

Difference Between the Tirthankara and Buddha Sculptures

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The word 'Jaina' has its origin from Sanskrit word 'Jina'. These words convey the doctrine of Jina, a narration, a discourse, a sermon or a spiritual philosophy. In simple words, these religious discourses delivered by the Jinas is the Jaina religion. The Jina is the one who is victorious or has conquered his mental ailments. The other synonyms of Jina are Jindeva, Jinendra, Jineshvara etc. In venerable words, these Jinas are called Arhata, Arhanta, Arahanta or Arihanta. After attaining the *kevalya* (enlightenment), the establishment of the *tirtha* (*sangha*) by saints - nun and *sravakas-sravikas* together they are termed as Tirthankara.

Jainism is one of the oldest surviving religions. It was established under currents of disposition of Jaina doctrines mentioned above. Probably the people of this period termed this religion as Jaina religion and the propagator of this religion as Jina. The Jina or Jaina religion is mentioned in the *Vishnu*¹, *Padma*² and *Matsya puranas*³, *Yogavashishtha*⁴ *Srimadbhagavata*,⁵ *Shaktayana-Vyakarana*⁶ etc. to name a few.

There were two types of thoughts during Vedic period *Yogavadi* and *Bhogavadi*. *Yogavadi* thought has different appellations in the Vedic *Samhitas*. The sramanas have been mentioned first in the *Rigveda*.⁷ The word *sramana* is derived from the words *shrama* (effort) or *parishrama* (diligence) meaning the one who does the hard work. In other words, the one who does efforts, meditates and believes in his own exertion is a *sramana*. They are also called as Vatarashanah Munis. The *Taittiriya Aranyaka*⁸ informs that Vatarashanah Shramana Rishi was proceeding towards Brahmapada. The word Shishndevaha finds mentioned in *Rigveda*⁹ and its meaning however is debated. According to the author, the Shishndeva or Linga deva or the God who possesses the phallus (*Linga*). This can be corroborated by the *Digambara* Tirthankaras. The same Veda¹⁰ has another word Nagnahu which too corresponds to *Digambara* and also indicates towards Tirthankara.

The word *Vratya* is referred to in the Vedic literature. The *Vraatyasukta* also had been cited in *Atharvaveda*.¹¹ The definition of *Vratya* in the *mantra* of the same *Vraatyasukta* is 'Vratya are those who have incarnated (embodied) soul and concealed their soul with a body, are the lord of entire living creatures, the ultimate being (percipient) of the universe.' Here also, these indicate towards Tirthankara.¹² Likewise, the words like *Urdhavareta*, *Urdhavamanthi*, *Nirgrantha*, *Naginini*, etc. are quite prominent in the Jaina religion.

The first Tirthankara Rishabha has been quoted in *Rigveda*¹³ and *Atharvaveda*.¹⁴ He has been considered as the profounder of Jainism. Both these literatures have cited Rishabha as Vrishabha.

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Basically, the authentic meaning of Rishabha is Vrishabha and hence the name Rishabha has been cited in the ancient texts. Chanda has stated this more clearly. According to him, the meaning of Rishabha is Vrishabha i.e. bull and bull is the symbol of Tirthankara Rishabha.¹⁵ The *Mandalas*¹⁶, 4¹⁷ and 10¹⁸ of *Rigveda* have given the description of him in various contexts. The first Tirthankara has been mentioned in great detail in various other Vedic and Pauranic texts. Besides, the twenty-second Tirthankara Nemi too is significant from historical perspective. The name of Nemi has been cited with different purpose in *Rigveda*¹⁹, *Ramayana*²⁰, *Mahabharata*²¹ and *Puranas*.²²

The Jaina pantheon is very extensive. But this religion however, revolves round the Tirthankaras. These Tirthankaras are the navigators and chiefs who lead the Jaina religion. There are twenty-four Tirthankaras²³: Rishabha, Ajita, Sambhava, Abhinandana, Sumati, Padmaprabha, Suparsharva, Chandraprabha, Suvidhi, Sheetal, Shreyansha, Vasupujya, Vimala, Ananta, Dharma, Shanti, Kunthu, Arra, Malli, Manisuvrata, Nemi, Parshava and Mahavira. Besides, *Yaksha-Yakshi*, Jainyugaliya, Tirthankara parents, Bharata, Bahubali, 64Yoginis, Sarasvati, Laxmi, Dikpala, Kshetrapal, Navgraha, Ganesha etc. are some other deities who have been given importance in Jaina art.

Sixth century BCE was a period of great religious turmoil in India. There was revolt against Vedic religion in terms of hypocrisy, untouchability and inequality and various other hostile customs and traditions then prevalent in the contemporary society. The post-*Brahmana* literature also mentions various contemporary religious thinkers, reformers, spiritual preceptors etc. The Buddhist texts accounts them to be 62 (sixty-two) while Jaina texts 368 (three hundred and sixty-eight).

The name of Gautama Buddha of the same period is of foremost importance among the atheist. The *Dharma* propounded by him became the pan-Indian religion in the later period. It is said about Gautama Buddha that –‘If an evaluation of the posthumous affects of him be made in the world he is considered the greatest person born in India’.²⁴

The word Buddha is a Pali word meaning ‘knowledge’. The word *Baudha* has been derived from the word ‘Buddha’ and it manifests Buddha’s dialogue or discourse, speech, doctrine, spiritual teachings, Buddhist religion and Buddhism etc. Another connotation of Buddha is that in the night of *Vaishakha Purnima* Siddhartha attained *Buddhatatva*²⁵ i.e. enlightenment or knowledge under a *peepal* (*Bodhi*) tree. Gautama was of Siddhartha’s *gotra*. So he was called Gautama as well. And by adding Buddha to Gautama, he was called Gautama Buddha.

Gautama Buddha was born in 563 BCE at Lumbini near Kapilvastui.e. Modern Rumindei or Rumindeh.²⁶ A Pillar Inscription of Asoka is the evidence in which ‘Hide Budhe Jaate ti’ scripted informs that it was here where Buddha was born. Through *Mahavagga* we come to know that the name of Buddha’s father was Suddhodhana²⁷, mother Maya²⁸, maternal aunt Prajapati Gautami²⁹, wife Yashodhara³⁰ and son Rahul.³¹

Buddhist religion established by Buddha witnessed the emergence of a large number of Buddhist deities and led to the development of Buddhist pantheon in the later period which included Buddha, Manushi Buddha, Dhyani Buddha, Bodhisattva, Tara, Prajna-Parimita, goddess of Light, goddess of directions, Dikpalas and Navagrahas etc.

Religious sculpture is also called ‘*pratima*’. The literal meaning of *pratima* in ancient Indian texts is ‘*pratirupa*’ i.e. similar representation of a figure or a form. Panini³² in his *Ashtadhyaie* has

used the word *pratikriti* for the similar figure. In *Rigveda* the word *pratima*³³ has been used for *yagyna*. The word *archcha*³⁴ has also been used in the same text. The word image in fact has been used for those sculptures which had bearing on religion or some beliefs. The other iconographical synonyms used for image are – *pratima- vigraha, bimba, pratikriti, pratirupa* etc.

The earliest images from archaeological point of view were first made of terracotta during Neolithic period. Probably, being influenced by nature, the images took the form of toys, followed gradually with the preparation colossal images, which perhaps ornamented the houses of comparatively rich people. Consequently, there was a great demand for images and hence the making of images in huge quantity began in the Indus valley civilization. These images included the toys for children, animal and birds, land and water-animals, mother goddesses, male figures etc. Some images seem to have been of religious affiliation. Since the Indus script has not yet been deciphered satisfactorily their significance still is shrouded in mystery. The material used for preparing these objects were clay, terracotta, stone and metals.

Probably, being influenced by these images, in later period when the man's religious desire increased, the people started visualizing the Gods and Goddesses whom they adored. This led to making of religious icons in tune with the iconographic principles as ordained the religious scriptures.

After a long time, in the Mauryan period (3rd century BCE) immaculate religious sculptures appeared during the Shunga period (2nd–3rd century BCE) which included the bust of Tirthankara, Sun, Shivalinga, and Buddhist Stone Slab, Ayagapattas, Mother-goddess etc. It was however Kushana Emperor Kanishka who got made sculptures as mentioned in the Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina canons on a large scale in 1st century CE at Gandhara and Mathura.

Since Jainism had twenty-four Tirthankaras, their iconographic details vary from time to time whereas in Buddhism the Buddha being the only one, the images of Buddha were only made. This paper attempts to throw light on the comparative studies of the sculptures of Tirthankara and Buddha fashioned up to twelfth century CE.

(1) Since the Tirthankara attained '*kevalya*' by standing, his first ever sculpture was fashioned in the *kayotsarga-mudra* in the Mauryan period (fig.1). As Gautama Buddha obtained '*buddhattva*' or enlightenment by sitting in meditative posture, his first image was caused in *dhyana-mudra* during the Kushana period.

(2) The sculptures of Tirthankara were made only in *dhyana-mudra* (fig.3,4,6,8,10) only while Buddhist images besides *dhyana-mudra*, were also made in *varada, abhaya, dharmachakra, bhumisparsha, parinirvana mudras* (fig.2,6,7) etc. in large numbers.

(3) Representation of *usnisha* (fig.2) which symbolises *nirvana* was a characteristic feature in all the Buddha's images since the Kushana period i.e. first century BCE whereas it is not depicted in the sculptures of Tirthankara. However, a small *usnisha* was introduced in the Tirthankara images of the later period.

(4) The images of Buddha's were created both at Gandhara and Mathura centres during the period of Kushana. The depiction of '*urna*' (that symbolises the synthesis of the senses and the intellect) and spiral tuft of hair between the eyebrows was common at both the centres and this depiction remained

popular till about second-third century CE (fig.2). But it disappeared in the later period. However, it was revived after a long time in the Buddha images of Bengal and Bihar of Pala period in the tenth century CE.

(5) The depiction of moustaches was a common feature in majority of the sculptures of Buddha made at Gandhara while at Mathura very few sculptures have also this depiction perhaps inspired by the Gandharan artists. In the Tirthankaras images the moustaches were never depicted.

(6) A majority of the Tirthankara sculptures of Kushana and later periods (except south India) have the auspicious symbol of *Srivatsa* (fig.3) on the chest while this is absent in the images of Buddha.

(7) According to Jaina traditions Tirthankaras in their initial stages, when went for the attainment of '*kevalya*' were draped with clothes on their body. While they were meditating their clothes gradually deteriorated and disappeared. Thus after achieving their '*kevalya*' they were left with bare clothes and they considered '*ambara*' i.e. sky as their clothes and were hence called as *digambara*. Thus, the images of Tirthankara were shown naked i.e. without any clothes, while the sculptures of Buddha with *sanghati* (*cheever*).

(8) During the Kushana period, the palms of Buddha were depicted with *chakra* and sole with both *chakra* and *triratna*. There were no such traditions in the Tirthankara sculptures.

(9) Only in Kushana period the Gautama Buddha's fingers were marked with auspicious symbols, which were absent in Tirthankara sculptures.

(10) It was during the Kushana period that a particular *lanchhanas* were introduced for the identification of twenty-four Tirthankaras, like the first Tirthankara Rishabha had *keshavalleri* (long hair hanging down to shoulders), twenty-second Tirthankara Nemi had *Krishna-Balarama* (his cousin brothers), twenty-third Tirthankara Parshava had serpent hood and the last Tirthankara Mahavira the Lion.

Around eight-ninth century CE the Tirthankaras were also depicted with various *lanchhanas*³⁵ for example: vrishabha (bull), gaja (elephant), ashva (horse), kapi (monkey), conch bird, mahisha (buffalo), varaha (pig), bhalluk (bear), sarpa (snake), simha (lion), makara (crocodile), gairda (rhino), kurma (tortoise), mriga (deer), chhag/ajah (goat), matsya (fish), *srivatsa*, *swastika*, chandra (moon), *vajra* (thunderbolt), *kalasha* (pot), *nilotapala* (blue lotus), *padma* (lotus) *sankha* (conch). Since the Buddha was the chief of Buddhism, there was no need for the depiction of such symbol for Buddha.

(11) In about the sixth century CE *yaksha-yakshi* or shasandevta began appearing on either side of the images of Tirthankaras.³⁶ These guardian deities were made as attendants of Tirthankara for their protection.³⁷ These depictions also helps in the identification of Tirthankaras. Such depictions however, are absent in Buddha's images.

(12) The sculptures of Tirthankaras belonging to eight–ninth century CE show the drapery hanging down up to the pedestal over which the *lanchhanas* were depicted (fig. 8), while the seated of Buddha showed the absence of such drapery.

(13) There was a tradition of performing *jala-abhisheka* on the attainment of *kevalya* by the Tirthankaras. Therefore, in the sculptures Tirthankars belonging to the sixth-ninth century CE, *jala-*

abhisheka (fig. 9) by elephants along with the musical instruments is depicted over the head of these images and no such depiction is found on the Buddha images.

(14) In tenth-eleventh century CE, some images of Tirthankara belonging to *shwetambara* sect were made with *sanghati* (fig.2,5,6) and for their identification the *lanchhana* or *shasandevta* were also shown. But in the images of Buddha these depictions are not shown.

(15) During tenth-thirteenth century CE, some sculptures of Buddha in Bihar and Bengal were depicted with the *stupi* (symbol for *stupa*) on the *parikara* (fig.7). There was no such depiction in Tirthankara sculptures.

(16) The sculptures of Buddha belonging to eleventh-twelfth century CE are decorated with beautiful crown and jewellerys (fig.6) whereas the Tirthankara images are devoid of all such ornamentation.

In addition, there is an unending debate on when and where the first Tirthankara images were fashioned. The available literature indicates that the images of Tirthankaras began to be made during the Mauryan and pre-Shunga period perhaps at Lohanipur, Patna whereas the Buddha's image began appearing in the Kushana period. Buddha's sculptures were made at two places namely Gandhara and Mathura as said earlier while the images of Tirthankara were restricted to Mathura region only. The sculptures of Buddha belonging to Kushana period show Buddha in meditation showing his skeleton. No such images of Tirthankara have been found. In addition, there are differences in the material used for making both these group of sculptures. The images of Buddha were cause din schist (fig.6) stone of Gandhara region and red sandstone from Mathura and its adjoining regions. The sculptures of the Tirthankara of the same period were made with the red sandstone only. The halo of Buddha in the Gupta period were large and elaborately decorated while the halo of Tirthankaras were of medium size. An image of nineteenth Tirthankara Malli (eleventh century CE) has been reported from district Unnao of Uttar Pradesh (fig.10). This image is in the form of a female figure. It is believed that the *digambara* sect did not considered women to be fit for attaining *kevalya*, but the *shvetambaras* considered them equally fit for *kevalya*. These delineations are absent in Buddhist art.

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Fig.1 Tirthankara Torso, Digambra, Kayotsarga- mudra, 3rd B.C, Lohanipur, Patna



Fig.2 Buddha, Dhyana- mudra, ushisha, urna and Cheever, 1 A.D, Gandhara



Fig.3 Tirthankara, Dhyana-mudra, Srivatsa, 1 A.D, Mathura



Fig.4 Tirthankara Nemi, Dhyana-mudra, Krishna-Balrama, 1 A.D, Mathura



Fig.5 Buddha, Standing, decorated and magnifying halo, 4th A.D, Mathura, Government Museum, Mathura.



Fig.6 Buddha, Bhumisparsha- mudra, crown and ornaments, 11th A.D, Patna, State Museum, Patna.



Fig.7 Buddha, Dhyana- mudra Stupi, Nalanda



Fig.8 Tirthankara Rishabha Dhyana- mudra, Clothes on Pedestal, 11th A.D, Lalitpur



Fig.9 Tirthankara, Kayotsarga- mudra
A.D Jalaabhishek 11-12th A.D, Dubkund,
Gwaliyer



Fig.10 Tirthankara Malli (Female),
Dhyana- mudra 11th Unnao, uttar Pradesh