

Evidence of the Origin of Tirthankara Images in the Archaeological Literature

Brijesh Rawat

DSM National Rehabilitation University, Lucknow, India

Keywords: Jainism, Buddhism, Jina, Indus Civilization, Literatures, Vadik, Vedas, Image, Mauryan, Sunga.

Abstract: Jainism has occupied its prominent place since Ancient India. There had been twenty four Tirthankaras in this religion. Rishabha was the first promulgator and first Tirthankara. Rig-Veda, Yajurveda and Atharveda mention the name of Rishabha, tirthankara Ajit and tirthankar Nemi. Similarly, in other Ancient Indian literature, along with the mention of said tirthankars, the mention of Parshva and Mahavira too has been found in plenty. Shishnadeva, Nagnahu, Keshin, Shraman, addressed in Rig-Veda are synonyms of tirthankars. Words like Udharvareta, Udharvamanthi, Nirgrantha, Vatarshna, Shaman etc, cited in other ancient literature has been used for Jinas and sages which definitely augments the presence, value and popularity of Jainism and Tirthankaras. In Harappa Civilization the writer has obtained seventeen sculptures akin to the images of tirthankaras, which bears resemblance to the idols of Historic Tirthankara sculptures. Following this, the construction of the sculptures of Jinas continued during the Mauryan, Sungas and Kushanas period.

1 INTRODUCTION

The root source of the word Jaina is from the Sanskrit word 'Jina'. The meaning of the word 'Jaina' is of Jainai.e. opinion of Jina, saying of Jina or discourse of Jina. Its intention being the religion promulgated by Jina was Jainism. The meaning of Jina was the conqueror i.e. the one that overcomes his mental disorders or weaknesses, is called Jina. Jina is also known as Jinadeva, Jineshvara, Jinendra etc. in as a mark of respect. These in a venerable term are called as Arhat, Arhant and Arihant. Worldly sensual environment and kashaya form disorders are known as love and hatred. By conquering over this love and hatred one becomes Vitarag (free of passions) or Jina. As self-conquering person is a vitarag, hence for the purpose of self-conquering the religion they preached was called as vitarag religion.

Jina's are praised by deva-adideva, Indra etc. Hence they have been named as shreshtha (paramount). Their soul too in their previous birth was engrossed with desire and passions like an ordinary man. But he acquired mukti (moksha) from his bond of life and death, by following self-inspection, devotion and entreaty. And, after this he attained Kevalya. Because of the establishment of tirtha after the attainment of kevalya together with

Sadhu- Sadhavis and Sravakas- Sravikasthey were called tirthankaras. Tirthankaras been produced by the word tirtha. And, the origin of tirtha word has with the adding of prefix true with thak suffix. It means through whose medium one can get through or to ferry over is tirtha.

In fact, it has been the characteristic feature of Indian culture that there has always remained in the coteremporary form the coordinated flow of different views. This fact has always existed in the Cultural history of every era. During its primary phases there were two views that flowed parallel to each other- one was the flow of Sramanic culture and the other was the flow of the Brahmanic culture. Under brahmanic culture comes Vedic or Aryan traditions and under sramanic cultures come the Buddhist, Jains and other traditions where the yogic and meditative tendencies were found in prominence.

Similarly the Uttaradhyana Sutra of Jainism mentions about the word 'Naginina' the meaning of which is nudity. The churnikaar of Uttaradhyanasutra has described about the then popular some sects like- Mrigacharika, Udadandak, (an ascetic walking with a stick raising up in his hand), Jaina and Ajivakas saints who used stay nude.

Similarly one another popular word is shishnadevah which occurs in the second mandala of Rig Veda. The meaning of it is a subject of dispute.

Still the meaning of it is shishnadevahi.e.linga deva. It's still clear meaning is the god who bears linga (male organ). For worshipping thelinga Aryans called

Non Aryans as shishnadeva. The worship of linga in direct form was done by the shaiva Sect. It is quite possible that Non Aryan would have been the followers of shaiva religion and would have worshipped thelinga; hence NonAryanswere called shishna deva.As regards the archaeological evidence from the ancient sites of Indus Valley Civilisation namely Mohan-Jo-Daro and Chahundaro the image of Pashupati Shiva and from Dhaulavirathe lingas made from Stone has been obtained. Form Kalibangan the shivalingawith yonipeetha has also been found. The literal meaning of the word shishnadeva is not completely correct. My opinion is that that the worshippers of linga would have been called shishnaman or shishnaworshipper and not shishnadeva. The word deva is used for God. The meaning of Deva is the one who gives. That means the one who gives the contemporary society some specialknowledge,culture, concept, is called deva. Hence it is quite appropriate that the use of the 'deva' word of shishnadeva must have been used for some exceptional manor great man. This kind of exceptional man might would have been Jina or tirthankara, who being completely nude or in the digambarattva form, their linga along with the other parts of the body was visible. And these were not deva but after the attainment of Kevalyathey looked accordinglylike extraordinary men who as the respective gods of the contemporary writers were referred to as devaas per their level. Similar types of stone and terracotta figures have been obtained from the ancient sites of Mehargarh, Mohan-jo- Daro, Harappa, Dhaulavira etc. of the Indus Valley Civilization. Hence the word Shishnadeva is quite close to the tirthankaras. Jinas have also the synonyms like deva-deva or deva-adideva. In Rig-Veda itself the word Nagnahu has been mentioned. It is clear that the meaning of this word was related to nudity or without clothes. Nagnahu and Shishnadevah are words having similar meanings. The meaning of both of the words is digambarattva. The nudity or digambarattva are the most important characteristic of the Jina Images.

There was the presence of sramanas during the timeof GautamBuddha also. Gautam Buddha spoke while bringing the systematization in the conduct system of sramanas-

Nahambhikkhavesanghatikasyasanghatidharana mattensamaannayyamvadaami,

Achelakasyaachelakamattenranjojalikasyarajojali kamattena....

Jatilakasyajatadharanamattensammannayyamvada ami!

i.e. oh Bhikshusdon't call sramannya only for the sake of wearing drapery by the sanghatikas, by mere chelakatva of achelakas, rajjolikaatavas of rajjaolikas and wearing jataas by the Jatas bearers are not called sramannayas. It means that I don't call it by mere symbolization, but they do have distinctive qualities and conduct.

Similarly we do get ample information about the matters relating to Jainism through Vedic Literature and Puranas. Besides this B.C. Bhattacharya in his book 'The Jaina Iconography' has mentioned about the description in Arthashastra written by Kautilya about the sculptures of Jayanta, Vaijayanta, Aparajita and other Jaina gods etc. The seventh pillar Inscriptions of Asoka's also mentions about the nirgrantha (as were called in beginning), the followers of twenty fourth tirthankara Mahavira-

Hemeva baamnesuaajivikesu pi mekate....

Niganathesu pi me

It is known from the inscription engraved in the Hathigumpha Inscription (First century B.C.) of Kharvela in Udaigiri, Odisha, that in the twelfth year of his reign as a result of his victory, Kharvela brought back the sculpture of Jina that had been taken away by the Nandaraja-

Bar same cha base... Nandarajaneetam cha ka (li) gam JinaSammivesa

Through this chronological analysis it is clear that there is ample description about sramanas tradition and cultures either directly or indirectly in Veda, Arthashastra, Puranas, Buddhist texts and Inscriptions. It is proved that prior to the composition of Vedas the yogavadiSraman tradition was fully established which were referred by other synonyms like - sraman, vratya, shishnadeva, arhat, arihant, vatarshanaetc. During the Vedic period the words like sramana, vratya, shishnadevah, and nagnhu etc. have been described in adequate quantity, but if its direct linkages be added to the historical Jainism then it would be a prejudice. Yes, the intended distinguishing features of Jainism were observed in the then contemporary description, through which this assessment is made simple and distinctive that probably the Jainism was prevalent in its primary stage prior to the Vedic phase. The evidences in favour of it are the sculptures similar to the sculpture in kayotsargamudra found from the sites of Indus Valley Civilisation. The relationship between some of the kayotsarga sculptures obtained from Indus Valley Civilization and of the sculptures of Rishabha of Historical period. The sculptures are in meditative (dhyanamagna) posture and in vitaraagmudra. The

dharmachakra, naga, animals and trees all are the characteristic features of the Jaina art.

While throwing light on the other side of the sramanawords light gets thrown on one other fact. Since sramanas were of yoga tendency and used to stay nude, they perhaps would have worn the dress of saints, as two kinds of sculptures had been obtained from Harappa Civilisations. First were of dighambarattva and kayotsargamudrasculptures, and the second sculptures were in the yogamudra wearing drapery in both standing and meditative posture. Here the second type i.e. those wearing drapery and in meditative postures have been described. The male sculpture made from steatite has been obtained from the ancient sites of HR areas of gadhi's mound of Mohan-jo- Daro whose hair and beard are well combed along with the moustaches too are worth noticing which is clearly visible. The hair is well combed and has been tied with a band at the back. The forehead is flat, nose is small but well elevated, eyes are half closed, and the lower lip is broad. The eyes are looking down at the tip of the nose. The ear is small and circular. The chivar (the garment of an ascetic) being prepared of three leaves covers the left shoulders and the right shoulder being depicted bare. The rest portion of it is broken. The length of it is 19 cms.

There are some distinctive characteristics in all these four sculptures. The well combed hair of Raj yogi tied up with a band, well combed beard, armllet and the drapery (chivar)embroidered with three leaves is the indicator of being civilized. The three faced Shiva or Pashupati Shiva is well adorned with jewelleries, and the cloth touching in the triangular form that is hanging down from his neck upto the stomach portion too proves him not to be an ordinary yogi but specifies him to be a special person or the king or god. Of the other two sculptures, one that is sitting in bhusparshamudra, his cloth is like an ordinary drapery with no jewelleries in hand etc. Similarly the standing sculpture too is covered with an ordinary drapery. Through this one comes to know about three kinds of yogis. There is one who is a Rajpurusha (person related to royal family), the second one is Devapurusha and the third one devoid of heavy clothes and jewelleries, bold and the extraordinary yogi who has achieved his position through his hard work and effort. It seems that during Indus Civilisation meditation and yoga was prevalent for all the classes whether they were devas, rulers or ordinary society and hence we get the description about it in abundance in Vedic samhitas.

Besides, on the coins of Indo-Greek rulers along with the depiction of Indo- Greek god and goddesses

the representation of figures similar to Indian god and goddesses were also shown. On the coins of Plato there is the depiction of god with a halo on the chariot driven by four horses. He is estimated and identified with Mithra or Sun. Similarly during the Second century B.C. on the obverse side of the silver coins of Maues a male figure with a halo is depicted on the chariot driven by two horses. In one of his hand is a lance and in front of him is a charioteer. According to some scholars this figure belongs to Sun. On the silver coins of the Indo-Greek king Agathocles has been obtained from Ae Khanum situated from Vakshu Area, on one side of which there are standing figures one holding chakra and the other one holding plough and a club. They have been identified with Krishna and Balram. Similarly on the other silver coins of Agathocles a female figure in Indian costume and a leopard has been shown who has been identified by Jitendra Nath Banerjea as Ashvamukhi Yakshini. The Saka King Moas of Second century B.C. had issued about twenty types of coins. Among these on the reverse side of one of these copper coins there is a sitting figure which the scholars believe it to be the image of Buddha. Kushana King Kanishka too had made the depiction of Buddha in ample quantity.

Besides these, there is one more description that needs to be mentioned, that is there is about thirty Neolithic stone shelters near and around Mori village of the Mandasor District of Madhya Pradesh. Over the roofs and walls of it there is drawing made by ochre. It depicts varieties of animals, humans in dancing pose and the depiction of cowherds along with the animals which is contemporary to the third and fourth category of Panchamadh paintings. Some drawn figures of this place are of importance. Like a square swastika in a circle, chakra with eight spokes, Sun with its rays, triangular house, bullock cart and most important is the sarvatobhadra symbol emancipating from the creeper of swastika which is of great importance from the perspective of Jainism and Jaina sculptures of sarvatobhadrika types.

2 CONCLUSIONS

Hence it is my observation, that Yogavadi sramanas tradition was fully established during the Harappan civilisation, whether it was Shaivism, Buddhism or Jainism. Unless the Harappan script is deciphered, it would be a prejudice and in haste to come to any conclusion. But still on the basis of Iconography, it would not be wrong to say that, during the then contemporary period too that there was the existence

of Buddhism and Jainism in one form or the other, with a difference in name. From this study it is clear that during the Harappan and Vedic phase there was the prevalence of the construction of sculptures for religious purpose. During the said phase there was a clear and religious environment in which along with the other sculptures the construction of religious sculptures too were constructed, out of which some of the sculptures due to its artistic characteristics bears very close similarity with the Jaina sculptures. In course of time there was a chronological development from these proto sculptures similar to the tirthankaras, to that of the historical tirthankaras Images.

REFERENCES

- Uttaradhyana Sutra, 23/12
Rig-Veda, 2/14/4
ibid, 2/19/27
Majjhim Nikaya, 40
Bhattacharya, B.C., The Jaina Iconography, Lahore, 1936,
p.33
Samrat Asoka, Seventh Pillar Inscription
Kharvela, Hathigumpha Inscriptions, Udaigiri, Orissa
John Marshall, Mohan-Jo-Daro and the Indus Valley
Civilisation, London, 1931, III, Pl. XCV, 26 and 27
Mackay, Further Excavations at Mohan-Jo-Daro, New
Delhi, 1938, II, Pl. LXXXI, 6, 10, 11 and
PL. LXXV, 12, 1
Gupta, P.L., Bharat Ke Purva Kaalik Sikke, Varanasi, 1996,
p.103
ibid, p.133
ibid, p.103
ibid, p.103
ibid, p.132
Indian Archaeology- A Review, New Delhi, 1957-58, p.27,
Pl.14/1-4