

A Torso of Parsvanatha in the Bhagalpur Museum (Bihar)

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Bhagvan Parsvanatha¹ is one of the most revered Tirthankaras of Jainism. According to Prof. Rhys Davids,² he was the lone founder of the Jaina Faith. He is the 23rd Tirthankara and his emblem is snake. He was born in the royal palace at Varanasi in about 817 B.C. He was married with the daughter of king Prasenajita of Kosala but like prince Siddhartha he left his home to follow the life of an ascetic at the age of 30 and preached his doctrine of love and universal fraternity, for about 70 long years through out the country. He was closely associated with the province of Bihar and he died in about 717 B.C. at Mount Parsvanatha³ (*Sammata Sikhara*) in the district of Hazaribagh, Bihar.

The torso⁴ of Bhagvan Parsvanatha under discussion was acquired by the author of this paper from Katwali Police Station, Monghyr in the year 1977. It was unearthed inside the old Monghyr Fort during the course of construction of the building for Gun Factory. The town of Monghyr,⁵ no doubt, has a glorious past. It is learnt from the *Padmacarita* of the Acarya Ravisena⁶ (*circa* 7th century A.D.) that the Jaina religion was in flourishing condition during that period in the vicinity of Monghyr. Temple of the Tirthankaras were being built and the teachers were always moving in these sacred places propagating their religion. Acarya Jinasena⁷ and Acarya Haribhadra⁸ (*circa* 8th century A.D.) also described the Anga region as a centre of Jainism. The colossal

¹ Bhattacharya, B. C : *The Jaina Iconography* (Delhi 1974), pp. 58-59.

² Davids, Rhys : *Ency. Britt.*, Vol. xii (9th Edition), p. 543.

³ Ramchandran, T. M : *Jaina Monuments of India* (Calcutta 1944), p. 1.

⁴ Ghose, T. C. S : *Bihar and Orissa District Gazetteers, Patna District*, pp. 30-52.

⁵ Sinha, B. P. (ed.) : *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, Vol. I, Pt. II. (Patna), p. 457.

Ibid., p. 458.

torso of Lord Parsvanatha which is broken above the chest and upto the knees measures 110 x 36 cms. The waist and chest measure 80 cms and 94 cms. respectively. This very measurement gives us an idea about its colossalness. The snake Dharana, as usual, coming up from Lord Parsvanatha's back who is standing in his natural *kāyotsarga mudrā*. He is naked and hence worshipped by the Digambara sect. It is carved out in black basalt.

At present, a temple of Lord Parsvanatha is situated at Bara Bazar which is situated in the heart of the Monghyr town. It is worshipped by the Digambara Jains. According to the local people, it was constructed some hundred years ago above the original temple site. The author is of opinion that the torso of Lord Parsvanatha under discussion was originally placed near the present temple and was being worshipped prior to its destruction. It might be destroyed in the 13th century and thrown into the ditches of nearby Monghyr Fort which was subsequently found and at present adorning the Bhagalpur Museum, Bhagalpur.