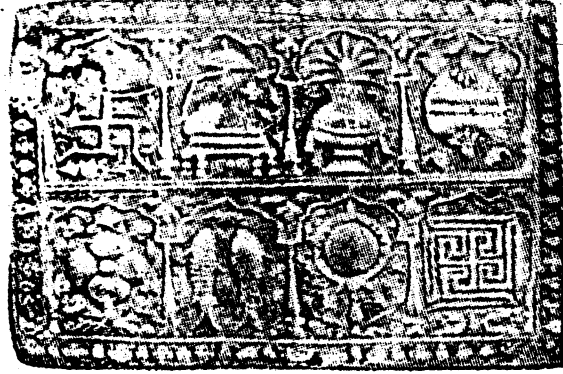


# An Unpublished Asta-Mangala Patta at Bhagalpur

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The *aṣṭa-maṅgala-paṭṭa* holds an important place in the Jaina pantheon. Small platters of these *aṣṭa-maṅgalas*, be it in silver or in bronze, are dedicated in the Jain temples and worshipped along with other Jain metal images in the sanctum.<sup>1</sup> According to the Jaina philosophy, the *bhāva* worship<sup>2</sup> (mental attitude) has been mentioned as a best way for attainment of emancipation. The idol-worship was, however, introduced later on for the lay-worshippers who could not perform the worship without it. Due to this reason we find references of symbolic worship, such as of trees, rivers, *aṣṭa-maṅgalas*, *vrkṣas*, *nāgas*, *mukundas* etc. in the early Jaina canons.<sup>3</sup> For instance, the famous *caitya* of Purnabhadra<sup>4</sup> situated inside the glorious city of Cāmpa (present Champanagar, a suburb of Bhagalpur), had no structural shrine and here possibly the tree itself with *śīla-paṭṭa* is the *yakṣāyatana*. The tradition of this symbolic worship is still continued in the Jaina religion, but in the form of *aṣṭa-maṅgalas* in general.

Before going into description of the Bhagalpur silver *aṣṭa-maṅgala paṭṭa*, it will be better to know its antiquity and traditions in brief. The *Aupapātika-sūtra*,<sup>5</sup> an important and ancient Svetāmbara canonical text, refers to the *aṣṭa-maṅgalas* as *svastika*, *śrīvatsa*, *namdyāvarta*, *vardhamānaka*, *pūrṇa-ghaṭa*, *darpaṇa* and *matsya*. These are often referred to in Jaina texts, including canonical works, as decorating tops of architraves or ramparts, or placed on *caitya*-trees and platforms or painted on walls and so on.<sup>6</sup> Hemacandra also notes that the eight auspicious symbols were represented on *baṭi-paṭṭas* or offering slabs.<sup>7</sup> The Digambara tradi-

<sup>1</sup> Shah, U. P., *Studies in Jaina Art* (Benaras-1955), pp. 109-112.

<sup>2</sup> Upadhyaya, A. N. (ed), *Brhatkathakosa of Harisena* (931A.D.), p. xxxvii.

<sup>3</sup> Jain, J. C., *Life in Ancient India as depicted in Jain Canons*, (Bombay-1964).

<sup>4</sup> Thakur, U., *Studies in Jainism and Buddhism in Mithila* (Benaras-1964), p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> Ghosh, A. (ed), *Jaina Art and Architecture*, vol. III, (New Delhi-1975), p. 489.

<sup>6</sup> *Adi-Purana*, Parva 22 verses 143, 185, 219, etc.

<sup>7</sup> *Trisasti Salaka Purusa Caritra* I, p. 190 and note 238.

highly influenced by the text prescribed in the *Aupapātika-sūtra*. A number of flowers with stalk and leaves have been casted around the *svastika* mark which gives a beautiful look. It is followed by a *supraṭiṣṭha*, the auspices seat. The beautiful couch has an artistic umbrella over it. Further, depiction of a *pūrṇa-ghaṭa* (full vase) with leaves gives a natural look. The fourth and last auspices symbol in the upper panel shows a *vardha-mānaka* (a powder flask). The lower panel starts with a *puṣpadāma* symbol. The full blossomed flower presents an artistic look. It is encircled by small flowers, having stalk and leaves. The sixth *aṣṭa-maṅgala* symbol, the *matsya-yugma* (a pair of fish), is superb among all from the decorative point of view. It looks alive. It is followed by a round mirror with decorative border and artistic handle. The last symbol shows a *nandīāvarta*; its nine points have beautifully been casted without any fault. The author of this paper thinks that this beautiful silver platter had been manufactured in the ancient city of Campapura. From regular archaeological excavations<sup>14</sup> at the Champanagar, stone moulds for making ornaments were unearthed. It refers to a flourishing industry of jewellery at this place. It seems that it belonged to the ancient Jain temple which was demolished during the medieval times. It was preserved by the local Jaina community because of its small and handy size. Often Jaina ladies prepare in the hall of worship such eight symbols on platters with uncooked husked rice.

<sup>14</sup> Sinha, B. P., 'Some rare Antiquities from Recent Excavations in Bihar', *Archaeology and Art in India* (New Delhi-1978), pp. 46-47.

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