

## A BUDDHIST STATUE AT PARANAGAR

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The district of Alwar in Rajasthan holds a prominent place from the point of view of artistic Splendor. The site of Paranagar is also famous by the name of Rajoragarh. It is situated 36 km west of Rajgarh and to the south of the famous wildlife sanctuary of Sariska. Earlier a way to approach Paranagar was through Sariska but that has been closed now. It would be worthwhile here to clarify that Rajoragarh is actually a compound name. As a matter of fact these are two villages - Rajor and some way south of it Garh, both closely linked together historically

The place developed in the 8th - 15th centuries during the time of the Bargujara rulers who were the vassals of the Imperial Pratiharas of Kannauj. Till today the site is full of the remains of Hindu, Jain and other Gods and Goddesses. It was Cunningham who first of all wrote about this place in his reports. Later, many other scholars worked on the site throwing light on many of its facets.

Paranagar is a 10th century site of more than a dozen temples mostly in ruins. Only the temple of Nilakantha Mahadeva, facing West, has its Sikhar intact. The temple has been protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) as a National monument. The temple is under worship till date and the site itself has come to be known as Nilakantha in the popular language. Besides this, some more temples were dedicated to Siva as is proved by the extant lingas therein. A Jain temple situated about 100 yards west of it is in a good state of preservation. A colossal statue of pink sandstone of Jain Tirthankar Santinatha still stands there in the dilapidated sanctum. The villagers nearby call the image as Naugaza.

The purpose of this article is to document a Buddhist image found at the site. It is a Buddhist figure with two attendants. It was found by Sri R.C. Yadav of ASI and published in a local daily (Dainik Bhaskar) sometime back. It was Shri Yadav who firstly kindly supplied me a copy of it. The image wears a transparent cloth on the body that drapes it till the knees. It is

flanked by two attendant on both the sides. The curls of hair on the head are found typically in Buddha images. Other signs like long ears reaching the shoulders and closed eyes can also be seen. Hanging on both the sides is a loose drapery passing over the arms which are now broken below the elbow. No other major sign or inscription is detectable in the figure.

This figure is a very important addition to the images found at Nilakantha till date. Many more such examples might be present in the images in the hutments built by ASI at the site itself. More work can be done and Buddhist influence at the site can be aptly ascertained if the ASI allows sculptures in the hutments to be photographed.

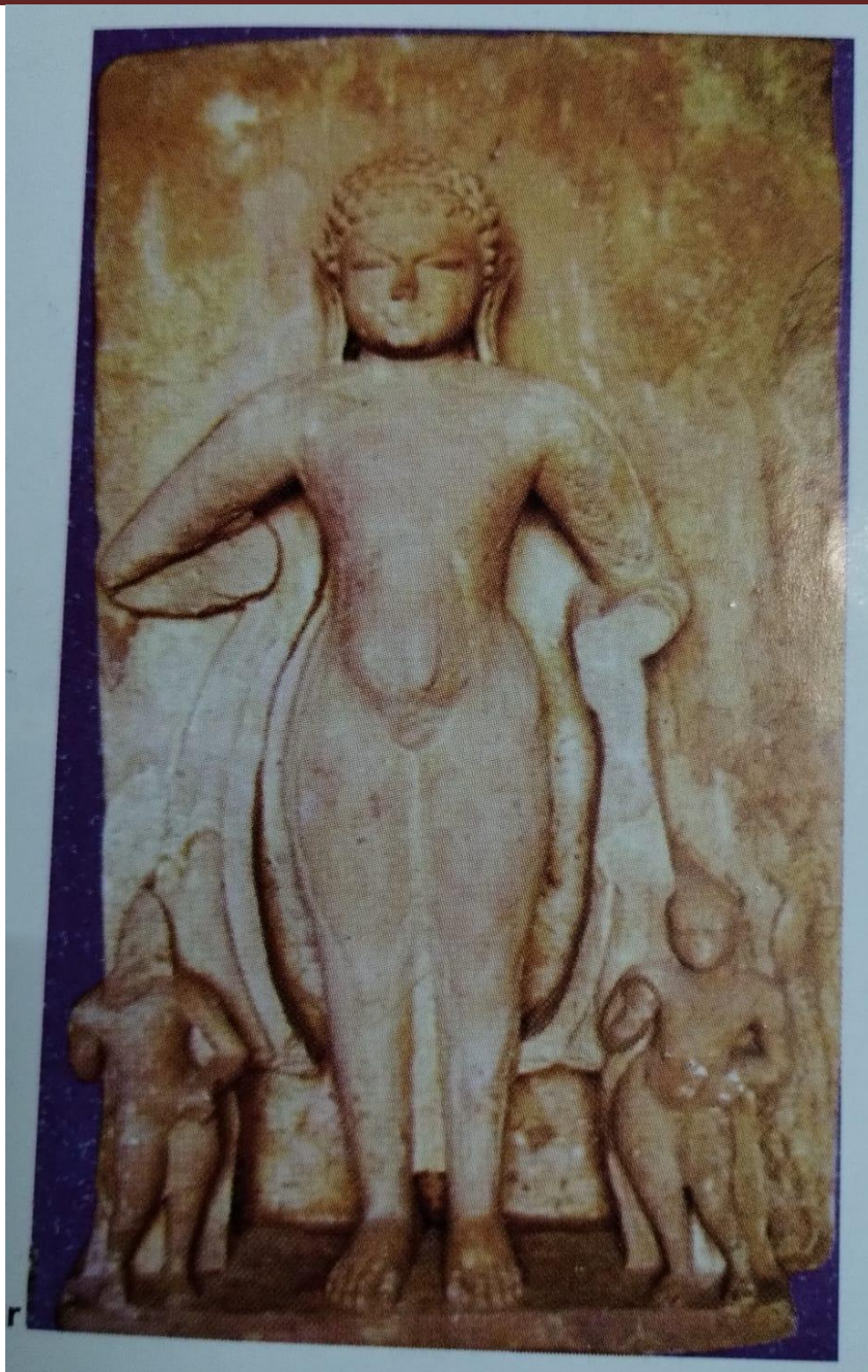
It is notable that Brahmanic, Jain and Buddhist art grew and developed side by side in the same compound. This is an evidence of the spirit of cultural understanding and co-operation prevalent during the period. Though it is not uncommon to find Vaishnava, Saiva and Jain influence developing in the same compound, like at the famous temple site of Khajuraho, to find these three in conjunction with Buddha images is certainly interesting.

Nearest Buddhist site to Paranagar is Bairat or Viratnagar in Jaipur district. The excavations there revealed the ruins of a Buddhist maonastery of Mauryan times in a very good state of preservation. Jhalawar, in the Hadoti region in south east Rajasthan, is another famous Buddhist site. The entire region was deeply influenced by Buddhism. There are as many as three sets of cave shrines here, a colossal figure of Buddha, a cave cut into a stupa and many lifelike Buddhist statues. Another centre in the vicinity was at Chittoragarh, where approximately ten portable 9<sup>th</sup> century votive stupas were found.

Thus Buddhism was already present there in the locality around our site of Nilakantha and it is not unnatural that Buuddhist impact penetrated Alwar at Rajoragarh.

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