

# ***A Survey of Jaina Art***

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The core concept of the development of art in Ancient India was essentially religious, with social and other aspects as subordinate components. The phrase 'Unity in Diversity' is applicable not only to Indian citizens, but to Indian art as well since time immemorial. Whether Brahmanical, Buddhist, Jaina, Tribal or Folk art of ancient India, it is clearly visible that these being interwoven, adopted each other's ideas, concepts, styles and techniques from time to time during the development. This can be experienced in their renderings in clay, stone, wood, ivory, metal, palm-leaf, cloth, paper, etc. The Ancient Indian Art, which fructified in the form of architecture, sculptures and paintings is so much intermingled that it becomes a necessity to understand one before inferring about the other. That is why, while reconstructing the history of ancient Indian art, the study of Jaina Art becomes indispensable.

Broadly speaking, there were two major cultural streams in Indian tradition - one led by the Vedic sages and the other by *śramaṇas* (ascetics). From the Vedic tradition sprouted several cults and sects around Viṣṇu, Śiva, Śakti and several other deities and their multiple forms; while Jainism and Buddhism followed the *śramanic* tradition. Although Jainism is older, but as compared to Buddhism, very little attention has been given to the study of Jaina art. Art is a very basic expression of human emotions in visual form. It is a known fact that the art in ancient India was intimately associated with religion, which did not pertain only to the deities, but it also covered the entire activities of the society. Religion has been the way of life in India since its inception and it continues till date. This is the reason that around the core concept of religion, manifestation of the contemporary society indulged in all types of daily activities was given due importance in Indian visual art forms. Alongwith the main figure of the deity or some religious/mythological episode, common people were also depicted with all their accessories and exercise. Therefore, Indian art has to be viewed as a socio-religious product, wherein, a detailed glimpse of the multi-faceted aspects of culture is provided. Jaina Art follows the same trend.

## **Important Sites**

The important centres, which are known for the caves, temples, sculptures and paintings of the Śvetāmbara and Digambara sects of Jainism are - Osian, Dilwara, Jaipur, Chittorgarh, Jodhpur, Ghanerao, Jalor, Nagda, Nagpur, Bikaner, Ranakpur, Delhi, Palam,

Deogarh, Mathura, Varanasi, Jaunpur, Chandpur, Dudhi, Unnao, Orai, Chanderi, Rajgir, Lohanipur, Sonabhandara, Chausa, Udaigiri, Khandagiri, Jabalpur, Satna, Khajuraho, Gyaspur, Gwalior, Ujjain, Vidisha, Mandsaur, Mandu, Malwa, Kumbharia, Akota, Taranga, Girnar, Ajanta, Ellora, Pattankudi, Aihole, Venur, Shravanbelagola, Shimoga, Gulbarga, Karkala, Badami, Halebid, Hummacha, Prabhaspatan, Sadari, Lakundai, Mudabidari, Nadole, Nadlai, Dhanagulapadum, Pendakonda, Vijayanagara, Madurai, Chandragiri, Kalagumalai, Tiruparuttikunaram, etc.

## Important Texts

Some of the important Jaina texts, which deal partially and elaborately with the Śvetāmbara and Digambara art and architecture are - **Paumacariyam** of Vimāla Sūri, **Ācāra-Dinakara** of Vardhamāna Sūri, **Ādipurāṇa** of Jinasena, **Mahāpurāṇa** of Puṣpadanta, **Padmapurāṇa** of Raviṣeṇa, **Uttarapurāṇa** of Guṇabhadra, **Tr̥ṣaṣṭhīśālākāpuruṣacaritra** of Hemacandra, **Jinacaritra** of Amaraçandra Sūri, **Pratiṣṭhāpāṭha** of Jayasena, **Mantrādhirāja-Kalpa** of Sāgaracandra Sūri, **Pratiṣṭhāsārasangraha** of Vasunandi, **Rāyapaseṇiya**, **Bhairava-Padmāvati-Kalpa**, **Ambikātāṭaṅka**, **Vividhatīrtha-Kalpa**, **Dīparaṇava**, **Tilloyapaṇṇati**, **Harivaṁsa-Purāṇa**, **Vasudevahiṇḍi**, **Kalpasūtra**, **Caupannamahāpuruṣacariyam**, **Mānasāra**, **Kahāvali**, **Kalpapradīpa**, **Pravacana-Sārodhāra**, **Bṛhat-Saṁhitā**, **Nirvāṇakalikā**, **Rūpamaṇḍana**, **Pārśvanāthacarita**, **Devatā-Mūrti-Prakaraṇa**, **Aupapātika**, etc.

## Pantheon

In the first stage of the evolution of Jaina pantheon, the concept of twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras or Jinas evolved between the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. and 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Although the first Tīrthaṅkara is Ādinātha or Ṛṣabhanātha and the last is Vardhamāna or Mahāvīra, but the historicity of only the last two, i.e. Pārśvanātha and Mahāvīra is accepted. In the second stage, the concept of sixty-three *Śālākāpuruṣas* (Great-men) developed, the first complete list of which is encountered in the Jainā text **Paumacariyam** of Vimāla Sūri datable to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. They were divided into five groups, which are - twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras, twelve Cakravartīs, nine Baladevas, nine Vāsudevas and nine Prativāsudevas. Curiously enough, three of the twelve Cakravartīs are from the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras, viz. Śāntinātha, Aranātha and Kunthunātha; and in that case, the total number should be sixty, but the Jaina Literature always refer to 'sixty-three *Śālākāpuruṣas*'. With this concept started the assimilative efforts of Jaina *ācāryas*, and as such, the Hindu deities Rāma and Balarāma were included in the group of Baladevas; and Lakṣmaṇa and Kṛṣṇa in the Vāsudevas. Similarly, the characters like Aśvagrīva, Tāraka, Niśumbha, Bali, Prahlāda, Rāvaṇa, Jarāsandha, etc. found place in the Prativāsudevas. In the third

and interesting stage, in between 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the inclusion of Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Gaṇeśa, Śiva, Brahmā, Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, Harinaigameśī, Yakṣas, Yakṣīs, Kṣetrapālas, Navagrahas, Aṣṭadīkṣpālas, Bāhubalī, Vidyādevīs or Mahāvīdyās (Tantric goddesses), etc. expanded the Jaina pantheon considerably.

## Symbols & Motifs

Symbols and Motifs, without doubt, are the earliest form of representations in art in any civilization of the world and they found expression immediately with the advent of ideogram. Symbols are the vehicles of thought as several things can be conveyed at a time utilizing minimum space and putting minimum effort. These alongwith motifs are deeply rooted in Indian Culture and used extensively for their auspicious significance and decorative properties. Their depiction in Indian art can be traced right from the Indus Valley Civilization. The punch-marked coins, which are datable from the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. reveal about five hundred different types of symbols.

In the Jaina Art also, symbols preceded the images, as corroborated by the availability of a good number of *Āyāgapāṭas* (stone tablets of homage) containing various types of auspicious symbols and motifs. Interestingly, the earliest representation of the Tīrthaṅkaras in human form (in meditating posture) appeared on the *āyāgapāṭas* in miniature form amongst other symbols and motifs; and these are earlier than the emergence of Buddha images. While symbols were carved for the purpose of worship, motifs aimed at arousing the taste towards beauty and aesthetics. In the Jaina art, the symbols and motifs were rendered on the architraves, walls and door-lintels of temples, on the sculptures, in miniature paintings of *paṭalīs* and manuscripts, in paintings on canvas of different *paṭas* and in scroll-paintings of *vijñaptipatras*.

In between 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. and 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., the concept of *aṣṭamaṅgala-cihnas* (eight auspicious symbols) was evolved, nurtured and firmly planted in Jainism as revealed by the *āyāgapāṭas*. *Aṣṭamaṅgala-cihnas* carved on these tablets of homage were standardized (variation also noticed) and each held a specific meaning. These are the following :

- (i) *Matsya-yugma/Mīnamithuna* (a pair of fish) signifying Cupid's surrender with his banners (marked with fish or crocodile) at the feet of Tīrthaṅkara after being defeated.
- (ii) *Devagrha* means dwelling place of the deities.
- (iii) *Śrīvatsa* stands for the highest knowledge emitting straight from the heart of the Tīrthaṅkara. The depiction of *śrīvatsa* on the chest of Tīrthaṅkara is an important feature of Jaina art, specially of Mathurā.

- (iv) *Ratnapātra* means a pot full of jewels.
- (v) *Triratna* (three jewels), in the Jaina context, signify *samyak-jñāna* (right knowledge), *samyak-dr̥ṣṭi* (right faith) and *samyaka-saṅkalpa* (right conduct).
- (vi) *Puṣpasrak* means a garland of beautiful flowers.
- (vii) *Vaijayantī/Indrayaṣṭi* is the flag or banner of victory.
- (viii) *Pūrṇaghāṭa* (Full Vase) signifies the Tīrthaṅkara himself.

Although not in the list above, *Svastika* is a familiar symbol and it has been very common and deeply rooted in Indian culture since ancient times and is still used extensively on every auspicious and happy occasion in Indian homes, shops and offices. It stands for *svasti* or *śānti* (peace). In the Jaina art, *svastika* is depicted both clockwise and anticlockwise. Clockwise *svastika* signifies Sun or male energy, while anticlockwise *svastika* represents Moon or female energy. Some other important symbols depicted as *aṣṭamaṅgala-ciḥnas* in Jaina art with variation, are - *Nandyāvarta/Nandipada* signifying *nava-nidhis* (nine treasures); *Varddhamānaka* responsible for increase in wealth, fame and merit; *Bhadrāsana/Supratiṣṭha* is an auspicious seat sanctified by the Tīrthaṅkara; *Darpaṇa* (mirror) is for seeing one's true self; *Bhṛṅgāra* (perfume-flask); *Dhvaja* (flag/banner), *Vyajana* (fan); *Chatra* (umbrella); *Kanyā* (virgin girl); *Cāmara* (fly-whisk), etc. Beside the *aṣṭamaṅgala-ciḥnas*, there are several other auspicious symbols also in Jainism, like *Cakradhvaja*, *Hastidhvaja*, *Simhadhvaja*, *Sarvatobhadra*, *Mānastambha*, *Sthāpanā*, *Śālabhañjikā*, *Padma*, *Cakra*, *Phalpātra*, *Akṣata*, *Samavasaraṇa*, *Aṣṭapāda*, *Śatruñjaya*, *Sammata-Śikhara*, *Pañca-Meru*, *Śarāvasamputa*, *Siddha-cakra-yantra* and many more.

## Auspicious Dreams

In the Jaina tradition, the concept of auspicious dreams is held in a very high esteem and these were, by and large, rendered in art from time to time. The belief is that Triśalā, mother of Mahāvīra, saw auspicious objects in her dreams just prior to his birth, which are fourteen in number according to the Śvetāmbara tradition and sixteen in number according to the Digambara tradition. The objects are - (1) White Elephant (2) White Bull (3) White Lion (4) Goddess Lakṣmī (5) Beautiful Garland (6) Moon (7) Red Sun (8) Wonderful Banner (9) Full Vase (10) Celestial Lake (11) Ocean of Milk (12) Celestial Palace (13) Heap of Jewels and (14) Smokeless Fire. The Digambara tradition adds two more, viz. Pair of Fishes and Lofty Lion Throne.

## Cognizance (Lāñchana)

A unique and important feature of the figures of all the twenty-four Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras was that they were always shown only in two postures, i.e. either *kāyotsarga*

(standing in renunciation) or *dhyānastha* (sitting in meditation). Hence, all were alike and it was rather difficult to distinguish one Tīrthaṅkara from the other. Thus, a new concept crept in between 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and distinctive *lāñchanas* (cognizance) were provided to help identify each Tīrthaṅkara, like Bull for Ṛṣabhanātha, Elephant for Ajitanātha, Deer for Śāntinātha, Conch for Neminātha, Snake for Pārśvanātha, Lion for Mahāvīra and so on. However, the *jaṭā* (matted-hair) of Ṛṣabhanātha and *sarpa-phana* (snake-hood) over Pārśvanātha's head made them easily identifiable.

## Yakṣa/Yakṣī

Jainism, being of *śramaṇic* tradition, had special stress on *tyāga* (renunciation) and *sādhanā* (austerity); and these two basic concepts sustained throughout. This is the reason that Tīrthaṅkaras were always shown only in two postures. Although, *dhyānastha* posture was prevalent in Brahmanism and Buddhism also, but *kāyotsarga* posture was exclusive in Jainism. Tīrthaṅkaras represented the highest point of spiritualism; and by worshipping them, one was supposed to attain the path of spiritualism, renunciation and austerity. But the fact remained that religion is adopted, obeyed, followed, nourished and spread by the mundane society experiencing joys and sorrows of life and indulged in all types of worldly affairs, which naturally gives birth to various types of dreams, desires and ambitions. No religion can progress and survive without the followers; who, in return, except the assurance of safety, happiness and prosperity in life from their religion. This problem came before Buddhism also and they tackled it by introducing Buddha images in *varada* (boon-bestowing) or *abhaya* (protection) postures in order to attract the masses.

Since the Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras represented a concept that was totally different from the material world, the Jaina *ācāryas* realized the practical problem of alluring more and more people to accept Jainism. They sorted it out in a different manner; and without compromising with the basic tenets of *tyāga* and *sādhanā*, they introduced *Yakṣas* and *Yakṣīs*, also known as *Śāsana-devatās*, around 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to cater the need of common people. The Tīrthaṅkara figures remained in the *dhyānastha* or *kāyotsarga* postures as before and the *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs* occupied the place at their pedestals. This new concept turned out to be a grand success as it was welcomed and accepted wholeheartedly by the masses. While Tīrthaṅkaras paved the way for the highest point of spiritualism, their close associates *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs* were responsible to take care of the mundane interests and bestow boons and provide the desired material things to the worshippers.

One *yakṣa* and one *yakṣī* were provided for each Tīrthaṅkara and were rendered

in art accordingly, like Gomukha and Cakreśvarī with Rṣabhanātha, Vijaya and Jvālāmālinī with Candraprabha, Gomedha and Ambikā with Neminātha, Vāmana and Padmāvati with Pārśvanātha, Mātāṅga and Siddhāyikā with Mahāvīra, etc. Soon, the concept of *yakṣa/yakṣī* established firm footing within Jainism and became so popular that a stage came when they jumped out of the pedestals of Tīrthaṅkara images and their independent sculptures began to be carved and worshipped. Among the twenty-four pairs of *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs* special attention was attached only to *yakṣīs*. After acquiring the independent status, four out of the twenty-four *yakṣīs* gradually emerged with prominence and earned more popularity among the masses; they are - Cakreśvarī, Ambikā, Padmāvati and Jvālāmālinī. In comparison to *yakṣī* figures, hardly ten percent figures of the *yakṣas* are available, which prove the popularity of *yakṣīs*. We do not have a single example of the depiction of all the twenty-four *yakṣas* together at a place, but we do notice the renderings of twenty-four *yakṣīs* collectively at three different places, viz. Deogarh, Khandagiri and Satna. *Yakṣīs* were gradually depicted with four arms, six arms, eight arms, up to twenty arms, being suggestive of their gradual increase in power and strength and their capability of providing protection and fulfilling the desires of common people. Not only this, their position in the society became so strong that even independent texts were written dealing exclusively with a particular *yakṣī*.

### Assimilation

Besides establishing balance between the spiritual and material world for the worshipper through representing the figures of Tīrthaṅkaras and *yakṣas/yakṣīs*, respectively, the Jainas never hesitated in borrowing anything suitable for them or their religion to make it more acceptable to the masses. Therefore, they assimilated several Hindu deities also with due grace and honour. In the process, Neminātha was depicted with Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa during the Kuṣāṅga period. The figures of Rāma, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Kāma, Rati, Agni, etc. alongwith their *śaktis* were depicted in the Pārśvanātha Jaina Temple at Khajuraho, while those of Gaṇeśa at Mathurā and Kumbhariya. Notably, the earliest figure of goddess Sarasvatī in Indian art hails from the Jaina tradition with the same name; it is recovered from Mathurā and datable to 132 A.D. Similarly, the earliest representation of Kṛṣṇa playing Holī with *gopīs* is in the Vimala-Vasehi Jaina Temple of 1150 A.D. at Dilwara, where the rarest depiction of Nṛsimha in the Jaina tradition is also notable. Unlike Buddhism, there were only a few rulers who patronized Jainism; but since it could understand the basic needs of common people, it penetrated among them and firmly established itself. The assimilation of several other deities within Jaina pantheon is the result of such belief.

## Expansion

All the Tīrthaṅkaras were born in Kṣatriya families and almost all were associated with North India, particularly Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. This may be the reason that the early evidences of Jaina art are obtained from northern region of India, like Lohanipur, Mathurā, Chausa, etc. Although the initial stages of Jaina art, whether in form of cognizance, symbols, etc. or in form of postures of Tīrthaṅkaras, definitely sprouted in North India, but there is a tradition accepting Candragupta Maurya as convert to Jainism and his death in the South. However, the sure evidence of Jaina Art from South India is obtained from the Cālukyan period, i.e. 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.; and after that, Jainism spread equally and rapidly in southern region also. The Jaina Art became all in one and South India's contribution was as much as North India. The most magnificent and tallest statue of Gommaṭeśvara (Bāhubalī) measuring 57 feet was installed in A.D. 983 at Shravanbelagola (Karnataka).

Some of the distinctive features of the Jaina sculptures of North India and South India are -

- (i) The mark of *śrīvatsa* on the chest of Tīrthaṅkara was an essential component of North Indian images but not of the South Indian ones;
- (ii) Maximum Tīrthaṅkara images in North India are those of Ṛṣabhanātha, Pārśvanātha and Mahāvīra, whereas the South Indians carved more sculptures of Pārśvanātha and Mahāvīra only;
- (iii) A lot of variation is noticed in the *yakṣa/yakṣī* sculptures of the North in comparison to those of the South;
- (iv) Among the *yakṣīs*, Cakreśvarī, Ambikā and Padmāvatī were more popular in the northern region, while Ambikā, Padmāvatī and Jvālāmālīnī were the favourite *yakṣīs* of the South Indians.

## Division

The figures of Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras are usually sky-clad, and therefore, some scholars take them to represent the Digambara sect. But up to the early 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., no evidence is available to suggest the distinct division between Śvetāmbara and Digambara sects. The earliest Jaina texts are the Āgama texts datable to 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. and these refer to both *sacela* (draped) and *acela* (undraped) Jaina *sādhus* (ascetics). It is also a known fact that Pārśvanātha used to wear clothes and it was Mahāvīra who decided to renounce even clothes. Out of 132 inscriptions of the Kuṣāṇa period recovered from Mathura, 83 belong to Jainism and these refer to *kulagaccha* (a group of Jaina ascetics), which corresponds to what is found in **Kalpāsūtra**, a Śvetāmbara text datable between

1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. The depiction of some episodes, like 'Embryo-transfer of Mahāvīra', is found only in Śvetāmbara tradition; and therefore, it can safely be accepted that both the sects moved hand-in-hand, without a distinct division whatsoever at least up to the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It was only towards the close of the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. that in the Vallabhi-Vācanā (Congregation Conference in Gujarat), under the leadership of Devardhigaṇa Kṣamāśramaṇa, the Śvetāmbara sect was formally established. Soon after this event, distinct images of Tīrthaṅkaras wearing *dhotīs* came into existence.

## Comparison

Some facts that come up, when a comparative study of the representations in the art of Śvetāmbara and Digambara sects is made, are -

- (i) Temples and sculptures of the Śvetāmbara tradition dominate in Rajasthan and Gujarat, while the other regions yield more artifacts of the Digambara tradition;
- (ii) In the Śvetāmbara Jaina temples, twenty-four *devakulikās* (small shrines) were made and Tīrthaṅkara images were consecrated in each, but this practice was not prevalent in the Digambara sect;
- (iii) In comparison to the Śvetāmbara sites, the Digambara centres produced a larger number and variety of Tīrthaṅkara images;
- (iv) Śvetāmbara sect was rigid in the carving of Tīrthaṅkara images and the Digambara sect was more innovative and experimental in this regard, as evident from the *dvitīrthī* (dual images), *tritīrthī* (triple images) and *caumukhī* (quadruple images) on a single pedestal;
- (v) Śvetāmbaras believed in inscribing the names of Tīrthaṅkaras on their pedestals for identification, while Digambaras stressed on the depiction of cognizance;
- (vi) Śvetāmbara sect was not hesitant in depicting the life-episodes of the Tīrthaṅkaras and *Samavasaraṇa* (divine palace for the first sermon after attaining the *kaivalya-jñāna*) in art, while Digambara sect was silent on this;
- (vii) Next to the Tīrthaṅkara images, Śvetāmbaras concentrated more on the depiction of sixteen *mahāvidyās*, while Digambaras carved more figures of *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs*;
- (viii) The sixteen auspicious dreams were rarely depicted in the Śvetāmbara temples, whereas they were frequently carved at the entrance of Digambara temples.

## Jīvantasvāmī

A new concept of *Jīvantasvāmī* emerged in Śvetāmbara sect of Jainism around 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D., although there are scholars who push it back to the time of Mahāvīra on the basis of literary evidence. The time of origin of this concept is a matter of debate. However, the earliest evidence, in the form of sculpture and obtained from Akota with the inscription '*Jīvantasvāmī*', is dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. *Jīvantasvāmī* is that form of Mahāvīra when he was still in the palace but started practising meditation and penance. It almost corresponds to the concept of *Bodhisattva* in Buddhism. In this case, Mahāvīra is depicted in *dhyāna-mudrā* (meditating posture) with ornaments and clothes on. *Jīvantasvāmī* images were installed and worshipped at several places in Rajasthan and Gujarat. Although the concept of *Jīvantasvāmī* started with Mahāvīra, but by the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the *Jīvantasvāmī* form of other Tīrthaṅkaras also developed. In fact, the worship of Tīrthaṅkaras before the attainment of *Kaivalya-Jñāna* (Supreme Knowledge), i.e. *Jīvantasvāmī*, developed as a separate cult; hence, the *yakṣa/yakṣī* figures also started to be carved with their images. Besides, the *trichatra*, which was exclusively shown with the Tīrthaṅkaras, was also depicted with *Jīvantasvāmī* images giving him the same status and honour.

## Bāhubalī

Bāhubalī, son of Rṣabhanātha and also known as Gommaṭa, Gommaṭeśvara, Bhujabalī, Kukkuṭeśvara, etc., renounced the world after being deceived by his brother Bharata in wrestling and adopted the path of hard penance. He stood in the *kāyotsarga* posture continuously for one year and ultimately achieved the *kaivalya-jñāna*. Although he is not a Tīrthaṅkara, but he acquired the same status and honour in Jainism and became an object of worship. An interesting fact about the images of Bāhubalī was that he was always depicted in the *kāyotsarga-mudrā* and never in *dhyānastha-mudrā*. Literary references of Bāhubalī are available from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D., but his images in stone began to be carved from the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. During the period of severe penance, various creeping animals and plants covered the body of Bāhubalī, but he remained unmoved. This is rendered in the art and the depiction of creepers, snakes, lizards, scorpions, etc. over his body makes him easily identifiable. Like Tīrthaṅkaras, Bāhubalī images were also provided with *chatra*, *siṃhāsana*, *cāmaradhara*, *dharmacakra*, *yakṣa*, *yakṣī*, *śrīvatsa*, etc. revealing his high position within the Jaina pantheon. Bāhubalī was given preference even over Tīrthaṅkaras in the caves of Ellora.

## Characteristic Features

Regarding the antiquity of Jaina Art, some scholars trace it from the Harappan

Culture on the basis of a few figures found on the seals, and particularly the famous stone male torso, which they identify as the earliest Tīrthaṅkara figure. But the real evidence comes from Lohanipur belonging to the 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. A general belief is that Jaina Art is the most stereotyped art of India with wearisome absence of variety; especially the depiction of Tīrthaṅkaras is highly monotonous. But a careful probe reveals that it is not so. Tīrthaṅkaras are shown exclusively in two postures only, viz. *kāyotsarga* for renunciation and *dhyānastha* for austerity; and in both the cases, firm determination is the pre-requisite condition that plays the key-role. In order to suggest this determination for hard penance, the figures were made stiff. Even then, with the passage of time, Tīrthaṅkara figures also, iconographically and aesthetically underwent changes and became slimmer, slender and sophisticated, though postures remained the same. During the Gupta period, lessened gap between the hands and feet enhanced the flexibility and elegance of the images.

The Digambara Jaina literature clearly instructs that the Tīrthaṅkara image should either be shown standing in *samabhaṅga* in the *kāyotsarga-mudrā* with hands hanging down, or sitting in *padmāsana* in the *dhyānastha-mudrā* with right hand resting above the left and both placed over the lap. The figure should be *digvāsā* (without clothes and ornaments), *taruṇa-rūpa* (youthful), *ājānalambabāhu* (hands hanging down below the knees), *śānta* (calm), *nāsāgra-dṛṣṭi* (eyes looking at the nose), *dhyāna-nimagna* (mediating), *kincinnamragrīva* (no stiffness) and *śrīvatsa* mark on the chest. The evidences confirm that the artists never violated these instructions throughout the history of Jaina art.

The *caumukhī* or *sarvatobhadra* (four-fold images) started to be carved from the Kuṣāṇa period, i.e. 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D., in which, four different Tīrthaṅkaras were shown facing the four directions. There is ample ground to accept these Tīrthaṅkaras as Ādinātha, Neminātha, Pārśvanātha and Mahāvīra. Initially, *caumukhī* sculptures were carved in one block of stone. In the second stage, this pillar-type representation transformed into a solid shrine; and in the third stage of development, this monolith shrine transformed into a functional shrine with four different Tīrthaṅkaras. The *samavasaraṇa* sculptures are identical with *caumukhī* sculptures, but the difference is that the same Tīrthaṅkara was represented on all the four sides. Besides, the Tīrthaṅkara in *samavasaraṇa* was always depicted in *dhyāna-mudrā*, whereas the Tīrthaṅkaras in *caumukhī* were always carved in *kāyotsarga-mudrā*. A new practice started during the Gupta period in which a small figure of a Tīrthaṅkara was depicted alongwith the main figure.

Another important feature of the Gupta sculptures is the beginning of the depiction

of cognizance, the earliest example of which is found from Rajgir datable to the late 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. during the reign of Candragupta-II. A different tradition started in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. from Varanasi and Rajgir, and later Mathura, where in place of one cognizance, a pair of cognizances was carved, like two lions with Mahāvīra, two elephants with Ajitanātha and likewise. However, such depiction stopped after the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. There has been a lot of interaction in Indian art. *Dharmacakra* with two deer was a common representation in Buddhist art. A special feature of the Śvetāmbara sculptures of Rajasthan and Gujarat was that a *siṃhāsana* (lion-throne) was shown below the Tīrthaṅkara image, and below that, *dharmacakra* was depicted with two deer. Almost all the figures are carved with this concept, where deer signify peace and they are not cognizance.

*Pañca-Parameṣṭhis* are held in high esteem in Jainism and regarded as the highest form of worship. They include *Arhata* (Tīrthaṅkara), *Siddha* (Liberated Soul), *Ācārya*, *Upādhyāya* and *Sādhu*. Deogarh was an important centre of education and *ācārya*, *upādhyāya* and *sādhu* were given place among the deities. In the later *caumukhī* sculptures, one of the four figures used to be that of *ācārya*, *upādhyāya* or *sādhu*-mostly shown engaged in *Śāstracarṇā* (canonical discussions) and remaining three of the Tīrthaṅkaras. This innovation was made to associate the spiritual world with the material world. Gradually, independent images of *ācārya*, *upādhyāya* and *sādhu* were also carved. Another innovation made in Jaina Art during the Gupta period, was the concept of *Āyudhapuruṣa*, i.e. personified form of the attributes of gods, particularly Viṣṇu. Hence, *dharmacakra* was now replaced by *cakrapuruṣa* in *abhaya-mudrā* below the Tīrthaṅkara figures.

The available evidence reveals that the Jaina temples came up after the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. at Rājgīr, Osian, Deogarh and other places. Their general plan is *sāndhāra* type (with inner circumambulation path), which exactly follow the Brāhmanical temples in form and architecture. The only difference is the presence of 24 *devakulikās* all around the *garbhagṛha* (inner sanctum). The Mahāvīra Temple at Osian has a cluster of five *devakulikās* and the earliest representation of Jaina *mahāvidyās*. The *praveśa-dvāra* (entrance-gate) of the Śāntinātha Temple at Deogarh was identical with Brāhmanical ones, depicting Gaṅgā and Yamunā on either side, besides *navagrahas*, etc. The Ādinātha Temple at Khajuraho provides the solitary evidence of Digambara tradition depicting the 16 Jaina *vidyādevīs*. Erection of *Mānastambhas* (free standing pillars) in front of the temples was an important feature of Jaina architecture, particularly in North India.

One of the most magnificent Jaina temples is the Pārśavanātha Temple at

Khajuraho, which is datable between 950 and 970 A.D. An inscription here informs that this temple of Jinanātha (Ādinātha) was built by a trader Pāhila who was honoured by the Candela king Dhaṅga. This is corroborated by the figures of bull (a sure cognizance of Ādinātha) and Gomukha-Cakreśvarī, the *yakṣa-yakṣī* associated with Ādinātha. Undoubtedly, the temple was that of Ādinātha; but the original statue was replaced by a black stone image of Pārśvanātha in the 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D. due to unknown reasons and now it is known as the Pārśvanātha Temple. All around the temple, the Brāhmaṇical deities in various postures, including amorous postures were depicted. The **Harivaṃśa-Purāṇa** instructs that in order to attract the common people, it is necessary that the figures of Kāma and Rati should be given place in the Jaina temples. This confirms that the Jaina artists not only emphasized on spiritualism through the Tīrthaṅkara images, but also on materialism through the accompanying figures.

## Paintings

The dark phase of about two hundred years in the history of Indian paintings still remains to be a challenge before the art historians. The exuberant phase of the large monumental wall-paintings of Ajanta and Ellora ended up by the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and then suddenly we come across small miniature Jaina paintings from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. What happened during the time gap of about two centuries in between? How the things took shape during this period? Why the artists switched over directly from monumental paintings to miniature paintings? These are some of the vital questions still seeking solution, as no traces of visual records of this period remain for us to know.

## Miniature Paintings

The Jaina artists have the credit of creating the earliest miniature paintings in India, which were done on *paṭalīs* (wooden book covers) and manuscripts. These *paṭalīs* are the top and bottom covers of the palm-leaf manuscripts and the term used for such books is *pothīs* (loose leaf folio), which are found in abundance. The question is - why do we find such a large number of illustrated and un-illustrated manuscripts in the Jaina tradition? The scholars give the following two reasons :

- (i) A famine struck in which hundreds of Jaina *śramaṇas* lost their life. The Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras decided in several councils that the canons should be put down in black and white before they are completely lost. Wood and palm-leaf, being the available mediums, were used for the purpose.
- (ii) *Śāstra-dāna* (writing and gifting of canonical literature) was regarded to be a pious duty in the Jaina tradition for earning spiritual wisdom. Hence, numerous copies of *pothīs* were prepared and gifted to the Jaina *maṭhas*,

*bhaṇḍāras*, temples and libraries, particularly in the regions of Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Siddharāja Jayasīma and Kumārapāla were the two important rulers of Gujarat who patronized the *laiyās* (scribes) and contributed in preparation of thousands and thousands of copies of the Jaina *pothīs*. That is why, the likeness in Jaina *pothīs* can be witnessed, as the style, figures, script, colour, size, etc. remained exactly the same while making copies. Not only the kings, but common people also patronized the *laiyās* and created *pothīs* according to their social status, i.e. the medium class Jaina devotees prepared ordinary *pothīs*, while the rich class patronized opulent production and used even pure gold in their renderings.

*Laiyās* were the scribes specially appointed for writing and preparing the copies of Jaina manuscripts, as they were skilled in the art of both writing and painting. A whole community was devoted to this pious work and it was called Mathena, chiefly associated with the Bikaner and Jodhpur regions of Rajasthan. Initially, they were the Jaina *sādhus* who were outcaste due to some sin (misdeeds) committed by them. Some of them settled down in family life, while others remained independent and formed the Mathena community. They had deep understanding and knowledge of the Jaina canonical literature, and therefore, adopted the profession of scribe. They were also known as *Mahātmā* or *Gorjī*. Later on, some Hindus also adopted this profession and got included in the Mathena community. They worked both for Jainas and Hindus, and also taught calligraphy in the homes. They innovated *Guṭkā-pothīs*, which were small portable books carried by the Jaina *sādhus* while travelling. The palm-leaf *pothīs* continued till the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and then the paper came into use.

With the propagation of Jainism, the *pothīs* were created from different regions of India, and thus, stylistic changes were quite obvious. The overall format of *pothīs* gradually became larger, the picture area and paintings grew in size, while the subject matter reduced to four lines per page with small letters. Early Jaina miniature paintings had no perspective; they were two-dimensional and very simple. The figures were painted in profile and hardly any visual is seen with front face. These were symbolic, stylised and narrative in expression, possessing three distinctive features, which are the landmarks of Jaina miniature paintings -

- (i) Pointed nose,
- (ii) Double chin, and
- (iii) Farther protruding eye into the space.

Other features were - the red monochrome background, angularity of limbs and

the use of primary colours, viz. yellow, red, blue, white and black. Gold or silver was also used, but the use of gold is not seen before 13th century in paintings. The subject matters of these manuscripts were basically **Kalpasūtra** and **Kālakācārya-Kathā**.

A *paṭalī* was divided into several compartments and incidents were painted in narrative style with a fine brush in each compartment within the space available to make it clear what the *pothī* is all about. One *paṭalī* requires a special mention, viz. 'Coronation of Ṛṣabhadeva', where the two-dimensional linear figures were painted, like any other traditional Jaina *paṭalī*, in each compartment. But here, the artist tried to make an attempt to apply some shading to give the figures a roundish look. This is the earliest representation of such an attempt made in the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Other important *paṭalīs* are - *Supārśvacariyam-paṭali*, *Mahāvīra-citrapaṭṭikā*, *Jinadatta-paṭalī*, *Pārśvanātha-citrapaṭṭikā*, *Sixteen-Vidyādevī's-paṭalī*, *Māṇḍu-Kalpasūtra*, *Mūdabidarī-paṭalī*, *Yaśodhara-carita*, etc.

Just before the rise of Mughal Empire, a phase came when the Jaina style of paintings experienced deviation. This phase is termed as the 'Sultanate' phase or the 'Pre-Akbarī' phase, which is accepted to be within the time-span from 1500 A.D. to 1650 A.D. The trade contacts with the Śāhīs of Central Asia through the Gulf of Khambat, Surat and other coastal towns brought the Persian elements in the paintings. The 'farther protruding eye into the space' disappeared from the profile during this period. The most important illustrated Jaina manuscript of this era is **Deośāṇopādo**, being the earliest manuscript throwing light on the foreign influence. It is profusely illustrated and all its components, including the border decoration, costumes, turbans, colouring, etc. have the Persian impact. The manuscripts of Sultanate phase are quite opulent and executed with great taste, as the Sultans were very fond of such paintings. Beside gold and silver, lapis-lazuli, aramusk and other expensive Persian colours were extensively used for making the three-dimensional paintings. The trend of *svaṇṇākṣarī* (gold-letters) for writing manuscripts also began in this period.

Two strands of paintings developed during the Sultanate period; one following the Indian epics and subject-matters, while the other dealing with Sūfī poetic works and romances. Both these styles moved parallel to each other with regional variations. *Lauracandā* group of paintings is a Sūfī romance done in Islamic style, while *Caurapañcāśikā* group of paintings is totally an Indian romance. The Jaina manuscripts of *Caurapañcāśikā* are highly stylised, like fish-tail mountains, basket-pattern water, stylised trees, curling-cloud pattern, red monochrome background, flowering meander, dancers wearing three-tier skirts, etc. *Gītagovinda*, *Śāhanāmā*, *Isardā-Bhāgavata*,

*Vasantavilāsa-Phāgu, Niyāmatanāmā, Mṛgāvata*, etc. are some of the famous paintings of Sultanate period. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the Sultanate style of paintings almost disappeared and gave way again to the preparation of copies of earlier manuscripts in the Jaina tradition.

## Cloth Paintings

The evidence of cloth paintings is not traced prior to the 14th century A.D., as cloth is also a perishable material. Termed as *paṭacitra*, or simply *paṭa*, the Jaina cloth paintings were mainly done for the performance of Jaina rituals and ceremonies. As compared to the manuscripts, these *paṭas* were much larger in dimensions. Beside throwing light on the changes and development in art, these *paṭas* are extremely important from historical point of view for their rich social, cultural, religious, economic, architectural, linguistic and calligraphic contents. These paintings were basically narrative in nature.

If traced in the Jaina Literature, the earliest reference of cloth painting is found in a Prākṛta text **Kuālemālā** datable to 775 A.D., which informs about *Samśārācakrapaṭa* - a long painting on cloth containing the sorrows and pleasures of life. It is also important to note that the Buddhist and Jaina art went hand-in-hand; while the Buddhist cloth paintings (*thaṅkās*) were created in Nepal and Tibet, the Jaina cloth paintings (*paṭas*) in Western India (Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, etc.) almost contemporarily. As such, these adopted each other's elements, and stylistically, these are so similar that, at times, it becomes difficult to make a distinction.

Regarding the technique, rice-flour mixed with water and glue was smeared over the piece of *khaddara* (thick cottoncloth) and allowed to dry. After that, *ghuṭāi* (burnishing) was done with a piece of smooth stone in order to fill-up the holes and obtain a smooth surface. Then the painting was done with a brush. **Viśuddhimagga** of 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. refers to the three stages of preparation of the canvas - (i) *Dhauta* (washing of cloth), (ii) *Ghaṭṭita* (burnishing of cloth) and (iii) *Raṅjita* (painting on cloth). Just like the *paṭalīs*, the red monochrome background was very prominent in *paṭas* as well. The Jaina cloth paintings are broadly divided into the following groups :

**Tāntric Paṭas** - Usually made in the rectangular format, the Jaina *tāntric paṭas* were painted with bright colours where symbols, mystic figures and *mantrākṣaras* were the subject of painting. The concepts of *yantra*, *tantra* and *mantra* were included in this group. The Jaina *sādhus* used to carry these *paṭas* with them and handed over to the needy persons for worship or meditation. *Yantras*, in a sense, were the aids for increasing concentration for mediation. Some Jainas resorted to the external aids by worshipping

the mystic syllables and diagrams, which developed in the form of *mantrapāṭas* containing lot of diagrams, geometrical designs, a figure of a deity, Jina or symbol painted right at the centre and equipped with *mantrākṣaras* and numbers representing various gods, goddesses, demi-gods, *navagrahas*, monks and others.

After the painters completed their painting work, *yatis* took over from them to write the *mantrākṣaras* and sanctify the *pāṭas*, as they had the deep knowledge about the *yantras*, *tantras* and *mantras*. Three elements were important regarding these *mantrapāṭas*, viz. (i) *sādhyā* (the object to be concentrated upon, like mystic diagram or deity in the centre), (ii) *sādhana* (the process of meditation) and (iii) *sādhaka* (the monk or person performing meditation). These *mantrapāṭas* became so important in the Jaina tradition that they were not only painted on cloth, but also carved and painted on stone, made with coloured powders and painted on the walls of temples. The *Sūryamantra pāṭa* became an essential component of Jaina rituals. A graduate student, after completing his education, had to receive the *Sūryamantra pāṭa* from his *guru* (teacher) and only then he passed out and acquired the status of an *ācārya*; and this practice continues till date. Such *pāṭas* are obtained in a large number right from the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D..

**Biographical Pāṭas** - Another category of colourful *pāṭas* with lot of pictures but no *mantrākṣaras* are regarded to be the biographical *pāṭas*, as they contain the illustrations and narrations of various incidents from the lives of different Tīrthaṅkaras. Following the scheme, the concerned Tīrthaṅkara was painted at the centre and the surrounding area was filled-up with the scenes from his life. These *pāṭas* were also known as the *pañcatīrthī-pāṭas*, because the four Jaina *dhāmas/tīrthas* (places of pilgrimage) were essentially painted (Tīrthaṅkara being the fifth) on these *pāṭas*, viz. Śatruñjaya, Giranāra, Aṣṭapāda and Sammetaśikhara. Later on, these *pāṭas* transformed into *vividhatīrthī-pāṭas* with the increase in number of the *dhāmas* and their depiction accordingly in the art.

**Cosmological Pāṭas** - The Jainas devoted much attention to cosmology, and therefore, lot of cosmological *pāṭas*, mostly square in shape, were prepared containing diagrams, maps, charts, calculations of distances, etc. The most renowned *pāṭa* of this category of *pāṭas* is the *Lokapuruṣa-pāṭa*. *Lokapuruṣa* (cosmic man) is a concept in Jainism of the three worlds, viz. *ūrdhvaloka*, *madhyaloka* and *adholoka*; **Saṅgrahaṇīsūtra**, containing charts, maps, etc. was the source material for the complicated Jaina geography. The symbolism and drawings of these *pāṭas* was quite rigid. Whether *Aḍidvīpa*, *Jambudvīpa* or *Aṣṭadvīpa*, they remained alike in size, shape, etc., over the years with complex writing on top. *Sūryapatākā*, *Candrapatākā*, *Grahaṇapatākā*, etc. are some of the other *pāṭas*

belonging to this category, which shows that, although complicated, the Jainas made considerable progress in geography, astrology and astronomy.

**Pilgrimage Paṭas** - Initially, the pilgrimage *paṭas* were smaller in size carefully prepared to make them portable and handy for the Jaina monks to easily carry them along while on pilgrimage tour. When the importance of pilgrimage gradually increased with time, the devotees and householders started visiting the holy places personally. A group of such pilgrims was called a *saṅgha*, which was headed by the *saṅghavī*. Even though everybody reached the holy place, not all were capable enough to climb the hills and visit the temples situated at their tops, as most of the Jaina pilgrimage centres were situated on the hilltops, such as Śatruñjaya. Thus, huge *tīrthapaṭas* were prepared and hanged for the *darśana* of those devotees who missed the opportunity of visiting the temples at hilltops. The huge *paṭas* were painted in the form of beautiful cartographic maps with every single detail of the *tīrtha* area. They were hanged on the auspicious day of *Kārttika-Pūrṇimā* facing the *tīrtha* spot and opened for public. They were sponsored by the *śreṣṭhis* (rich community of the society). *Śatruñjaya-tīrthapaṭa*, made by *Seṭha Śāntidāsa* in 1641 A.D., is the best specimen of Ahmedabad painting style in the Shahjahan period.

**Vijñaptipatras** - These were narrow and long scroll paintings, which were, at times, fifty to sixty feet in length. *Vijñaptipatra*, also called *Vinatipatra*, was basically a letter of invitation or request prepared by the Jaina community of a town with the clear purpose of inviting a Jaina *sādhu* to stay with them and spend the *caumāsā* (four months of rainy season) during which, the *sādhus* stopped travelling. These scroll paintings were profusely illustrated with the auspicious symbols, motifs, cognizance, auspicious dreams, *aṣṭamaṅgala-cihnas* and vivid description of the town with all the facilities available there. An important *vijñaptipatra* is that of Emperor Jahangir, in which, he issued a *firmāna* (order) to stop the slaughtering of animals during the twelve days of *paryuṣaṇa* at the request of some Jaina ascetics from Patan. This unique episode of the Mughal period was painted by the royal painter Ustād Śālīvāhana in 1610 A.D. and it occupies a very important place in Jainism.

**Kṣamāpanā-Patrikās** - Similar to *vijñaptipatras* in appearance, the *Kṣamāpanā-patrikās* were prepared and presented before the *gurus* or elders and apology was solicited for any misdeed committed during the last one year or so. They were also pictorial and highly decorated scroll paintings.

**Miscellaneous Paṭas** - This category contains all other types of cloth paintings, like *Jñānabāzī-paṭa*, *Citrakāvya-paṭa*, *Hanumāna-patākā*, etc. *Citrakāvya-paṭas* were very

uncommon and peculiar type of *paṭas* containing mystic diagrams and jumbled up letters, which could be deciphered only by the expert Jaina *munīs*. *Jñānabāzī-paṭa* was a game similar to the modern 'Snakes & Ladders', where 81 squares were painted and illustrated with good and bad *karmas* (deeds) of human life. A bad *karma* pulled one down, while a good *karma* pushed one up. Continuous good *karmas* finally took one to the ultimate goal of life, i.e. *mokṣa* (salvation).

## Conclusion

The above survey of the development of Jaina Art in India, thus, establishes the fact that this form of Indian art was neither monotonous, nor detached from the other prevailing streams. In fact, it developed in coordination and accordance with the social, religious and cultural changes taking place in different eras within the country; and this is the reason that, unlike Buddhism, its continuity is maintained throughout the history. The effort of the Jaina *ācāryas*, devotees and artists to take the responsibility of creating and maintaining the religious and social harmony since ancient times is simply laudable. When the other forms of art struggled during the Muslim rule in medieval period, the Jaina art flourished. Therefore, a deeper probe of the Jaina Art becomes inevitable while reconstructing the history of the development and reformation of art in ancient, medieval and modern India.



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