

Kharavela and Jain Cave Architectures in Udayagiri

Abstract

Jainism is one of the ancient religions of world. Khandagiri-Udayagiri is one of the oldest and prominent siddhakshetras of Digambara Jain community. It is one of the earliest Jaina rock cut shelters which command a unique place in Eastern India in the history of rock cut architecture, art and Jaina religion. The Mahamegh Vahana dynasty of Kharavela is treated as the golden period of Jainism. His spiritual vision expanded to the limitless point and he patronised Jainism as state religion). The caves in Udayagiri illustrates the Jaina legends, mythology and iconography in the Rani and Ganesa Gumphas etc.

Keywords: Khandagiri-Udayagiri, Kharavela, Cave Architecture, Rock Cut Shelters, Hatigumpha, Ranigumpha, Sramanas, Arhats.

Introduction

Jainism is one of the ancient religions of world. The history of Jainism in Odisha traces back to the days of Parsvanatha, the 23rd Tirthankara. Khandagiri-Udayagiri is one of the oldest and prominent siddhakshetras of Digambara Jain community. King Kharavela has constructed these caves about 2000 years ago for the resting of the Jaina monks. The twin hills afford the peace of mind and the sanctity for religious pursuit. There are as many as 34 nos. of caves or cells for sramanas or Jaina monks. Some caverns are as early as Mahavira's time and consecrated by the visit of Arhats.

Khandagiri and Udayagiri, the twin hills, are situated at a distance of 8kms to the west of Bhubaneswar Railway station. The hills are connected with the city by NH-5. The whole range was considered as one general name Khandagiri but the north eastern hill bears a local name, Udayagiri (hill of the sunrise). It is one of the earliest Jaina rock cut shelters which command a unique place in Eastern India in the history of rock cut architecture, art and Jaina religion.

The Mahamegh Vahana dynasty of Kharavela is treated as the golden period of Jainism. The Hathi Gumpha inscription first discovered by Sterlin and edited by number of scholars give a systematic account of the career and achievement of Kharavela till his 13th regnal year. The paleography, language and art significantly indicate that he belonged to 1st century B.C. It is clear from the inscription that Jainism was the religion he adhered to. The Hathi Gumpha inscription starts with salutes to Arhats and Sidhas. There are the venerable pancaparamesthin of Jaina beliefs i.e, Arhat paramesthin, sidha paramesthin, and sadhu paramesthin.

As a householder Kharavela observed the principles in a liberal way. For him the observance of vows of Ahimsa, Digvrata and Desavrata were not so rigorous. He contributed significantly for the furtherance of classical forms of art, music and dance. In the 13th regnal year, the inscription points out that Kharavela became the Bhikharaj and Dharmaraj. His spiritual vision expanded to the limitless point and he patronised Jainism as state religion. In his later life he observed the five vows of Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Aparignaha as Mahabratas but not the anubratas like a householder. He had patronized Jaina saints, and Sramanas. He had built caves for the resting of the monks and Arhats. This testifies to his love and reverence for them. The earlier caves of Khandagiri and Hathi Gumpha inscription throw light on different aspects of Jainism which prevailed in Kalinga during that period.

Historically the cave architecture goes back to Mauryan period. The cave architecture was developed by the use of stones for construction purposes. The caverns in the hillocks and rockcutshelters were primarily meant for the nomades for short period. The most significant and ancient architectures are the Hathi Gumpha cavern with the inscription of the Kalinga King Kharavela of the Chedi dynasty, the Rani Gumpha, Svargapuri and Manchapuri caves, Ganesa-Gumpha



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The caves in Udayagiri illustrate the Jaina legends, mythology and iconography in the Rani and Ganesa Gumphas. The portraits of Kalinga royal figures are shown in the Rani Gumpha and Manchapuri caves.

The Caves in Udayagiri

1. Rani Gumpha : The lower storey and The upper storey
2. Bajaghara Gumpha
3. Chhota Hathi Gumpha
4. Alakapuri Gumpha
5. Jayavijaya Gumpha
6. Panasa Gumpha
7. Thankurani Gumpha
8. Patalapuri Gumpha
9. Manchapuri Gumpha – The lower storey
10. Svargapuri Gumpha – The Upper storey
11. Ganesa Gumpha
12. Jamvesvara Gumpha
13. Sarpa Gumpha
14. Bagha Gumpha
15. Hathi Gumpha
16. Sarapa Gumpha
17. Haridasa Gumpha
18. Jagannath Gumpha
19. Rasui Gumpha

All these caves do not bear any authentic names. Some of these have been named after their general shapes and some after specific sculptures etc. But here the number and the traditional names are taken into account according to the A.S.I.

Cave No.-1 Rani Gumpha

The Rani Gumpha is said to have been erected during the reign of Kharavela for his queen. It was a two storied monastery. The cave deserves a unique place among the contemporary rock cut caves sculpture friezes commodious wings, large number of cells and the spacious quadrangle in front.

Cave No.-2 Bajaghara Gumpha

The cave is of having two independent cells. It is having that footed verandah in front. The ceiling of left cell is carved and floor raised at the back.

Cave No.-3 Chhota Hathi Gumpha

The elephants carrying flowers for worships is the auspicious mark of the prospects. It is represented by a law roofed cell and the carvings of a series of 6 elephants on its facades. The floor is raised at the back and the ceiling is flat.

Cave No.-4 Alakapuri Gumpha

It consists of two cells in two storey. The pilaster of the verandah contains a damaged bracket a pair of winged horses most part of the pillars and the floor of verandah have been renovated. The left pilaster depicts a woman carried by a man in his left arm pressing the trunk of the elephant in the right.

Cave No.-5 Jaya Vijaya Gumpha

It is a two cell cave near Alakapuri Gumpha. The lower part of the cave is having plain cell with a spacious entrance. The upper story contains two cells having flat roofs, raised floors and separates door openings. The verandah roof prevents rain water entering inside the cells.

Cave No.-6 Panasa Gumpha

Immediately after a small scoping beyond Jaya-Vijaya Gumpha is Parasa Gumpha. It is now

open in the front. The original floor has become down to a deeper depth because of quarrying.

Cave No.-7 Thakurani Gumpha

It consists of two cells one above the other. The lower cell is spacious. The inner bracket has a pair of winged animals. Figure of markaras and winged animals are found on the pillar and pilasters tops. The upper is a small one. Its floor has pillars like inclination.

Cave No.-8 Patalapuri Gumpha

It consists of four dwelling cells. The ceiling is arch shaped and the floor raised at the back. The facade is devoid of workmanship. In the walls of the back cells there are holes at regular intervals near the ceiling.

Cave No.-9 Manchapuri Gumpha

Manchapuri Gumpha is a rock shelter with three cells. The upper part of this storeyed cave is known as Svargapuri Gumpha and the lower part including the cell at its side is known as Manchapuri Gumpha. The floor of the cell is gradually raised to the end to give pillow like inclination for when they relax. The two were put up by Kudepasi and Vadukha and the 3rd probably by Kharavela. It is noteworthy that there is a craving of worshipping the Jina by a royal group, an elephant, the settlers and celestials. It is perhaps the seen of reinstallation of the Kalinga Jina image by Kharavel after its reconquest from the Magadhan by. There are two inscriptions in the manchapuri cave read as "Arias Maharajas Kalingadhaptina Maha-Vaha-Kudepasiarino leanam and limro Vadukhasa lenam".

Cave No.-10 Svargapuri Gumpha

The upper part of the Manchapuri cave is called as Svargapuri Gumpha. It consist of a long low roofed back cell with 3 doors and a side cell with one entrance. The side of pilaster are carved with winged animals and the arches are engraved with floral devices and creepers commencing from the mounts of makaras. The floors of the cell here and elsewhere are raised at the inner ends serve as natural pillows for monks. The record of the queen is inscribed between the second and third cells.

Cave No.-11 Ganesha Gumpha

It is located a little distance from Rani Gumpha. It consists of 2 dwellings cells with a benched verandah in front. The ceiling of the cell is low and flat but the floor is raised at the back.

Cave No.-12 Jamvesvara Gumpha

The cave is a low roofed cell. It has two plain door innings. There is a benched verandah. The pillary and two pilasters support the roof of the verandah. There is an inscription on the right side, which records the cave was of Mahamada Nakiya and Bariya.

Cave No.-13 Sarapa Gumpha

It consists of two small cells to the west of Hathi Gumpha facing east is called Sarpa Gumpha. It has a very narrow verandah. The floor is raised at the back.

Cave No.-14 Bagha Gumpha

It is located to the west of Hathi Gumpha. It consists of a cell and the verandah in front. The upper jaw, armed with formidable teeth, eyes and nose resembles like tiger, forms the roof of the front verandah. There is a two lined inscription on the outer

wall in its right depicts the fact that the cave is associated with the town judge Bhuti.

Cave No.-15 Hathi Gumpha

Among these caves the Hathi Gumpha caverns is one of the most significant cave contained the famous inscription of Kharavela. It is located at the end of the literates path leading to udayagiri. It narrates the 13 regnal year of Kharavela one after the other.

Cave No.-16 Dhanaghar Gumpha

The right of Hathi Gumpha toward Ganesh Gumpha is Dhanaghar Gumpha contained a low roof, the door ways and a benched verandah and two pilasters and pillars support it. The figures of elephants, lion, honey suckles and lotuses relieve the brackets.

Cave No.-17 Haridasa Gumpha

It is a spacious chamber with two pilasters and door ways. It is devoid of any sculptural presentation.

Cave No.-18 Jagannatha Gumpha

It has single chamber. It is the longest one in Udayagiri caves. It is having four entrances and a benched verandah supported by three pillars. Three niches are there for keeping lamps.

Cave No.-19 Rasui Gumpha.

It is a small dwelling cell with a narrow verandah without pillar. It is devoid of architectural features.

Jain art and architecture brought a new dimension to the art tradition of India. The Jain sculptures of Odisha particularly caverns in Udayagiri are narrative. The narrative scenes in the caves of Rani Gumpha, Ganesh Gumpha, Manchapuri

Gumpha, Jaya-Vijaya Gumpha etc. of Udayagiri hill clearly represent the cultural, religious, legendary accounts during the reign of Kharavela. The depiction of flying Gandharvas, guards, bracket figures crowing animals along with decorative motifs in the caves prove the rich art tradition of Odisha as well as the cave architecture rarely found in India. Kharavela being a Jain was the harbinger of non-violence and peace, are reflected in the cave architecture of both Khandagiri and Udayagiri in a unique manner which bring the people of the world together.

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