JAINA SCULPTURES IN BHARAT KALA BHAVAN

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The sculpture gallery of the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras Hindu University (Varanasi), possesses some Jaina sculptures in stone and metal. The present paper focuses on the Jaina sculptures in stone.¹ These figures cover a long span of time and they mainly hail from sites in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Among them are a few Kuśaṇa Jina heads;² but the figures of the Jinas and Yaksīs from Gupta to the medieval times make the rest of the bulk. Of the 27 Jina images, four represent Jina caumukhi (Pratimā-sarvatobhadrikū) and the remaining single Jina figures. Of the traditional 24, at least eight Jinas are represented in the collection: they are Rṣabha (1st), Ajita (2nd),³ Supārśva (7th), Candraprabha (8th), Śaṇṭi (16th), Ariṣṭanemi (22nd), Pārśva (23rd) and Vardhamāna Mahāvīra (24th).

There are 11 separate figures of Jina Rṣabha in the collection; Rṣabha being the premier Jina, was held in the highest veneration in all the sects of the Jainas.

Rṣabha's earliest image (Acc. No. 23275 : 71 x 54 cms.) (not illustrated) is dateable to c. eighth-ninth century A. D. and is fashioned in black stone. It hails from South India. Rṣabhanātha seated cross-legged is not accompanied by any of the prātihāryas (splendour phenomena). The body of the Jina is slim and in fine proportions. Four other Rṣabha figures are dateable to c. 10th-11th century A. D. The provenance of these figures, excepting for the one, is unknown; but the images appear to have come somewhere form U. P. or M. P. on the basis of iconographical features and style. One of these figures, beautifully modelled (Acc. No. 274 : 9 x 18 cms) and carved in buff sandstone, is sky-clad; it stands on a carpet in kāyotsarga-mudrā. The figure above the waist is badly mutilated. The central mūlarāga figure is flanked by two male fly-whisk bearers. Bull-cognizance is carved on the pedestal. On the left of the bull, is a figure of four-armed Cakreśvarī in lalitāsana; she holds discs in two upper hands while the lower hands show the abhaya-mudrā and some indistinct object. To the right of Cakreśvara appears a kneeling figure of ārādhaka or worshipper with hands in nāmāsāra-mudrā. The Gomukha Yakṣa, however, is here depicted as playing a truant. (Not illustrated)

One other figure of Rṣabha in buff sandstone (Acc. No. 176 : 53 x 46 cms.) (not illustrated) was procured from Rājaghaṭi, Vārānasi. Here the Jina is seated in dhyāna-mudrā on a cushion placed over a carpet bearing the figure of bull cognizance. The carpet is spread over the throne supported by two lions with intervening
dharmaçaakra. The hair-do of the Jina is after jaṭā with usniṣa, the lateral strands 
hanging over the shoulders. The mūlanāyaka is accompanied by five prātiḥāryas, 
namely cāmaradharas, trichatra, aśoka-tree, a prostrate figure beating a drum, and 
flying mālāḍharas. Two elephants with riders holding a ghaṭa (Hiranyendras) are 
also shown in the parikara. The figures of four-armed Gomukha and Cakreśvari 
are also carved. The pot-bellied Gomukha holds abhaya, a flower, and a mongoose 
skin-purse. 4 Cakreśvari rides the garuda in human form and bears abhaya-mudrā, 
a mace, and a conch in the three surviving hands. Gomukha and Cakreśvari are 
accompanied by two adorers with folded hands. On each side of the mūlanāyaka 
there appear eight diminutive figures of the Jinas, both seated and standing. The 
nudity of the standing Jina figures suggests the Digambara affiliation for the 
image.

The next two figures (not illustrated) are badly mutilated. On in buff sand- 
stone (Acc. No. 179 : 37 x 31 cms.) with its head almost gone, represents Jina 
Rṣabha standing sky-clad on a pedestal with four other standing Jinas, two standing 
near the feet and two flanking the shoulders, the paṇca-Jina group forming a very 
handsome composition (Plate 1). Stylistically, the sculpture cannot be later than the 
ninth century A. D. It may have hailed from Uttar Pradesh or Madhya Pradesh. 
The principal figure shows hanging hairlocks over the shoulders, an invariable feature 
of Jina Rṣabha. The Jina is flanked by two figures of standing Jinas and two male 
cāmara-bearers on two sides. The triple umbrella is mutilated, but the halo 
decorated with lotus petals (padmaprabhā), hovering mālāḍharas, two lions, 
supporting the simhāsana, and the śrivatsa on the chest are extant. The second 
figure (Acc. No. 307 : 25 x 40 cms.) has only the head and the upper part of the 
parikara surviving. The next figure—this again in buff sandstone—shows Rṣabha 
with beautiful, small, oval face revealing a benign smile. The mūlanāyaka with 
jaṭājāta is joined by nine small Jinas, two flying garland bearers and two Hiranyen-
dras. The triple parasol topped by a prostrate figure of drum-beater and drooping 
leaves are also extant.

The remaining five figures of Rṣabha belong to the c. 12th century A. D.; three 
of these are unaccessioned. They are fashioned in buff sandstone and seemingly 
hail somewhere from U. P. and M. P. The first figure, unaccessioned (67 x 29 
cms.), depicts him seated in the dhyāna-mudrā. The iconographic details are 
similar to the above-noted figure (Acc. No. 176). The mūlanāyaka, with bull 
cognizance, jaṭā and lateral strands, is accompanied by six Jina figures, three on 
each side. Rṣabhanātha is joined by traditional Yakṣa-Yakṣi pairs. The two-arm-
ed Gomukha, on the right, sits in lalita pose; he bears water-vessel in his surviving 
left hand. The four-armed Cakreśvari on the corresponding left, rides over a garuḍa 
and shows the abhaya, mace (or disc) and an indistinct object in her three surviving 
hands. (Not illustrated).
Another but smaller image (Acc. No. 484 : 32×34 cms.) shows Rṣabha as seated on a lotus seat. The image’s head and the upper section of the parikara are broken; but the hanging hair-locks are still discernible on the shoulders. The Jina is flanked by two standing male fly-whisk bearers, surmounted by two small seated Jina figures. On the pedestal, to the right of the dharmacakra, appears bull cognizance with a kneeling worshipper with folded hands. (Not illustrated). The third figure (Acc. No. 22073 : 78×47 cms.), seated cross-legged on a cushion with bull cognizance hails from Khajurāho (Plate 2). Rṣabhanātha sitting on a simhāsana and with two fly-whisk bearing attendants, two female attendants, the trichatra topped by a drum beater; drooping (cātya-vṛkṣa) leaves, was originally accompanied by 23 small Jina figures, a few of which have now disappeared. The fourth figure (Plate 3) shows sky-clad Rṣabha (Acc. No. 24050, 65×35 cms.) as standing in kāyotsarga on a triratha pedestal. The Jina, marked on the chest with krivatsa, is here not provided with the usual trichatra and the drum-beater. The hair do shows curls with an usṇīsa and hanging hair-locks. The rather short body of the Jina is accompanied by the customary male cāmaradharas. Besides, there also appear four small standing Jina figures above the cāmaradharas.

The two other unaccessioned figures fashioned in buff sandstone, dateable to c. 13th century probably come from some sites in Central India. The first of the two (39×21 cms.) shows Rṣabha seated cross-legged on a bhadrāsana, the dharmacakra is flanked by two standing bull figures, hair combed back with locks hanging on the shoulders, the head shows a central protuberance. Of the aṣṭa-mahāprātiḥāryas, only the hovering mālādharas are carved in the present instance. The second Rṣabha again without aṣṭa-prātiḥāryas, shows sky-clad (75×28 cms.), it stands in kāyotsarga on a simple pedestal with two cāmaradharas. (Not illustrated).

Ajitanātha

The small eroded stele (Acc. No. 24047, 40×28 cms.) shows Jina Ajitanātha seated in dhyāna-mudrā on a simhāsana (Plate 4). Below the seat two elephant figures are carved as cognizance on the two sides of the dharmacakra which is reminiscent of an earlier tradition of representing the cognizance in practice at Rājgir, Vārānasi, and Mathurā during the Gupta period. The stele also contains the figures of two-armed standing aṣṭagrahas with their right hand in abhaya while the left one bears some indistinct object. Sūrya bears lotuses in two hands and Rāhu, as usual is ūrdhvakāya. The Yakṣa-Yakṣī figures are absent. The figure cannot be later than the earlier part of the sixth century A. D. In view of its early date it may have pertained to the Śvetāmbara sect.

Supārśvanātha

A mutilated head of Jina Supārśvanātha canopied by five hooded cobra (back basalt, Acc. No. 176 : 39×34 cms.) is dateable to c. 10th century A. D. The pro-
venance is Rājghāt, Vārāṇasī. The drum-beaters and two elephants with riders holding vases are extant. (Not illustrated).

Candra prabha

There is, in the collection, a solitary figure of Jina Candra prabha (Acc. No. 23961 : 52×31 cms.). The figure in basalt is dateable to c. 11th-12th century A.D. and probably comes from Bihar. The Jina is seated on a cushion with crescent, his cognizance, carved below the seat. The cushion is placed below the simhāsana supported by two lions. The Jina flanked by two usual male cāmaradharas holding fly-whisk in the inner hand and a flower in the outer one, is provided with trichatra, drooping leaves and gliding mālādharas. (Not illustrated).

Śāntinātha

A small image of Jina Śāntinātha, carved in black stone (Acc. No. 23271), is in the museum, assignable to c. ninth century A. D. The Jina standing sky-clad in the kāyotsarga, the deer cognizance carved in the centre of the simhāsana, is accompanied by two cāmaradharas. He is also provided with trichatra, flying mālādharas and a halo. The four small seated graha figures are also carved in the parikara.

Ariṣṭanemi

A beautiful figure of Ariṣṭanemi (or Neminātha) (wrongly labelled Mahāvira) in the Museum, (Acc. No. 212 : 44×37 cms.) is in sandstone and dateable to c. seventh century A. D. It hails from Rājghāt, Vārāṇasī. Although the cognizance is not carved, the rendering of Sarvāṇubhūti and Ambikā may be taken to indicate Neminātha. The Jina is seated on a lotus seat below which is carved a tree, possibly a palm tree, with a human figure on it. On the left of the tree is two-armed Ambikā with a child in left hand and a lotus in the right. The two-armed Yakṣa holds a pot, probably representing nidhi, in left hand and a lotus in the right.

Pārśvanātha

The Museum possesses four detached heads and one full figure of Jina Pārśvanātha. Of the four heads two are from Mathurā and dateable the Kuśāna period (Acc. Nos. 356 : 15×15 cms.; 20748 : 31×47 cms.) and must, therefore, belong to the Śvetāmbara sect; while the third one (Acc. No. 23759) is from Central India and dateable to c. 11th century A. D. Pārśvanātha, in all these cases, is provided with seven-hooded snake canopy overhead. However, in one instance, trichatra with drooping leaves, drum-beater, hovering mālādharas, and four small Jina figures are also carved. The fourth figure (Acc. No. 23991 : 128×43 cms.) in grey sandstone is ascribed to c. 10th-11th century A. D. Pārśvanātha, standing as sky-clad on a simple pedestal with a seven-hooded snake canopy overhead, is accompanied by usual male attendants (Plate 5). The trichatra, drum-beater, droop-
ing leaves and two couples of flying mālādharas are also carved. Above the shoulder of Pārśvanātha, there appears, on each side, Jina standing as sky-clad. The slim and elongated body of the mūlonāyaka is well proportioned.

Mahāvira

A solitary figure of Mahāvira, provenance Varanasi, in the Museum (Acc. No. 161 : 125 × 66 cms.) is assignable to the Gupta period and its importance lies in its being the second earliest Jina image showing the cognizance.⁶ The Jina accompanied by two fly-whisk bearers is provided with a nimbus and hovering celestial beings. Flanking the dharmacakra are carved two lions, the cognizance of Mahāvira. Further, at the two extremities of the pedestal, are carved two seated Jina figures in place of the usual lions, suggesting simhāsana. (Not illustrated.)

Unidentified Jina figures

There are three Jina figures in the Museum which remain unidentified for the want of the cognizances. The first (Acc. No. K 48 : 50×40 cms.), assignable to c. ninth century A. D., represents a sky-clad Jina in the kāyotsarga-mudrā without the usual cortege of symbols. The second figure (Acc. No. 94 : 53×42 cms.), assignable to c. 10th century A. D., is a seated Jina figure. The third figure (Acc. No. 298 : 35×28 cms.), dateable to c. 13th century A. D., represents a Jina seated in dhyāna-mudrā with the usual accompaniment of the aṣṭamahāprātiḥāryas and the dharmacakra. The figures of the Yakṣa-Yakṣī pair are conspicuous by their absence. However, rendering of two-armed goddesses, eight in number, in lalitāsana merit attention since they probably represent aṣṭamāṭīkās, whose association with Jaina images is otherwise unknown (Plate 6). Although the attributes held by these goddesses are not distinctively identifiable, in some cases they show the abhaya and a fruit.

Jina Caumukhī or Pratimā Sarvatobhadrikā

The Museum has four examples of Jina caumukhī dateable between c. seventh and 11th century A. D., all fashioned in buff sandstone and showing sky-clad Jinas in the kāyotsarga-mudrā standing as they all do on simple pedestals. In earliest example belonging to c. seventh-eight century A. D. (Acc. No. 77 : 138×58 cms.) exhibit the figures of four Jinas without any identifying mark (Plate 7).⁷ Close to the feet of principal Jina on each side, the figures of two other Jinas, seated in dhyāna-mudrā, are carved. Thus the present caumukhī contains, in aggregate, the figures of 12 Jinas. The second caumukhī (Acc. No. 85 : 87×33 cms.) of about eighth-ninth century A. D. contains the figures of four different Jinas, bearing bull, elephant, deer (?) and lion cognizances and hence identifiable with Rṣabhanātha Ajitanātha, Śāntinātha (?) and Mahāvira. The heads of the three Jinas, however, are damaged. Rṣabhanātha is provided with long jatā hanging up to the knees (Plate 8). The elephant cognizance of Ajitanātha is carved in pair,
flanking the dharmacakra (Plate 9). The third figure (Acc. No. 24048: 84 × 20 cms.), is dateable to c. 10th century A. D. Of the four, only Rśabhanātha and Pārśvanātha may be identified on the testimony of hanging hair-locks and seven hooded snake canopy (Plates 10-11). All the Jinas with śrivatsa are shown with haloes, drooping leaves, trichatra and a drum-beater. The fourth figure (Acc. No. 691: 32 × 18 cms.) attributable to c. 11th century A. D., likewise show identifying marks of only two of the four Jinas—Rśabhanātha and Pārśvanātha. The Jina figures are accompanied by the usual mālādharas, gliding in air, and prabhā maṇḍala.

Cakreśvari

This is a solitary instance of its kind (Acc. No. 24049: 69 × 38 cms.) in the Museum (Plate 12). The figure is of Cakreśvari, the Yakṣi of Rśabhanātha. The figure, by virtue of its style, seems to have been carved probably in the Cedi country in M. P. and is dateable to c. 10th century A. D. The eight-armed Cakreśvari here rides a garuḍa in human form and holds the varada, vyākhyaṇa-cum rosary, disc, and conch in her surviving hands. She has a halo. Her garland bearing female attendants wear tall kiritanukuta with a small Jina figure at the crown-front. The body of the goddess is slim, balanced and proportionate and the face is oval.

Architectural Fragments

The Museum has four architectural fragments which mainly contain the figures of the Jinas. The first piece (Acc. No. 50: 75 × 20 cms.) of c. 10th-11th century A. D. is a detached part of a pilaster exhibiting eight Jina figures. Of the eight one is standing as sky-clad while the others are sitting. The remaining three pieces in buff sandstone is assignable to c. 11th-12th century A. D. The second piece is a fragmentary portion of an śikharikā (Acc. No. 86) which shows a standing Jina on one side, while the other side shows the branches of a mango tree topped by three small figure which is suggestive of the representation of the Yakṣi Ambikā, now lost. Of the three small figures, the central one is of a seated Jina flanked by two mālādharas. Third piece (Acc. No. 401: 34 × 55 cms.), a fragment of door-lintel, shows three seated Jina figures, each flanked by two male attendants. (Not illustrated.)

The fourth piece (Acc. No. 264) is of special importance since it shows Jina figures on two sides and the figures of Ambikā Yakṣi and a Jaina couple on the remaining two sides (Plates 13-14). The piece forms the lower portion of a pillar. On one side there stands a sky-clad Jina with snake coils running all along his body which helps us to identify the figure with Pārśvanātha, although the snake canopy over head is damaged now. Pārśvanātha is joined by two usual cāmara dharas. On other side, there appears a seated Jina figure although badly mutilated,
1. Paṇca-Jina standing,
c. 9th cent. A. D.

2. Rṣabha caturviṃśatipaṭṭa,
Khajurāho, c. 12th cent. A. D.
3. Standing Jina Rṣabha in Pañca-Jina group, c. 10th cent. A. D.

4. Ajītanātha seated, c. early 6th cent. A. D.
5. Pārśvanātha standing, c. 10th-11th cent. A. D.

6. Jina seated. c. 13th cent A. D.
7. Pratimā sarvatobhadrikā, c. 7th-8th cent. A. D.

8. Pratimā sarvatobhadrikā, Rṣabha standing. C. 8th-9th cent. A. D.
9. Pratimā-sarvatobhadrikā, Ajitanātha standing. C. 8th-9th A.D.

11. Pratimā-sarvatobhadrikā, Jina Pārśvanātha standing. C. 10th cent. A.D.

12. Yakṣī Cakreśvarī, Cedi style. C. 10th cent. A.D.

but identifiable with Rśabhanātha on the strength of a bull carved over the head of the Jina. The niche on third side is occupied by two-armed Ambikā, the Yakṣī of Neminātha. The Ambikā in concurrence with Digambara tradition possesses two hands and rides a lion and holds a bunch of mangoes in her right hand while with the left she supports a child seated in the lap. Another figure, on the right and close by Ambikā is perhaps the second son of Ambikā. The branches of mango tree are also spread over the head of Ambikā. The only remaining side shows in the centre two seated figures accompanied by several other figures all around. The upper portion, however, is damaged and the remaining figures are also much defaced. The central figure probably represents the parent of some Jina. Four tall figures standing nearby, probably represent some deities who are present here for celebrating an auspicious occasion (kalyāṇa) related with the life of a Jina. Of the four, one figure with a child in her left lap is a female and represents some goddess. One of these remaining male figures, standing on an elephant is probably Indra who used to visit the earth on the occasion of the janna-abhiṣeka of every Jina. Above these figures were carved celestial figures with their one hand in abhaya-mudrā, suggesting thus their divine status. The central scene may be related with the representation of the anointment of some Jina after birth whose figure is shown probably in the lap of the goddess, standing to the left of the parent of the Jina.

Notes and References


2. A few Kuṣāṇa heads with seven-hooded snake canopy may be identified with Pārśvanātha.

3. However, Ajita is here represented only in the Jaina caumukhi (Acc. No. 85).

4. The attributes here and elsewhere are reckoned clockwise starting from the lower right hand.


7. Tiwari, Jaina Pratimā, p. 150.