

## Four Panca-Tirthikas from Bhagalpur

AJOY KUMAR SINHA

The Svetambara Jaina Temple, Campanagar<sup>1</sup> (a suburb of Bhagalpur town) stands upon the ruins of ancient Jaina temple site of glorious Campapuri, the capital city of Anga. The present temple was however constructed in about 1760 A.D. by the benevolent Svetambaras of Murshidabad town.<sup>2</sup> Martin Mantgomery<sup>3</sup> left behind him a detailed account of this temple in his book. Buchanan<sup>4</sup> attributed this temple to Jagat Seth, banker of Murshidabad Nawab. The present temple is an example of solid masonry work and its thick round large-sized pillars reminds one of the Greco-Roman architectural style. It contains as many as fifty stone and bronze images among whom four bronze *Pañca-Tirthikas* of great archaeological as well as religious importance have been selected by the present author for study.

The antiquity of *Pañca-Tirthika* icons is hardly four to five hundred years old. Majority of them have been reported from the western India and some of them are housed in the museums abroad. The present author thinks that the Jainas during their golden days (circa 15th-16th century A.D.) propagated the five fold path for attaining the *saniyak Jñāna*<sup>5</sup> (one of the *tri-ratna*) in terms of these *Pañca-Tirthika* icons. This may also be related to the five fold vows<sup>6</sup> of the Jainas, viz non-injury, non-lying, abstinence from theft, chastity and detachment from all external and internal temptation.

The *Pañca-Tirthikas* under discussion are beautiful examples of the mediaeval metal art of India. They are well preserved and are under worship. Five Tirthankaras are grouped together in a geometrical composition. The *mūla-nāyakas*, in all the four icons are seated cross-legged in deep meditation. There are two standing Tirthankaras by the side of the *mūla-nāyaka*, and on each end is a standing flywhisk-bearer in *tribhaṅga*

<sup>1</sup> Sinha, Ajoy Kumar, 'Jaina Shrines in Bhagalpur', *The Jaina Antiquary*, Vol. 36 No. 2 (Arrah-1983), pp. 22-23.

<sup>2</sup> Patil, D. R., *The Antiquarian Remains in Bihar* (Patna-1963), pp. 78-79.

<sup>3</sup> Martin, Montgomery, *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*, Vol. II (London-1837), pp. 29-30.

<sup>4</sup> Buchanan, H., *An Account of the District of Bhagalpur* (Patna-1839), pp. 75-76.

<sup>5</sup> *Uttaradhyayana Sutra*, (*Jaina Sutras* translated by H. Jacobi).

<sup>6</sup> *Tattvartha-raja-vartika*, Ch. VII, 1 (Sanatana Jaina Series).

posture. By the side of the each *mūla-nāyaka's* halo are two seating Tirthankaras also in deep meditation and on each end is a dancing Gandharva. Pair of truncated elephants are on either side of *mūla-nāyaka's chatra*. On the right and left ends of the lion-throne of the *mūla-nāyaka* are shown respectively the figures of the attendant Yaksa and Yaksi. In the centre of the lower-most end of the pedestal is placed the mother goddess seated in the *ardha-paryāṅkāsa*. The shrine is topped by a beautiful finial flanked by pair of fishes.

The earliest of these *Pañca-Tīrthikas* bears the date samvat 1523 (A.D. 1466). The *mūla-nāyaka* in this icon is Bhagavan Sambhavanatha, the third Jaina Tirthankara (fig. 1). It bears an inscription on its back. The next belonged to samvat 1581 (A.D. 1524) and its *mūla-nāyaka* is Bhagavan Santinatha, the sixteenth Jaina Tirthankara (fig. 2). The third bears the date samvat 1585 (A.D. 1528). The *mūla-nāyaka* in this icon is Bhagavan Adinatha, the first Tirthankara (fig. 3). The last *Pañca-Tīrthika* belonged to samvat 1603 (A.D. 1546) and its *mūla-nāyaka* is Bhagavan Sumatinatha, the fifth Jaina Tirthankara (fig. 4). Stylistically, all these four icons belonged to one school and show similarities with the western school of Jaina metal art. The *Pañca-Tīrthikas* from Bhagalpur show similarities with the *Pañca-Tīrthikas* from west India displayed in the Los Angeles County Museum (U.S.A.),<sup>7</sup> Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad,<sup>8</sup> Central Archaeological Museum, Gwalior and one enshrined in Sagardighi, Murshidabad.<sup>9</sup> But in comparison to each other the Bhagalpur *Pañca-Tīrthikas* are artistic from iconographic point of view as they contain all iconographic details.

<sup>7</sup> Ghosh, A., *Jaina Art and Architecture*, Vol. III, pl. 333.

<sup>8</sup> Sharma, B. N., *Jaina Pratimayen* (New Delhi-1979), p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Lalwani, Ganesh, *Bhagavan Mahavira* (Calcutta-1974), pl. 13.