

# Jain Monumental Paintings of Ahmedabad

Dr. Shridhar Andhare

Pilgrimage is one of the primary institutions in India, which has exercised great influence on the minds of the people of all dimensions. According to *Kashi Khanda* of *Skanda Purana*<sup>1</sup> there are two kinds of *Tirthas* namely, *Manas Tirtha* and the *Bhauma Tirtha* i.e. spiritual and physical objects of pilgrimage. It is said that those whose minds are pure, who are men of virtue and those who are self controlled and saintly beings sanctify the places they visit and themselves become peripatetic *Tirthas*. In the *Tirtha Yatra* chapters of *Mahabharata*<sup>2</sup> it is mentioned that, "It is the purity of mind and senses, wisdom, truth, freedom from anger, pride and sins and above all treating all creatures as their own selves is the essence of all pilgrimage."

In the second category of physical *Tirthas* are included the *Dharma Tirtha* i.e. places noted for men of learning; the *Artha Tirtha* i.e. centers of trade and industry on the banks of a confluence; the *Kama Tirtha* i.e. where men of worldly desires enjoyed life in full luxury and the *Moksha Tirtha* i.e. secluded spots among natural surrounding fit for meditation. More often all or more than one of the above factors make a place famous as a place of pilgrimage such as Varanasi, Avanti, Dwarika and many others which are common to other religions including Jainism. Buddhism inspired Buddha's disciples in creating holy spots. The same phenomenon holds good for Hinduism and Jainism. We observe that even the aboriginal cult figures of *Yakshas* and *Nagas* were assimilated to fulfill the needs of the Buddhist, the Brahminical and Jain pantheons which gave rise to new *Tirthas*. At this point of time the *Sthala Mahatmya*<sup>3</sup> evolved and regarded each *Tirtha* as the epitome of the entire country.

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1. N. P. Joshi. *Skanda Purana* (Marathi Trans.) sake 1905. Pune. See *Kashi Khanda* (Uttarardha) pp. 197-252.
  2. *Mahabharata*. Aranyaka Parvan. ch.80.
  3. ob-cit.

The ancient Jain tradition, rich in its system of philosophy, religion and ethics presents in its *Tirthas* an equally interesting cross section of Indian cultural heritage. This vast material is recorded in the *Tirthamala*, or the memoirs of the Jain pontiffs, of the *Sanghas*. Practically all the great centers of civilization were included among the Jain *Tirthas* such as Mathura, Kampilya, Ahichhatra, Hastinapur, Rajagraha, Kaushambi, Ayodhya, Mithila, Avanti, Pratisthana, Champa(Bhagalpur), Pataliputra, Sravasthi, Varanasi, Prayag, Nasikeya, Prabhas, Dwarika and many others.

Acharya Jinabhadra Suri (ca. 14th cent.) preserved the records of the Jain religious tradition in his *Vividha-Tirtha-Kalpa*, a compendium of hymns and stotras composed by these wandering religious teachers, constitute a valuable account of their literary activities and provide a religious history of the *Sanghas*. The heads of such pilgrimages were called *Sanghapatis* who organized such activities under the guidance of some spiritual teacher or *Āchāraya* and undertook its financial responsibility. It is this pious act which earned them the honorific title of *Sanghapatis*, *Sanghvi* or *Sanghi* in Hindi. Gradually, this concept gave a great impetus to the *Tirtha Yatra* activity among the Jain community and achieved for it a vitality and continuity unknown elsewhere. Thus, it is apparent that like other sects, the Jains also had and still have their *Tirthas* or holy places all over India. They are invariably located on picturesque hilltops which are difficult to access, but which provide undoubtedly, the most natural surroundings for concentration. Famous among them are Satrunjaya and Gimar in Gujarat, Sammeta Shikhara in Bihar and Astapada (the exact location of this *Tirtha* in geographical terms is not clear, though it is regarded as one of the *Tirthas* by the Jains).

It is customary for the Jains to visit the *Tirtha* of Satrunajaya at least once in their lifetime to gain wisdom because this *Tirtha* is most sacred to them. For those who are unable to visit the *Tirtha*, the Jains created a tradition of commissioning such painted *Patras* (cloth banners) illustrating the *Tirthas* in a symbolic and cartographic manner. A number of such banners have been published by the

author in the recent catalogue of "The Peaceful Liberators."<sup>4</sup> These banners are hung oriented toward the direction of the Satrunjaya hill, at sacred Jain locations such as temples, *Upasrayas* (temporary resting places for itinerant Jain monks and nuns) and other such institutions on the day of *Kartik sud punam*, i.e. on a full moon day of the month of *Kartika* (October-November) for public viewing. On this day thousands of devotees visit and worship the *Pata* and the *Tirtha* of Satrunjaya is thrown open to all from this day. As a result of this religious belief wealthy Jain families often commissioned painting of *Tirtha Patas* mainly on cloth. Therefore we see a number of such banners surviving even today. Moreover, such *Patas* were also made on wooden planks, in plaster work on temple walls and also carved in stone in low relief, to be displayed inside the temples. The earliest examples of these can be seen at the Osian and the Ranakpur temples in Rajasthan which date back to the 11th and the 15th centuries respectively.<sup>5</sup>

It is generally observed that smaller *Panchatirthi Patas*<sup>6</sup> i.e. banners showing five *Trithas*, were of early dates and were by and large preserved in folded or scroll forms for easy portability. Subsequently the size of the *Patas* become large as they were intended to be displayed in Jain public places for big audiences. Some of these *Patas* bear inscriptions mentioning the place, time of creation and also the names of the benefactors etc. Two such interesting specimen of *Vividha Tirthi Patas*<sup>7</sup> are discussed here in detail. These form the subject matter of this paper.

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4. Pratapaditya Pal. *The Peaceful Liberators. Jain Art from India.* LACM 1994. See Jain Monumental Paintings.
  5. U.P.Shah. Vardhamana Vidya Pata. *JISOA* Vol.X. 1942. pp 42-51.
  6. Shridhar Andhare. "A note on the Mahavira Samavasarana (pata). *Chhavi I.* Golden Jubilee Volume. Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares. 1972.
  7. U. P. Shah. Treasures of Jain Bhandaras. L. D. Series 69. Ahmedabad 1978. col. pls. V and VI; B+W pls. 131-133. Also see Shridhar Andhare. painted Banners on cloth: *Vividha Tirtha Pata* of Ahmedabad. Marg, Homage to Kalamkari. Bombay, 1979, p. 40.

Both the *Patas* are in a vertical format, the longest one measuring 4.5 x 1.20m. of the Samvegi Jain Upasraya and the other somewhat shorter measuring 3.5 x 1.08m. of the Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi, in Ahmedabad display identical subject matter of illustrating various *Tirthas* in a symbolic manner. Both have extensive colophons and Sanskrit text relating to pictures on the *Pata* describing each, line by line. Such a practice is noted here for the first time.

Apart from mentioning the name of the benefactor as Seth Shantidas of Ahmedabad, the Jain magnate of the Mughal period<sup>8</sup>, the scribe mentions a succession of the great Jain monks of the late Akbar - early Jehangir period starting from Shri Hiravijayji to Vijayasena Suri to Rajasagar Suri to Buddhisagar Suri and others by whose commands the *Pata* was ordered by Seth Shantidas. The end of the long colophon mentions the following in Devanagari script.

“स्वस्ति श्री. विक्रम संमत् १६१८ वर्षे ज्येष्ठ सित..... महाराजधिराज पातशाह श्री. अकबर प्रतिबोधक.... हीरविजयसूरि पट्टोदय गिरि दिनकर .... भट्टारक श्री. विजयसेन सूरिधरानाम् भट्टारक श्री. राजसागर सूरि चरणानाम्, युवराज भट्टारक श्री. बुद्धिसागर सूरि प्रमुखानेक वाचना दि चतुर परिकर चरणानाम् उपदेशात् अहिमदाबाद वास्तव्ये ओसवाल ज्ञातीय श्री. चिंतामणी पार्श्वनाथ प्रासादादि, धर्म, कर्म, निर्माण, निष्णात शा. श्री. शांतिदासेन सकल मनुष्य योग्य पंचभरत, पंचैरावत, पंचमहाविदेहातीतानागता २ वर्तमान २०, विरहमान ४, शाश्वतजिन - शाश्वत जिन तीर्थपट श्री. शत्रुंजय, गिरिनार, तारंगा, अर्बुत, चन्द्रप्रभु, मुनिसुव्रत, श्रीजिरईला पार्श्वनाथ, च, श्री. नवखंडा पार्श्वनाथ, देवकुल पाटक, मथुरा, हस्तिनागपुर, कलिकुंड, कलवृद्धि करहाटक साचोर आदि नाम युक्त - सप्तविषत नाम - इदम्.”

Though the last few lines of this colophon are not legible, the rest undoubtedly confirms that the *Pata* was commissioned by Seth Shantidas living at Ahmedabad in A.D. 1641. The Samvegi Upasraya *Pata* has also similar text but certain portions have been left blank. However both colophons need detailed study.

From this elaborate colophon it would be apparent that Seth

8. M.S.Commissariat. A History of Gujarat. Vol. II. Orient Longmans. Bombay. 1957. Ch. XIII. p. 140-143.

Shantidas was a devout Jain and spent his great resources freely on purposes enjoyed by his faith. His career and activities flourished during the reigns of Emperor Jehangir and Shah Jahan and his great resources as a financier, and business connections at the imperial court as a jeweller, enabled him to enjoy considerable favour and influence at the imperial court at Delhi. He had attained a very high social position and was made the first "Mayor of Ahmedabad" by social voice. During the course of his magnificent career he built the temple of *Chintamani Parsvanath* in a suburb of Ahmedabad.

According to *Chintamani Prasasthi*<sup>9</sup>, a Sanskrit verse, written in A.D. 1640, on the basis of the original copy found by Muni Jinavijayaji in Ahmedabad, this temple was begun in A.D. 1621 during the reign of emperor Jehangir by Seth Shantidas and his brother Vardhaman. In view of Jehangir's happy relations with Jain leaders and his tolerance of their religion, the construction of the temple was finally completed in A.D. 1625. This monument was seen by an itinerant German traveller Mendelslo, who confirms that after his visit Aurangzeb converted this temple into a masjid. Another French traveller by the name of M.de Thevenot who visited the city in A.D. 1666, writes that, "The inside roof of the mosque is pretty enough and the walls are full of the figures of men and beasts etc." This brings to light the fact that there was painting activity in Ahmedabad in the early 17th century. Moreover, Shah Jahan also issued a number of *farmans* in favor of Shantidas which throw significant light on the activities of that period. A detailed study of these documents is on the way.

In yet another instance quoted in the Jain *Rasamala*<sup>10</sup> which, apart from giving a vivid account of Shantidas's career mentions in Gujarati that, "He had got made several *Tirtha Patas* of Siddhachal and others from emperor Akbar."

"મહાન અકબર અને જહાંગીર બાદશાહ પાસે તેમનૂ સારી રિતે માન હતુ. અકબર બાદશાહ પાસેથી તેમણે સિદ્ધાચલ તીર્થાદિના પટ્ટાઓ કરાવી લીધા હતા."

9. ob-cit

10. *Jain Rāsamālā* (Gujarati). Pt.I.Srimad Buddhisagarji Grantha mala. No. 24. Bombay 1902. p. 8.

It is well known that Ahmedabad and Patan in Gujarat have been prolific centers of Jain and secular paintings on paper and cloth till about the middle of the 15th century, of which the *Champaner Panchatirthi Pata*<sup>11</sup> of A.D. 1433, and the *Vasanta Vilasa* scroll of A.D. 1451<sup>12</sup>, painted at Ahmedabad are the major landmarks. It is very likely that due to the frequent visits of the Mughal royalty in and around Gujarat in the late Akbar-early Jehangir period that practicing Gujarati painters shed some of their earlier characteristic features and adopted new conventions of dress and landscape as evidenced by the *Matar Sangrahani Sutra* of A.D. 1583<sup>13</sup>, now in the collection of the L.D.Museum in Ahmedabad. At the same time the cultural scenario of Ahmedabad appears to be gradually changing. Obviously, Seth Shantidas's cordial relations with the imperial Moghuls at Dehli may have brought about certain changes which are reflected in the arts and crafts of that period. Art of miniature painting in particular shows a new understanding in the first quarter of the 17th century in the so called popular Moghul documents but with a strong Rajasthani and Gujarati flavor. This material was discovered and published in the last two decades of which the MS. of *Anwar-i-Suhaili* of A.D. 1601<sup>14</sup> painted at Ahmedabad, the Cowasji Jehangir folio of *Gita Govinda*<sup>15</sup> and a set of horizontal *Ragamala* paintings<sup>16</sup> published by Saryu Doshi and Tandon in Marg and the latest set of *Bhagavata Purana*<sup>17</sup> discovered by the author, all

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11. Moti chandra. *Jain miniature Painting from Western India*. Ahmedabad 1949. Figures. 177,182, also see N.C.Mehta, *A Painted Roll from Gujarat*. A.D.1433 *Indian Arts and Letters* Vol. VI. pp. 71-78.
  12. Norman Brown. *The Vasanta Vilasa*. New Haven 1963
  13. Moti chandra and U.P.Shah. *New Documents of Jain Paintings*. Mahivara Jain Vidyalaya. Pt. I. Bombay. 1968. p. 356.
  14. R.Pinder Wilson. *Paintings from the Islamic Land*. Oxford 1969, pp. 160-171.
  15. Karl Khandalavala and Moti Chandra. *Miniatures and sculptures from the late Sir Cowasji Jehangir* Bart. Bombay 1965. col. pl.D. Fig. 69.
  16. Saryu Doshi and R.K.Tandon. Marg. 1981. Notes.
  17. An Illustrated MS. of *Bhagvata Purana*. (Private collection.) Unpublished.

may belong to Gujarat or may have been painted in Gujarat up to ca. 1650 A.D.

In respect of building activity of Gujarat in the early 17th century, especially at the mosque of *Sarkhej ka Roza* in Ahmedabad; there are extant remains of wall paintings above the arches and on the interior of tombs of some of the subsidiary mosques in the contemporary Mughal style, which stylistically resemble the two *Suri Mantra Patas* of the early 17th century, published by Sarabhai Nawab<sup>18</sup>. These *Patas* have been lost but they impart a glimpse of the style that prevailed in Ahmedabad in the early 17th century.

The *Pata* from Prachya Vidya Pratisthana, Paladi, Ahmedabad which represents *Vividha Tirhtas* again is an example of the type of painting that was done at Ahmedabad in the early 17th century. It is a curious mixture of Mughal and Jain elements with male and female figures clad in contemporary Mughal costume. The next two large vertical *Patas* from Samvegi Jain Upasraya and Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi respectively, hereafter culled no. 1 and no. 2 are quite similar in many respects and are perhaps painted by the same hand at the same time. They are divided into four parts horizontally. The only difference being that the first has the colophon on the top whereas the second has it at the bottom.

The general arrangements of *Patas* shows the ground completely filled with smaller rectangles of different colours showing seated *Tirthankaras* and other deities in rows numberin 904. The first register from the top has a Shikhara shaped arrangement with ascending steps having rectangles filled with cosmological calculations, smaller and larger temples and other figures etc. The second register has two *Tirthas*, Satrunjaya above and Girnar Garh below, divided by a second line of boundary wall. The drawing and painting in this square is similar to what one observes in the Mewar *Ramayana* of 1649 by Manohar. This does not appear to be very far in date from the *Patas* presently under discussion. In this semi-stylized landscape the artist has tried to give a number of symbolic

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18. Sarabhai Nawab. *Suri Mantra Vidhi*, Ahmedabad 1971.

and historic details which can be interpreted. It shows a number of temples, *Kundas*, lakes and other details. The last register has various other *Tirthas* including Astapada and Sammeta Sikhara. The arrangement here is so complex that it becomes rather difficult to identify. However, the following; Sri Satrunjaya, Girinara, Taranga, Arbhuta, Chandraprabhu, Muni Suvrata, Sri Giraila Parsvanath, Kalavridhi, Karahataka, Seahor etc. are included in the text. The last two examples are late and belong to the Anandji Kalyanji Pedhi and the Samvegi Jain Upasraya respectively.

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