The Jina Images of Khajuraho with Special Reference to Ajitanatha

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Khajuraho, situated in the Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh, has yielded over four hundred Jaina images excluding those represented on the door-ways and fragmentary door-lintels. Of these, more than one hundred and fifty images represent the Jinas in the usual two *mudrās*, namely, the *dyāna-mudrā* (seated cross-legged with palms in the lap) and the *kāyotsarga* (standing erect with hands hanging down to the knees), the former being more popular at the site. The whole group of Jaina sculptures at Khajuraho, ranging in date from mid-tenth century (954—Parsvanatha Temple) to the twelfth century, is to the credit of the Digambara Jaina sect which is indicated by the fact that the Jinas are rendered as sky-clad, the nudity is clearly ascertained in some of the seated figures even where the hands laid in the lap are broken off. The association of the Jaina iconographic remains at Khajuraho with the Digambaras is further evidenced by the occurrence of the sixteen auspicious dreams at the site in place of the fourteen as usual with the Svetambaras.

Ajitanatha, the second Jina, is represented by four images. All the images, worked out of the buff-coloured sandstone, vary approximately from 19″ × 14″ to 52″ × 15″ in dimensions. All the figures are now preserved in an Open Air Museum, adjacent to the Adinatha Temple. The figures are assignable to a period from the eleventh to the twelfth century. On the testimony of the statistical study of the Jina images of Khajuraho, it is evident that Ajitanatha was accorded a favoured position who in order of preference is placed after the three most popular Jinas at the site, namely, Rsabhanatha, Parsvanatha and Mahavira, represented respectively by forty-five, eleven and nine images.

I may note here in passing that only thirteen out of the twenty-four Jinas were rendered in concrete representations at Khajuraho[1].

The Jina images of Khajuraho represent a fully developed stage of the Jina iconography. They are carved with all their attributes including the *aṣṭapratihāryas*[2] and the distinguishing emblems, except in some examples where the figures of the *Yakṣa-Yakṣī* pairs are conspicuous by their absence. The images of Ajitanatha at the site follow a homogeneous formula of Jina representation, this being the case with all other Jina images of Khajuraho, in effect elsewhere in India also during the medieval period. Ajitanatha has been rendered with the full cortege of their assessory attributes including the *aṣṭapratihāryas*, *śrīvatsa* mark in the centre of the chest and the *lāñchana*, elephant. As to the *Yakṣa-Yakṣī* pair, it is surprising to note that their figures have been carved in a single instance only (K 43). In other instances the *Yakṣa. Yakṣī* figures are dropped in favour of the tiny Jina figures. It appears relevant to note here that the iconographic forms of the twenty-four *Sāsanadevatās* do not appear to have been evolved at Khajuraho. However, the standardized and independent forms of only three *Yakṣa-Yakṣī* pairs, namely, Gomukha and Cakresvari, Sarvanubhuti (or Kubera) and Ambika, and Dharanendra and Padmavati, the *Sāsanadevatas* respectively of Rsabhanatha, Neminatha and Parsvanatha, were known to the Khajuraho sculptors. The representation of the aforesaid three pairs even does not correspond fully with any of the available Digambara textual prescriptions.

In three cases Ajitanatha is represented as seated cross-legged with his hands laid in the lap in *dhyāna-mudrā* on an ornate cushion, decorated with lozenge shape and floral design, and in one case, however, he stands erect as sky-clad in the *kāyotsarga-mudrā* (K. 22). The standing Jina is shown directly on the pedestal, while in other instances he sits on a lotus placed over an ornate cushion. In two examples the hair of the Jina is dressed in small ringlets with *uṣṇīṣa* at the top, while in one case (K. 22) head is lost. In remaining one instance, the hair is disposed in two parallel rows of curls on the forehead and has been combed back in *jaṭā* fashion. The pedestal is borne by round pilasters carved at two extremities, which are absent in one instance (K. 43). The covering cloth

[1] Rsabhanatha, Ajitanatha, Sambhavanatha, Abhinandana, Sumatinatha, Padmaprabha, Suparsvanatha, Candraprabha, Santinatha, Munisuvrata, Neminatha, Parsvanatha and Mahavira.

[2] Eight chief attendant attributes are: *Asoka* tree, scattering of flowers by gods, divine music, flywhisks, lion-throne, nimbus, heavenly drum-beating, and *chatra-trayi*.

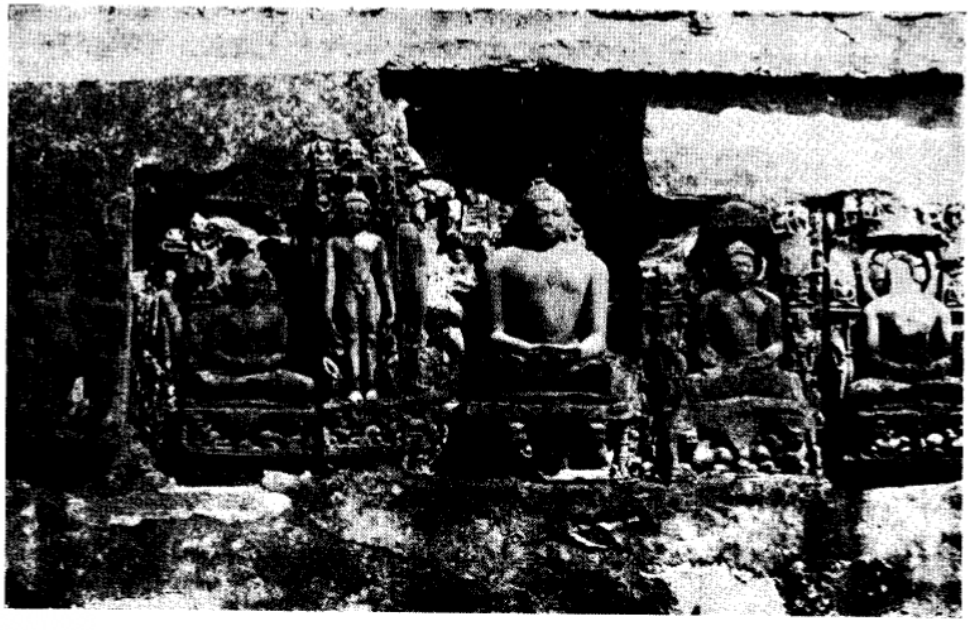
hanging on the front of the pedestal is decorated with *kīrtimukha* from whose open mouth is suspended festoons. However, in one case (K. 59) it also shows beads and lozenge-shaped decorations. In the centre of the pedestal is depicted a *dharmacakra* flanked by kneeling worshippers with folded hands. At two ends of the pedestal are also sculptured two lions, suggesting *simhāsana*, standing or sitting with their backs and faces turned towards each other, and in one case, however, they stand to front facing the observer. Barring a single instance (K. 66), in all others the *mūla-nāyaka* is attended on either side by a standing male fly-whisk-bearer wearing rich jewellery with the inner hand bearing a fly-whisk held above the shoulder and the outer hand resting on the thigh. Over the head of the Jina is shown a three-fold *chatra* topped by a disembodied figure beating a drum, now damaged in two examples (K. 59, K. 66).

Besides the aforesaid common features, the Ajitanatha images also reveal points of difference in regard to the representation of the elephant cognizance, diminutive Jina figures and other secondary figures and motifs. Now I proceed to the individual treatment of the Ajitanatha images with a view to seeing their individual details.

First image (K. 66), measuring 23.5″ × 17″, exhibits the elephant emblem on left of the *dharmacakra*. On the lower-most part of the *simhāsana* are carved some flying figures. Each recessed corner of the throne is occupied by a seated Jina figure, in place of *Yakṣa-Yakṣī* pair. The principal Jina is joined by two standing Jina figures. At each top corner, there also appears a standing Jina. The nimbus of the *mūla-nāyaka* is decorated with lotus blossom and beaded circle. However, the figures of the flying *mālādharas* and elephants with riders, usually carved on the top *parikara*, are absent here. The figure is attributable to the eleventh century.

Second image (K. 43) measures 23″ × 16″ and is datable to the eleventh century. The halo shows similar decorations as referred to above. Over the head of each *cāmaradhara* figure is depicated a standing Jina figure. The top *parikara* shows the flying *mālādharas* and elephants with riders. It is the solitary image of Ajitanatha at Khajuraho which contains the *Yakṣa-Yakṣī* figures. However, the *Yakṣa* figure of the left extremity is hidden under the plaster but on the corresponding right side, there appears two-armed *Yakṣī* carrying a sword in her extant right hand.

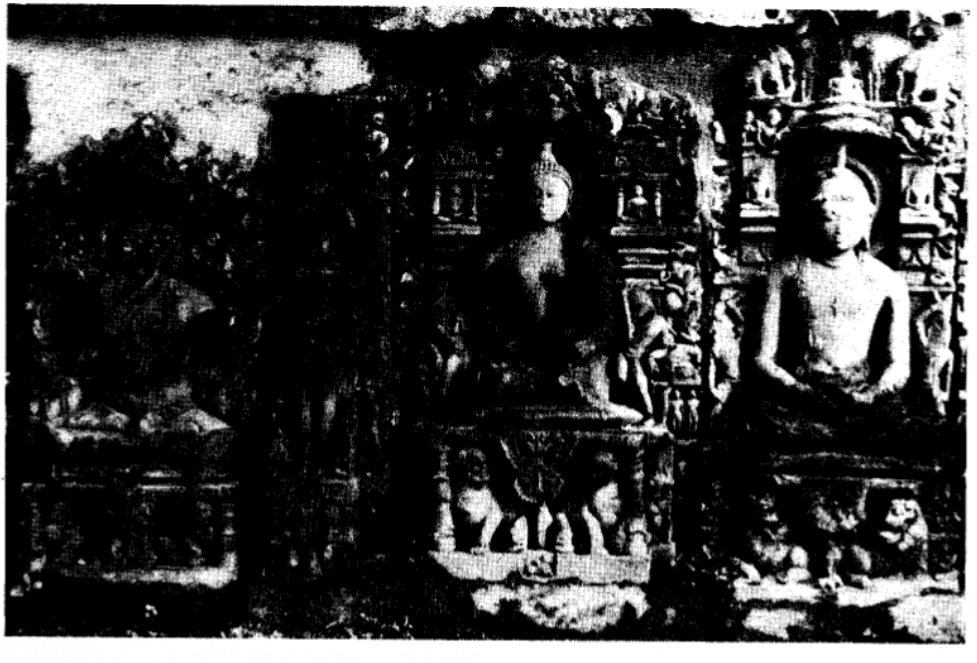
Third image (K. 59), measuring 27″ × 15″, is assignable to the twelfth century. Below the *dharmacakra* is carved the cognizance, an elephant. In the right recessed corner of the throne is carved a pair of



K. 58-63

Jina Images in the Open Air Museum at Khajuraho

K. 4-7



the standing Jinas headed by a seated Jina, over which again appears a standing Jina, slightly smaller in size than the principal Jina. However, the figures of the left corner are now lost with the damaged portion of the throne. At the top *parikara* are also shown the figures of two seated Jinas and flying *mālādharas*. At right top corner there also appears a seated Jina figure. The top *parikara* also exhibits at each end an elephant with two riders, of which one bears a vase. The aureole of the *mūla-nāyaka* is decked with blossom circlet and two rows of beaded bands.

Fourth image (K. 22), measuring 52″ × 15″, is ascribed to the twelfth century. The head and left arm of the standing Jina are now damaged. Beneath the *dharmacakra* is carved an elephant. Close to the feet of *mūla-nāyaka* sit figures of male and female adorers. In the left recessed portion of the image are carved, from below, three pairs of standing Jinas, one above the other. Under the feet of the principal Jina are carved five small figures, identifiable with the five *grahas*. However, the four *grahas* have not been represented. The first three figures similarly show the *abhaya-mudrā* and the *kalaśa* in two hands. The fourth figure is that of Rahu with human bust and the fifth figure is of Ketu with arms folded and its portion below waist resembling a snake. The top *parikara* exhibits two flying *mālādharas* and elephants with riders. The throne-back-ends are ornamented with the *gaja-vyāla-makara* trio.

Photographs by the Author.