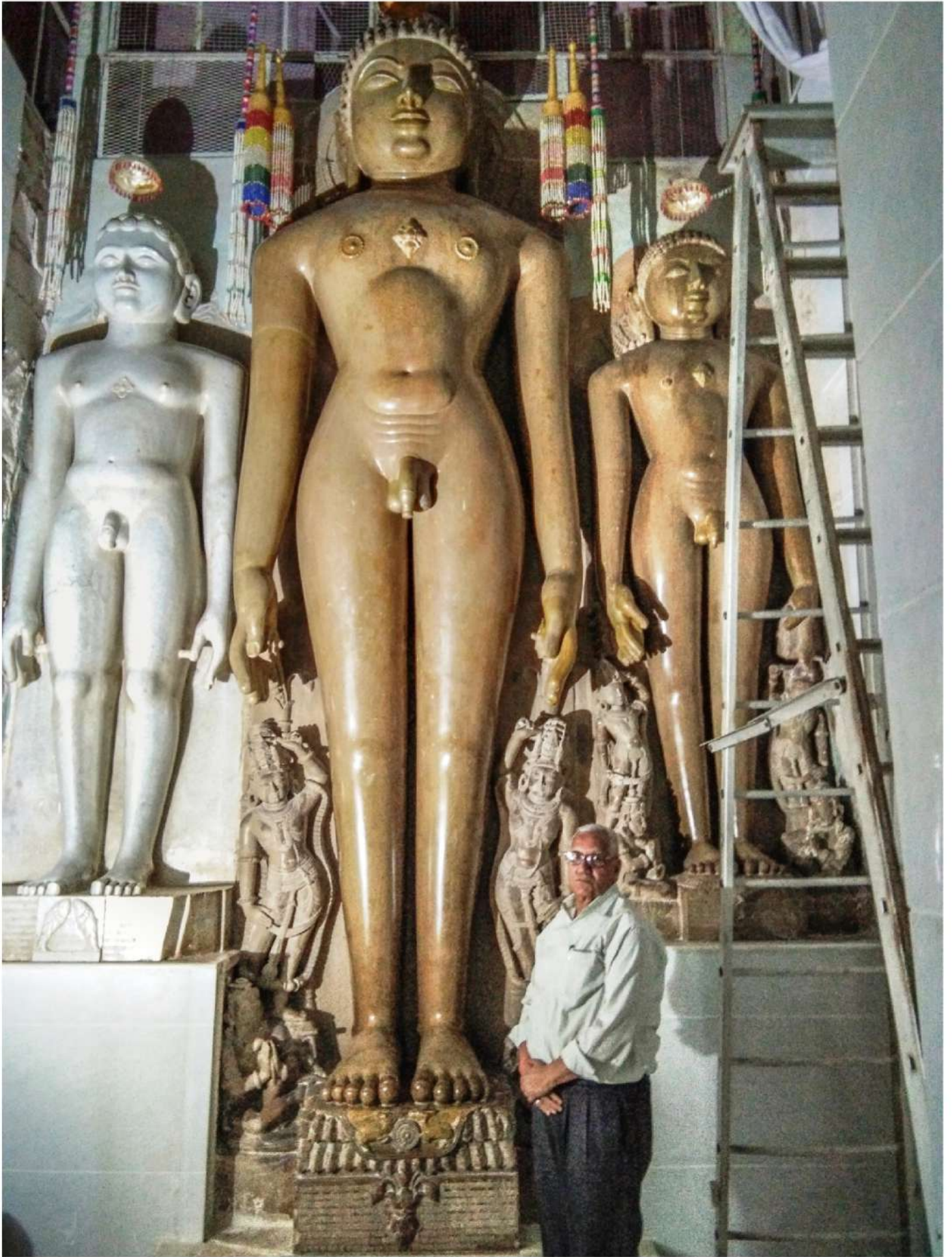


Fig.7 : Shantinatha (author nearby), *garbhagriha*, Shantinatha temple, Ahar, inscribed *samvat* 1237 (=1180 CE)



Fig.8 : Pedestal inscription of *samvat* 1237, Shantinatha image, *garbhagriha*, Shantinatha temple, Ahar

However, the figures of *yaksha* and *yakshi* are not shown in the image. The imposing and graceful image of Shantinatha is flanked by beautiful and highly ornamented figures of flywhisk-bearers. The *mulanayaka* with placid face is beautiful (*roopavana* and *suroopa* – as mentioned in *Brihat Samhita* and *Manasara*). Although devoid of *trichhatra*, *simhasana* and *yaksha-yakshi* figures, yet proportionate body, anatomical features and contemplative look reveal highest degree of spiritually and *shanta-bhava*. Let me confess I have been fortunate enough to have the *darshan* of this image and feel the peace at heart and my own insignificant identity before the epitome of 'Peace'.

References & Notes

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4. Unnao (UP), 11th century CE, State Museum, Lucknow (Acc.No.J.885).
5. Deogarh (Lalitpur, UP) and Mohangarh (Tikamgarh, MP).
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7. *Paumachariya* (4.43-55), *Vasudevahindi*, *Avashyaka-niryukti*, *Padmapurana* of Ravishena (4.76, CE 676), *Harivamsha Purana* (11.99-100, CE 783), *Adipurana* (CE 837), *Trishashtishalakapurushacaritra* and *Chaturvimshatika* of Amar Chandra Suri (13th century CE, 70.367-96).
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