Siddhaikavira Images from Ratnagiri, Odisha

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Abstract: Manjusri is conceived as the God of wisdom in Buddhism. The manifestations of Manjusri in India are purely Indian or are influenced by the Indian tradition. The characteristic and identifying features of Manjusri include the typical sikhandaka-kakapaksha coiffure and the necklace of pendants and amulets. Siddhaikavira, is one of the forms of this deity. The images of Manjusri reported from Ratnagiri range from life size sculptures to niche images of votive stupas and even metal images. Stylistic differences are noticed in the images of different phases from the site which is discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Manjusri, Siddhaikavira, Vajrayana, Bodhisattva, Dhyani Buddha, Yamantaka, Ratnagiri

Introduction
Manjusri is one of the most important deities in the Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist pantheon and is conceived as the God of wisdom. In Vajrayana, he is the meditational deity who embodies enlightened wisdom. The name Manjusri signifies tender glory (Banerjee 1994: 24) and is also known by his full Sanskrit name as Manjusri-kumara-bhuta. His name occurs repeatedly in the Buddhist sutras of the 2nd century AD. Here, he is shown in the role of an interlocutor, asking the Buddha to expound the various aspects of dharma. He is referred in the Mahayana sutras like the Prajnaparamita-Sutras and also in tantric texts like Arya Manjusri Mulakalpa (Sastrī1920), Manjusrinamasangiti, Guhyasamaja Tantra, Amitayus Sutra, Mahavairocanabhisambodhi etc. Manjusri is a dharma Bodhisattva which means that he can attain Buddhahood at any time but has postponed it as his vows are not yet fulfilled. When he attains Buddhahood, his name will be Universal Sight. According to the Lotus-sutra, his pure land is known as Vimala which, according to the Avatamsaka sutra is located in the east. It is said that the benefits gained by keeping Manjusri’s name in mind are superior to the benefits gained by keeping in mind the names of billions of Buddhas. In one of the sadhanas in Sadhanamala, Manjusri is described as equal to all Tathagathas who are none but the five Dhyani Buddhas (Bhattcharyyya B 2010). The Mahayanists believe that the worship of Manjusri can confer upon the devotee wisdom, retentive memory and intelligence and also enables them to master many sacred scriptures. The mantra of Manjusri ‘Om A Ra Pa Ca Na Dhih’ is believed to enhance wisdom and improve one’s skills in debating, memory, writing, explaining etc. (Bhattacharyyya B 1958: 120).
It is not clearly known when Manjusri entered the Buddhist pantheon, but by 3rd century AD he was a well-known Bodhisattva in most of the Asian Countries. Images of Manjusri are rarely found in Gandhara and Mathura school of art but, his worship was in vogue during the Gupta period. Faxian records that Manjusri was worshipped in Mathura during the time of his visit (Banerjee 1994: 26). The manifestations of Manjusri in India are purely Indian or are influenced by the Indian tradition. In some of the sadhanas, he is considered as an offspring of Amitabha in red colour and in some as that of Akshobhya with the blue colour (Banerjee 1994: 26). In the Vajradhatu-mandala, he is referred to as the eldest son of Vairocana. He is also considered as the
collective emanation of the five Dhyani-Buddhas. There are forty-one Sadhanas in Sadhanamala devoted to Manjusri. Nipannayogavali also describes the forms of Manjusri (Banerjee 1994: 26). The characteristic and identifying features of this deity include the typical sikhandaka-kakapaksha coiffure and the necklace of pendants and amulets.

Figure 2: Bodhisattva Image Displayed in Lalitagiri Sculpture Shed
Different forms of Manjusri are reported at Ratnagiri. These include Siddhaikavira, Arapcana, Maharajalilasana, Manjuvara, Manjughosha etc. The images range from life size sculptures to niche images of votive stupas and even metal images. Stylistic differences are noticed in the images of different phases from the site. The characteristic *shikhandaka-kakapaksha* coiffure as well as the *vyaghranakha* pendant is absent in one of the figures of the early phase. In another 8th century image, the coiffure is present, but the necklace is similar to other sculptures of that period. In the later examples, the typical coiffure and necklace are noticed. Some of them also have ornate *mukutas*, but the Dhyani-Buddha is absent on the *mukuta*. Instead, two or more Dhyani-Buddhas are shown on the back-slab.
Siddhaikavira

In the Sadhanamala, four sadhanas describe this form of Manjusri as one-faced, two-handed and decked in celestial ornaments. In one of the sadhanas, he is seated in vajra-paryankasana carrying an utpala in his left hand and displays varada-mudra with his right hand. Some other sadhanas attribute a lotus to this deity but do not mention the asana of the deity (Bhattacharyya B 1958: 114). Bhattacharyya opines that a confusion is likely to arise between the forms of Lokanatha and Siddhaikavira if they are both represented without companions and without the figure of the parental Dhyani Buddha (Akshobhya for Manjusri and Amitabha for Lokanatha) on their crown, for both these deities have the same symbol, the lotus and the same mudra, the varada pose (Bhattacharyya B 1958: 114).
Some Siddhaikavira images have been reported from Ratnagiri (Sindhu M J 2014: 165). In these images, the deity is either standing or seated and display varada-mudra with their left hand while the right holds the stalk of an utpala. The images represent the deity decked in the characteristic vyaghranakha pendant and shikhandakakakapaksha coiffure.
An exception to this is an image retrieved during the scientific clearance work in the Mahakala temple area. The image (RTG-04/09) under discussion shows the deity standing in tribhanga pose over visva-padma (Figure 1). Both the hands of the deity are broken. Deity (87x42x20cm) is dressed in a diaphanous antariya similar to a skirt and an uttarasanga in upaviti style. He is decked in mukta-hara, upavita with a central clasp, katisutra and an ear stud and ratna-kundala in the left and right ears respectively. The hair, wavy in style is pulled up on the top of the head and tied as a bun, with a few of the locks falling on the shoulders. There is an effigy of Akshobhya on his crown. To the right side is depicted a full-blown lotus at the waist level and on the left, the lotus is at the shoulder level and supports a pustaka over it. There is a dwarf attendant standing to the left side of the deity. He holds the stalk of the pustaka bearing lotus by both his
hands while gazing towards the opposite side. He has big ear lobes but ear rings are absent. There is a beautifully carved pearl bracelet on his right wrist. The bottom right side of the sculpture is broken off and missing while the top portion is cut out in the form of a halo, similar to some 8th century images reported from Udayagiri. The features like jatamukuta as well as the ornamentation of the deity like the long yajnopavita with a central ornamental clasp and pearl strings as valayas, keyuras and grivas is similar to a figure displayed in the Lalitagiri sculpture shed (Figure 2) which appears to be slightly earlier to this image (stylistically). The antariya resembling a skirt is also similar in both the images with the Ratnagiri specimen displaying an additional uttariya worn in upaviti style. This type of antariya is also noticed in the niche images of Avalokitesvara and Vajrapani of Monastery 1 as well as headless image of Tara which have been dated to the 8th century AD. But their ornaments and hair style are more elaborate than the specimen under discussion which suggests an earlier date to it.

![Figure 7: Different Forms of Manjusri Reported from Ratnagiri](image)

In both these Bodhisattva images (Figures 1 and 2), the characteristic coiffure, utpala and necklace of Manjusri are absent. The Lalitagiri specimen has a padma as his attribute and has two attending figures- a male krodha standing and reverently looking at the Bodhisattva and a seated female who holds an utpala in her left hand. The Dhyani-Buddha on the crown has flaked off and hence it is not sure whether the deity represented Padmapani or Manjusri. The display of padma as his attribute and the presence of the female deity Tara supports the identification of this figure as that of Padmapani. The attendant is generally Hayagriva. But, in the example from Ratnagiri, the bottom right side of the sculpture is broken off and missing. Two padmas are shown on either side of the figure, with the left one bearing a pustaka while an attendant, possibly Yamantaka is shown standing on guard near the left foot of the figure. There is also an effigy of Akshobhya on his jata-mukuta. All these features help in the identification of this image as Siddhaikavira form of Manjusri.

Identification of this image as Manjusri has been done on the basis of the attribute (book on lotus), the effigy of Akshobhya on the crown and the accompanying figure of
Yamantaka as his attendant. This is so far, the only image of Manjusri from this site which does not display the characteristic vyaghranakha necklace, shikhandaka-kakapaksha coiffure and upala flower. The pearl-strings as ornaments in the Odishan sculptures are the characteristic trait of the 6th–7th centuries AD (Mohapatra 1998: 72). The vyaghranakha necklace and shikhandaka-kakapaksha coiffure are noticed from 8th century AD onwards. Based on these observations, this image may be stylistically dated to the late 7th or early 8th century AD which would make this specimen one of the earliest images from Ratnagiri. Some of the other interesting finds representing this form of Manjusri are described as follows.

A defaced khondalite image of Manjusri (238x90cm) is placed in the sanctum of Temple 5 and faces north. This two-armed image of Manjusri, with its head and fore arm broken and missing, stands with a slight flexion on the visva-padma accompanied by two female figures, one on either side (Figure 3). The deity is dressed in a diaphanous antariya and is decked in various ornaments like nupuras, katisutra, mukta-valayas, keyuras with an ornate central piece, mukta-hara including the characteristic neck string with a central amulet two tiger nails and six medallions. The right palm of Manjusri displays the varada-mudra, and the left appears to have held the stalk of an upala which rises above the left shoulder. There is another full bloomed lotus near the right shoulder of the deity above which is placed some object (damaged). Near the stem of this lotus is inscribed the Buddhist creed in nine lines in the characters of the 9th century AD. Above the missing head of the image is a visva-padma on which is seated the Dhyani-Buddha Amitabha with an oval halo behind his head. On its two sides are flying vidyadhara holding garlands.

The two female figures on either side of the main deity are draped in a sari and a flowing uttariya and are decked in nupuras, valayas, keyuras, vaikakshaka-haras, kundalas and a short mukuta. Their hair is tied in the form of a bun and both carry chamara in their right hands. The figure on the right holds a flower in her left hand whereas the left hand of the figure on the left is broken and missing. Its head is also missing but was retrieved among the debris during the course of excavation (Mitra 1981: 313). These two goddesses might represent the attendant deities of Manjusri- Kesini, to the right and Upakesini to the left as described in the sadhanas (Bhattacharya 1958: 114) and, this image represents Siddhakavira form of Manjusri. On the pedestal is represented a kneeling devotee and also a pair of three hooded nagas in human form holding a ghata in their hands.

In another standing figure (200.7x99 cm), the deity is dressed in a diaphanous antariya held at the waist by a chain-shaped girdle with a flower shaped clasp, stands in a slight flexion on a visva-padma (Figure 4). He is elegantly adorned with valayas, keyuras, mukta-hara, a vyaghranakha-hara with tiger nails and amulets, a muktopavita of three strings, large kundalas, pada-valayas and a high ornate mukuta. The mukuta covers most of the coiffure and a few locks of hair fall over the shoulders. Two female figures (probably Kesini and Upakesini) are depicted as standing on either side near the feet of the deity.
Both of them hold a chamara in their right hands and an utpala in their left hands. Their dress consists of a sari and a fluttering uttariya and they are adorned with a chhannaavira type of necklace and nuparas as ornaments. The top corners of the back slab have images of Dhyani-Buddha- Akshobhya to the right and Amitabha to the left. Both of them are seated on a visva-padmas. The image can be stylistically dated to the 9th century AD.

In a seated image (106.7x64.8 cm) of Manjusri obtained as a surface find from the southwest of Mahakala temple, the deity is shown seated in lalitasana over visva-padma displaying varada-mudra with his right hand (Figure 5). The left hand placed on the seat, holds the stalk of an utpala over which is the book. The deity is dressed in an antariya held at the waist by a chain shaped katisutra with a flower-shaped clasp and an uttariya in upaviti style. He is decked in mukta-valayas, keyuras, hara, kundala, upavita of three pearl strings with a clasp, thick pada-valayas and a short mukuta with an ornate projection. The peculiar necklace of Manjusri with tiger nails and amulets is also present. The hair is tied in the form of sikhanda-kakapaksha coiffure with some locks falling on the shoulders. The pedestal has the image of a Naga with a ghata in his hands and another one with folded hands. The face of the image is mutilated and the upper part of the back slab is broken and missing. There are four other images of this form of Manjusri in standing as well as seated postures.

In a bronze image (RTR- 2, 72) of Manjusri (5.7cm) retrieved 3.81m below the northern wall of Cell 17 is shown standing on a padma. The damaged right palm was possibly in varada-mudra and the left hand holds the stalk of an utpala. The two-armed Bodhisattva is dressed in an antariya and is bedecked in valayas, keyuras, haras, kundalas and a conical mukuta with three triangular pieces. The figure is in round but is much defaced and may be stylistically dated to the 9th century AD.

Apart from these, there are also twenty-eight votive stupas representing Manjusri seated in lalitasana over a visva-padma displaying varada-mudra with his right hand, while the left placed on the seat holds the stalk of an utpala (Figure 6). They are similar in style with only some changes in the decoration on the stupas. Apart from these Siddhaikavira images, there are many sculptures, bronze images and a large number of votive stupas which represent five different forms of Manjusri reported from Ratnagiri (Figure 7). These images belong to both the phases of sculptural activity at the site. The variety and number of images of Manjusri at Ratnagiri testify the importance given to Ratnagiri as an important educational institution of that period.

References


