

The Architecture of the Early Medieval Jain Temple and Ritual

The Analysis of Ellora Caves

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Abstract—The article is dedicated to the analysis of various components of architecture and iconographic program of the Jain temple that can reflect rituals of that age; on the example of Ellora complex, this paper tries to understand the concepts embodied in architecture and sculpture, as well as transformation of ideas over time. Much information can be obtained from the comparison of the composition of Hindu and Jain temples. The scale of architecture and its images, spatial orientation, physiology of the architecture, and its mission bring adepts to spiritual rebirth. They play an important role and reflect the ritual as well. From the yakṣas, who bestow the material welfare, through a palace-like space, the believer passes to the hidden place of garbhagṛha, where Jina sits in absolute darkness, silence and tightness; the role of meditating Jina is more a role model than an object of worship. Obviously, through the images we can understand that music played an important role in the ritual, as evidenced by numerous images of musical instruments; another level of interpretation of these motives is the concept of divyadhvani and devadundubhi and the concept of Jina's Samavasaraṇa.

Keywords—Jain temple; Ellora; cave temple; Indian Architecture; Jain ritual; Samavasaraṇa

I. INTRODUCTION

It is almost obvious that religious architecture reflects ritual because its creation is dictated primarily by the cult requests of the religious community and this statement does not require any evidence. However, each religion solves this in a different way, in each country and at a certain time interval in different ways. Based on the analysis of Ellora Jain caves, this article is an attempt to identify how the architecture of the Jain temple is related to the ritual – whether it reflects, follows, and sets boundaries and accents for the disciple.

The cave temples of Ellora are the most important monuments of the early medieval Jain heritage. It is the largest surviving Jain complex of the 9th century India, featuring an abundance of embossed images. It is located in the Central India, in the state of Maharashtra, carved into the mountains of the Western Ghats. Only a few temples of that age have survived, including in Deogarh of Guptas and

Pattadakal of Pallavas, but the scale of Ellora is incomparably more ambitious. In the 1880s, when the study of the complex began, and all the caves of Ellora were numbered, Jain caves were the last and were numbered 30 to 34. In fact, the Jain complex includes more than 20 shrines richly decorated with reliefs. Therefore, the complex provides the researcher with a lot of material for analysis.

The Jain community in Ellora reached its greatest development under Rashtrakutas, especially under the last rulers of this dynasty, who provided it a considerable support (9-10th centuries). At this time the royal patrons switched their attention from the Buddhists to the Jains. This was common since the 7th century. The Chinese pilgrim Xuan Zang, who visited South India in the middle of the 7th century, observes that Buddhism is gradually giving way to the Digambara Jainism, and a complex was built for the Digambaras. Partly, probably, the reason for such a preference on the part of the royal dynasty was that the main activity of the Jains was trade, usury: activities forbidden to Rajputs, which included Rashtrakutas, but necessary for the functioning of the state. The Jains also took an active part in the political life of the country and were very educated people. The construction of the Jain complex under the Yadava dynasty continued, and then minor customers joined the facility, ordering individual images as well.

Jainism, having appeared in the Śramaṇic period (6-5 BC), almost simultaneously with Buddhism, as a philosophical movement, changed its attitude to the creation of images and rituals. Initially, like the Buddhist, the Jain teaching denied the worship of images. However, the reality gradually made its own adjustments and the mūrtis (images for worship) appeared — there were images of Tirthankaras and the deities inhabiting the skies. The mythology of Jainism was gradually becoming more complex, including the increasing number of deities borrowed from Brahmanism. Strict hierarchical Cosmology became increasingly complicated over the centuries of the existence of Jainism due to the Jain scholars' desire to classify and systematize everything. All beings received certain attributes, characteristic, colors, etc. Transformational processes lasted

long enough, which affected, in general, the works of architecture and sculpture.

As a rule, literary sources, according to the Indian cultural tradition, do not fully reflect the real historical state of religion, ritual, society, describing everything as it should be in the ideal world, giving often impracticable guidelines and in no way trying to “record” life. Literary works, having existed for centuries, building up new layers of commentaries, modifying the original meaning, cannot quite answer what, for example, was the real religious ritual during this period. This is a feature of Indian literature, derived from the characteristics of the world view. However, in works of art, especially in works of visual art, it is impossible to avoid partial reflection of life. Politically significant concepts were reflected, as a rule, indirectly in the iconographic program of monuments. Therefore, architectural monuments, their architecture and rich decoration are important sources for reconstruction of religious ideas and rituals.

II. ABOUT THE CONSTRUCTION PLANS OF JAIN CAVES OF ELLORA

So, first, we have to analyze the plans of cave temples. In Ellora, as already mentioned, there are more than 20 Jain caves forming several levels. They were numbered clusters, which can be compared to monasteries of those days. In addition to the premises for prayer, there were monk cells.

Spatial orientation of the Temple plays a really important role in all religions. The spatial orientation of Jain caves of Ellora is different — there is no clear orientation of the sanctuary in one direction, for example, to the East, so that the first rays of the sun “awaken the object of worship”, as written in Indian Vāstuśāstras architectural treatises. In general, the plans of the cave temples are similar to the Buddhist vihāras and the Hindu caves of Ellora. The caves are square in plan, with a tendency to symmetry, with an antarala (intermediate space, vestibule) entrance — a small rectangular room and a square hall, demarcated by pillars, preceding the garbhagrha — the sanctuary, which is the darkest and narrowest room of the temple. As a rule, the central hall contains four columns or a number of columns divisible by 4. The number 4 has a rather developed symbolic meaning in the Jain tradition. The four types of beings are gods, people, inhabitants of hell, and animals, that is, the four states of jīva — the soul. The four pillars of the Jain Saṃgha are monks (sādhus), nuns (sādhvīs), community and laymen. Four states of the soul: infinite knowledge, infinite perception, infinite happiness, and infinite energy.

Since ancient times, pradakṣiṇa served as an important all-Indian ritual of worship. It's a ritual walk around the shrine in a clockwise direction, so the right side the worshiper's body is turned to the object of worship. It was also spread in Jainism. However, in the cave temples you cannot make this pass, since the sanctuary carved at the far end of the hall. In the Hindu caves of Ellora, a corridor was carved around the garbhagrha, but Jain architects for some reason decided not to borrow this practice. Only Indra Sabha was built for this purpose — a detached pavilion, carved like sculpture, like a caturmukha — with four entrances on each

side. Obviously, the caturmukha building was carved just for the purpose of performing the important pradakṣiṇa ritual.

III. THE PHYSIOLOGICAL ASCENT AND ZONES OF THRESHOLDS

Moving from the architectural plans, to the interior space, first, we need to speak about the logic of space, its ideas. One of them suggesting the physiological ascent of the believer to the main sanctuary; it plays an important role. As already mentioned, the garbhagrha is located along the central axis, carved in the farthest from the entrance wall; it is the narrowest and the darkest space of the temple. In addition, the believer constantly makes an ascent to the shrine — the level of the floor rises, giving the person a physiological feeling of a change in the sacral status of space.

Special ornamentation of Jain temples also contributes to mental entry. Through the magnificent imagery of the upcoming younger celestials, the medieval master transforms the external vanity into the grandeur of a heavenly abode. The adept seeing the decor enters the space mentally, attracted by the richness of the ornamental solution. As is known, it is the mental entry into another space — the complete change of impression is extremely important for the sacred space — other than the external world, transformed, saturated, transmitting the splendor of the heavenly abode.

Only after a person switches to a different perception, they can fully perceive the main images of worship. They gradually move away from grandeur and oversaturation into extremely simple and dark space of garbhagrha (skt., 'womb-container'), where the believer has to be “reborn”.

Through lush ornamentation, through switching from the profane to the sacred world, it is possible to concentrate on the simple image of a naked man, devoid of all kind of ornaments.

IV. JINA IMAGES

Tīrthaṅkaras, the Jain worship objects — are depicted in the same pose as Buddhist ones — of yogic concentration, since the ideal of asceticism lies at the heart of both religions. In the Dīgambara iconography, Tīrthaṅkaras are depicted naked, free from worldly ties and all the conventions of the real world. Besides this, according to the vow he has taken, they must not have any property, as monks.

Jinakalpa, the Jina lifestyle becomes a role model for members of the community. Tīrthaṅkaras are depicted in two yogic poses — *padmāsana* (lotus pose, common in Indian iconography also in Buddhism, and Hinduism) and unique *kayotsarga* (standing with arms down, more appropriate to the ideals of *ahimsā*). The difference is that in *padmāsana*, the hands of Tīrthaṅkara are found exclusively in *dhyāna mudrā*, the gesture of meditation.

In Ellora's Jain temples there is no prevalence of a deity / perfect man over a person entering a temple — all images are of a human height or even less. It provides the perfect psychological contact of person with the object of worship,

self-identification of worshipper with the visualized Teacher. The image is an object for imitation, following the actions of Tīrthaṅkara leads to release from the circle of rebirths. Thus, a Tīrthaṅkara in the sanctuary is none other than a similar monk in his cell, narrow and dark, practicing austerity and meditation. He is an object to follow. The concept changes in the Jain art over time, as the Tīrthaṅkara image become more deified. Compared with the huge image of Buddha in the Buddhist cave 10 (Viṣṭakarmān cave) of the same complex, in Jain caves, all the images are commensurate with the person or even smaller. Temples also do not suppress their scale.

Once again I have to mention that initially Jainism did not postulate the worship of images. The monks, in particular, did not need images at all, conducting mental bhāvapūjā with recitation of ancient hymns. Everything external (including sculpture) was involved solely for the sake of the lay donators, the part of the community that provided material support. The images of donators are also present in the iconographic program of the temple.

V. THE WELFARE GIVING IMAGES

The orientation of the sculptural reliefs of Jain caves to the laity can be seen in another essential part of the iconographic program — the images of giving material well-being yakṣas, already similar to yakṣas of Buddhism (Jambhala or Pancika) and in Hindu iconography (Kubera) and compared with Gaṇeśa. The yakṣa, located on the left and the yakṣini, located to the right of the entrance to the temple, are sasanadevatas, the guardian deities of Tīrthaṅkara; they are the protectors of the Jain teaching [1]. According to Harivaṃśapurāṇa of Jināsena (783 AD.), Indra appointed a pair of Yakṣas to each Tīrthaṅkara. At the same time they are gods who bestow welfare, as indicated by their corpulence and abundance of jewellery decorating their bodies. Such deities, located in the entrance areas of the temple, provide material benefits to the community.

Moreover, in contradistinction to Hindu theologians, Jain believes that Tīrthaṅkara is not present in its image; therefore, it is obviously useless to offer prayers to it. Only yakṣas can give an answer and help. It is an important feature of Jain religion that was reflected in iconographic program of temples. The Tīrthaṅkara has already left the circle of rebirth; he is not present in this world. Lawrence A. Babb introduced the concept of "Absent Lord". Liberated Jina conquered all his passions, affections, and desires. For this reason, all the rituals and offerings, as well as musical performances, are virtually unnecessary [2]. Tīrthaṅkaras cannot interact with the worshippers, responding to their requests, which reduces all the efforts of the ritual to naught. However, in reality, sufficiently developed worship rituals indicate that most Jains believe that in some way Jina is present in his image. A formula was introduced according to which the offerings accepted in all religions, the believer does not bestow upon the deity, but simply leaves all this in the temple nearby his image [3].

VI. THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN THE RITUAL

We will not find reliable information about the role of music in the Jain ritual of the early Middle Ages due to the nature of the literature of that time. For example, in Ādipurāṇa of Pampa (941 AD), written in the Kannada language, music and dance are described in detail several times [4]. However, there narrated about the divine music, performed at the court of Indra, and not about the real ritual.

In Ellora, thirteen of the twenty-one images of Tīrthaṅkaras in the main shrines include images of musical instruments. In addition, musical instruments are present in many relief images of Tīrthaṅkaras located in *mandapas*. A comparison with iconographic programs of other monuments of Jainism reveals that the interpretation of the *aṣṭamahāprātihārya* motif by Ellora masters gives special attention to musical instruments (this is not only the depictions of musicians, but also independently floating drums, plates, shells, pipes etc). This is a *divyadhvani*, a divine sound, many-valued iconographical motive, and at the same time this testifies the increasing role of music in ritual [5].

It is known that at the early stage of the existence of Jainism, music and theatrical performances were banned, but over time, obviously, their role became ever higher. And in the modern ritual, singing hymns, praising Tīrthaṅkaras, is one of the six essential rituals (*āvashyaka*) of a Jain layman. *Snatrapuja* includes playing musical instruments, singing, combined with holding and washing the sculptural image of Jina and the accompanying images.

Divyadhvani (divine sound) is closely related to the idea of *Samavasarana* of Jina, which was reflected in the iconography of temples at that time. In Ādipurāṇa of Jināsena (9th AD), it is said that music and dance in front of image of Jina never stopped in the *Samavasarana* [6].

VII. THE CONCEPT OF SAMAVASARANA IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE TEMPLE

Samavasarana is a meeting hall where, after the enlightened Tīrthaṅkara proclaims his sermon to those who gathered around him. At the same time, *Samavasarana* is the name of the sermon. The *Samavasarana* hall description is given in medieval Jain literary sources. In the very centre of the square or round pavilion elevated above the ground sits Jina surrounded on two sides by servants with fans (*camaradharas*). The hall is divided into twelve equal parts, intended for different groups of worshippers. These include not only people and deities, but also animals. The medieval Digambara texts call this *gandhakuti* pavilion — “the fragrant hall” (there is a parallel with the *gandhakuti* of Buddha). The concept of the assembly hall is reflected in the architecture of the Jain temples, including cave temples, which José Pereira proves in his work with the example of the Ellora complex [7]. Especially brightly it is embodied in *Chota Kailasa* (Small Kailasa). Here, in the upper pavilion of the sanctuary Mahavira sits on his throne, surrounded by servants with fans. On the outer walls of the temple there are images of deities who arrived to listen to Jina's sermon.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The architecture of the Jain temple, as a material reflection of the ritual, is similar to the Hindu and the Buddhist architecture; it is obvious that the ritual at that time was in general similar to that of Hinduism. The symbolic saturation of the temple space gradually grew, the philosophical concepts embodied in the iconographic program became more complicated and one of them is the idea of *Samavasarana* of Jina.

Gradually, a musical component began to play an important role in the Jain ritual. The increase in the amount of musical images in the iconographic program of Jain temples can serve as evidence of the increasing role of music in ritual. The religion, which was initially tuned exclusively to asceticism, eventually absorbed the whole arsenal of mediators influencing the emotional aspect of a person, using various arts, including dance and music. That already happened by the time the complex was carved, the confirmation of which can be found in literary sources. Thus, over the centuries, the Jains recognized the potential of music and began to play musical instruments and sing during the ritual, especially during festivals with a large number of participants, with music contributing to their unity.

In the later Jain art, figures of musicians and dancers in the sculptural decoration of temples became much more common alongside with the images of *mithunas* (loving couples) and various deities, as well as fantastic animals. The tendency of separating of the two poles of sculptural images, simple and laconic, purely symbolic images of Jina, and detailed, filigree decorative figures became more and more pronounced. Framing the figure, the images intensify the effect of calm concentration of the central figure. Contrasting with it, they contribute to a better entry of the believer, his transition from the vain world of everyday life to the world of calm meditation. However, in the rich carved geometric and floral decoration, numerous figures are not accentuated and they are part of a kaleidoscopic composition that leaves no free space either on the pillars or on the ceiling arches, which made the temple look like a celestial abode.

Subsequently, a similar way of departure from the original ascetic doctrine, the attraction and development of various kinds of arts led to a split of Jainism in the middle of the 15th century. One part of monastic community despised the fact that instead of living a harsh simple life, monks watch theatrical plays, musical performances, dress in expensive clothes, ride palanquins, etc. A powerful iconoclasm movement was formed, and the Jain community was divided into *Mūrtipūjaka*, admirers of images and *Sthānakavāsī* — true monks.

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