

THE VIMALA PERIOD SCULPTURES IN VIMALA-VASAHI

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The Vimala-vasahi and its ornate marble interior are sufficiently famous to warrant omission of a eulogistic preamble. The vasati's history, chronology, and achitectural description I have dealt with at length in earlier publications¹, though up to a relevant point a succinct recapitulation with a few minor modifications to my earlier conclusions I will include in the present discussion.

In c. A. D. 1030 or perhaps a few years before that date, Jaina Vimala of the Prāgavāta caste of the *vaiśyas* of Bhillamāla² had been appointed *daṇḍanāyaka*, political and military agent-resident at Candrāvati (capital of the Paramāras of Arbudamaṇḍala or Ābū) by king Bhimadeva I of the Solaṅkis or Caulukyās of Aṅhillapāṭaka³. Vimala eventually founded the temple for Jina Ṛṣabha at the village Deūlavāḍāgrāma⁴ sited on a low eminence on the plateau Mt. Ābū.

As the later *prabandhas* narrate, he had difficulty in getting land for his temple from the Śivaite owners whom he apparently had to pay high price in bargain⁵. The cult image of this temple was consecrated by Vardhamāna sūri of Candra-gaccha⁶ in V. S. 1088/A. D. 1032 as reliable medieval literary sources report⁷. A few posterior Solaṅki inscriptions inside the building attest to Vimala's authorship of the temple⁸.

Vimala's building, however, was modest in size and meagrely ornamented. The architect he employed had used the local dark stone of questionable quality, instead of the elegant marble of Candrāvati or Ārāsaṇa, apparently for want of funds or due to the still undeveloped transportation facilities to lift and move the heavy material up on the mountain-plateau from the quarries of Ārāsaṇa⁹. The dark *mūlaprāsāda* (sancturay) is above 25 ft. in width, having a few shallow *aṅga*-proliferations on plan and a meagrely moulded elevation¹⁰. The superstructure is a low tiered pyramidal roof, its height restricted by the fact of its shallow foundations since the building perches on bare, possibly partially prepared, flat, rock surface that gently sloped toward the east. The *gūḍhamāṇḍapa* (closed hall) conjoined to the *mūlaprāsāda* is and, to all seeming, there was an original open *trika*, or *mukhamāṇḍapa* (pillared portico), to front the closed hall in the design of Vimala's foundation.

The building possibly was surrounded by a *prākāra*-wall presumably with an unpretentious gate at the east. A few, small, free-standing *devakulikā*-chapels may within decades have been added to in the courtyard along the northern and southern flanks¹¹. But the major addition to the complex, as one of the *prabandhas* relates¹², was made by Cāhilla, a brother (or rather son) of Vimala¹³, of a

raṅgamaṇḍapa, or columnar hall, a mukhacatuṣki to the *prākāra* as eastern entrance, a *hastisālā* (elephant court) facing this east porch of the *prākāra*, and a *toraṇa* set up very close to the eastern opening of the former court, all (like the original portions of the Vimāla's building) constructed in black stone.¹⁴ This Cāhilla may be identified with the *mahāsāndhivigrahika* Cāhila figuring in the Caulukya Karnaḍadeva's charter of S. 1146/A. D. 1090 granted to the Jaina temple at Tākovi¹⁵. The dullness of the plain black stone interior of Vimāla's original building can be imagined. When, in the 12th century, the Solankī empire of Gujarāt reached the zenith of its power, Prthvipāla, a minister of emperor Kumārapāla and also descendent of the Vimāla's family,—he being Vimāla's great grand nephew,—not only replaced the original Trika or *mukhamaṇḍapa* as well as the *raṅgamaṇḍapa* of black stone by two magnificent new marble halls, but also planned completely to enclose the entire central complex by a surround of *devakulikās*-chapels with a colonnaded *paṭṭasālā* cloister, all done in glistening marble. The larger part of these additions were built by the munificence of Prthvipāla and subsequently by his son Dhanapāla. The main refurbishment programme had started c. 1144 and completed c. 1150, though the *devakulikās* were continued to be added till c. A. D. 1189.

Almost the total splendour of the Vimāla-vasahī's interior thus owes to Prthvipāla, Dhanapāla (and, to a smaller extent to a few other donors, like their distant cousins Hemaratha and Daśaratha, and Minister Yaśovīra of Jābālipura, and a few others from the lay followers Śvetāmbara sect.) The question is whether there exist any sculpture of interest and of worthiness inside this temple complex which could date from Vimāla period. My four exploratory visits to this temple undertaken between 1959 and 1975 helped locating at least six images which, judging by their style, can definitely be ascribed to Vimāla's times.

The otherwise undecorated *prāsāda*-walls, which very largely are of Vimāla's period, still possesses three Jina images in marble (Plates 1-3), one each in the *bhadra-khattaka*, are stylistically of the early 11th century and hence they conceivably are of Vimāla's times. Excepting in the southern *bhadra-khattaka* where the *bimba* or image proper seems of the restoration period (c. A. D. 1322), the rest is all original, and thus pertain to the original foundation. With minor differences in rendering, the details of the lion throne and the ornamental *parikara*-frame in each case of the three examples are identical. The *simhāsana* shows Sarvānubhūti and Ambikā at the extremities, and next the lions, the elephants and the edgewise *dharmacakra* flanked by dears. The *parikara* in each instance contains two handsomely flexured *cāmara*-bearers, the Hiraṇyendra pair on elephant-backs, the *mālādharas*, the souring adorent *vidyādharas* and, at the apex, a *śaṅkha* or conch-blowing figure. The Sarvānubhūti-Ambikā pair is rarely encountered after the 11th cent. A. D. The typical suave flexure of the *cāmaradharas* and the

characteristic grouping of the deeply undercut celestials above, the lotus aureole behind the Jina's head, and the edge-wise *dharmacakra* are features commonly met with in the elaborate Jina images of the second quarter of the 11th cent. A. D.

Similar elements, the general manner of composition, and the qualitative excellence image surrounds are noticeable in two contemporaneous larger images in marble (brought from some unrecorded site) now under worship in the Jaina temple at Beḍā (situated northeast of Mt. Ābū) may be illustrated here by way of comparison (Plates 4 and 5). In these two almost identical examples, the *dharmacakra* is disposed face-wise; and a triple umbrella is additionally shown since the images are sufficiently large to accommodate that *mahāprātihārya* or glory-feature. Stylistically, the images may date from *c.* middle of the 11th cent. A. D.

The small differences seen in the two Beḍā images may be explained by another image in the same group which stylistically precedes in time even to the Vimala vasahī examples (Plate 6). The image seemingly belongs to the earlier part of the 10th century. The compositional elements are grouped with more space between the postures, though formal, are more animated. The overall mannerism of the composition reveals different graphics, of the tradition of paintings to be precise. The image being larger than all the preceding shown her, could also include a female attendant beside the two male cāmara-bearers. All these attendants are provided with plain oblong haloes, a reminiscence of the pre-medieval traditions.

A still earlier image with conventions ancestral to these all is the marble Jina image inside Brahmāṇa (Varmān)'s Jaina temple (Plate 7), the image, like the older parts of the temple, stylistically may be dated to *c.* late 9th cent. A. D. Hiraṇyendras and the *śaṅkhapāla* are absent since it is an early sculpture. The cāmara-bearers, particularly the right one of the two, has body flexure even more graceful than all previously discussed. This Brahmāṇa image represents the pure Gūrjara-deśa tradition, the other images incorporate a few Maru elements and mannerism in their shaping.

One of the *devakulikā* chapel at the south-eastern corner of the Vimala vasahī temple contains three images of Yakṣī Ambikā, the two smaller at the flank of the middle large one are more ancient. One of them (Plate 8) has *padmaprabhā*-aureole, in the other one the lotus petals of the *prabhā* behave like flames (Plate 9). Not only the style of the aureole but also the style of the *dhammila*-crowns of the two examples is seldom met with after A. D. 1040; it is ubiquitous in the latter half of the tenth century in all Mahā-Gūrjara schools, Kaccha-Ānarta, Arbūda and Medapāṭa to be precise. The two marble images of Ambikā, then, reasonably may be placed to Vimala's period and at least one (Plate 8) may date from the foundation of the temple, the other, although contemporaneous, may have been soon after installed or brought here at some later date from Ārāsaṇa or Candrāvati or some such site in the Arbūda territory.

By way of comparison I introduce here three less known images of Ambikā indicating progressive motion toward ossification in rendering. Plate 10 is from the sanctum of Mahāvīra temple at Ārāṣaṇa, dateable to c. A. D. 1062. Its halo differs, so are the ornaments, flattened and stuck to the skin of body. (The Sarvānubhūti there, Plate 11, is also in the same style.) The crown preferred here is karṇḍa; the general treatment and mannerism seem to derive from the so-called Sās temple at Nāgadā near Āhaḍ in Mevād.

One more examples of an image of Ambā in Plate 12 is in a *devakulikā* in the western *bhramantikā* or colonnaded cloister of the Mahāvīra temple in Ārāṣaṇa. The fine suave features met with earlier, disappear here. The squarish face, the summarized ornaments, and the hardened mould indicates toward 12th or the 13th century A. D.

The fifth image of Ambikā (Plate 13) is from Mt. Girnār, installed in a late medieval small *kulikā* near the southern porch of the *gūḍhamaṇḍapa* of the Neminātha temple. The general mannerism and idiom of treating the limbs,—legs, waist and torso—and face as well as ornaments and the *āmra-pallavi* in the hands seem to remind the sculptures of Kumārapāla's time inside the Vimala-vasahī additions and at other places. An inscription of S. 1215/A.D. 1159 in the northern porch of the *bhramantikā* of the Neminātha temple refers to the installation of an Ambikā image near Nāgajharā¹⁶. Plausibly this is the said image, removed from the original site at a later date to the *kulikā* where it is found today. The blackened surface speaks of prolonged algae action on the marble of the very image, a fact which supports the supposition that it must be the very image mentioned in the inscription referred to in the foregoing lines. These last two illustrations unhesitatingly prove the relative earliness of the Ārāṣaṇa Ambikā in Plate 10, which in its turn clearly endorses the earliness of the style of the two Vimala-vasahī icons shown as Plates 8 and 9.

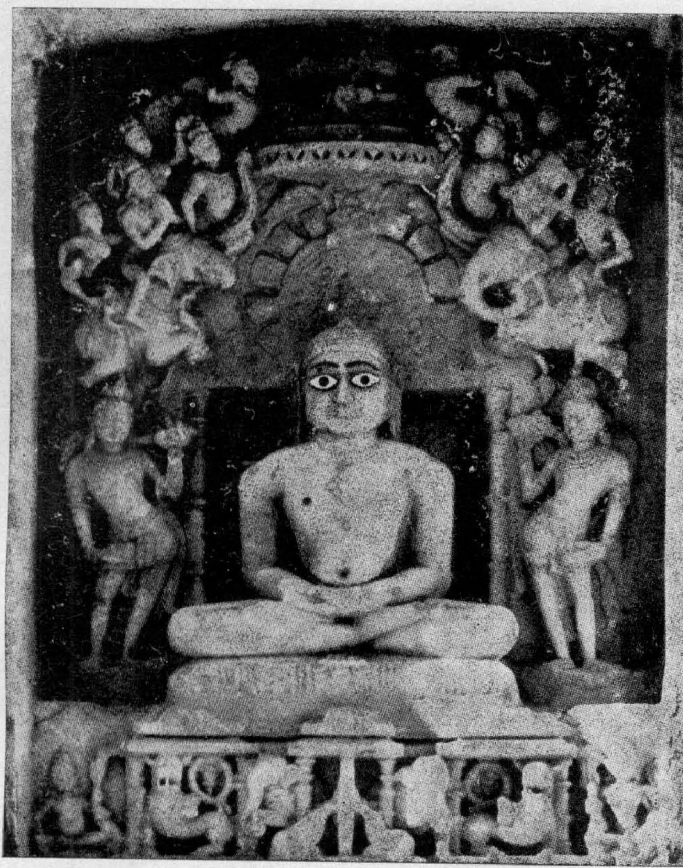
The last illustration (Plate 14) apparently pertains not to Vimala's but his successor Cāhilla's times. The *hastīśālā* of the vasati very plausibly was built by him. The pair of *dvārapālakas* placed at the eastern entrance still retains the gracefully swaying body of the times c. the mid eleventh century A. D. and are in any case not latter than Cāhilla's period.

(What is left out of discussion in this paper is the image in the forechamber of the southwestern extension of the *bhramantikā*. This large black stone image, popularly known as of Jain Muni Suvrata and looked upon as 2500 years old, is, in fact, of Jaina Ṛṣabha; it certainly was the original *mūlanāyaka* image of Vimala's temple and hence of A. D. 1032. Its pedestal is lost but the *maśuraka*-seat bearing jewels on the front, the *padmaparbhā*-aureole, the *vyāla*-makara at the lateral of the throne, and the face and the hair style of the Jina's figure,—all proclaim early eleventh century as the age of the image. The image is not permitted to be photographed.)

All the illustrations for this paper are by the courtesy and kindness of the American Institute of Indian Studies, Varanasi.

Notes and References

1. Cf. "The Chronology of the Solaṅkī Temples of Gujarat", *Journal of the Madhya Pradesh Itihas Parishad*, No. 3, 1961; also "Vimala-vasahī-nī Ketālika Samaśyāo" (Gujarāṭī), *Svadyāya*, Vol. IX, No. 3, V.S. 2028.
2. Bhillamāla, from the 11th cent. A. D., is equally known as Srimāla after the city's patron goddess Śrī (Mahālakṣmī). From late medieval times onward, the town is known as Bhinnamāla.
3. Currently Pāṭaṇ.
4. Currently Delvādā, anglicised Dilwara.
5. I forego citations since not relevant to be central facts of this paper.
6. This is the tradition recorded in the annals of the Kharatara-gaccha which traces its ultimate roots in this Vardhamāna Sūri. The alternative tradition, of the Tapa-gaccha records in particular, aver that the four *ācāryas* of the four different *kulas* or sub-orders of monks,—Nāgendra, Candra, Nirvṛtti and Vidyādhara—officiated the consecration rites.
7. Again, I forego citing original sources since not serviceable to the main discussion.
8. For references pertaining to original sources, see my paper "Vimala-vasahī-nī" earlier referred to.
9. The town is currently known as Kumbhāria where five Jaina and one Śivaite marble temples exist. The old township has disappeared, the settlement shifted a mile to the west of Kumbhāria, to what is known as Ambājī.
10. Very disappointingly so indeed.
11. The earliest Devakulikā image-pedestal dates to S. 1121/A.D. 1065.
12. For discussion and references to the original sources, see my "Vimala-vasahī-Nī," paper.
13. *Ibid.*
14. The *toraṇa* and the grilled walls of the *hastiśālā*, the eastern *mukhacatuṣkī* and the *mūlaprāsāda* (main shrine) and the *gūḍhamaṇḍapa* are still extant. The original *trika* and the *raṅgamaṇḍapa* were refurbished in marble in mid 12th cent. A. D.
15. Cf. Pt. Ambalal Premchand Shah, *Jaina-tīrtha-Sarvasaṅgraha* (Gujarāṭī) Vol. I, pt. 1, Ahmedabad 1953, p.
16. For latest discussion and citation, see my "Ujjayantagiri and Jain Aristanemi", *Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art*, NS, Vol. XI, 1980, p. 69, *infra*.



1. Seated Jina, northern *bhadrakhattaka*, *prāsāda*, Vimala vasahī, Delvāḍā., Mt. Ābu.
C. A. D. 1032

2. Seated Jina, western *bhadrakhattaka*, Vimala vasahī.
C. A. D. 1032.





3. Seated Jina, southern *bhadra-*
khattaka, Vimala vasahī.
A. D. 1032.

4. Seated Jina, Jaina temple.
Beḍā. C. early 11th cent.
A. D.





5. Seated Jina, Jaina temple Beḍā.
C. early 11th cent. A. D

6. Seated Jina, Jaina temple. Beḍā.
C. early 10th cent. A. D.





7. Seated Jina, Jaina Temple,
Varmān. C. late 9th cent. A. D.

8. Ambikā, Vimala vasahī, Delvāḍā,
Mt. Abu. C. A. D. 1032.





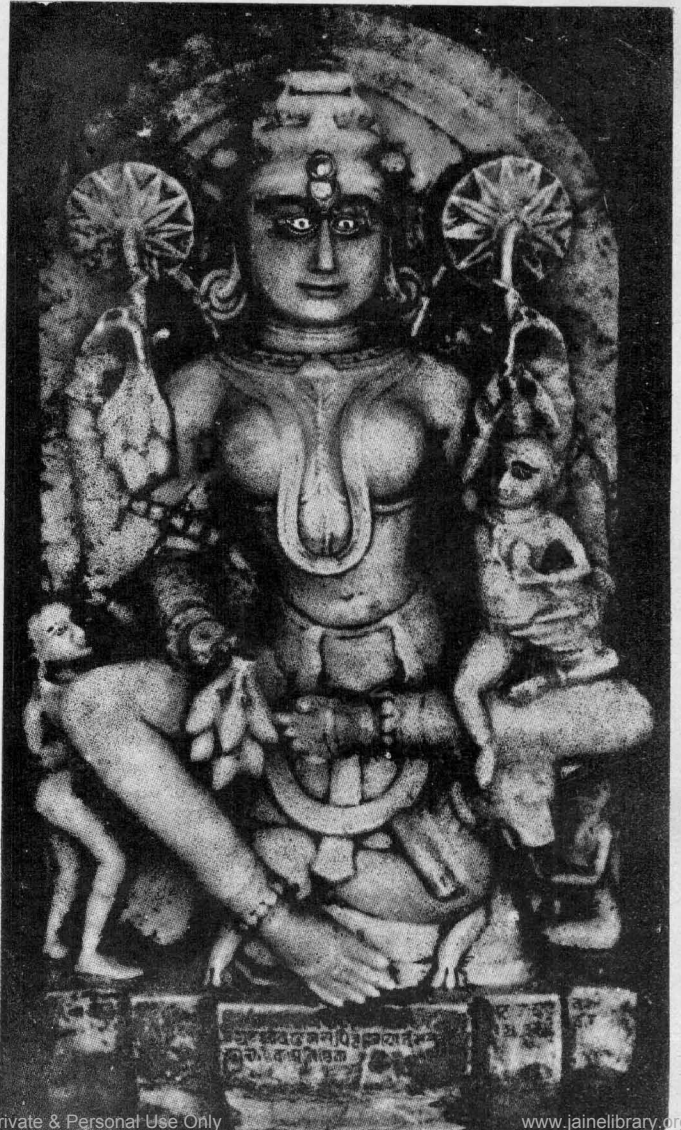
9. Ambikā, Vimala vasahī, Delv
C. A. D. 1032

10. Ambikā, Mahāvīra temple, Kum-
bhāriā (Ārāsaṇa). C. A. D. 1062





11. Sarvānubhūti, Mahāvīra temple,
Kumbhāriā. C. A. D. 1062



12. Ambikā Mahāvīra temple,
Kumbhāriā (Ārāsaṇa),
Devakulikā in *bhramantikā*.
C. 12th or 13th cent. A. D.



13. Ambikā, Neminātha temple,
Girnār. C. A. D. 1059.

14. Hastiśālā, *toraṇa*-pillar and
dvārapālā, Vimala vasahī Delvāḍā.
C. mid 11th cent A. D.

