

Parshvanatha-An Image in Trance at Annigere in Karnataka

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Introduction

India has been a land which has produced three major religions of the world, namely Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. While all the three religions are still practice in India, Hinduism and Buddhism have spread to other countries. Jainism is still a live religion in many states of India like Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan. The name Jaina is derived from the word jina, meaning conqueror, or liberator. Believing in immortal and indestructible soul (jiva) within every living being, its final goal is the state of liberation known as *kaivalya*, *moksha* or *nirvana*.¹ The *sramana* movements rose in India in circa 550 B.C. Jainism in Karnataka began with the stable connection of the *Digambara* monk called Simhanandi who is credited with the establishment of the Ganga dynasty around 265 A.D. and thereafter for almost seven centuries Jain communities in Karnataka enjoyed the continuous patronage of this dynasty. Chamundaraya, a Ganga general commissioned the colossal rock-hewn statue of Bahubali at Sravana Belagola in 948 which is the holiest Jain shrines today.²

Patronised by every major ruling dynasty such as Gangas, Kadambas, Badami Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Kalyana Chalukyas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagar and Wodeyar times, besides the ruling families such as Alupas, Santaras, Nayakas, Chautas and others. Even in difficult times of religious movements Jainism survived to exist in Karnataka and safeguarded the *Digambara* Jaina sect. This has resulted in Jaina vestiges found in remote corners of Karnataka state in large number. The literature and culture of the land of Karnataka has become richer with the contributions of Jaina patrons, poets, preceptors, craftsman, merchants, traders, artists and principles of living. The places of piligrimage of the Jains have played an immense role in enriching the State's art and architecture.

The Jinas or Thirthankaras list of twenty-four given before the beginning of the Christian era and the earliest reference occurs in the Samavayanga Sutra, Bhagavati Sutra and Kalpasutra. The Kalpasutra describes at length only the lives of Rishabhanatha, Neminatha, Parshvanatha and Mahavira. The iconographic feature of Parsvanatha was finalised first with seven-headed snake canopy in the first century B.C. followed by other Tirthankaras.³ The present paper focuses on the image of Parshvanatha and its artistic expression of trance.

Parshvanatha – His life

Parshvanatha emphasized on the principle of Ahimsa (non-injury) and added three more precepts, namely, abstinence from telling lies, from stealing, and from external possessions. 23rd Tirhtankara Parshva was born as a prince of the King Ashvasena and Queen Vama or Varmila in the city of Varanasi in the asterism Vishakha, he was dark-blue in complexion. According to Svetambaras, he was called Parshva because his mother had seen, in dream, a black cobra passing by her side durin her

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confinement. Parshvanatha is regarded as a historical figure and there is a two hundred and fifty year gap between Parshvanatha and the next Tirthankara Mahavira, according to the Acaranga sutra, Mahavira's parents were lay followers of Parshvanatha.

As Shah narrates, the life of Parsva is known as *Kamathopasarga*, the attack by Kamatha, a Brahmin ascetic (*tapasa*) practicing penance with his fires kindled around him. In his wandering Parshva tries to save a cobra caught under the logs of wood set on fire by Kamatha. He liberates the dying snake by chanting the *Navkara mantra* and this snake takes birth as the god of snakes called Dharanendra (Indra of the Nagakumara class of demi-gods). Kamatha, after death, was also born as a god Meghamaalin and continues to carry his vengeance against Parshva by disturbing his intense penance by pouring torrential rains, flooding the area and sending terrific beings to create disturbance. Dharanendra comes to the rescue of drowning Parshva who is unaffected by Meghamaalin's destructive act. Dharanendra coils himself around Parshva and spreads the seven hoods as a crown of protective canopy, while his queens lead by Padmavathi sing and dance to soothe Parshva's pains.

Parshvanatha on seeing a *pata* depicting the life of the preceding Tirthankara Neminatha, gets inspired and the desire to turn a Jain monk awakens in him. The Lokantika gods appear before the Jina to-be and respectfully inform him that the time for taking *diksa* had approached and pray to him to save the afflicted humanity by founding the Jaina 'tirtha'. For a year from there on, the Jina to-be given handsome charities (called *varshika* or *varshi-dana* in Kalpa-sutra miniatures) at the end of which period, he is carried in a palanquin to a park outside his city-gates where he plucks his hair in five fistfuls (*panca-musti-lonca*), removes all the ornaments, garments, etc., and turns a *Jina* monk. Indra and other gods attend and perform the ceremony, Indra catches the plucked out hair in a costly piece of cloth and throws them in the milk-ocean. This is the *Diksa-kalyanaka* in the life of every *Jina*.⁴ Parshvanatha and Suparshvanatha have a similarity in the name, a canopy of snake-hoods overhead and can be differentiated by the cognizance on the pedestal. The snake is seen coiled behind Parshva while only the hoods are seen in Suparshvanatha.

Iconography of Parshvanatha

The earliest images of Parshvanatha are some sculptures obtained from the Kankali Tila, Mathura. Started with the worship of Jaina stupas in Mathura in the first century B.C. is dedicated to Parshvanatha. With an introduction of sculptures called *pratima-sarvato-bhadrika* in the inscriptions on their pedestals, show Tirthankara images on each of its four sides known as *Caumukha-pratimas*. The Kushana period gives Tirthankara iconography in *Kayotsarga* posture on a pedestal or meditating while sitting in *Padmasana* on a *simhasana* (lion-throne), flanked by figures of *sadhus* (monks), *sadhvis* (nuns), *sravakas* (Jaina laymen), *sravikas* (Jaina laywomen).⁵ The rendering of the swastika and snake emblems are attributed to Suparshvanatha and Parshvanatha. Dharendra and Padmavathi pair as *yaksha* and *yakshi* for Parshvanatha. Tirthankara images are in postures, the standing or the *Kayotsarga mudra*, and the sitting or the *padmasana* or the *ardha-padmasana* posture (popular in South India). Eight kinds of heavenly signs (*ashta pratiharyas*) – Always remain near the Tirthankara: (1) *Simhasana* (Throne) (2) *Divya dhvani* (3) *Chamara* (4) *Prabha mandala* (5) *Surapushpa vrishti* (6) *Deva dundubhi* (7) Ashoka tree (8) *Chatra traya* (three umbrellas)⁶

Parshvanatha - Some Basadis in Karnataka

Karnataka has two types of worship places dedicated to Tirthankaras, one being the '*betta*' or temples on hills and hillocks, the other known as '*basadi*'; the temples of Jains with Idols of Tirthankaras. A typical Jaina temple has a 'Manasthamba' the pillar in front, allowing to enter from the main door leads to a corridor, a pillared hall, an antechamber and the sanctum which houses the main deity as a Tirthankara along with small icons of goddesses, *sarvatobhadra* etc. There are small shrines dedicated to 'Kshetrapala', '*yaksha - yakshi*', hero stones, inscriptions and the snake gods. Some *basadis* dedicated to Parshwanatha in Karnataka can be found in Halebeedu, Aladangady, Yelawatti, Karaguduri, Lakkundi, Saligrama and Annigeri.

Parshvanatha *Basadi* at Annigeri

Annigeri situated in the Hubli - Gadag railway line, in the Navalgund taluk, is at a distance of 55 km from Dharwad, in North Karnataka. It was an urban centre in ancient times and boasts of several beautiful old temples. The place came under the sway of several dynasties beginning from the Badami Chalukyas to the Vijayanagara and Adilshahis. It was Annigeri that served as the capital of Chalukya Someshwara IV (A.D. 1185-89). The place, celebrated in ancient epigraphs as 'Varanasi of the South' has over twenty-five stone inscriptions. The earliest of these (A.D. 750) belongs to the reign of Kirtivarma II of the Badami Chalukya dynasty.⁷

The first known Kannada poet (Adikavi) Pampa was a Jain and born here in all likelihood, since his mother hailed from this place, is the author of *Adi Purana*, a celebrated Jain work. Though the inscriptions at Annigeri make references to Chedi Pancha *Basadi*, Hemmadi *Basadi*, etc, only the Parshwanatha *Basadi* has survived to this day. This *basadi*, built on an elevated place, resembles a rail coach and has been recently restored. Here the *Basadi* has a sanctum, an antechamber, a pillared hall, a verandah, and an entrance with gateways on three sides, having attractive door frames. The idol of Parshwanatha is housed in the sanctum. This *basadi* has lathe turned pillars in Chalukyan style. All the three doorways have attractive door frames. The tower upon the sanctum is of the kadamba-nagara type and the outer wall of the *basadi* is undecorated. There are other idols of Padmavathi and snake stones in the outer hall of the temple.

Parshvanatha at Annigeri

The Parshvanatha in the *basadi* at Annigeri is an image of about three feet tall seated on a two feet high pedestal. The stone is emerald green in colour with circular patterns supporting the character of Parshvanatha who is of a dark complexion. This well chiseled idol has broad shoulders, a straight posture sitting in padmasana, his hands hold the Jnana mudra, a lotus pedestal with a line of inscription on it forms the base. The head of Parshvanatha has circular shaped hair and a pleasant face with half closed eyes and the ears have elongated lobes. A mystic smile adorns his face with an expression of the state of living in enlightenment. Dharanendra, the snake god coils behind him and crowns his head with its stretched seven hoods as if encompassing him with his protection. Two celestial beings flank him with a *chauri* and two lions are seen on either sides and the emblem of lion is seen on the pedestal known as '*simhapita*'. The image has the three umbrellas upon its head and floral patterns filling up spaces around to give an effect of the expansion of his auras. The eight signs '*ashta pratiharyas*' are seen around the image of Parshvanatha Tirthankara.

Conclusion and observations

Looking through the many sculptures of Parshvanatha in Karnataka, each one is unique in their own special aspects. Some images of Parshvanatha have grandeur in size, some others have a radiating persona and others symbolize compassion. The Parshvanatha at Annigere stands special for its colour, posture and expression. In total, the image of Parshvanatha carved out of a single stone looks unaffected and unaware of any of the surrounding characters whether the snake, the celestial beings or the lions flanking him. The *padmasana* keeps the body upright and establishes the adept in a pivotal meditative state aligned within and also encourages a stabilized breathing and radiates this state through the whole being. He sits in the lotus posture at ease and poise in a thorough state of transcendence explicitly made by the sculptor giving him a smooth polished finish. In contrast, the snake god Dharanendra who coils behind Parshvanatha and spreads his seven hoods is treated with lines on the coils that express his intensity to expand and maximize his hoods so that he can avail the best protection to Parshvanatha who had attempted to save his life in his previous birth. Though a venomous creature, the snake here is shown in detail as though showering gratitude and commitment towards his master. This exclusive sculpture leaves a devotee of the Jina Parshvanatha in stupor, an art historian rise questions and arrive at interesting analysis and sees an artist into total appreciation to the sculptor who has created this marvel in stone and filled this image with trance.



Fig .1 Parshvanatha at Annigere, Karnataka

Footnotes

¹ Pal, Pratyaditya, *The Peaceful Liberators – Jain Art from India*, Thames and Hudson, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California, 1995, p-14

² Pal, Pratyaditya, *The Peaceful Liberators – Jain Art from India*, Thames and Hudson, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California, 1995, p-20

³ Tiwari, Maruti Nandan Prasad, Elements of Jaina Iconography, Indological Book House, Varanasi, 1983, p-5

⁴ Shah, Umakant Premanand, *Jaina Iconography*, Abhinav Publications, 1987, p-2-99

⁵ Shah, Umakant Premanand, *Jaina Iconography*, Abhinav Publications, 1987, p 9-10

⁶ <http://www.jainpushp.org/religion/symbols.htm>

⁷ Gezetteer Dharwad p - 791

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Pal, Pratyaditya, *The Peaceful Liberators – Jain Art from India*, Thames and Hudson, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California, 1995

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Karnataka Dtate Gezetteer- Dharwad District

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