

SUMATI-JÑĀNA

Perspectives of Jainism

A Commemoration Volume
in the Honour of
Ācārya 108 Śrī Sumatisāgara Jī Mahārāja

Chief Editor

Dr. Nagarajaiah, Hampa, Professor Emeritus
1079, 18-A Main, 5th Block, Rajajinagar
Bangalore-560 010, Karnataka

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Jaina Remains from Agra Region

With Special Reference to Bir Chhabili Tila, Fatehpur Sikri

Arakhit Pradhan

The Agra region originally formed a part of Surasena Mahajanpada with Mathura as its capital. The Surasena kingdom extended over at least the present districts of Agra and Mathura, probably with a second capital at Shauripur in Agra district.¹ The explorations and excavations carried out in and around the area have revealed a long sequence of cultural history from prehistoric cultures to the modern periods in the form of tools, sculptures; coins, inscriptions, bricks and pottery. Pre-historic rock paintings are reported from rock shelters at Rasualpur, Patsal, Madanpura, Bandrauli etc. Excavations at Hada Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri has brought to light cultural sequence from Ochre Colour Pottery culture, Painted Grey Ware culture, Northern Black Polished Ware, Sunga-Kushana, Gupta and early Medieval periods. The gap in the history of the region is filled after the excavation at Bir Chhabili Tila. Agra region was one of the main centre of political activities during Lodi and Mughals. There were ancient temples of various sects like Shaivism, Vaisnavism and Jainism, which have survived in the city and testify that Agra has been a center of religions and trade from long time. At present, there is a sizable population of the followers of Jaina faith in Agra and its surrounding area. Shauripur (the birth place of Neminatha, the 23rd Tirthankara) is one of the holy places of Jainism.

The explorations in and around Agra have brought to light evidences of Jaina images from Bateshwar, Kagaraul, Tundla, Fatehpur Sikri, Jagner, Sakalpur etc. A good number of sculptures have been found while digging foundations for constructions of houses in village Kagaraul located 20 km south-east of Fatehpur Sikri and 25 km south of Agra city. Three houses still have seated Tirthankara images with broken head in front of their entrances. Of the two life size images reported from the site one that of Rsabhanatha in seated posture (with head broken), placed in front of the house of Shri Netrapal Singh Solanki contains an inscription in Nagari Script and Sanskrit language on its pedestal. The inscription reads as: "Om (siddham) samvat 1039 (AD 982) phagun sudi 2 nandya sravikaya Rsabhanathasya

pratima pratishapita".² (Pl. 5.1) "The image of Rsabhanatha was consecrated by Nandi Sravika on Phalgun Sudi 2 Vikram Samvat 1039 (AD 982)." One Chandi or Parchandi Yakshi sculpture holding a child and a horse found depicted on the pedestal is also reported. Outside the village, there is a mound with remains of a medieval temple. On the surface of the mound, many fragmentary images of various sects are found lying.

An image of Adinatha datable to circa 10th-11th century. A.D. was reported from Tundla by Shri C. B. Mishra and C. P. Singh of the Northern Circle of Archaeological Survey of India in 1977-78.³ No further work was carried out in the Tundla region.

The village Sakalpur (27° 18' 40" N; 78° 07' E) situated 20 km north-east of Agra on the bank of river Karban, a tributary of Yamuna, in Block Khandoli Tehsil-Itimadpur, district Agra has revealed a Jaina image reported in the recent year.⁴ The find spot of the image at Sakalpur was investigated by the author and it was revealed that there are many mounds located on the bank of river Karban and in the vicinity of Sakalpur. On the top of the mound called Chamunda Tila at Sakalpur, there is kept an image of Adinatha (Rsabhanatha), first Jaina Tirthankara with lanchhana bull depicted on the pedestal (Pl. 5.2). The image in buff sand stone measures 36×34×6 cm (length× breadth × thickness). In the absence of any inscription, the image can be dated to 10th-11th century AD on stylistically. No other remains of Jainism could be noticed on the surface of the mound.

Fatehpur Sikri and its vicinity have yielded sculptures of Jaina pantheon along with Hindu sculptures.⁵ From the Sikri village one fragmentary image of a Tirthankara ascribed to medieval period was reported in 1980-81.⁶ Shri C. P. Singh and Sushil Kumar Jain of the Agra Circle of the Survey noticed some fragmentary sculptures at Fatehpur Sikri. Amongst these, mention may be made of a head of yaksha, and an inscribed pedestal of the Tirthankara, Adinatha.⁷ A fragmentary image of Jaina Tirthankara belonging to the mediaval period is also reported from Jagner.⁸ In addition, Jaina remains in the form of sculptures are reported from Shauripur, Bateshwar.

The stray reporting of Jaina images in different parts of the Agra district indicates that the area was inhabited by followers of Jainism. But importance of the flourished Jaina centers in the region during the early medieval period was not realized until the excavation at Bir Chhabili Tila in 1999-2000. The excavations at Bir Chhabili Tila, Fatehpur Sikri has added new dimensions to the study of Jaina sculptural art. Excavation at the site has revealed a temple plan of 10th-11th century AD belonging to the Jaina sect (Pl. 5.3). More than 35 Jaina sculptures have been recovered from the excavation, which include Shruti Devi Jaina Saraswati representing a classical art. The Jaina images from Bir Chhabili Tila are briefly enumerated in the following paragraphs.

Jaina images from Bir Chhabili Tila, Fatehpur Sikri

Bir Chhabili Tila (Lat: 27° 6' 5" N; Long: 77° 40' 7" E) is located to the south-west of Nagar (Sikri Char Hissa in revenue records), Fatehpur Sikri, tehsil Kiraoli, District Agra, Uttar Pradesh. The site was at first subjected to excavation in the year 1982-83 by Archaeological

Survey of India and Aligarh Muslim University under the national project. A few fragmentary Jaina sculptures and some architectural members were discovered from the excavation. Further archaeological excavations conducted at the site during the field season 1999-2000 by Archaeological Survey of India, Agra Circle, has revealed four cultural periods. Period I is datable to 6th to 8th century AD, Period II is datable to 9th to 12th century AD, Period III - 12th to 16th Century AD and Period IV is assigned to 16th to 18th century AD.⁹ (also Sharma et al., 2001: 55-72¹⁰). Important results of the excavation include discovery of a Jaina temple belonging to Period II and thirty-five sculptures including the image of Sruti Devi Jaina Saraswati. Out of these, 31 sculptures were discovered from a Pit.¹¹ There are 14 inscriptions mostly found on the pedestals of many of the sculptures. The Jaina sculptural remains from the excavations at Bir Chhabili Tila may be broadly classified into the following categories:

1. Jaina Tirthankara images
2. Yakhsi and Yaksha images
3. Image of Sruti Devi Jaina Saraswati

1) Jaina Tirthankara Images

The Jaina Tirthankara images discovered from Bir Chhabili Tila are found depicted in two postures viz.

- i) Standing or Kayotsarga posture and
- ii) Seated or Padmasana posture

i) Tirthankara in Standing or Kayotsarga posture

Five Tirthankara images in standing posture were discovered from excavations. Among them, two are of Adinatha, one of Sambhavanatha, one of Santinatha and one of Kunthunatha¹². The iconography of these standing Tirthankara images are described below:

Adinatha

The first image of first Jaina Tirthankara Adinatha (Rsabhanatha) measures 170 cm in height and 66 cm in width. The image, which was found in two pieces in a man made pit during excavation, fits together. Arms of the image are partly missing (*Pl. 5.4*). It has a beautiful parikara (stele) depicting row of miniature Tirthankaras twenty-four in numbers (chaubisi) on both sides of the main deity. Out of the Chaubisi nine figures are in seated posture and three figures are shown standing on either side. The standing figures, three on either side are shown above the shoulder level. The seated figures of Chaubisi are depicted from foot level to shoulder portion. A pair of chanwar-bearers (camaradhara) and Sravikas (female devotees) are depicted in the lower level. Srivatsa symbol is shown on the chest. Here Adinatha is shown wearing a lower garment tied by an auspicious knot at the waist (katibandha). The head portion of the image is shown with a decorated halo (prabhamandala) at the back. The head has matted hair with an usnisa at the top. A chhatra (parasol) is depicted above the head. Flying gandharvas and one elephant are depicted on top corner on either side of the deity. Leaves of Asoka tree are also depicted. A three-line inscription and a bull symbol are

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depicted on the pedestal of the image. The image is dated to V. S. 1039 (982 AD).

Adinatha

The second sculpture of 1st Jaina Tirthankara Adinatha in buff sandstone measures 123 cm in height and 63 cm in width. The headless image is shown standing in kayotsarga posture wearing a lower garment tied with an auspicious knot at the waist, hence belongs to swetambara sect. Srivatsa symbol is depicted on the chest. It had also been originally decorated with Parikara panel. The upper and lower portion of the panel are missing (Pl. 5.5). The pedestal is also partially missing. Two chanwar-bearers, one on either side is shown standing in tribhanga posture. These two attendants are depicted holding chanwar on one hand and placing the other hand on the thigh. One Sravika on either side in sitting posture near the foot is depicted. An inscription of two-line and the bull symbol are depicted on the pedestal. The image was installed in the year V. S. 1034 / 977 AD.

Sambhavanatha

The image of 3rd Jaina Tirthankara Sambhavanatha measures 122 cm in height and 66.5 cm in width. The head, left arm, finger portion of right arm and upper portion of chaubisi panel of the sculpture are missing. The image was found in two pieces, which fits together. Row of miniature Tirthankaras (chaubisi) is depicted on both side of the main deity (Pl. 5.6). In the parikara panel, nine figures are shown in seated posture on the left side. The right side of the panel has seven seated miniature Tirthankaras. The remaining five Tirthankara figures are missing from the right side panel whereas the three figures are missing from left side of the parikara panel. Two chanwar-bearers, one on either side of the main deity is shown in dwibhanga posture. One female devotee (sravika) on either side are shown near the foot in folded hand posture (anjali mudra). A srivatsa symbol is shown on the chest. The symbol has eight petals. Here Sambhavanatha is shown wearing a lower garment tied with an auspicious knot at the waist (katibandha). One fold of the garment is hanging in the middle upto the knee. A three-line inscription with date and a horse symbol are depicted on the pedestal of the image.

Santinatha

The image of Santinatha in buff colour sand stone discovered from the excavation measures 55 cm height and 23.5 cm in width. The image is found broken in two pieces. The head and lower arms of the sculpture are completely missing. The portion below the knee of the image is partly chipped off and missing. Here the deity is shown standing in kayotsarga posture wearing a lower garment tied with auspicious knot at the waist (Pl. 5.7). The central fold of the garment is hanging in the center upto the knee. Both the sides of the sculpture are devoid of any decoration. A diamond shaped srivatsa symbol is depicted on the chest. The pedestal of the image contains the symbol of deer and a two line inscription in devnagari script and Sanskrit language.

Kunthunatha

The image of Kunthunatha measures 68 cm in height and 23.5 cm in width. The head and

arms of the image are missing. It is shown depicted in standing posture wearing a lower garment tied with an auspicious knot at the waist. The central fold of the lower garment is hanging upto the knee portion. The image is devoid of parikara, chanwar-bearers and sravikas (Pl. 5.8). There was a Pravabali around the head as it is evident from the impression in the chopped off head portion. A diamond shaped srivasta symbol is shown on the chest. A two line inscription and vehicle symbol of Kunthunatha are depicted on the pedestal.

ii) Tirthankara in Seated or Padmasana Posture

Eleven seated Tirthankara images are discovered from the excavation, which are made of buff sand stone, red sand stone and black/blue marble. These images are of various sizes and heads of all these images were found missing. All these have srivatsa symbol on the chest. Except two seated Tirthankara, remaining 10 images in Padmasana posture are unidentified because of absence of symbol (lanchhana) on the pedestal. The inscriptions on pedestal of some of these images do not speak about the name of the Tirthankara. However, one seated sculpture is identified as Adinath, the first Tirthankara on the basis of hair-locks on its the shoulder (Pl. 5.9). Another seated Tirthankara image in bluish colour stone (Pl. 5.10) could be identified as Mallinatha, the 19th Tirthankara. These Tirthankara images are shown seated cross legged (Padmasana) on a pedestal bearing an incised floral design of various patterns.

Four broken heads of Jaina sculptures are also discovered from the excavation. Out of these heads, three certainly belong to the image of seated Tirthankara not of standing image. Unfortunately, these heads could not be fitted to any of the discovered headless sculptures and hence, might belong to some other sculptures. These heads have matted hair and usnisa. Evidence of black colour paint is found on one head (Pl. 5.11) and could be assigned to Munisuvrata, the 20th Tirthankara or to Neminatha, the 22nd Tirthankara. On another head, traces of red colour paint is noticed on head and could be assigned either to Padmaprabha, the 6th Tirthankara or Vasupujya, the 12th Tirthankara¹³. The fourth head belongs to Parsvanatha, the 23rd Tirthankara having nine serpent-hoods (Pl. 5.12).

2) Yakshi And Yaksha Images

The Yakshini images are donatory in nature. The following Yakhsini sculptures were discovered-

(a) Ambika

Two independent sculptures of Ambika, the Yakshini of Neminatha, the 22nd Tirthankara were discovered. One broken Ambika image carved out of red sandstone was discovered from the pit which is datable to circa 6th-7th century AD on the basis of iconographic features¹⁴. The deity is shown seated on a lion holding Priyankara on the left lap (Pl. 5.13). She is seated below a mango tree with over hanging mango fruits. The image having two hands is shown holding a bunch of mangoes (amralumbi) in her right hand and holding a baby (Priyankara) on her left lap supported by the left hand. The pedestal is devoid of any decoration and bears no inscription. The deity is adorned with a decorated headgear. The

image is depicted wearing long necklace hanging upto waist through the gap between the breasts, and also adorned with bangles on arm and anklets on feet and ear ornaments on ear. The image could be easily assigned to Svetambara sect as the deity is depicted wearing a transparent cloth.

The other sculpture of Ambika in buff sand stone is datable to 10th century AD. Here, the deity is shown seated in lalitasana inside a niche on a lion holding her son Priyankara on left lap (*Pl. 5.14*) and is depicted wearing decorated headgear, ornaments on ear and wearing a transparent cloth.

Another sculptural panel depicts a couple seated in lalitasana posture over a pedestal.¹⁵ The couple is identified as Yaksha Gomukha and Yakshini Ambika. The female deity is holding a child on her left lap and her arms rests on the lap of the Yaksha i. e. Gomukha. Another child (Subhankar) is shown standing beside the Yaksha. The head part of the Yaksha is partly missing (*Pl. 5.15*).

b) Chandi or Prachandi

One sculpture of Chandi or Prachandi, the Yakshi of Vasupujya, the 12th Jaina Tirthankara in buff sandstone datable to 10th century AD was discovered.¹⁶ She is shown seated on a horse holding sword in one hand and shield in the other hand, adorned with ornaments and headdress (*Pl. 5.16*).

c) Cakresvari

Cakresvari, the Yakshi of Ist Tirthankara Adinatha is depicted flanked by two attendants on either side.¹⁷ The deity is shown standing in tribhanga posture over a decorated pedestal and her vehicle eagle is depicted on the pedestal near her left feet (*Pl. 5.17*).

Yaksha images

The Yaksha image from the excavation includes a fragmentary image of Gumukha with an inscription (*Pl. 5.18*). The image is badly mutilated.

3) Jaina Srutadevi Saraswati

The most important findings of this excavation is a sculpture of Srutidevi Jain Saraswati¹⁸ owing to its uniqueness. The life size-image of Saraswati in buff sand stone was carved out of a single block of stone, but it was found broken into several pieces. The image has an inscription in Nagari script and Sanskrit language on the pedestal (*Pl. 5.19*). The inscription mentions that the image of Saraswati was installed in Vikram Samvat 1068 (1010 AD) (*Pl. 5.20*). Its female attendants, one each on either side was broken. Only lower portion of the right side female attendant is available that too in mutilated condition. The parikara panel on its side are also found broken except two figure, one standing Tirthankara and one flying Gandharva on right side. The four hands of the figure are broken and some portion of the front hands on either side are missing.

The image is depicted standing in tribhanga posture on a pedestal. She has wide-open eyes with eyebrows stretched like bow. Her nose is sharp and pointed. Lips are thin and

perfect whereas chin is pointed.

As mentioned above, her arms are found broken. But rear arms are recovered from the site. The front side right arm is partly available whereas the front left arm is partly available two pieces. Her rear right hand is upraised and she is holding a rosary. The rear left hand is also upraised and she is holding some object mostly a lotus bud. Her front right hand was depicted in Varada mudra as evident from the available fragment. The front left hand is possibly in Abhaya mudra.

The image is adorned with a Kirita-Mukata (Tiara) upon its head. She is wearing transparent cloth and decked with various ornaments in different parts of the body like: Kundala (Pendent) and Ear rings, gravika and kanthasri and vaijyanti-hara (five stringed necklace). The necklace is closely tight having a large peddle at the center. To the left side of it, are carved 14 pendants and 16 are on the right side. These pendants were found painted with red pigments indicating precious stones. Her hands are decorated with armlets/bracelets. The foot ornaments of the deity include anklets at the ankle and toe rings (bichhuwa). The toe rings are of different shapes and designs. The sculpture was originally painted in white colour. The pendant and other jewellery are painted in red colour. The eyes are depicted in white with black eye-balls.

EVIDENCE OF TEMPLE REMAINS

The excavation has revealed a Jaina temple remains assigned to Period-II¹⁹ (Fig.1). The platform (base of adhishtana) of the temple, constructed of massive undressed stone blocks of sandstone regularly placed on each other from the north-east to the south-west direction measures 18 m. in length and 4.5 m. at the rear end and 9 m. in the front. The extant height of the temple platform above the foundation is 2.8 m. on the south, 2.58 m. on the east, 2.8 m. on the west and 2.71 m. on the north. The temple platform measures 4.5 m. on the south and 9 m. on the north. The southern portion of the temple platform is slightly projected thus reducing its width from 9 m. to 4.5 m. On the top of the platform, flat and massive sandstone blocks were provided to give a smooth surface for the superstructure. The average size of each of these stone blocks is 2 x 0.5 x 0.2 m. In the later period, a large number of such slabs from the platform were found disturbed and also re-used at the site. Evidence of projections is there on east-west direction to provide space for steps to approach the shrine from lower platform. The northern projection on the eastern side has a flight of steps. Another flight of steps was discovered on the southern projection. A broken head of Parsvanatha sculpture was discovered near lower step of this projection.²⁰ Few moulded and carved sandstone architectural parts of the temple like kumbha, amla, pillar base, beki were also reported from the site in large quantity and are datable between 9th-11th centuries AD.

A random rubble masonry wall measuring 23 m. in length, 16 m. in width and 65 cm. in thickness was found encompassing the adhishtana parallel to the corresponding side.

The temple remains has its entrance from the north side. The main shrine is enclosed by a massive random rubble masonry wall constructed with mud mortar and strengthened

by well-dressed veneering stone. The average thickness of this wall is 1.8 m. with the extant height 1.66 m. from the base. The well dressed veneering stone were fixed on the exterior wall for strength as well. These veneering stones were fixed together with iron dowels.

From the above study, it is clear that Agra region was rich with Jaina art as evident from the surface findings and from the excavations at Bir Chhabili Tila, Fatehpur Sikri as well. At least, there were three major centers in the region i. e. Fatehpur Sikri, Kagaraul and Shauripur Bateshwar. Though Mathuara was a great centre of Jaina images during the Kushana period as evident from the Kankali Tila excavations, very few sculptures of Jaina faith of 10th-11th century AD are reported.²¹ The remains of temple reported as Jaina temple is based on the findings of the Jaina sculptures in large numbers from the site. As these fragmentary Jaina images are not found in situ fixed to any temple part some scholar may question the authenticity of assigning the temple remains to the Jaina sect. The other side of the logic is that if there was no Jaina temple at Bir Chhabili Tila site during 10th-11th century AD. what was the necessity in taking pains to bury or make Visarjan of these headless/ mutilated sculptures at this site by bringing those from other places. In the context mentioned above, there is no doubt that there was a Jaina temple at Bir Chhabili Tila site.

Acknowledgements

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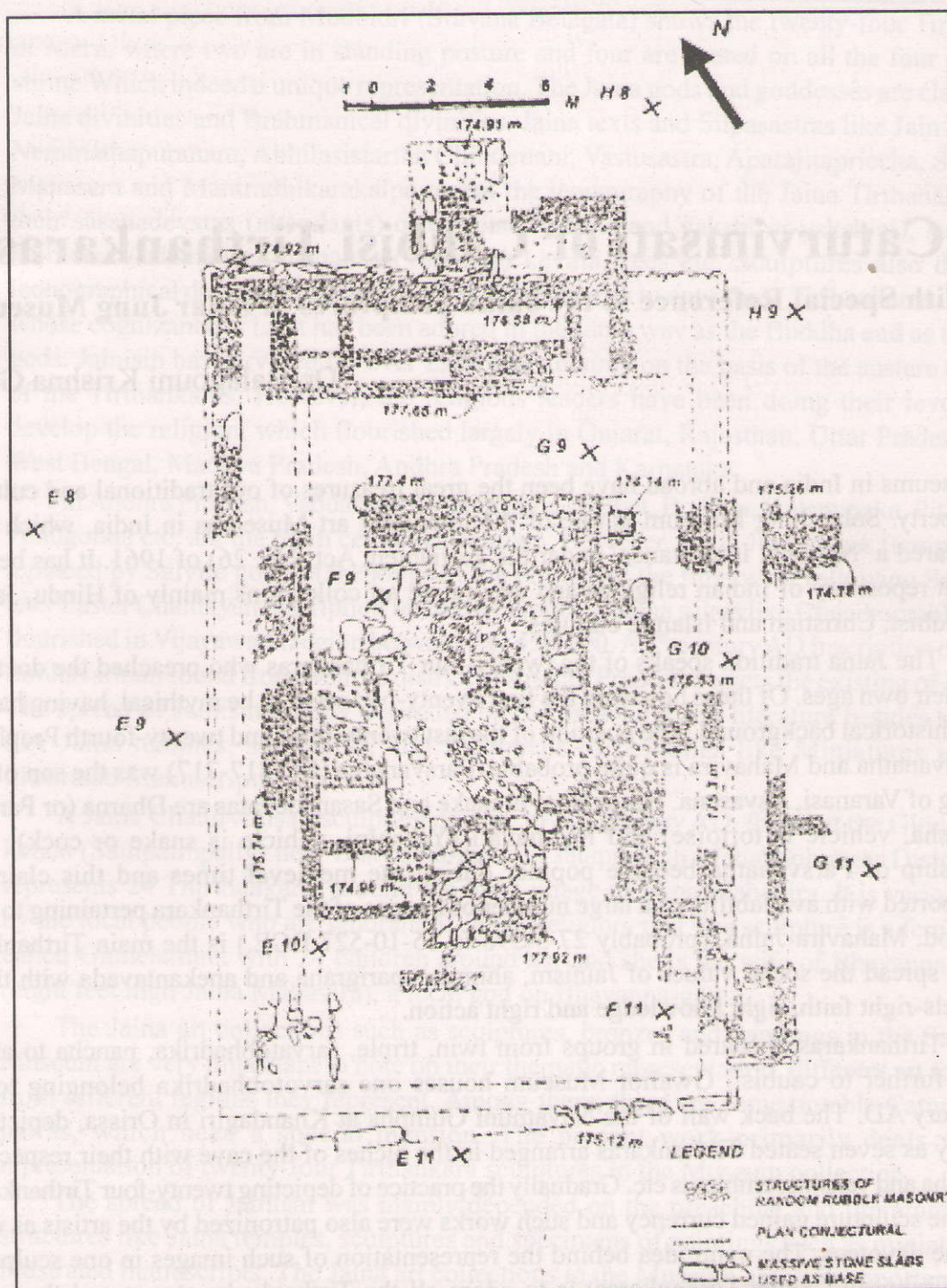


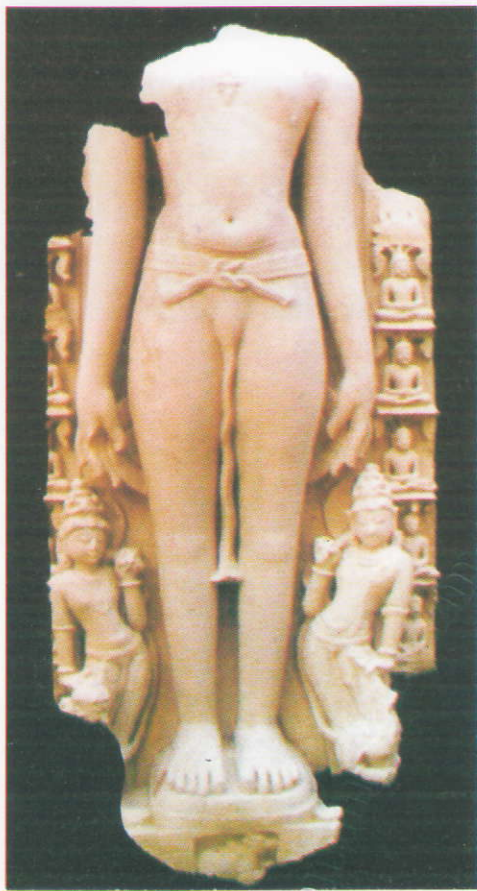
Fig. 1



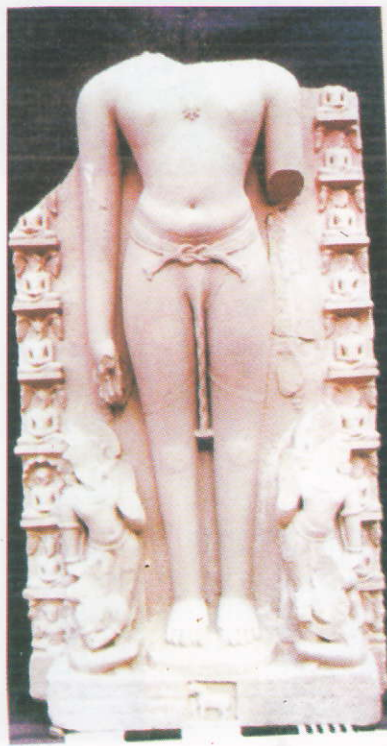
Pl. 5.3



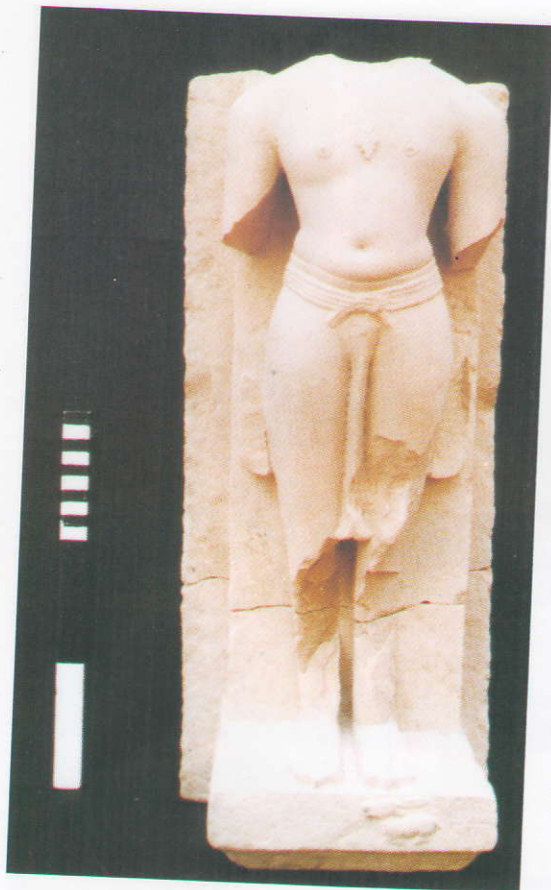
Pl. 5.4



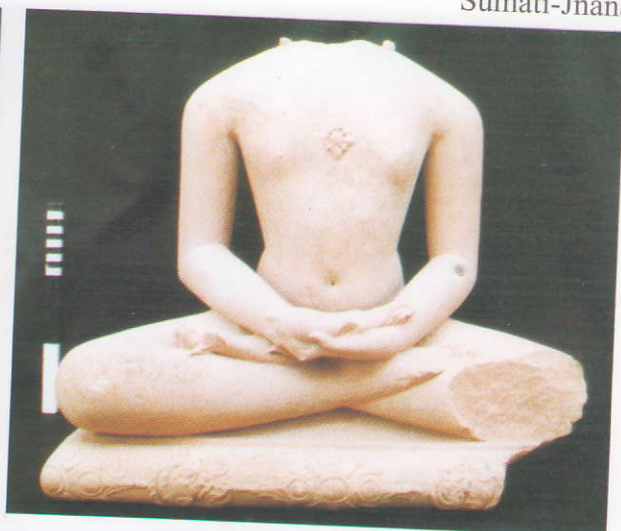
Pl. 5.5



Pl. 5.6



Pl. 5.7



Pl. 5.9



Pl. 5.10



Pl. 5.8



Pl. 5.12



Pl. 5.11



Pl. 5.13



Pl. 5.14



Pl. 5.15



Pl. 5.16



Pl. 5.17



Pl. 5.18



Pl. 5.19



Pl. 5.20



Pl. 6.1



Pl. 6.2