

Art of Enlightenment



Exhibition held at
Parliament of World Religions
Melbourne - Australia
(December 3-9 2009)

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Art works designed from the original miniature paintings
in museums and other collections and specially
commissioned to
traditional miniature painters

by **Smt. Asha Mehta**

Text

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Art of Enlightenment

Jainism claims a legacy of a series of 24 Tirthankaras. Present Jainism owes much to the preachings of the 24^h Tirthankara Mahavira, which are compiled after His final Liberation.

Jainism is concerned mainly with unfolding of pure consciousness within you which is an exclusive prerogative of the human race. It is called emancipation - a state of existence beyond sorrow and death. Jainism is a way towards this attainment. It is particularly known for: firstly the practice of non-violence in day-to-day life, for instance Jains have been vegetarians for centuries. Western travelers in India right from the 13-14th centuries were astonished to see animal hospitals run by the Jains. Secondly according to Jainism every view-point contains a relative truth in it and therefore, all religious beliefs have a place in society.

Artistic imagery and religious inspiration: Like other religions Jainism has also used art to help seekers in their spiritual endeavours. Jaina art is replete with rich religious content. Jaina art, with its intricately carved marble temples, profuse number of sculptures and varied types of paintings, occupies a special place in the history of Indian art. Monks took keen interest in production of art works and often explained Jaina precepts with the help of illustrations.

The exhibition is also designed for more or less the same purpose - to make it more easy for the visitors to understand Jainism.

FOUNDERS OF JAINISM

Jainism owes its existence to the 24 Tirthankaras whose teachings form the basis of this religion. They re-establish the religion and present it in the contemporary context for the benefit of people. Literal meaning of Tirthankara is one who makes a passage through the waters and helps people to swim across the ocean of life and death. They are also known as Jinas, the victorious ones who have conquered their passions.

Rishabhanatha, the first Tirthankara of the present eon is considered the founder of Jainism who also civilised the society of that time. Vardhamana Mahavira (C.599-527 BCE) the 24th Tirthankara who was a senior contemporary of the Buddha, Parshvanatha the 23rd and Neminatha the 22nd Tirthankara are known as historical figures. The rest of them are known only through oral tradition. The preaching of Lord Mahavira, are compiled in *theAcharanga Sutra*, *Uttaradhyayana Sutra* and other texts.

Tirthankaras are worshiped not as gods but as real Enlightened human beings of the past. Jains pray to them for inspiration and blessings. They revere the entire tradition of the Enlightened Ones and particularly the living sadguru who preaches the true meaning of dharma and translates the scriptural message into practical training of the disciple.

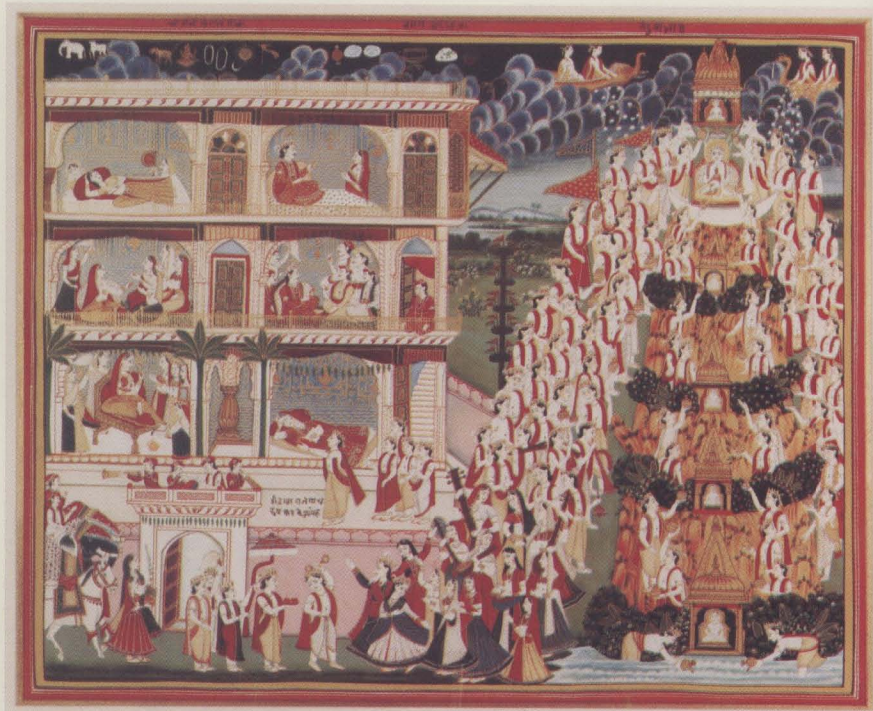


Twenty four Tirthankara Pata

The painting illustrates all the twenty-four Tirthankaras in two concentric circles around the central figure of Rishabhadeva, the founder of Jainism. All of them are seated on thrones in meditative postures and look alike. All of them are attributed a symbol and a colour which enable the devotees to identify them.

Below to the left is the image of Gautama Ganadhara the principal disciple of Lord Mahavira. To the right is a small shrine of the footprints of the guru. Jainism has paid great importance to the tradition and lineage of gurus who have passed on the message of the Jinas to people.

Tirthankaras are worshipped individually or in groups of three, five, seven and twenty-four. Though all of them are worshipped equally, some of the more popular Tirthankaras are Rishabhadeva, Shantinatha, Neminatha, Parshvanatha and Mahavira.



Birth and Ablution of a Jina

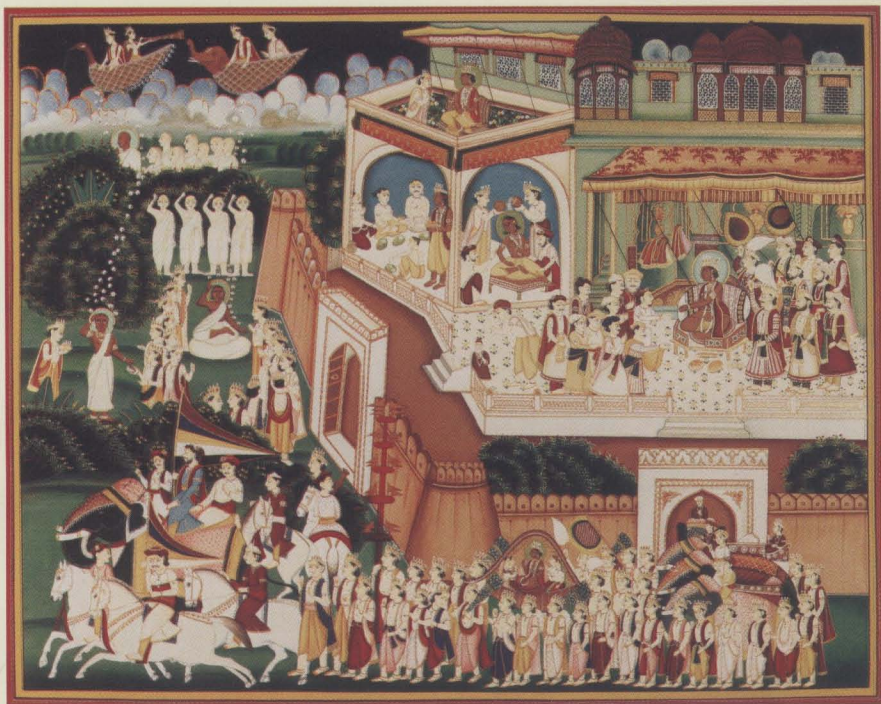
Five events are of paramount importance in the life of a Jina. They are conception, birth, lustration, *diksha* or renunciation, enlightenment and final liberation. The left side panels depicts from top:

Jina's mother sees 14 auspicious dreams, an indication of the advent of the Jina. They are depicted up in the sky.

Priests make a prophesy about the greatness of the prince. Jubilations by people and other episodes before His birth.

The lowest panel illustrates His birth and advent of the lord of the heaven Indra who assumes five different forms to be able to serve the baby Jina.

On the right Indra has carried the child Jina to mount Meru, for His lustration. The Jina is shown on a crescent known as Pandukasheela symbolising His absolute purity. Gods of the heavens, including all the Indras celebrate His lustration with great festivity, joy and enthusiasm.



Renunciation and Liberation of Mahavira

It illustrates two great episodes in the life of Mahavira: Renunciation and Emancipation.

The narration starts from the terrace scene where the future Tirthankara is seen asking for His brother's consent. Below in the balconies He feeds people and gives away all His possessions which is supposed to take a year to complete. Then it is time for the Great Departure and He is carried in a procession outside the palace walls to the gardens on the outskirts of the town. He renounces even His personal attire and plucks His hair to announce His entry into monkhood. He performs penances and then on attaining omniscience He preaches disciples, as seen on top right of the painting.

*Gods celebrate the descent of the
Tirthankara on this earth
with great festivity and pomp because it promises
the liberation of thousands of souls from
the miseries of the cycle of life and death.*



Ablution of a Tirthankara

An image of a baby Tirthankara, seated in meditation posture on a lotus pedestal, is being bathed by two devotees. The Pandukasheela is supported on the mountain Meru situated in the midst of the cosmic ocean. Two Indras are filling the pitchers from the ocean. Standing on the steps carved out of the serrated mountain on both the sides, the rows of Indras are passing those water pitchers in relay to the top of the mountain for lustration.

Behind at a distance, women are carrying the ablution water in pitchers brought from various rivers. The Tirthankara is receiving lustration by two devotees while the celestial musicians perform. The ablution water is also being collected by another Indra standing at the foot of the mountain.



Ecstatic dance of Indra

The birth of a Jina is the most auspicious event of that time, celebrated by men and gods alike. The *kalpasutra* describes in detail the celebrations of the *janmakalyanaka*. At the time of the lustration of the Jinas, Indra assumed five different forms, with one he lifted the infant, the other held a parasol above him, the third and fourth stood on either side waving *chauris* and the fifth one danced.

Indra is ecstatically dancing with multiple arms gracefully bending his body into rhythmic movements to the tune of the musicians. He holds several lotus flowers and Bijapuraka fruits in his hands as an offering to the Jina who has descended on the earth to enlighten human beings. Lotuses are offered to the Liberated One as a symbol of absolute purity and Bijapuraka as a symbol of ultimate liberation. Musicians and celestial damsels - *all* dance with him.



Samavasarana or Congregation Hall of Mahavira

Samavasarana illustrates the most auspicious event in the life of a Tirthankara. As soon as the Tirthankara attains *kevala jnana*, omniscience, Indra erects a celestial Pavilion where all the varieties of beings assemble to receive His divine preachings.

The Samavasarana is composed of three concentric walls or ramparts; the first and the innermost wall is made of precious gems, the next of gold and the third one of silver. Each wall has four gateways, one in each direction.

In the painting, the outermost enclosure appears like a parking place of the vehicles of the dignitaries who have come to hear the sermon. A wide variety of animals have peacefully occupied the second enclosure. The third enclosure has divinities, monks, and lay devotees. In the centre, four identical Jina images facing four cardinal directions are placed on the octagonal crystal pedestal to recreate the original Samavasarana where the Jina was visible to the entire congregation alike from all the directions.

Thus spoke Mahavira

The Arhats of the past, those of the present and the future narrate thus, discourse thus, proclaim thus, and affirm thus: One should not injure, subjugate, enslave, torture or kill any animal, living being, organism or sentient being. This doctrine of Non-Violence (Ahimsa Dharma) is immaculate, immutable and eternal.

(ACHARANGA SUTRA, CH. 4)

To deny the existence of mutually conflicting view-points about a thing would mean to deny the true nature of reality.

(ACHARANGA SUTRA)

One who cultivates an attitude of equality towards all living beings, mobile and stationary, can attain equanimity. Thus do the kevalis say.

(ANUYOGADVAR, 708)

Righteousness consists in complete Self-absorption and in giving up all kinds of passions including attachment. It is the only means of transcending the mundane existence. The Jinas have said so

(BHAVA-PAHUDA , 83)



Samavasarana Congregation Hall of Mahavira

The samavasarana is composed here of three concentric walls or ramparts; the first and the innermost wall is made of precious gems, the next of gold and the third one of silver. Each wall has four gateways.

In the centre of this Assembly Hall stands the sacred Ashoka tree under which Mahavira had attained kevalajnana. He is seated under it on a throne with a halo of divinity around His head. His emblem the lion is seated in front of His throne. Closest to Mahavira are His attendants, monks and nuns and celestial musicians - all of whom are within the first enclosure.

Beyond the first wall in the second enclosure are lay worshippers whereas the third one is occupied by the animals, birds and other creatures and aquatic animals all sitting together in front of the Enlightened One. His blessings shower equally on all the sentient beings. No one is precluded from the joy of spiritual advancement.



Samavasarana of Aranatha

It is a very elaborate depiction of the congregation hall which almost looks like a three tiered pyramidal fortress. His cognizance known as *nandyavarta*, an auspicious symbol placed in front identifies the Jina as Aranatha, the 18th Tirthankara. Each jina attains enlightenment under a particular tree which remains associated with Him. Aranatha is seen seated under the profusely bloomed tree of Tagara (Indian Valerian).

Monks, lay followers and birds and animals all have gathered to listen to the Tirthankara. Outside there are drummers and other musicians to celebrate the event.



Marriage Procession of Neminatha

Neminatha, the 22nd Tirthankara returned from His marriage procession half way to avoid killing of animals for the marriage feast. This remarkable incident exemplifies the importance of non-violence in day to day life of every sensitive human being.

As narrated in Jaina literature the wedding party of prince Nemikumara was approaching the bridal pavilion of Rajamati. Suddenly He heard frightful shrieks and cries of animals to be slaughtered for the wedding feast. He was deeply anguished by the thought of such violence. He at once decided to renounce that life which delights in inflicting miseries on others. His bride Rajamati also followed His footsteps and renounced.

The painting illustrates the entire episode in detail. In the foreground the marriage procession of Neminatha is approaching the bride's pavilion. There are birds and animals in an enclosure. On top left against a different colour background monk Neminatha is performing meditation in the *kayotsarga* pose.



Ahimsa Paramo Dharma

Neminatha turning back from the Bridal Pavilion

Neminatha, the 22nd Tirthankara returned from His marriage procession half way to avoid killing of animals captured for the marriage feast.

The marriage procession of Neminatha is illustrated in a more simple style. The painting is divided into two panels; the upper panel depicts Nemikumara approaching the palace of Rajamati.

In the lower panel He is seen returning single without getting married, as He was greatly anguished by the violence in the kind of life He lived.

YOU AND THE UNIVERSE

Attachment and hatred are the seeds of karma....

Karma is the root of birth and death.

*Wise men say that the cycle of birth and death
is the cause of unhappiness.*

(UTTARADHYAYANA SUTRA)

Jain cosmological paintings illustrate this entire network of life cycles into different regions of the universe in which the soul rotates. This rotation is a direct result of one's karma - thought, feelings and actions.

Human being who oscillates between the upper and the nether worlds time and again, performs karmas when he is in the Jambudvipa, the centre of the universe. In order to liberate himself from this network he should transcend karma. This can happen by following right knowledge, right faith and right conduct as propounded by the Jinas.

The purpose of such paintings is to help people easily understand the working of karma and his own role in creating his own destiny. It also gives hope that with proper effort one can attain eternity.

The soul can after attaining absolute purity through incessant efforts during various cycles of rebirths, can reach right to the summit of this cosmos which is called the *siddhashila*, the seat of the supreme liberated souls.

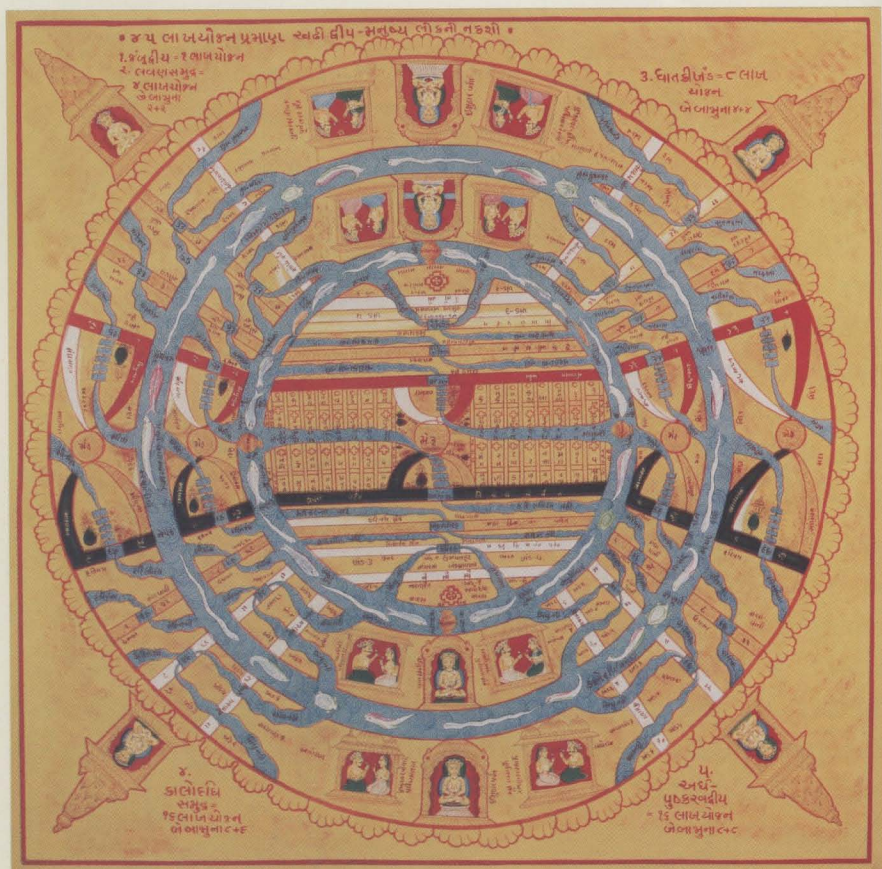
Lokapurusha, The Cosmic Being

The Torso of the *lokapurusha* represents the upper world, comprising of seven main regions where higher and the lower Vaimanika gods dwell.

Below the upper world, that is the central area around the navel, represents the middle world which though small, is the most important of the three worlds. It is here that the Tirthankaras are born to guide human beings who dwell on the Jambudvipa, the centre of this universe. This is the only place in the cosmos where liberation from the cycle of life and death is possible. Many oceans and continents, represented by blue and red lines, surround the Jambudvipa.



The lower world consisting of seven infernal regions, covers the lower part of the *lokapurusha*. The inhabitants of this world suffer untold miseries as seen in the painting.



Adhi dvipa Island Continent

This depicts the central part of the cosmos, a complex of land and water bodies. It is known as Adhidvipa or the two and a half islands. This island continent comprises of Jambudvipa in the centre surrounded by an ocean named Lavanasamudra. Beyond it is Dhatakikhanda again encircled by the Kalodadhi ocean. Surrounding all these is the huge Pushkara dvipa. The first two island and only a part of the last is inhabited by humans.

Tirthankaras are enshrined in small shrines on the northern and southern periphery of the Jambudvipa. In the entire cosmos this is the only auspicious area where emancipation is possible and where Tirthankaras are born.



Jambudvipa or Adhi dvipa

The painting depicts a close up image of the central part of the cosmic being. According to Jain cosmology, Jambudvipa (The Island of the rose apple tree) is at the centre of Madhyaloka, or the middle part of the universe, where the humans reside. It has 6 mighty mountains, dividing the continent into 7 zones. Out of them only the three zones namely Bharata Kshetra, Mahavideha Kshetra and Airavata Kshetra are known as Karma bhoomi - the land of action, where the humans reside and practice austerities if they choose to. Tirthankaras preach the doctrine here and liberation is possible exclusively on this land.

Mount Meru is the central support of Jambudvipa on top of which gods perform the ablution ceremony at the time of the birth of a Jina.

Leshya (Karmic colour)

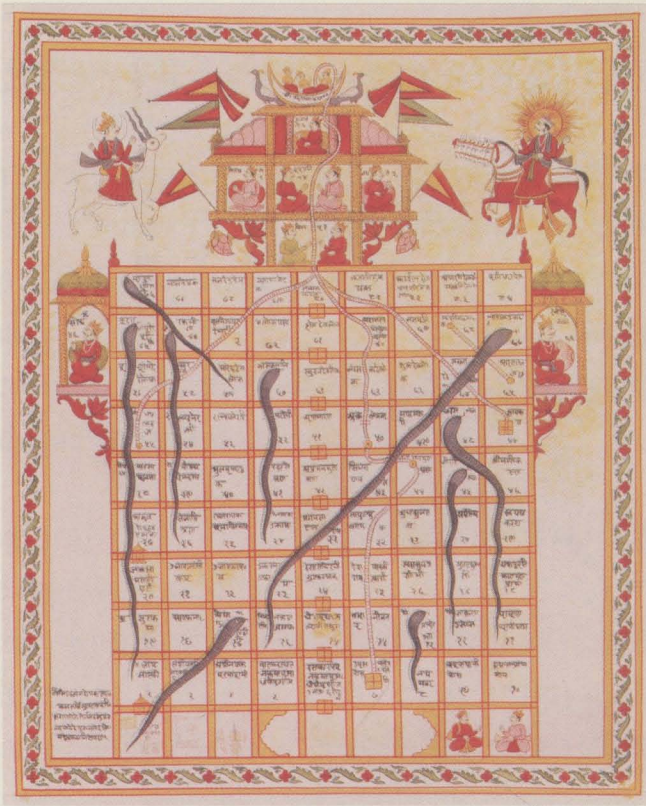


Leshya is spiritual-mental colourisation. Jain scriptures state that bondage and liberation mainly depend on one's mental state. Mental states are never uniform. They go on changing. They change to following different patterns:

1. Intense black - highly defiled and evil
2. Black that is defiled, evil
3. Grey (brinjal flower) that is less defiled, less evil
4. Yellow (rising Sun) that is evil-cum good, impure-cum pure
5. Lotus (pink lotus) that is pure, good
6. Luminous white that is best, purest highly luminous

They are illustrated by a story of six men and their behaviour. As seen in the illustration, the darkest one cuts the very root of the tree, the black one cuts off the main branches, the grey one

cuts the small branches, the yellow one cuts the branches that held the fruits, the lotus coloured one picks only the ripe fruits and the white coloured one picks only the fruit fallen on the ground.



Gyanbazi- **Game of Snakes and Ladders**

Though it has turned into a popular game, the Gyana Chaupad or Gyana Bazi is a reminder of the ultimate goal of a human being and also shows the steps leading to its attainment. It is available in Hindu, Muslim, and Jain versions. Its simplified version is played universally in India.

This Pata is a fine example of Jain version. The checkered board, representing the progress of one's life, is divided into eighty-four numbered squares, each with words pointing out the rules of conduct and their good and bad effects. The game is played by throwing dice. The ladders denote good behaviour and virtues that elevate the player to a higher level. The snakes denote downfall: the player slides down to the tail end after landing on the snake-head.

Four-tiered pavilion at the top represents the heavens. Its summit, occupied by a crescent-shaped siddhashila flanked by peacocks, is where the liberated beings live.



Stellar Positions in the Universe

The painting depicts the course of the constellations or *nakshatras* in the celestial sphere. The area around the ecliptic within which the constellations are placed is visualised as a human body. The mount Meru or Sumeru, the centre of the universe, stands in the centre surmounted by a towering flag.

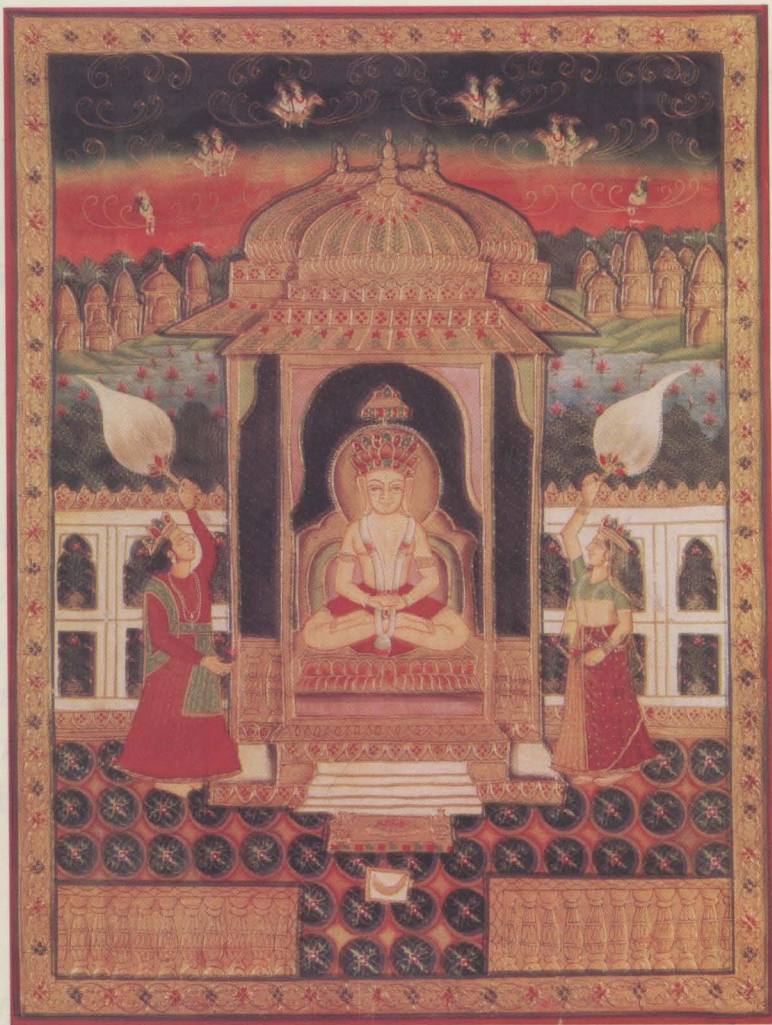
The sun and the moon are on either side of the face of the stellar being, almost appearing like his earrings. Twenty eight constellations identifiable by their shapes are painted in a sequence as they appear in the sky. The inscriptions near the constellations identify them and give the number of starts in each. The computation of the stellar position of each constellation is done in relation of the full moon as specified by the inscription behind the right ear. A longer inscription in the corner gives distances between the constellations.

WORSHIP PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Jainism recommends ways of liberating oneself from unhappiness caused by one's karmas. It consists of worship of Tirthankaras, study of scriptures, visiting pilgrimage places which commemorate the physical presence of the Jinas and other liberated beings to be inspired and strengthened by them.

Reciting prayers in the form of sutras and mantras and if need be worship and meditate upon the yantras which are visualized forms of certain mantras. These are deeply symbolical and help the devotee to discipline his mind more easily and gradually enable him to attain a state of enlightenment. Sometimes however, these are used for the fulfillment of one's material desires also.

These are some of the means a seeker can start with, The final emancipation comes through a guru, a living liberated soul whose help and blessings are invaluable for a seeker. That is why we find the illustration of the *gurupaduka*, footprints of the guru in every yantra.



Chandraprabha in Meditation

Jains worship Tirthankaras not as gods but as Enlightened, Victorious beings who are represented standing or sitting in meditation posture. The selection of a particular Jina is left to one's own choice.

Chandraprabhu, the 8th Tirthankara is seated in meditation. A large number of images of individual Jinas are available in miniature and other paintings, in stone, metal and other mediums. Jina worship is an important aspect of spiritual practice of the Jains. It induces the devotee to imbibe the Jina's divine qualities and strive to attain His perfection.



Shree Sammet Shikhar Tirtha

Shree Sammet Shikhar or Shikharji located in eastern India is one of the most important pilgrimage places of the Jains. Twenty out of twenty-four Tirthankaras spent the last days of their lives on this great mountain and attained their final liberation or moksha here.

This is commemorated by a shrine known as 'tonk', in the name of each of them. There are twenty such tonks enshrining their foot prints. The pilgrimage starts with the 'tonks' one after the other and in between there is a solitary temple of Shamaliya Parshwanatha. The temple is known as Jala mandir as it is surrounded by ponds. Parshvanatha is seated in meditation in the centre under the dome in an arched pavilion. Suvidhinatha and Mallinatha are enshrined to his right and left respectively.

A very interesting part of the painting is the identified shrines having footsteps of the 24 tirthankaras. The pathway leading to these places is quite busy with several pilgrims.

Every Jain desires to make a pilgrimage to Shikharji at least once in his lifetime.



The Temple Complex of Shatrunjaya Tirtha

Shatrunjaya tirtha, a pilgrimage centre situated near Palitana in Saurashtra is one of the five most important pilgrimage places of the Jains, the other four being Girnar, Abu, Sammeda and Ashtapada, King Bharata, the son of the first Tirthankara, Rishabhanatha, attained final emancipation or Kevalajnana on this mountain. It is the aspiration of all Jains to make a pilgrimage of Shatrunjaya at least once during his life time.

The painting shows a cluster of temples at the mount Shatrunjaya which has in all 65 temples and three hundred small shrines. It is believed that all the Tirthankaras excluding Neminatha, visited this mountain. Being associated with many great souls, the place is also known as Siddhakshetra, the place of the Siddhas.



One of the smaller Temples at Shatrunjaya

The main temple in the centre depicts Rishabhanatha seated in meditation. The pilgrimage place is full of hustle bustle with a number of lay pilgrims, monks and nuns worshipping different images in different temples in this complex.

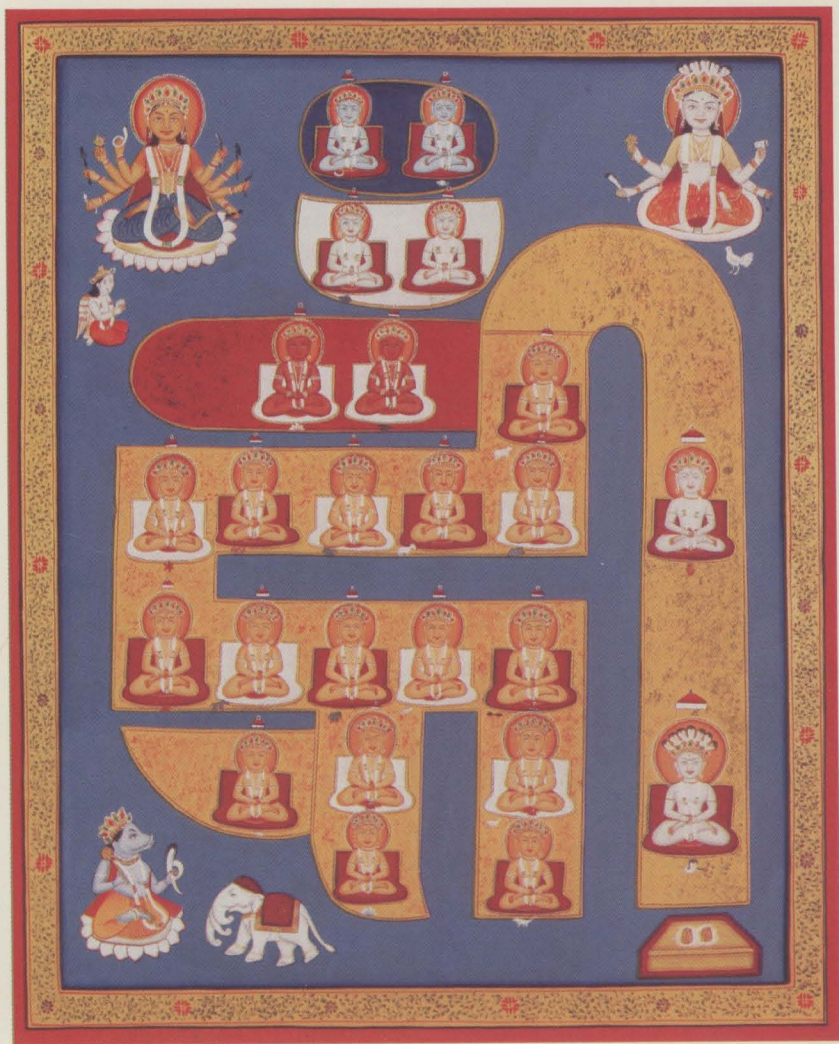
The Tirtha Patas were painted not only as a guide for the devotees wanting to make this pilgrimage but also to provide a glimpse of the sacred place to those who could not actually visit the place.



Pancha-tirthi Pata of Rishabhanatha

This *pata* is designed in the form of an eight petalled lotus mandala, in the centre of which is enthroned Rishabhanatha or Adinatha, whose *lanchana vrushabha* or bull is seated in front of Him. Four other Tirthankaras occupy the petals pointing to four cardinal directions - they are Shantinatha, Parshvanatha, Mahavira and Neminatha, all of them identified by their *lanchanas*.

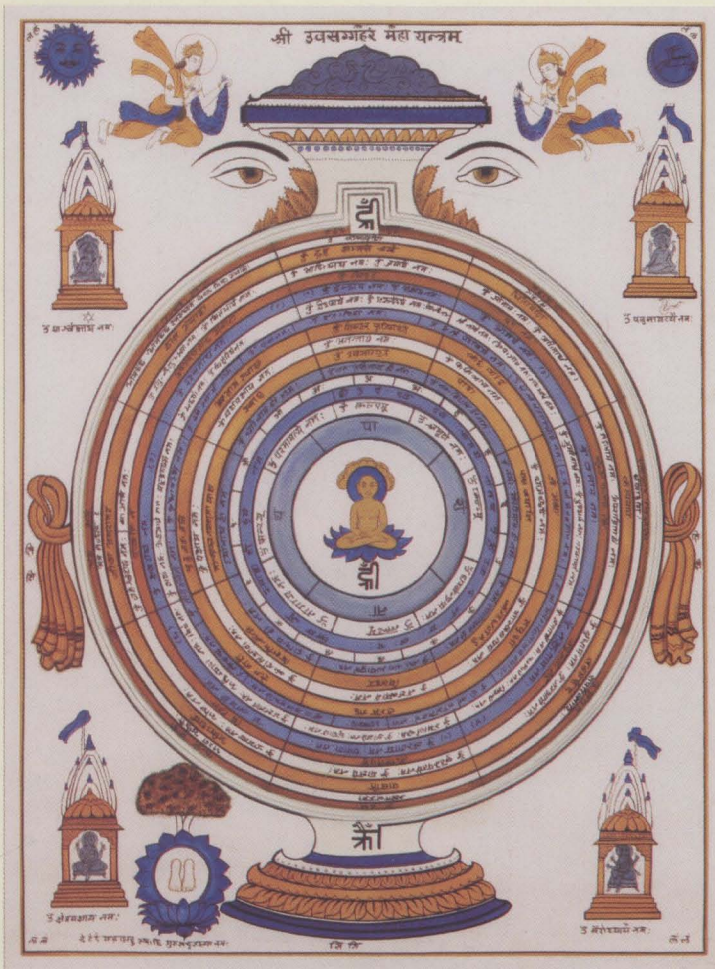
The other four petals have paintings of Ambika, Sarasvati, Ganesha and an Acharya. Two small shrines at the bottom express the devotee's gratitude to Gautamaswami who transmitted the message of Bhagawan Mahavira for the posterity. The other shrine is for the sadguru without whose grace emancipation remains only a far cry.



Rishimandala Pata

The painting depicts what generally comprises of the central part of the Rishimandala. A large hrimkara-the sacred syllable is superimposed by the images of 24 Tirthankaras all of them identified by their symbols placed in front of them.

A multi armed goddess Vaishnavi identified by Garuda seated in front of her, is seated in the top left corner of the painting, Padmavati is in the top right corner; Shakra in the bottom left and Gurupaduka is in the bottom right corner



Uvasaggahara Mahayatra

This yantra is a visual counterpart of the Uvasaggahara sutra recited generally as part of the morning worship. The sutra is an invocation of Parshvanatha for removing difficulties arising due to previous karmas.

Lord Parshvanatha is seated in Dhyana posture against a clear white circle. Around him there are seventeen concentric circles divided into eight sections and eight cardinal points.

Four small shrines in four corners enshrine Kshetrapala and other deities. The gurupaduka or the foot prints of the venerable guru are placed on a lotus under a parasol, next to Kshetrapala shrine in the left bottom corner.

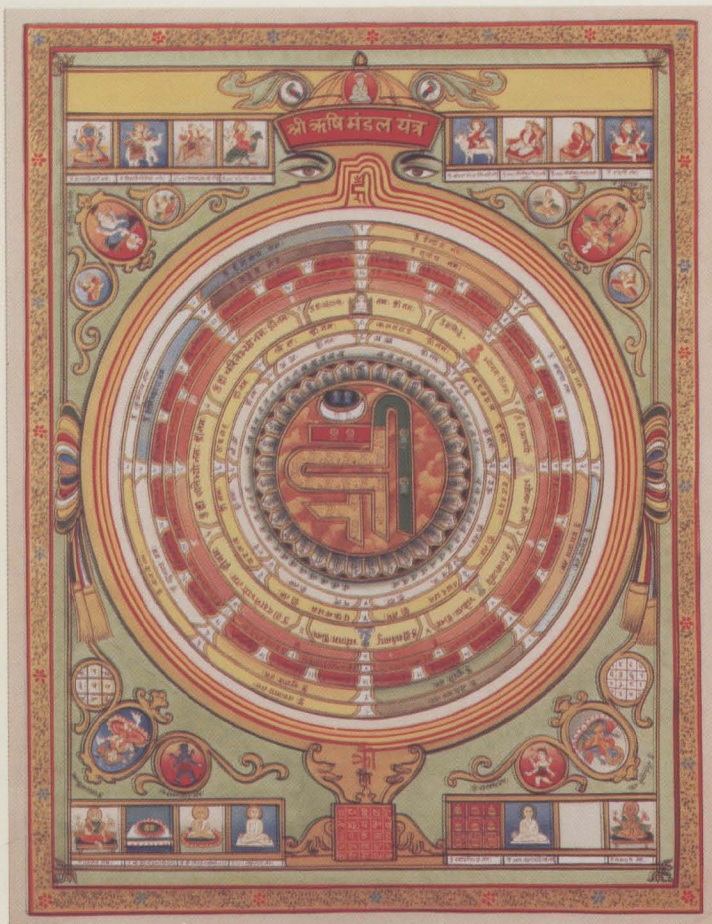
Siddhachakra Mahayantra



The central lotus incorporates symbolically the five venerable ones namely the Arihant, the enlightened one in the centre and, Siddha, the liberated one, Acharya, the Principal monk, Upadhyaya, the teacher monk and sadhu, the monk as well as right knowledge, right faith, right conduct and penance, in the eight petals.

The outer circle of petals has mantras of salutations written on alternate petals. This elaborately designed vase shaped yantra depicts salutations to Brahma, Indra and Manibhadra written on its neck whereas the base is formed of a row of shrines dedicated to the nine planets. Four shrines are installed in four corners. The top left shrine is dedicated to Shri Vimalleshvara, the right one to Chakreshvari, The lower left to Kshetrapala and lower right to a Siddha.

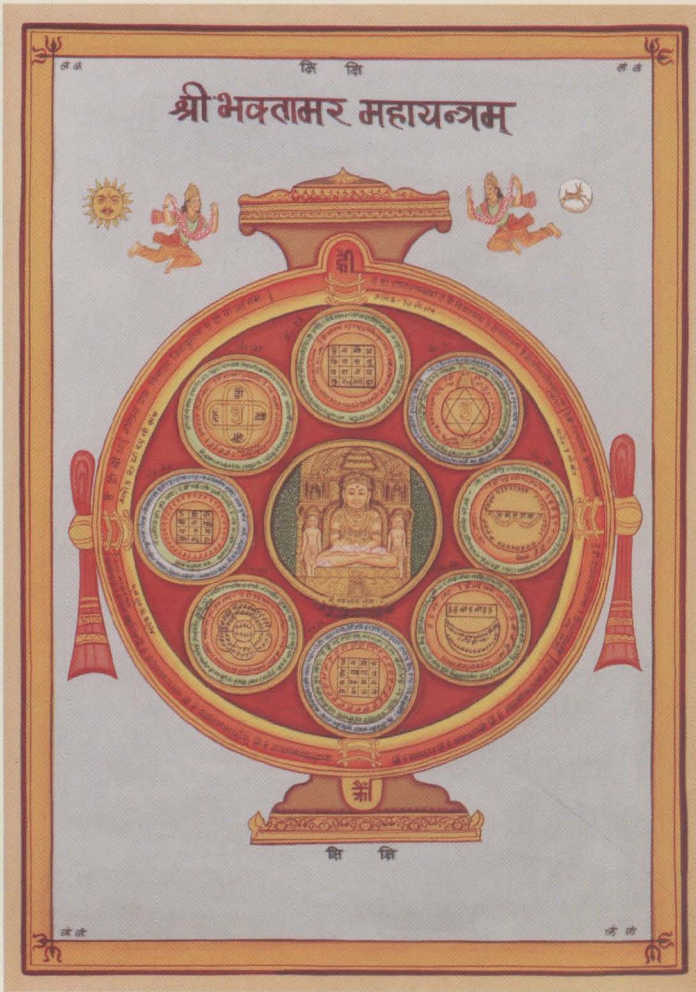
Shripala raja and his wife Mayanasundari whose legend bears testimony to the efficacy of the Siddhachakra, are standing on either side of the base of the yantra worshipping it. Siddhachakra is so popular that there are two public annual celebrations centered round it's worship.



Rishimandala Yantra

The sacred syllable hrim occupies the centre on which small images of 24 Tirthankaras are superimposed. All the concentric circles beyond the lotus have various mantras and salutations written on them. The area outside the yantra is replete with figures all of whom are identified by inscriptions.

The panel on top illustrates in each square from left to right: Aparajita, Vimalleshvara, Shasana yaksha, Yakshini, and 16 Vidyadevis (personified), Pitrus of the Tirthankaras, mothers of Tirthankaras and Jayas. Below that panel, on either side of the yantra are yaksha Dharanendra and Yakshini Padmavati. The lowest panel depicts from left to right: Jayanta, Gurupaduka, Shri Gautama Swami, 48 personified *labdhis*, and nine *nidhis*, eight mahasiddhis or great attainments, etc. Above this panel on either side of the yantra are Sarasvati and Vairochya.



Bhaktamara Mahayantra

There are very few Jaina homes without the Bhaktamara stotra book. Bhaktamara Stotra provides protection from fears -worldly or spiritual, to the devotee. It consists of 48 number of yantras for many different purposes. Generally these are only in the form of diagrams.

The prayers are addressed to Lord Rishabhadeva the first tirthankara who is installed in the centre of the yantra. Two other Jinas are standing in *kayotsarga* posture on either side of the throne of Rishabhadeva.

Around that circle is a broader of concentric circle having eight circles within it. These circles are the yantras corresponding to stanzas 17 to 24, and the outer rim gives those verses.



Brihad Surimantra Pata

Surimantra is also known as the mantraraja the king amongst mantras. Directed exclusively to spiritual attainments, the surimantra pata is given to the monk at the time of his promotion to the level of suri, by his guru. Surimantra pata is based on the Pancha Namaskara Mahamantra consisting of the salutations to five great beings namely the Omniscient one, liberated ones, preceptor monk, teacher monk and monk. This mantra is associated with Gautamaswami, the chief disciple of Mahavira whom the devotee wants to emulate by worshipping this yantra.

The image of Gautamaswami being adored by two lay disciples is installed in the centre of the yantra. The outer circle depicts the 24 Tirthankaras whereas the middle one shows worship and other activities of the common people.



Brihad Siddha Chakra

The Siddhachakra is depicted here as a full blown lotus inside two concentric circles, consisting of over a hundred petals. The five principal worship-worthy persons namely the Arhat, Siddha, Acharya, Upadhyaya and Sadhu all of whom are helpful in our voyage to self discovery, are illustrated in the centre. The Arhat or the Jina occupies the very centre of the chakra whereas the other four are placed in the petals in the direction of four cardinal points. The other four petals contain mantras related to right faith, right knowledge and right conduct and austerities.

Beyond that, one row of petals incorporates mantras of all the letters of the syllable as a source of knowledge. Interspersed in between the mantras are the images of yakshini Chakreshvari holding discs in both her hands.



Surimantra Pata

Surimantra also known as Pancha Namaskara Mahamantra is generally worshipped by monks who aim at attaining the spiritual heights of Gautamaswami one of the main disciples of Lord Mahavira. Therefore Gautamaswami occupies the central position in the whole mandala.

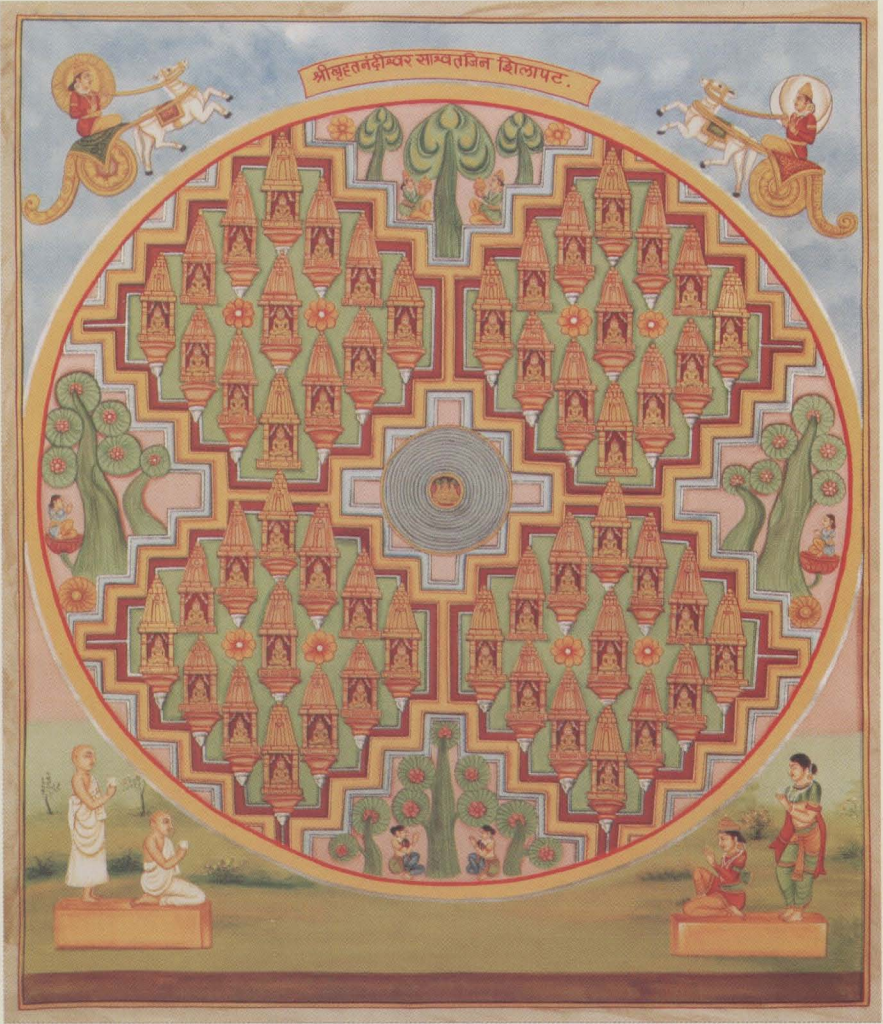
It is a big lotus mandala encircled by a panel of 24 Tirthankaras. On top of this circle is the sacred syllable Hrim. Immediately below that panel are 16 petals containing different mantras.



Central Mandala of a Surimantra Pata

The second circular panel depicts images of legendary figures worthy of salutations. The space within the two intersecting triangles in the innermost circle, has Gautamaswami seated in meditative posture.

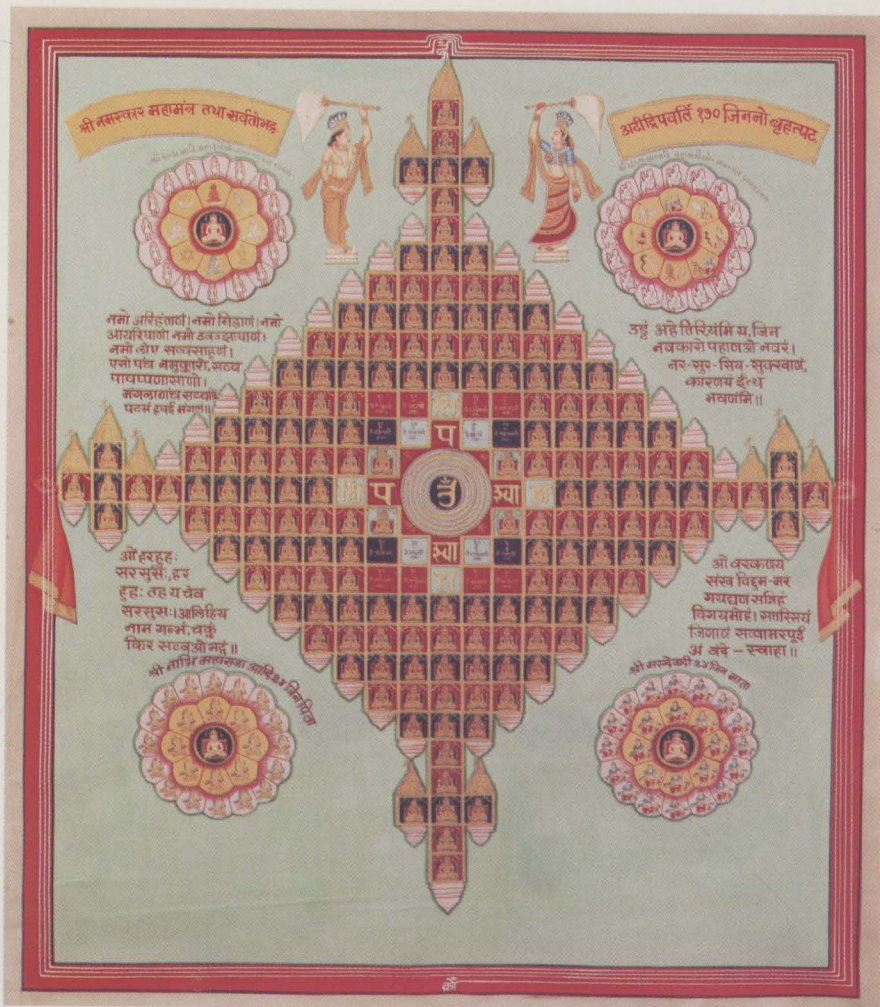
Several rows of gods, four goddesses seated in four corners, and lay worshippers - all are present outside the mandala to witness it and bless the devotee. As is customary, the gurupada, the footprints of the guru are being worshipped by a devotee.



Nandishvara Dvipa

The island called Nandishvara Dvipa is an island of delight for the gods. It is beautified with gardens of various designs in it. Gods celebrate the birth of the Tirthankaras on this island. Its composition and placement of various shrines are described in detail in the treatises on Jaina cosmology. 108 eternal statues of the Jinas adorn the Shasvata Jinalayas of the island which are surrounded by exquisite gardens and lakes.

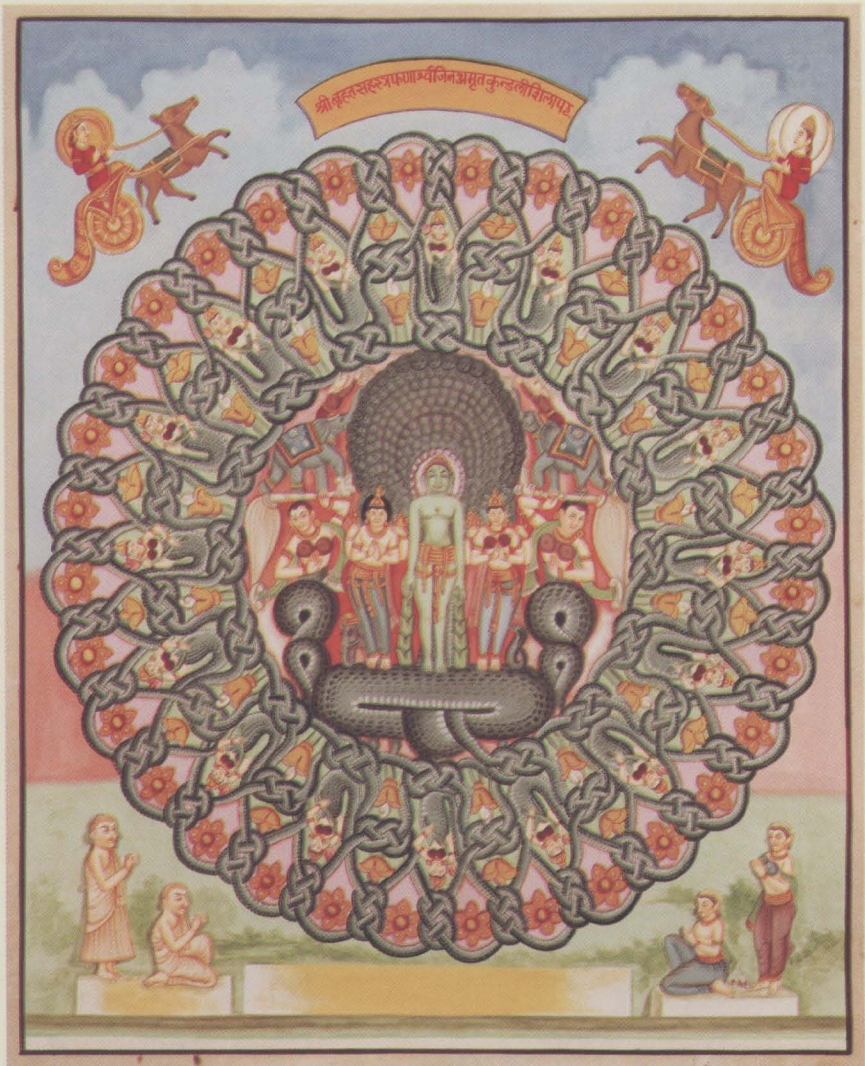
The Nandishvara Patas symbolically representing these Shashvata Jinalayas or Jinas is very popular with the Jain devotees.



Namaskara Mahamantra, Sarvatobhadra and 170 Tirthankaras

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The illustration combines the Nandishvara Dvipa shrines with the Sarvatobhadra pattern and the Namaskara Mantra in one.



Sahasrafana Parshvanatha Pata

Sahasrafana Parshvanatha literally means Parshvanatha with a thousand hoods around him.

The mandala-like composition is formed by intricately interlocking serpents around Parshvanatha who is standing in meditation with total equanimity. Dharanendra and Padmavati who are deified as minor divinities in the Jain pantheon flank him with folded hands. There are monks and devotees below standing in adoration of the Tirthankara.

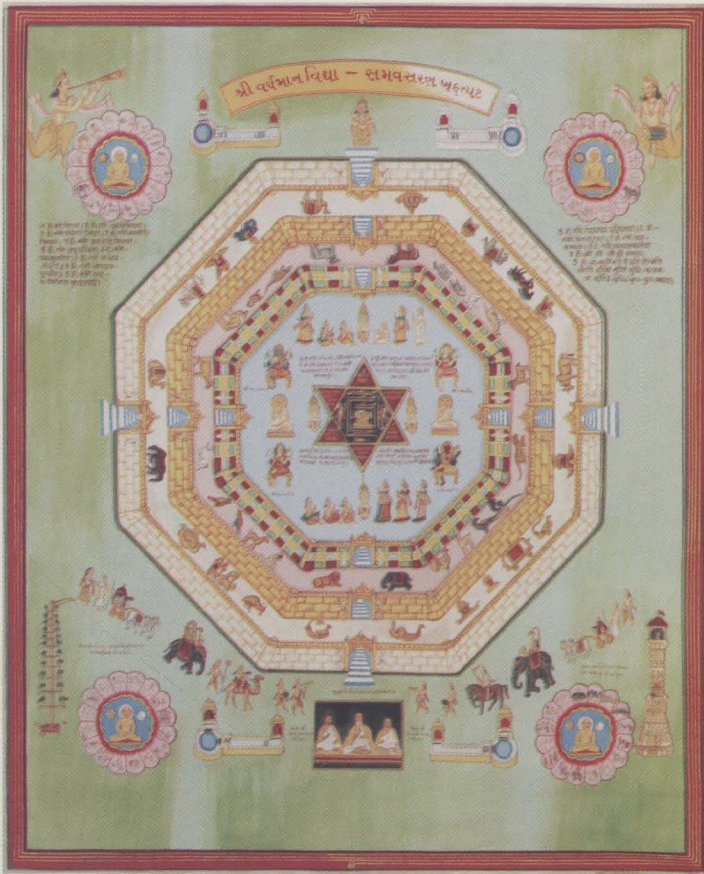
Sahasrafana Parshvanatha Pata



This cloth painting is an exquisite depiction of Lord Parshvanatha with yaksha Dharanendra and Yakshini Padmavati standing on a snake under the canopy of a thousand snake-hoods (*sahasra phana*). Below, Parshvanatha is being worshipped by an elephant and devotees.

The theme of Parshvanatha, Dharanendra and Padmavati lends itself to varied and intricate compositions. The episode took place when Parshvanatha was standing in deep meditation and Meghamalin showered torrential rains to drown him.

The serpent king Dharanendra came and spread his hood over Parshvanatha and lifted him up above the waters for safety. The Jina however is unaffected by either of them and remains steady in meditation with total equanimity.

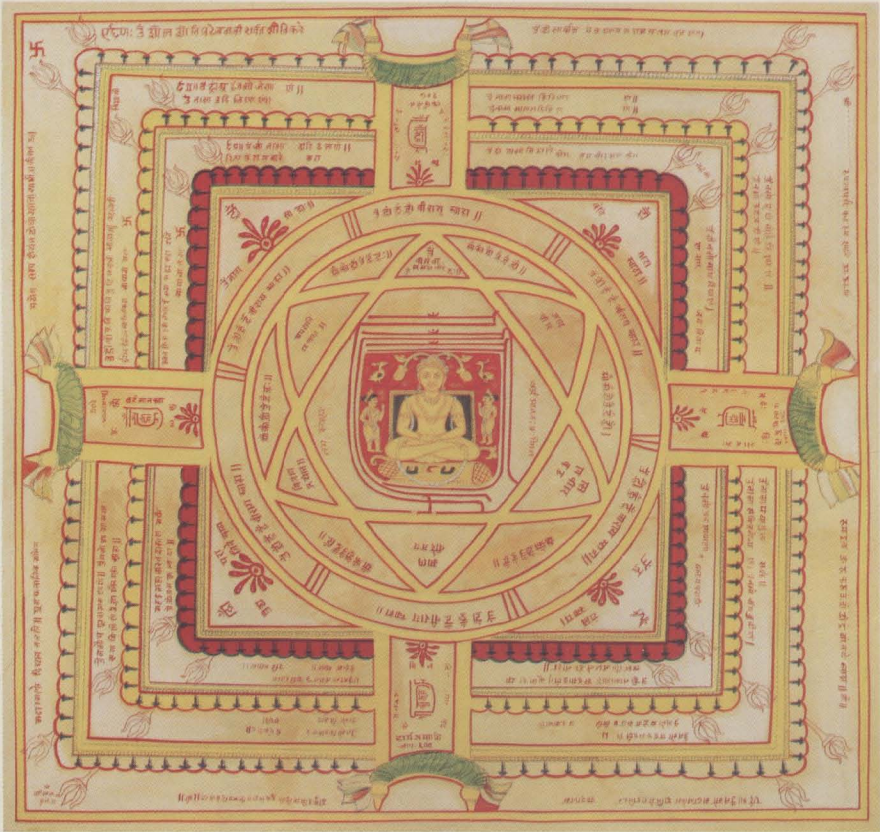


Shri Vardhamana Vidya Samavasarana Brihat Pata

This is a very interesting composition of the Samavasarana and Vardhamana Vidya which are mutually complementary.

The galleries of the Samavasarana are indicated by three forts with big gates and a flight of steps each. The innermost area is meant for gods, monks and lay worshippers all of whom are silently engaged in the worship of the Jina facing them in the top and the bottom of the panel.

The four Vidyadevis propitiated here are Nayadevi, Vinayadevi, Aparajitadevi and Jayantidevi whose images occupy the intermediate cardinal points. In the centre the two intersecting triangles make a star formation symbolizing the universe. Lord Mahavira is seated in the centre of the universe within a stylized sacred letter Hrim, facing all the four directions. Mantras recited by the Jains are written in the six empty arms of the star.

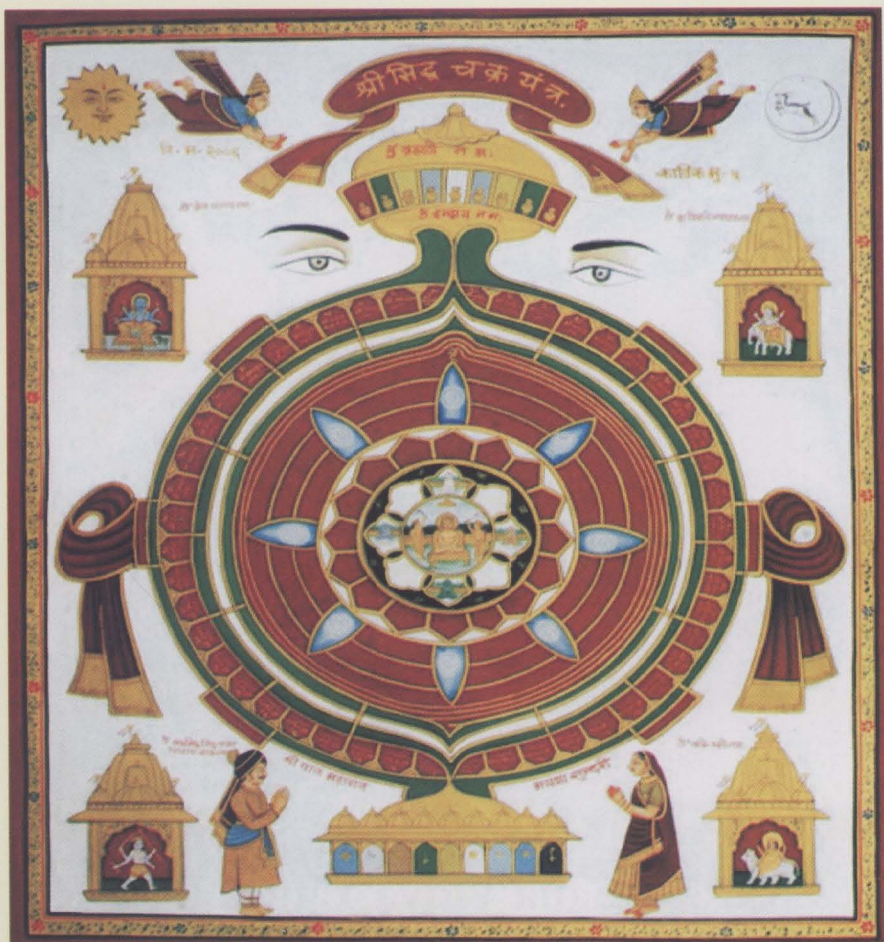


Vardhamana Vidya Yantra Pata

The basic structure of the yantra is the *bhupura* or the ground plan of a house. Like Samavasarana it has three enclosure walls opening out into four gateways in four directions. The gateways are decorated with green *toranas*. The rest of the yantra is bare without any embellishment, focusing on the main theme and purpose of the yantra.

The mantra consisting of Sacred letters Om, Hrim, Klim etc. is repeatedly written in a panel between two concentric circles within the inner enclosure wall.

Lord Mahavira to whom all the prayers are ultimately directed, presides over the centre of the yantra with the *bija* mantra Hrim largely written behind him. The four entrances also bear mantras which the devotee is instructed to repeat 108 times. All the mantras written in the yantra are to be recited again and again a certain number of times, in order to achieve the fulfillment of spiritual or even material desires.



Shri Siddha Chakra Yantra

Siddhachakra yantra is like a visualisation of the Navkara Mahamantra recited by Jains every day.

Vase-shape mandala painted in brown has Arhat or the Tirthankara in the centre. The other four venerable ones namely the liberated ones, the chief monk, the teacher monk and the monk are all seated in the petals of the four cardinal directions. The rest of the four petals are blank.

There are small shrines in all the four corners, dedicated to Ksetrapala, Vimala, a Siddha and Chakreshvari. King Shripala and queen Mayanavati are worshipping the Siddhachakra.

The fact that there are two public annual celebrations centered round the Siddhachakra worship, speaks for its popularity

Shri Sadguru charanarpanam astu

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