

**CONTEXT OF JAINISM IN CHHOTANAGPUR PLATEAU
(JHARKHAND): STUDY OF THE JAINA ANTIQUITIES FROM STATE
MUSEUM HOTWAR, RANCHI**

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Introduction:

The Chhotanagpur Plateau region in eastern India covers much of the recently created Jharkhand state, as well as the bordering areas of Orissa, West Bengal, Bihar, and some parts of Chhattisgarh. Geo-physically the region, covering roughly an area of about 86,239 sq. km. lying between 22°00' and 28°30' N latitude and 83°47' and 87°50' E longitude, is a landmass marked by an upland formation in the north-eastern part of the Peninsular block of the Indian subcontinent. This region comprises of series of Plateaus of varying altitudes, which are dissected due incessant weathering and erosion. The highest part of the Plateau is situated in the western part mainly confined to the western extremities of Gulma district and the southern section of the Palamu district. For most part this landmass has a covering the lateritic soil and there are several rivers which flow in different directions of which five most important are the Damodar, Subarnarekha, South Kole, North Kole and Sankha.¹ The state of Jharkhand is named after the combination of two words 'Jhar' and 'Khand' meaning 'Forest' and 'Land' respectively in other words 'land of forest'. This land form attracted humans from early times and at present also various tribal groups are present in this area having different subsistence economies.²

The earliest human occupation started in this forested land during the prehistoric times when the people were in the stage of hunting and food gathering; they used stone tools for fulfilling their needs in daily life. Gradually the hunter-gatherers settled in different areas and started the agriculture. The early village framing stage of the entire area are well represented with the discoveries of several ground and polished stone tools as well as the copper tools from various archaeological sites. However, it was not properly examined till date that when and how the spark of the second urbanizations penetrated in this rolling land. None of the epigraphic records during the early historic stage explain the socio-cultural-political conditions of this region. Hopefully this area was a speckled zone not only for the early historic period but also in latter period. As a result of this, even in the pre-independence period this area was marked by the British administrators as Jungal-e-mahāla.³

The present study region i.e. the Chotanagpur Plateau of Jharkhand, exhibits its identity through its own history which is not similar to the other areas. The history of this land may be marked as the history of aboriginal people. Apart from the colonial historiography comprising

survey records, i.e., geological, ethnological, forest surveys, reports of archaeological tours and surveys particularly that of Valentine Ball,⁴ J.D. Beglar,⁵ gazetteers, census reports, etc., archaeological research played an important role in the reconstruction of the cultural past of the region concerned. The recognition for portraying a total archaeological picture of this landmass may be given to Dilip K. Chakrabarti,⁶ who made a pioneering attempt in this direction. The contributions of R.D. Banerjee⁷ and later on D.R. Das⁸ in the context of the temple architecture and sculptures remains of the entire region laid the foundation of research in the historical records of the concerned region. In recent times, the works of Dilbar Bhengra⁹ and Bulu Imam¹⁰ are noteworthy. Both these works highlighted that the entire region has very potential for archaeological researches and sculptural remains. The rich and diverse spread of antiquarian remains of the period between 8th-9th century to 12th-13th century, particularly abandoned temples, architectural members and sculptures which gradually with time unfolded before the scholarly world mostly are associated with Jainism and Brahmanism, though some remains of Buddhist antiquities are also identified.

In recent years several discoveries indicate that Jainism appears to have held a stronger profile in this region rather than the two other religious ideologies. Jainism has a close association with this region from very early time because the location of Parashnath hill in Giridhi district, which is admittedly the most holy spot among the Jaina followers. According to the Jaina literatures among the twenty four Tīrthaṅkaras, nineteen Tīrthaṅkaras got *Nirvāna* at this hill including the twenty third Tīrthaṅkara Pārśvanātha.¹¹ Another important Jaina pilgrimage spot in this area was Kolhua Hill, which is about 10 km south-east of Hunterganj in Chatra District. Though this hill presently well-known for Kauleshwari Devi temple, which is actually dedicated to goddess Kālī. This is also accepted as one of the *Sati Pitha*. However, in this hill several Jaina antiquities were noticed including the rock-cut images of Twenty Four Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras.¹² The Jaina antiquities are not confined in this particular area only; it is spread throughout the length and breadth of this entire region. Several Jaina antiquities in the form of sculptural remains as well as the architectural fragments were noticed during field work in the region. Though till date not much has been done in the field Jainism, particularly to reconstruct the stages of development of Jainism in this undulating forested land of the country, however, presence of Brahmanism as well as Buddhism in this area is already known among the scholarly world.

In this context it is mentioned here that in one of his recent articles, Chattopadhyay has tried to identify this region in association with the Jainism. In his paper, in the context of the Jaina connection he mentioned that: “A distinct regional identity is discernible from the Jaina sculptures, i.e., images of Tīrthaṅkaras, Sāsanadevis, besides, *caumukhas*, recorded in and around the territory comprising ancient Manbhūm (modern Purulia in West Bengal, Singhbhum district of Jharkhand, Koluha region of Hazaribagh and of course, the old *Rāḍha* tract, i.e., parts of Bankura,

Midnapur and adjoining Burdwan and Birbhum districts. Stylistically, one may observe the emergence of a regional style of Jaina sculptures that gradually conceive both central Indian and the post-Gupta developments of south Bihar, i.e., the Ganga valley”.¹³

This statement regarding the stylistic features of Jaina antiquities of this entire region may not be acceptable. It is necessary to mention here that the regional style which emerged in this region had some influence from the art style of the Rajgir region during the formative stages but gradually it developed its own individuality. During its expanding phase this regional style flourished without any influence of the contemporary art styles surviving in the Ganga valley.



Plate 40.1: Tīrthaṅkara Rṣabhanātha, State Museum Hotwar, Ranchi.

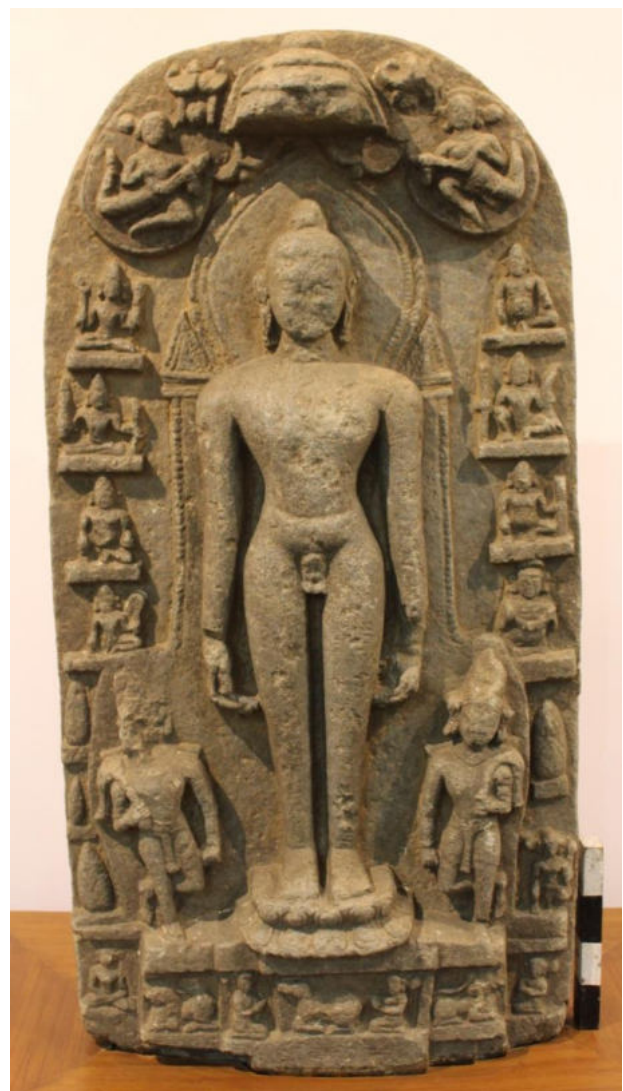


Plate 40.2: Tīrthaṅkara Śāntinātha, State Museum Hotwar, Ranchi.



Plate 40.3: Jaina Tutelary Couple, State Museum Hotwar, Ranchi.



Plate 40.4: Jaina Tutelary Couple, State Museum Hotwar, Ranchi.



Plate 40.5: Jaina Tutelary Couple, State Museum Hotwar, Ranchi.



Plate 40.6: Jaina *Caumukha*, State Museum Hotwar, Ranchi.



Plate 40.7: Jaina *Caumukha*, State Museum Hotwar, Ranchi.



Plate 40.8: Eight Bronze Tirthankara images, State Museum Hotwar, Ranchi.

The art style survived for a long period of time in the entire region without any royal patronage and the evidences of activities of the local artisans are scattered across the length and breadth of this region. These speckled art activities were discovered by various scholars over a long period of time but these art objects still date have not been studied properly to understand the various development stages of this strong regional art style.



Plate 40.9: Tirthankara Rṣabhanātha from Sasandihi, Purulia, West Bengal Sasandihi.



Plate 40.10: Tirthankara Śāntinātha from Palma, Purulia, West Bengal.

In connection with this art style, it may be also being mentioned here that the Jaina art style of entire Chhotanagpur Plateau area has several micro-regional variations. It is also submitted here that there are also diversities in nature of Jain antiquities discovered so far among the core area and the fringe area of this Plateau. In the fringe area we come across temples associated with Jainism during the early medieval period in different conditions. However, in the core area we find very few remains of temples which may be associated with Jainism. The array of Jaina Tirthankara images are also noticed in the Purulia, Bankura and Birbhum area, whereas, only two or three types of Jaina Tirthankara images were recorded from the core area of the Chhotanagpur Plateau area. The images of Yakṣiṇī as well as the votive stūpa / *Caumukhas* are



Plate 40.11: Jaina Tutelary Couple, Pakbirra, Purulia, West Bengal.

also rarely noticed from the core area, whereas in the fringe area we find good representations of these types of Jaina images.¹⁴ In this regard it is also essential to mention here that the similar types of stone was used for engraving the Jaina images in both the areas whereas in the core area of the Plateau region metal was widely used rather than the stone for preparing the Jaina images and several discoveries of the metal images support this assumption.

In this regard, it may be suggested here that different types of metal ores are abundantly available in the Chhotanagpur Plateau area and that these resources were exploited earlier too. Among the different metal ores the copper is one of the most important resources to be procured from here. The local population mined copper, gave it in raw form (or ingot?) to the traders and these traders in turn probably sold them to artisans who were making bronze images for which copper is an important component. Various types of minerals are also widely distributed in the different pockets of this Chhotanagpur Plateau area and the traders were very much aware about this. These forests were major

source for timber pole, small wood, firewood and medicinal plants. Even in the present scenario 100 species of medicinal plants occur in this ecosystem. Plants like *Aswagandha*, *Satmuli*, and *Bhringraj* are few of them. Leaves of various plants, which were the Non-Timber Forest Produce, are found in this Division. Another important plant of this region which could have an economic value was *Mahua* (*Madhuca longifolia*). They have multifaceted use and should not be identified only with liquor. During the making of oil from *Mahua* fruits, a typical type of wax is produced that is also used for several household purposes (such as mosquito repellent coil,

pain balm etc.) by tribal forest dwellers. The Jaina traders were possibly attracted by such abundant resources and tried to harness these resources for their own development purpose and for this reasons they might have erected temples and patronized the local sculpture to engrave the idols of Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras for worship. The original inhabitants as well as the downtrodden people of this area, who were actually rejected by the then higher society of the nearby region without any doubt accepted the Jaina ideology and converted to this ideology. Through these religious missions traders were able to penetrate into the local levels of the societies and reach the lower strata of the people and help them survive in their homeland without any trouble. This was probably one of the main reasons for flourishing of this religious ideology in this core area of the Chhotanagpur Plateau from the post Gupta period onwards.

In this context, it will be worthwhile to bring in the 13 lines Dudhpani rock inscription from Hazaribag area. It is an undated record though on the basis of its paleography it has been assigned to eighth century CE.¹⁵ Three merchants went on business from Ayodhya to Tamralipti and made huge fortune. On their way home they settled in this forested zone and carved out a principality with the consent of the king of Magadha. Naturally this was a well traversed route for merchants and thus was used by these three merchants who finally made the area their home.¹⁶ This inscription has great importance to reconstruct the activities of merchants during this period and indirectly shows the relationship of trading communities with the said lands. It also gives us the information on the sustained position of Tamralipti as an important port during the 8th-9th century CE. Later on some Tīrthaṅkara images were discovered from the core as well as the periphery zones of this undulating land which contained the inscription of the merchants as donors.¹⁷

Another aspect which needs to be pointed out here, in regards to the popularity of Jainism in this area, is the representation of the Jaina *ācāryas* and monks in the Jaina Tīrthaṅkara images. The Jaina images from Purulia and Bankura bear the depiction of the figures of *ācāryas* and monks. The depiction of *ācāryas* and monks indicate that in and around these localities Jaina monastic system had developed and Jainism had strongly penetrated the local levels of the society. The presence of the *ācāryas* and monks not only supported by the depiction of the smaller images in the pedestal of the main Jaina images, however, in some sites we noticed the memorial pillars with the depiction of the Jaina Tīrthaṅkara images, which also indicates the presence of the Jaina *ācāryas* and monks in the entire areas including the core as well as periphery area of the Chhotanagpur Plateau.¹⁸ It may be assumed that like the Śaiva *ācāryas*¹⁹ as well as Buddhist monks, who acted as religious propagators during the post Gupta period onwards in the entire eastern India and popularized their religious ideology, similarly the Jaina *ācāryas* and monks also campaigned religious activities for establishment of Jaina ideology strongly in this particular area. Both Brahmanism as well as Buddhism gets royal patronage during that time and as a result these two ideologies flourished mainly outside this area, whereas, without any royal patronage Jainism strongly flourished in this entire undulating land along the various river valleys due to the sponsorship of the Jaina merchants. In the recent extensive explorations along these river valleys

namely the Ajay, Damodar, Kumari and Kansavati or the Kansai, Subarnarekha and others as well as small meandering channels, locally known as *jors* and issuing out of the main rivers, I was successful in recording large number of antiquities affiliated to Jainism from a large number of villages. In the present paper, the author will highlight the iconographic as well as stylistic features of the Jaina images housed in the State Museum Hotwar, Ranchi. This database is supposedly hitherto unpublished, though some photographs are published however, the stylistic characteristic of these images are not studied till now, which is really essential for proper understanding the Jaina art style in the core area of the Chhotanagpur Plateau area and its discrepancy with the periphery area. These analyses may help us to conclude about the overall characteristic of Jainism in this part of the Indian subcontinent.

The State Museum Hotwar, Ranchi has collection of seven different Jaina images made of stone and eight bronze images of different Tīrthaṅkaras. Among the stone images one image each are of Tīrthaṅkara Ṛṣabhanātha and Śāntinātha, three images of Jaina Tutelary Couple and two are Jaina votive shrines/*Caumukha*. Among the eight bronze images, three images depict Tīrthaṅkara Ṛṣabhanātha and one is Tīrthaṅkara Candraprabha, three are Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvira and one is image of an unidentified Tīrthaṅkara. The details iconography and art style of these images are described below.

1. Image: Tīrthaṅkara Ṛṣabhanātha (**Plate 40.1**); **Stone:** Chlorite-Schist; **Measurements:** 87 × 43 × 11 cm; **Original location:** Patamda (Bhula), East Singhbhum; **Accession no:** 146.

In this image the Tīrthaṅkara is standing in *kāyotsarga* posture on a double-petalled lotus placed on a *pañca-ratha* pedestal. The face of the *mūla-nāyaka* and the *caurī*-bearers are damaged. The *mūla-nāyaka*, devoid of any worldly attire, has elongated ear-lobes and wears an elegant *jaṭājūṭa* with *keśa-vallarī* falling down the sides of the head and over the shoulders. An elliptical *śiraścakra* with leaf edge adorns the head of the Saviour and flame-tongued border devices. A beautiful lotus is depicted on either side of the *śiraścakra*. The top of the back-slab is crowned with a tri-liner *chatra*, each smaller than one below. The *chatra* is crowned by a tier which has delineation of leaf pattern indicating the heavenly *nyagrodha* or banyan tree that stands for the *kevala-vṛkṣa* of Ṛṣabhanātha. The tri-liner *chatra* is flanked by the divine hands playing on drums and cymbals. The garland bearers are also neatly depicted just below the divine hands playing musical instruments.

The Tīrthaṅkara is attended by the usual two fly-whisk bearers standing with crossed legs. The fly-whisks are hanging down. The twenty four miniature Tīrthaṅkaras are arranged in four horizontal rows of three figures each on either side. Like the principal image, they also stand in *kāyotsarga* posture on a plain pedestal and their respective *lāñchanas* are carved at the centre of their thrones. Just below the miniature Jinas, on both sides of the back-slab, are figures of the eight *grahas* (four on the right i.e., Sūrya, Maṅgala, Bṛhaspati, Śani and four on the left i.e., Soma, Budha, Śukra and Rāhu), starting with Sūrya in the upper right position and ending with

Rāhu at the bottom left. All these planetary deities are seated in usual postures on a plain pedestal and holding their respective attributes.

The existing portion of the present image shows that the *mūla-nāyaka* has a svelte figure and the carving of the image is very sophisticated. The arms of the Jina hang down vertically along the stiff torso and the finger tips touch the thigh on either side. The back throne of the image consists of posts decorated with mouldings and criss-cross scratched pilasters, supporting a horizontal cross-bar with lightly incised square rhizomes at its ends, above which there are triangular fleurons. The *pañca-ratha* pedestal is quite unique. The bull *lāñchana* of the *mūla-nāyaka*, is neatly carved at the centre of the pedestal (the bull occupies the entire central projection) and placed between two abraded deities. It is interesting to mention here that in this image the bull *lāñchana* of the Jina facing left which is not a usual feature in this entire region. The *ratha* adjoining the central one has depictions of a male and female devotee kneeling in *namaskāra-mudrā*. The extreme projections, on both sides, have crouching lions. In the present image, the organization of space evident from the entire composition is remarkable. On stylistic grounds the image can be assigned to a period ranging from the tenth to the eleventh centuries CE.

2. Image: Tīrthānkara Śāntinātha (**Plate 40.2**); **Stone:** Chlorite-Schist; **Measurements:** 100 × 53 × 14 cm; **Original location:** Dhalbhumgarh, East Singhbhum; **Accession no:** 145.

The Jina is in *kāyotsarga* and *samapādasthānaka* postures and stands on a full blown lotus placed on a *pañca-ratha* pedestal. The body of the principal deity is of slender disposition, though with the usual stiffness and both the arms hang down perpendicularly along the torso. Like the earlier image, in this image also the faces as well as the hands of the *mūla-nāyaka* and the *caurī*-bearers are smashed out.

The *pañca-ratha* pedestal of the image is quite unique and need special attention. The central *ratha* of the pedestal bears the *lāñchana* of the Jina i.e., deer, which is flanked by kneeling donors/devotees who are praying their obeisance with folded hands in kneeling posture. The adjoining portion shows stylized representations of crouching lions facing opposite directions. The extreme *rathas* of the pedestal bear some unusual figures. At the right corner of the pedestal an image of Jaina *ācārya* is depicted. He is seated in *yogāsana* posture. On the other hand left corner of this pedestal contained the figure of a Jaina devotee/disciple, who with folded hand showing his homage towards the Jaina *ācārya*. This type of the depiction is really remarkable for better understanding of the Jaina monastic system in that region. An inscription was engraved at the lower level of the pedestal, though due to the weathering condition this is completely eroded and it is very difficult to decipher.

The *mūla-nāyaka* has elongated ear-lobes and though the usual arrangement of the hair is not visible however, the prominent *uṣṇīṣa* is clearly engraved. On either side stand squat and

stout male *caurī*-bearers with crossed legs. They wear deeply incised loin cloth and jewellery including wristlets, armlets, necklace, *kamara-bandhan* and, *mukuṭa*. The left hands of the *caurī*-bearers are in *kaṭyāvalambita* posture and the right hands hold a fly-whisk.

On the edge of the back-slab are eight planets arranged in a vertical row of four on either side of the Jina. These on the dexter side appear to be Sūrya, Maṅgal, Bṛhaspati and Śani; while those on the sinister side are Soma, Budha, Śukra and Rāhu. They are seated on a plain pedestal in usual postures holding their respective attributes. In both the sides just below the planetary deities *ratnapātra* heaped with offerings are depicted. In right side three *ratnapātras* are present whereas in the left side only one is engraved and just below this a seated figure is depicted. This figure is very crudely engraved and most probably identified as the Yakṣiṇī Mahāmānasī.

The back of the throne consists of jeweled posts supporting a cross-bar on which are triangular foliated plaques. The circular *siraścakra* has beaded border and flowering twigs on either side. Vidyādhara holding long garlands can be seen beside the trilinear *chatra* on the top of the back-slab, and also a drum and a pair of cymbals struck by disembodied hands.

3. Image: Jaina Tutelary Couple (**Plate 40.3**); **Stone:** Chlorite-Schist; **Measurements:** 95 × 62 × 21 cm; **Original location:** Ichhagarh, East Singhbhum; (according to State Museum at Hotwar, Ranchi);²⁰ **Accession no:** 114.

In this image the couple sits in *ardha-paryāṅkāsa* posture on a double petalled lotus-pedestal. The male figure sits on the right, with the right holding some indistinct object (most probably flower bunch), which is also damaged and in his left hand he holds a child. He wears a *dhotī* reaching well below the knee, and elaborate jewellery comprising bracelets, armlets, beaded necklace, large circular *kuṇḍalas*, and an elegant *ratna-mukuṭa*. The female figure is similarly attired and bejewelled save an elegant coiffure with fillets replacing the *ratna-mukuṭa*. She holds a child in her left lap while she hold similar type of indistinct object like the male figure in her right hand.

Shading both these figures is a sprouting palm tree, from the branching knot of which descends a miniature figure. Above the branches of the tree is a seated Jina in *dhyāna* on a lotus seat and under a tri-linear parasol. The Jina is flanked by the two elephants and the *lāñchana* of the Jina is not clearly visible. Vidyādhara can be seen on the top-corners of the black-slab. The central projection of the *pañca-ratha* pedestal below bears seven interesting figures- a elephant rider followed by a seated figure; a *nāgi* and a crowned and bearded male, and three female figures in *añjali-mudrā*; this is probably the depiction of an episode. A miniature figure standing over a snake hood is also depicting in the left side of the back slab.

4. Image: Jaina Tutelary Couple (**Plate 40.4**); **Stone:** Chlorite-Schist; **Measurements:** 92 × 50 × 22 cm; **Original location:** Dhalbhum Garh, East Singhbhum; **Accession no:** 144.

In the present image the face and hands of both figures (male and female) are completely smashed out and other figures are also badly damaged. As a result of this it is very difficult to study the details stylistic features of this image. Like the earlier image, the image portrays a male and a female figure each probably holding a child (completely broken) in their left laps and their right hands most likely showing *varada mudrā*. Here the tutelary couple sits in *ardha-paryāṅkāśana* on a full blown lotus placed on a double flat throne with stylized posts supporting both the ends of this throne.

The extant image shows that the male figure wears *dhotī* and elaborate jewellery. The female figure is attired in a transparent lower garment and bejewelled with various ornaments. Though the *mukūṭa* is damaged however, her stylized hair arrangement is also visible.

The stylized foliage of a tree shelter the couple and a damaged miniature Jaina Tīrthāṅkara seated in *dhyāna-mudrā* is depicted above one of the branches. From the central branch hangs a swing on which sits a child. It is interesting to mention here that like the earlier image in this case Vidyādhara are not engraved in this image.

In the pedestal of this image five miniature figures are depicted. Among these five images two are riding on animals and in the left side is a figure seated in *dhyāna-mudrā* holding a lotus in his left hand and right hand resting on his lap. This figure is seated on a lotus pedestal. On the right side of these riding figures are engraved two more male figures. Due to vary abraded condition it is difficult to study the iconography of these images. This entire composition most probably indicates a narrative of the life history of the Tīrthāṅkara seated on the top of the tree of this image.

5. Image: Jaina Tutelary Couple (**Plate 40.5**); **Stone:** Chlorite-Schist; **Measurements:** 25 × 20 × 12 cm; **Original location:** Not mentioned; **Accession no:** 31.

The present image depicts only the upper part of the Jaina Tutelary Couple. Though in this case only some portion of the male figure has survived and the female figure is entirely lost. The extant portion of the image shows the bust of the male figure and he wears elaborate jewellery including *kuṇḍalas*, and an elegant *ratna-mukūṭa*. Above the head of the male figure, a stylized tree is depicted and on the branches a highly abraded miniature Jaina Tīrthāṅkara is seated in *dhyānasana* on a lotus. The identification of the miniature Jaina figure is very difficult. A small figure sits on a swing which hangs in the tree.

6. Image: Jaina *Caumukha* (**Plate 40.6**); **Stone:** Sand Stone; **Measurements:** 38 × 54 × 20 cm; **Original location:** Not mentioned.; **Accession no:** 28.

The present one is a damaged Jaina *Caumukha*. The extant portion shows two tiers decorated with the Jaina images along with the other associated images on its four sides. The frontal side exhibits two Jaina Tīrthāṅkaras seated in *padmāsana* posture (*dhyāna-mudrā*) on a plain circular cushion within niches. In both the cases the face of the Tīrthāṅkaras are badly

damaged. The Tīrthaṅkara depicted below is much decorated than the above one. The Jaina has elongated ear-lobes and his hair is arranged in schematic curls with an *uṣṇīṣa*. The chest has the depiction of nipples. He wears the mark of the *śrīvatsa* symbol on the centre of his chest which resembles the shape of diamond. The abdomen is definitely well represented especially in comparison to the other Jaina figures of this museum. The *Yogic* or spiritual power is reflected by the skillful carving of this image and an undergoing motion is also observed from this image. Above the head of the *mūlanāyaka*, a trilinear *chatra* is depicted. The tri-*chatrā* is flanked by figures of flying Vidyādhara with garlands.

The central figure of the Jina is flanked by standing male *cauri*-bearers, one on each side. On both the pillars of the niche a slim miniature shrine of Orissan *rekha deul* variety are engraved, which is *tri-ratha* in plan. The *jaṅghā* part has a central niche, which exhibits the Yakṣas and Yakṣiṇīs of this Tīrthaṅkara. The *śikhara* shows a typical *madhyalatā* with some *gavākṣa* motifs flanked by *pratiratha* and *karna-ratha*. There are no corner *āmlakas* on the *karna-ratha* and it is without any decoration. The tall *śikhara* is crowned by a heavy *āmlaka* surmounted by a small *kalaśa*. It is not possible to correctly identify the main Tīrthaṅkara and his associated Yakṣas and Yakṣiṇīs as the *lāñchana* of the Tīrthaṅkara is not depicted and the defaced condition of both the attendant figures.

Both the tiers are divided by decorated with *caitya* motif and floral decorations. In the top of the niche the Tīrthaṅkara is also seated in *dhyāna* posture and above the head of the Tīrthaṅkara a tri-linear *chatra* is engraved. The outside the niche two elegantly jeweled male *cauri*-bearers stand in *ābhaṅga* pose and hold a fly-whisk in their right hands and their left hands are in *kaṭyāvalambita* posture. This type of the decoration is replicated on the four sides of this specimen and hopefully this specimen originally had a third tier also but unfortunately lost. This type of the *Caumukha* is not found from this region as well as the eastern extension of this area. Most probably this influence came from the western extension of this Plateau area.

7. Image: Jaina *Caumukha* (Plate 40.7); **Stone:** Chlorite-Schist; **Measurements:** 44 × 15 cm; **Original location:** Not mentioned; **Accession no:** 149.

The present specimen is an exquisite image of *piḍhā deul* variety of *Caumukha*. It is square in plan. The four central niches have the figures of the Tīrthaṅkaras standing in *kāyotsarga* and *samapādasthānaka* postures on a full-blown lotus. The Tīrthaṅkaras are placed between stout pilasters relieved with floral scroll designs. The images are flanked by attendants on both sides. The respective *lāñchanas* of the Tīrthaṅkaras are depicted placed just below the lotus pedestal. The *lāñchana* of Tīrthaṅkara Pārśvanātha is depicted above the head of the Jina as a snake hood. The remaining three Tīrthaṅkaras are Ṛṣabhanātha, Candraprabha, Śāntinātha. In the niches, the four Tīrthaṅkaras are placed artistically under the trefoil arches. The existence of these arches is very interesting because we do not find the use of such arches in the *rekha* temples of Manbhum

standing to this day. The *ganḍi* portion of this specimen has three divisions. The central *pagas* of the specimen are decorated with floral design while the other two *kanikā pagas* are decorated with *khura*-shaped mouldings. This miniature temple most probably was crowned by an *āmalaka* surmounted by *kalaśa*, however unfortunately at present only *āmalaka* is survived.

8. Image: Eight Tīrthaṅkara images (**Plate 40.8**); **Stone:** Bronze; **Original location:** Bahragora (East Singhbhum); **Accession no:** Not mentioned.

The State Museum Hotwar, Ranchi has in its collection eight beautiful Digambara Tīrthaṅkara images made of bronze (three images of Tīrthaṅkara Ṛṣabhanātha and Mahāvira and one each of Tīrthaṅkara Candraprabha and an unidentified Tīrthaṅkara). This hoard of eight images was discovered as a chance finding from Bahragora (East Singhbhum). Stylistically and iconographically these eight images are similar and among these images only one (unidentified image the Tīrthaṅkara) Tīrthaṅkara is depicted seated in *dhyāna* posture and the rest are standing in *kāyotsarga* posture on a double-petalled lotus. The *viśva-padma* is placed on an oblong footed pedestal which is hollow within. The pedestal has moulded base and top and recessed middle part. In between two surfaces the central part of the pedestal of these images bears the depiction of the *lāñchana* of Tīrthaṅkaras.

In seven cases the arms of the Tīrthaṅkaras hang down vertically along the stiff torso and the finger tips touch the thigh on either side. In three Ṛṣabhanātha images the Tīrthaṅkara has elongated ear-lobes, and wears an elegant *jaṭājuta* with *keśa-vallarī* falling down the sides of the head and over the shoulders. In remaining five cases the Tīrthaṅkaras has elongated ear-lobes and hair is arranged in schematic curls with a prominent *uśṇiṣa*. In all eight images *mūla-nāyaka* bears a svelte figure and the carving of the image is very sophisticated. Few images bears a small inscription on the rear of the pedestal but since these images are displayed inside the showcase it is not possible for me to decipher these inscriptions. Hopefully the decipherment of these short inscriptions will help to identify the name of the donor. The measurements of these images could not be got due to the same reason.

Observation:

The present study has attempted to discuss the iconographic details of some Jaina images recovered from the different parts of the Jharkhand and presently displayed in the State Museum Hotwar, Ranchi. These images have not been studied earlier and the context of the Jainism in the Chhotanagpur Plateau area (Jharkhand) is also not known. As a result it is very difficult to place these images in the particular stages of the development of the art activities in this area. These Jaina images exhibits some new aesthetic elements that differ from the other Jaina images so far reported from the entire the study area and this justifies the assumption that there were some regional variations among the Jaina art styles developing in the Chhotanagpur Plateau region.

This undulating land became very sacred among the Jaina followers from very early times due to the association of the *Nirvāna* of nineteen Tīrthaṅkaras including the Tīrthaṅkara Pārśvanātha at the Parashnath hill in Giridhi district. Different Jaina texts also described these events of Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras and mentioned the name of the Pārśvanatha hill. Later on the *Ācārāṅgasūtra*²¹ refers to Mahāvīra's itinerary along this pathless tract, Chhotanagpur Plateau area. It is mentioned that during his 12 years of religious penances he visited different parts of eastern India including the *Lāḍha* (i.e., Rāḍha or western part of undivided Bengal), through its two divisions known as *Vajjabhūmi* and *Subbhabhūm*. These religious missions resulted in further development of Jainism in the present study area. During the historical phase no direct inscriptional evidences have so far been found from the present study area regarding the expansion of Jainism. However, several archaeological discoveries in the pre-independence and post-independence periods by different British administrators and later on by Indian as well as foreign scholars, confirmed that Jainism had a long history in the entire study area.²²

A rapid survey of the numerous relics and edifices associated with Jainism as noticed or discovered in the present study area amply demonstrates that Jainism made much headway in this land before and after the death of Mahāvīra and made an everlasting influence upon its inhabitants who accepted this faith for their salvation. Mahāvīra, Gośāla and other Jaina monks wandering over this region through ages came in direct contact with these so-called uncivilized people of the region and they were able to integrate the different socio-cultural groups into a single religious system, i.e., Jainism. It may be suggested that Jainism had penetrated down to the folk level in this region with the acceptance of the common people. As a result, in spite of direct confrontations with several religious systems, Jainism survived in the undulating landmass without any direct patronage of the so-called 'royal class' and reached its zenith during the Post Gupta period onwards.

The above discussed Jaina sculptural remains were retrieving mostly from the present East Singhbhum district, which may be included in the eastern most extension of the core area of the Chhotanagpur Plateau area. All these images were product of the regional art style of the entire area, though there are some micro level variations among this regional style. The Rṣabhanātha image (**Plate 40.1**) of the present one is stylistically as well as artistically similar to the Rṣabhanātha images reported from the Sasandihi (**Plate 40.9**), Bansgarh and Arsha of Purulia district. In the museum specimen only eight planetary deities are depicted whereas in Sasandihi image nine planetary deities are present and above the planetary deities in both the cases twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras are arranged in four horizontal rows of three each on either side of the central deity. Though these image are iconographically and stylistically are very much parallel however, the more artistic perfection is noticed in the Sasandihi image. In the Rṣabhanātha image of Sasandihi the *mūla-nāyaka* has much slender body and artist utilized the space to decorate the entire sculpture. The gradual development of the Jaina art style in the entire area is reflected from both these images.

The Śāntinātha image (**Plate 40.2**) of this museum is also stylistically similar with the Śāntinātha image of Palma (**Plate 40.10**) and Anai-Jambad (presently displayed in the Haripada Sahitya Mandir, Purulia) of Purulia district. However, the Śāntinātha images of Palma and Anai-Jambad show sophistication in execution than the present museum image. The section of the body of the *mūla-nāyaka* including the *parikara* elements and the pedestal of both the images exhibit much refinement and developed stage of Jaina art style in the fringe area of the Chhotanagpur Plateau area. The presence of *ācārya* motif in the pedestal of the Śāntinātha image of Dhalbhumgarh, East Singhbhum is an important aspect of Jaina art style in this region. The figures of *ācāryas* and monks are well known in the Jaina art of central India however, it is quite interesting that the Jaina image from East Singhbhum (Jharkhand) also bear the depiction of the figures of *ācāryas* and monks. In this context it is also mentioned here that some Jaina images of Purulia and Bankura bear the depiction of *ācāryas* and monks figures in the pedestal and these figures are also engraved sophisticatedly like the *mūla-nāyaka* of this image.

It may be postulated from the depiction of *ācāryas* and monks figure in the pedestal of the Śāntinātha image of Dhalbhumgarh, East Singhbhum that in and around these localities Jaina monastic system had developed and Jainism had strongly penetrated the local levels of the society. The development of Jainism was possible due to the active participation of the traders or merchants in this area as well as the Jaina *ācāryas* who popularized the Jaina teachings among the downtrodden people of this undulating land and hopefully these local communities effortlessly accept this nonviolence religious ideology. As a result, new adherents were initiated into this ideology and helped in its spread in the entire Plateau area for a long period of time. The scattered archeological remains of this religious ideology retrieved from this area also support this assumption.

Three Jaina Tutelary Couple are presently housed in the State Museum Hotwar, Ranchi and among these three images one is badly damaged and bust portion of the male figure including some parts of the back-slab are survived. The remaining two are complete and exhibit the development of the regional art style. Among these two images of Jaina Tutelary Couple the bigger one (**Plate 40.3**) is stylistically much developed than the smaller one (**Plate 40.4**). Not only the variations in the body proportion of the male and female figures of the image but also the much detailed *parikara* elements was used in the bigger Jaina Tutelary Couple image than the other one. Interestingly, in both the cases the pedestals of the Jaina Tutelary Couple bear some narrative stories related with the concerned Jaina Tīrthaṅkara image, but their identification is difficult. This type of Jaina Tutelary Couple sculptures are also reported from different sites of Purulia and Bankura districts. The site Pakbirra, Purulia district possesses four Jaina Tutelary Couple images and among these four the one image (**Plate 40.11**)²³ is stylistically and artistically similar with the bigger Jaina Tutelary Couple image of this museum specimen and another interesting thing is that the Pakbirra image also bears the narrative seen in the pedestal. However,

the remaining three Jaina Tutelary Couple images of Pakbirra are the product of the much developed art style and the narrative stories are not engraved in these images.

The above discussion on the Jaina images of the State Museum at Hotwar, Ranchi suggest that they are product of a strong regional art style, which developed in the core area of the Chhotanagpur Plateau. Though these images has some stylistic similarity with the Jaina images reported from the different parts of the Purulia and Bankura districts, however, the Jaina images of the periphery area of the Chhotanagpur Plateau exhibits much developed art form than the core area. In this context it may be assumed that this distinct school of a regional art tradition which lay in an essentially local matrix evolved in the core area of the Chhotanagpur Plateau. This art form gradually developed and extended in the other parts of this region including its periphery area with some micro level differentiation among the regional art forms. After examining the Jaina images from the core area with the periphery area of this Plateau, hopefully, it may be accept that the excellence of this regional art forms of the Jaina art style reached its climax in the periphery area of the Chhotanagpur Plateau. Though overall it could be acknowledged that within the broader province of the popular 'Pāla-Sena' art historical background, the unknown artisans of Chhotanagpur Plateau implemented their aesthetic skills guided by powerful local ateliers, without so called royal patronage.

Another important issue of the present study is to point out about the original locations of the displayed images in this museum. In one of my recent researches I have tried to highlight this issue in detail and here I have mentioned regarding one image. The Jaina Tutelary Couple (**Plate 40.3**) which is found from Ichhagarh, East Singhbhum as mentioned in the label of this State Museum at Hotwar, Ranchi is completely wrong. This image along with the other stone images of this museum was first noticed and photograph published by the J.D.Beglar in his tour report.²⁴ He noticed this image along with the other image from Dulmi, however, the museum label mentioned that this was retrieved from Ichhagarh. Due to this wrong information the site Dulmi as well as these images lost its own glories and the original contexts.

In the course of this present study I have tried to establish the archaeological context of the displayed Jaina images. The locations as mentioned in the labels of the museum indicate that the present day East Singhbhum which is the part of the ancient Singhbhum district was the core area of the Jainism from the post Gupta period onwards. Ancient Singhbhum has been studied by several scholars mainly in the context of its rich pre-historic antiquities; however, the historical phase of this region has not been well explored and properly studied. The discovery of the Chandil stone inscription throws some light regarding construction of stone temple for deity by the followers.²⁵ It shows that the people of this area were much aware about the religious ideology and the abundance of Jaina antiquities indicates that like the other religious ideology Jainism also strongly survived in this undulating land for a long period of time. However, the stylistic as well as artistic variations among the Jaina images in this region also support the

assumption that regional art style has some micro-regional deviations from area to area. This indicates that the regional art type has its strong foundations.

In the concluding part it needs to be recorded that the above note has several limitations to express the various facets of the present objective. For appropriate understanding about the origin and development stages of these regional art forms it is necessary to study the Jaina images from the core area of the Chhotanagpur Plateau in details. This study will also help to properly understand the micro-regional deviations of the art forms. The hypothesis referred to in this work needs further clarifications so far as the stylistic trajectories are concerned. The present paper is a preliminary attempt in this regard and hopefully future researches in this way may unfold more information about the strong regional art forms in the Chhotanagpur Plateau area as well as the comprehensive picture about the context of Jainism of the entire area.

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