Jain Monumental Paintings of Ahmedabad

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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 Purana¹ there are two kinds of Tirthas namely, Manas Tirtha and the Bhauma Tritha 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 Mahabharata² 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, Dwarka 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 Sihala Mahatmya³ evolved and regarded each Tirtha as the epitome of the entire country.

2. Mahabharata, Aranyak Parvan. ch.80.
3. ob-sit.
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, Ayodhaya, Mithila, Avanti, Pratishthana, Champa(Bhagalpur), Pataliputra, Sravasti, Varanasi, Prayag, Nasik, Prabhas, Dwarka and many others.

Acharya Jinarajadasa 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 Acharya 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 undoubt-edly, the most natural surroundings for concentration. Famous among them are Saranubaya and Girnar 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 Saranubaya 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 Patas (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." These
banners are hung oriented toward the direction of the Satrunjay hills,
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.5

It is generally observed that smaller Panchatirthi Patas 6 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 in
tended 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 Tirtha Patas7 are dicussed here in
detail. These form the subject matter of this paper.

1972.
1978. col. pls. V and VI; B+W pls. 131-133. Also see Shridhar
Andhare. painted Banners on cloth: Vividha Tirtha Pata of
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, 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.

"स्वरूपशाह श्री. विष्णु महाराज संस्कृत १६६८ वर्ष बैठा क्षेत्र सित............ महाराजाधिकार तारा. अकबर प्रतिवेदक..... हैसिकियसुरी पद्मावत गीत दिनकर ....... भट्टाचार्य श्री. विजयसेन सुरिकिरणामम भट्टाचार्य श्री. रजसागर सूरि चरणानाम, युवाग भट्टाचार्य श्री. बुद्धसागर सूरि प्रमुखानेक जानना दि सदुर परिक चरणानाम उपदेशात आहिमाधवाध वत्ते पेट साल आनंद श्री. विजयसेन पाध्याय प्रावद्धार नाम ग्रहण, निबंध, निर्माण, निर्माण शा. श्री. अंतमसेन सकल मनुष्य योग्य पंचवस, पंचवस, पंचप्रलोकेश्वराहीतितानागि ? वर्षांर्त २०, विधामान व, शा१५वागर रशात्व जिन तर्थपती श्री. श्रावजय, गिरिसागर, गांगाग, अवृत्त, चंद्रप्रभु, मुनिसुक्र, श्रीजीर्णशे साधनार, च, श्री. नवर्डिक पार्थनाथ, देवकुल पाठक, मधुर, हस्तनागपुर, कलिंकुड, कलिंकुड कराकां साधूर आदि नाम थुक - सर्वविषय नाम - हमस्."

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

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, 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 farman 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 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.”

"महाराज अकबर अने जहांगीर आदर्श पाले सेनां सारी रिते मान हेतु।
अकबर आदर्श पालसी तेजस्वी सिद्धालय तीर्थंकरा पवित्रे दीप मोहि हता।"

9. ob. cit
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 Panchatirhti Pata\textsuperscript{11} of A.D. 1433, and the Vasanta Vilasa scroll of A.D. 1451\textsuperscript{12}, 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\textsuperscript{13}, 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\textsuperscript{14} painted at Ahmedabad, the Cowasji Jehangir folio of Gita Govinda\textsuperscript{15} and a set of horizontal Ragamala paintings\textsuperscript{16} published by Saryu Doshi and Tandon in Marg and the latest set of Bhagvata Purana\textsuperscript{17} discovered by the author, all

\begin{enumerate}
\item 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.
\item Norman Brown. The Vasanta Vilasa. New Haven 1963
\item Karl Khandalavala and Moti Chandra. Miniatures and sculptures from the late Sir Cowasji Jehangir Bart. Bombay 1965. col. pl.D. Fig. 69.
\item An Illustrated MS. of Bhagvata Purana. (Private collection.) Unpublished.
\end{enumerate}
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. 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 number in 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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and historic details which can be interpreted. It shows a number of temples, *Kundas*, lakes and other details. The last register has various other *Tirithas* including *Astagada* and *Sammeta Sikhara*. The arrangement here is so complex that it becomes rather difficult to identify. However, the following: Sri *Satrunjaya*, *Girinara*, Taranga, *Arbutha*, *Chandraprabhu*, Muni *Suvarata*, Sri *Giraila Parsvanath*, *Kalavridhi*, Karahataka, Sehore 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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