

Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION

THE SHASTRA BHANDARAS OF VIDARBHA

This thesis ventures into the premises of Deccani- Jain painting narrowed down to Vidarbha, in the northeastern corner of the Deccan. The paintings in question, located from several Digambara Jain strongholds in the Vidarbha hinterland, mainly from the *shastra bhandaras* of the four and half centuries old town of Karanja, a prominent religious center of the migrant Digambara Jain community south of the Vindhya mountains, display an inconsistency of style and thematic content. Nevertheless, this stray heterogeneous group of paintings call for attention as representative of what is known as the School of Deccan¹ in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The aforesaid group of paintings, produced for Digambara patrons, stands distinctly apart from Svetambara paintings executed in overwhelming numbers in centers in Gujarat and Rajasthan, the bastion of the Jain manuscript tradition, and is also at variance in terms of thematic content and style with the illustrated Digambara manuscripts in *shastra bhandaras* from western and northern India. They exemplify a kind of ‘crossroad positioning’ with exposure to diverse socio political and cultural currents.

Navigating uncharted courses of Deccani painting in itself is a formidable task, the sheer paucity of material rendering it difficult, if not impossible, to piece together a cohesive tradition of painting in the region. The corpus of material from Vidarbha territory forms a multiform group, encompassing illustrated manuscripts and paintings executed between the late sixteenth and the late eighteenth centuries. An extraordinary cloth scroll among the collection, delineating the *pancakalyanakas* of the Tirthankara Rishabha holds the unique position of being the only known painted document of its kind in terms of magnitude and theme. It is executed in a style identified as that of the ‘Aurangabad school’² that stemmed from the coalescence of Rajasthani, Deccani and Mughal idioms. The collection also includes an illustrated manuscript of the ‘Yashodhara carita’, whose colophon reveals it having been painted in 1636 CE

at Idar in north Gujarat, the painter's name being Nanji. Painted in a highly eclectic style, it borrows liberally from the Caurapancasika, early Mewar and Popular Mughal schools. The manuscript's presence in a destination far removed from its original locale is not an isolated example, the Karanja *bhandaras* also horde some rare works such as a manuscript of what appears to be a compendium of 'Vasudevahindi' and 'Trisasti salaka purusa carita' painted in the western Indian idiom and datable to the late sixteenth century. Manuscripts such as these located in Vidarbha and painted somewhere in Gujarat or Rajasthan were obviously results of accretion and mediation on the part of some external forces that facilitated their transportation to faraway destinations. These agencies have been identified as those of the *bhattarakas*, the pontifical heads of religious establishments known as *pithas* that were established all over Gujarat, Rajasthan, north and central India as well as the Deccan.

The *bhattarakas* emerge as the principal motivating force in the religious and cultural outfit of Digambara Jain society. As authoritarians at the helm of religious and administrative affairs of the seats of power, their duties were three pronged- commissioning of manuscripts, installation of images and undertaking of pilgrimages. A strategically designed program of 'organized dana' was the most ambitious maneuver of the *bhattarakas* in their newly etched roles, imperative as much for the empowerment of the sect in a relatively alien land as to enhance their own status as religious overlords. With the *bhattaraka*- laity nexus concretized, the former took charge of the spiritual enlightenment of the latter. *Dana*, which originally implied simple acts such as offering alms to monks and nuns came to be interpreted in the broadest terms to include building of lavish temples and commissioning of images often made of costly materials³. Manuscripts accumulated in large numbers as an outcome of this benevolent act and both *bhattaraka* and devotee succumbed to the temptation of perpetuating their names for posterity by ensuring the inscription of their names on the object of *dana*.⁴ Individual wealth poured into temple coffers, turning into community

wealth; euphemized as *dana* it assured the smooth functioning of the *puṭha* and helped build up its identity.

The thesis, therefore dwells on a number of issues relevant to the in depth study of Digambara Jain painting in a region conventionally considered culturally arid. Documentation of some hitherto unknown manuscripts and a reappraisal of a body of published documents constitute the core of visual material upon which the thesis is structured. As the chosen area of study typifies the set of problems associated with 'rarified zones' bridled with numerous lacunae of information, it was necessary to employ other tools such as epigraphic and literary evidences to fathom the intricacies of the Digambara Jain 'School of Deccan'. Valuable data gleaned from such sources aided in a better understanding of the socio cultural milieu of Vidarbha and its repercussions on art production. It instigated inquiries into the realm of cultural politics of Digambara society in northeastern Deccan that have given the 'cultural products'⁵ of the region its unique character

CRITIQUE OF JAIN-DECCANI SCHOLARSHIP

Scholarship in the field of Jain painting, right from the times of Dr. Ananda Coomarswamy's essay on Jain painting as early as 1914 CE and the subsequent publication of 'A descriptive catalogue of Jain manuscripts and painted documents in the collection of museum of Fine Arts, Boston' in 1924 CE, has been focused on the study of manuscripts and paintings executed for the Svetambara community and gleaned from their *shastra bhandaras*. This includes the catalogue of rare and inaccessible manuscripts from Svetambara repositories published by Sarabhai Nawab, 'Jain Chitrakalpa drama'. The book features an essay on 'Jain monastic culture and paleography' by Sri. Muni Punyavijayaji, the erudite and visionary Jain scholar who was also the guiding force behind the establishment of L.D Institute of Indology, initially begun by a gift of over ten thousand manuscripts by him and at present being the single largest public collection of manuscripts and paintings, mostly of Svetambara origin. The exhaustive work 'Jain Miniature Painting from Western India' by Dr. Motichandra again encompasses Svetambara manuscripts, painted on palm

leaf and paper, as also paintings executed on wood and cloth, elaborating on their principal themes and techniques. Another major work in the area of Jain painting is 'New Documents of Jain painting' wherein its authors, Dr Motichandra and Shri U. P. Shah, survey numerous Jain and non Jain manuscripts from varied collections, focusing on painting activity outside Gujarat in Malwa and north India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. U.P.Shah's 'Treasures of Jain bhandaras' and 'More Documents of Jain painting' unravel more material from Jain repositories, throwing light on new centers of painting such as Surat and Ahmedabad. This material illuminates the fact that the hieratic Western Indian idiom, by the end of the sixteenth century, was paving the way for a number of styles including the Popular Mughal, Sirohi, Marwar and a highly regional 'popular style'⁶. The last was prevalent from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries wherein influences range from echoes of idioms as disparate as the Popular Mughal to the folk. Manuscripts such as the 'Sripala rasa' and 'Vijaya seth- Vijaya sethani rasa' are a case in point. A similar style, evinced in manuscripts such as 'Sri Chandra rasa' and 'Devi Mahatmya', has been referred to as Gujarati school⁷ of seventeenth-eighteenth century in Surat. U.P. Shah also draws attention to non Jain manuscripts such as the illustrated manuscript of Kiratarjunyam painted in a folkish style with distinct Mughal and Deccani elements in the costumes, painted at Khargon in the Malwa region, and dated 1768 CE, bringing into focus painting activities in isolated pockets outside Gujarat and Rajasthan.

A large number of *vijnaptipatras* or letters of invitation issued to monks to participate in religious activities during the *pariyushana parva*, have also been dealt with in the above works, located from centers like Sojat and Jodhpur, recalling varied idioms such as the Sirohi and the so called 'popular style' in and around Surat. The earliest, and perhaps the finest example of such a document, is the Svetambara Jain *vijnaptipatra*, letter of invitation, sent out to the monks by the laity, painted by Ustad Salivahana in 1610 CE in the Popular Mughal style, discussed at length by Dr. Pramod Chandra in his article 'Ustad Salivahana and the development of Popular Mughal Art.'⁸ Besides being the

most significant representative of the Popular Mughal school, this gigantic scroll also focuses on patronage of painting from the Svetambara community from Agra, outside the territories of Gujarat and Rajasthan in Western India. Besides the *vijnaptipatras*, other forms of Jain painting such as *vividha tirtha patas* and *tantra patas*, scrolls describing sites of pilgrimage and cosmological charts respectively, have been dealt with by Dr Sridhar Andhare and represent another class of Jain painting – ‘monumental painting’⁹ as distinct from the miniature tradition. Significant in the field of Jain painting has been the scholarship of others such as Karl Khandalavala, V Norman Brown, Rai Krishna Das, N.C Mehta, O.C. Ganguly and M.R. Majumdar. The extensive research undertaken in the realm of Jain painting has focused essentially on paintings of Svetambara origin as followers of this sect were unequivocally its chief patrons.

Digambara painting, in comparison to works executed for Svetambara patrons is not merely relatively limited but also widely scattered, the earliest of the Digambara manuscripts, the ‘Shatkhandagama’, datable to 1112 CE and executed on palm leaf, being discovered by Prof. Hiralal Jain in the *shastra bhandaras* of Mudbidri in Karnataka. Some manuscripts of the Digambara Jains were subsequently brought to light by scholars, the ‘Mahapurana’ from the Digambara Naya Mandir, Delhi, dated 1420 CE,¹⁰ discovered by Dr. Motichandra, being one of them. The credit of bringing into limelight illustrated Digambara Jain manuscripts from relatively unknown *bhandaras* goes to Dr Saryu Doshi who has unraveled hitherto unexplored works¹¹ from several temple repositories across the country, in Gujarat, Rajasthan, North India and the Deccan. These manuscripts display a range of styles varying from the Western Indian idiom to the Gujarati, the Caurapancasika to the Popular Mughal, and Sirohi and Surat styles to the Deccan. This includes the incomplete manuscript of Adipurana of 1404 CE, executed in Delhi, Pasanaha cariyu painted at Gwalior in 1441 CE, Adipurana of c 1450-1475 CE, and Yashodhara carita dated 1494 CE, subsequently published¹² while another important manuscript of the Mahapurana dated 1540 CE, was published by U.P. Shah & Dr Motichandra¹³

Dr. Doshi's relentless quest for illustrated Digambara manuscripts led to *bhandaras* in Karanja in the Deccan which yielded some unusual manuscripts that do not conform to any known school but for which Doshi prefers the nomenclature 'Sirohi'¹⁴ as certain stylistic traits affiliate the group of paintings to this intriguing school on the fringes of Mewar and Gujarat. One of her most significant finds in the Deccan is doubtlessly the *pancakalyanaka* cloth scroll from Karanja which is a product of the osmosis of styles that occurred in the second half of the seventeenth century when the Rajasthani *kalam* came into contact with the Deccani *kalam*.¹⁵ Doshi suggests its place of execution as Karanja, its eclectic style characteristic of the 'Aurangabad school' of the second half of the seventeenth century. Aurangabad's significance as a center of painting was brought to notice by the same author when she located, in a collection in Rajasthan, a manuscript of the *Rasamanjari*¹⁶ whose colophon mentions it having been painted in Aurangabad in 1650 CE for a Mewar chieftain.

The need to draw attention to the Vidarbha manuscripts was sparked off by a chance acquaintance with the manuscript of the 'Sugandhadasami katha' in a Digambara Jain *bhandara* at Nagpur many years ago, its curious hybrid style, conforming to no known school of painting, and yet imbued with a distinct identity and naïve charm of its own, had the researcher intrigued and thus begun a quest for more visual material in Vidarbha region. Documents such as the *pancakalyanaka* scroll published earlier by Dr. Saryu Doshi¹⁷ were clear pointers to the fact that painters did receive patronage in Vidarbha from Digambara Jains. This trail led to examining the possibilities of the existence of a school of painting in this region. There followed the uphill task of scouring various Digambara *bhandaras* for illustrated manuscripts and paintings that could be identified as products of this part of the Deccan.

The material presented in the thesis is the outcome of exploring various *shastra bhandaras* all over Vidarbha, in the course of which Karanja emerged as the principal site, the Senagana and Balatkara temples in the town yielding the bulk of the paintings and manuscripts documented, many of them unpublished and

some, like the illustrated manuscript of the ‘Yashodhara carita’ executed at Balapur in Vidarbha in 1736 CE, brought into light by the researcher for the first time. The medley of manuscripts and painted scrolls which range from the exquisitely painted *pancakalyanaka pata* dated to c. 1680 CE to the crude ‘Adityavara vrata katha’ datable to 1693 CE, poses numerous questions regarding the extent of art activity and forms of patronage in Vidarbha in the northeastern Deccan. It also raises enquiries into the degree of ‘Deccani’ influence in these works of art. Considering that some of the Dīgambara manuscripts were indeed products of the Deccani soil, to what extent does the ‘Deccani’ idiom play a role in them? What are the parallels and distinctions between painting patronized by Jains and Hindus in seventeenth and eighteenth century Deccan?

Inroads into the scholarship of Deccani painting were made by scholars like Stella Kramrisch followed by Herman Goetz, Douglas Barrett and Basil Gray since which a substantial wealth of information has been integrated on the subject. Marc Zebrowski’s ‘Deccani Painting’¹⁸ is a major work on painting in the Deccan and provides exhaustive accounts of the painting traditions in the courts of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda that combined Islamic, Iranian and local influences to produce works of a highly refined, lyrical quality. The book also offers valuable insights into the painting activity patronized by lesser known courts of both Hindu and Muslim rulers in Hyderabad, Bidar, Shorapur, Kurnool and Adoni, among others. In addition to the well documented information on the schools of south Deccan, painting activity in the northern Deccan has also been dealt with at length, and includes the Ragamala folios probably painted for a Hindu king in the seventeenth century, now scattered in various collections.

The city of Aurangabad, the headquarters of the Mughal forces of Aurangzeb in the Deccan, emerges as an important center of painting around the seventeenth century, where as mentioned earlier, the celebrated ‘Rasamanjari’ was painted for a prince from the minor branch of the Sisodiyas of Mewar. Another Ragamala set, as also a manuscript of the ‘Gita Govinda’ and

curiously, the paintings of women executed on glass panels from a palace in Ghanerao, display stylistic affinities with the 'Rasamanjari', all of these fusing Rajput, Mughal and Deccani elements to produce a style which may be unmistakably identified as that of Aurangabad. At times, the Deccani influence appears to have been overpowering, and notwithstanding the debate as regards to its place of execution, Aurangabad or Mewar¹⁹ the 'Kishkindha kanda' of the Ramayana painted for Rana Jagat Singh of Mewar in 1653 CE displays how certain Deccani features of composition, figure types and color palette were readily assimilated in the Rajasthani school. Painting activity however sporadic, also continued in centers such as Burhanpur and Ellichpur in northern Deccan, the former a prominent political base and center of cotton textiles, the latter, the capital of the Imad Shahi rulers of Berar. Painting activity in the Deccan in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from smaller Hindu courts of Wanaparty, Gadwal and Shorapur, as well as Rajahmundry have been documented by Jagdish Mittal²⁰ Mittal has also briefly discussed the significance of Aurangabad as a center of painting in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, citing the example of the illustrated manuscript of Bahar Danish by Inayatullah., painted in 1713 CE during the reign of the Mughal viceroy Dawud Khan Panni, at Aurangabad.²¹

The unstable political climate of the Deccan and dearth of uninterrupted patronage in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contributed little in helping in the development of a distinctive school in the region, though painting continued for the Marathas in modest sized ateliers in Pune and Nagpur. Maratha patronage has been taken into consideration from the point of view of its geographical proximity and the fact that it is contemporaneous to the area of research. The earliest published document on Maratha painting, an illustrated manuscript of 'Sakuntala' dated 1789 CE, located at Nagpur, was brought into light by Adris Banerjee²² It displays a style that borrows heavily from the schools of Rajasthan while the figure types and costumes are decidedly regional and suggests that the manuscript despite being discovered in the collection of the Bhosala house of Nagpur, could have been painted during the reign of Mudhoji,

though he does not rule out the possibilities of the manuscript having been painted at Pune, considering the political ties of the two ruling houses of Nagpur and Pune. Maratha painting, which encompasses both the mural and the miniature tradition represents a highly eclectic style with influences from the late schools of Rajasthan combined with certain regional idioms. A profusion of manuscripts have been discovered from Maratha courts and documented in works like 'Manuscript painting in the Deccan' by Dr. Usha Ranade²³, the work being largely a kind of descriptive catalogue of assorted manuscripts which leaves one clueless regarding the form of patronage, as well as issues relating to stylistic manifestations and chronology. The tradition of murals, which appears to have been highly popular in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Deccan has been dealt with by Dr. Kamal Chavan²⁴ in her doctoral thesis. Both these works concentrate on the painting traditions of western Deccan, from where one also chances upon isolated manuscripts such as the 'Nasik Ragamala' with its distinctive regional characteristics published in M.S. Mate and Usha Ranade in a monograph bearing the same title.²⁵ The former is also credited with a comprehensive study of mural painting executed in a Digambara Jain temple at Jamod²⁶ on the fringes of Vidarbha, which again displays stylistic affiliations with schools of Rajasthan, including Malwa. Scarcely any published document of painting in the eastern Deccan, the domain of the Bhosalas, exists. Among these, the illustrated manuscript of Jnanesvari dated 1763 CE²⁷ and once housed in a private collection in Nagpur is significant. A highly ornate 'Bhagavata Purana'²⁸ executed for the Bhosalas and presently in the collection of the Govt Museum in Nagpur, is another fine example of patronage extended to manuscript painting. Besides these, most of the illustrated manuscripts and scrolls executed for the Bhosala ruling house, now scattered amongst the descendents and the Govt museum, have gone unnoticed. Some of them show strong stylistic affiliations with painting from the western Deccan, and almost always deal with the same themes such as the Bhagavata Purana and Devi Mahatmya, while there are others which display an overpowering influence of the Mughal idiom including the predilection for chiaroscuro and perspective.

The visual material available from the Deccan indicates that painting activity in the region had always been sporadic, lacking continuity and cohesiveness, and involving itinerant artists mostly hailing from Rajasthan. It is only in the territories dominated by the Muslims that a homogenous, integrated style is observed, while painters working at the Hindu courts arbitrarily assimilated Rajasthani and Mughal idioms, combining them with certain regional traits.

While tackling unexplored visual material, aids such as epigraphs and literary sources prove to be valuable tools of investigation and reveal more beneath a casual reference to a person, place or period. Significant from the point of view of cultural studies is the seminal work ‘Bhattaraka Sampradaya’ by Dr Vidyadhar Johrapurkar²⁹. It is the maiden study of its kind on the origin and development of the *bhattaraka* or monastic system and its relevance in the socio-religious make up of Digambara society from the twelfth to the early twentieth century. The book elaborates on the genealogy of the various seats of power of these pontifical heads and deals with the nature of their duties, which include accounts of installations and consecration of images, making extended journeys to pilgrimage places and writing and commissioning of manuscripts. It also alludes to the *bhattarakas*’ interests in activities of temple building, image making and patronizing illustrated manuscripts³⁰. The *bhattarakas*, for all purpose, appear to be the highest authority in the socio-religious set up of the Digambaras and their well entrenched network of *pithas* or seats of power, their inter relationship, the mode of pontifical duties and their association with the laity facilitate in comprehending the complexities of Digambara painting in general and that pertaining to the Vidarbha region in particular.

Johrapurkar’s other significant contribution from the point of view of this thesis is the recent publication ‘Baghelwar Jati ka Itihas’³¹ concerning the history of one of the most prominent and enterprising of the Digambara Jain clans, the Baghelwars, and gives crucial insights into the migration of Digambara families from their homeland Rajasthan to the Deccan as early as the fifteenth century, their relationship with the *bhattarakas* and varied acts of piety including grand

consecration ceremonies for installation of images, commissioning of manuscripts and visits to pilgrimage sites

JAIN PRESENCE IN VIDARBHA : KARANJA AS A CENTRE OF ART PRODUCTION

Jainism had flourished in Vidarbha as early as the eighth century CE as some interesting finds, notably the hoard of bronzes from a well at Rajnapur Khunkhimi indicate. Vestiges from various sites including images of Tirthankaras as also the Antariksa Parsvanatha temple at Sirpur support the fact that the religion was fairly widespread in this part of the Deccan. This could well be the first phase of Jainism in Vidarbha, ebbing sometime around the twelfth century CE.

The second phase which commenced with the migration of Digambara Jains from Rajasthan as well as from Bundelkhand and Malwa, in quest of brighter business prospects and their settlement in various towns dotting the Deccan from the fifteenth century, witnessed its peak at Karanja, the nerve center of the Digambara sect in the Vidarbha region. The migrant community while consolidating their bases in the new milieu, ensured that the vital link with their homeland was not snapped, and contacts with the home bases continued by the way of business transactions and the inflow and outflow of people on religious grounds.

The role of the *bhattarakas* in this connection remains a crucial one, and to them goes the credit of establishing various pontifical seats in the Deccan, they were also instrumental in initiating the participation of the laity in various activities such as installation of images, copying and gifting of manuscripts and undertaking pilgrimages to sites in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Karnataka.³² They were themselves erudite scholars and authors of number of texts.³³

The Digambara Jain *shastra bhandaras* in Karanja, Nagpur, Anjangaon, Achalpur and Sirpur have a rich collection of manuscripts, of which only a handful are illustrated, with most of the paintings and illuminated manuscripts preserved in the *shastra bhandaras* of Karanja. Significant among them is the cloth scroll depicting the life of the first Tirthankara Rishabhanatha. Its

uniqueness lies in its being the only known document exclusively devoted to a particular theme – the *pancakalyanaka* or five auspicious events, though its unusual length, another remarkable feature, was not exactly uncommon for cloth scrolls, as *patas* or scrolls of considerable length such as *vynaptipatras* and *vividha tirtha patas*, painted in Gujarat and Rajasthan are found in abundance. Painted with a certain élan, it simultaneously recalls various Rajasthanī idioms such as Mewar, Bundi and Bikaner, and also incorporates features that are typically Deccanī, and is representative of the Aurangabad school of painting in the late seventeenth century. Its place of execution has been suggested as Karanja³⁴

Another seventeenth century document, the Yashodhara Carita of 1636 CE painted at Idar also shares space with the manuscripts painted locally in Vidarbha region, while an unusual manuscript delineating various characters, possibly a compendium of Vasudevahindī and Trisastisalakapurucarita, displays characteristics of the Western Indian school, including the presence of the farther protruding eye. Its rough shod execution and clichéd compositions suggests a lesser hand, but the presence of such a manuscript far removed from the established and known repositories of Western Indian manuscripts itself merits attention, as does the fact that it is one of the rarer kind of manuscripts painted on this particular theme in any temple or individual collection. The Idar manuscript is doubtlessly transported from Gujarat to the *bhandaras* of Karanja, while the place of origin of the ‘Trisastisalakapurucarita-Vasudevahindī’ compendium remains untraceable owing to the absence of a colophon.

The lack of a uniform expression in the illustrated manuscripts and paintings from these *bhandaras* poses a plethora of questions regarding their place of execution, patronage and identity of artists who painted them. Were the paintings executed in and around their present locale? Or was their presence in the Digambara temples in the Deccan merely due to the endeavors of the zealous *bhattarakas* who acted as ‘carriers’ transporting manuscripts to new centers of Jainism? Or alternatively, could the carriers be the migrant families themselves? It would be unjustified and short sighted to dismiss off all the visual material at

our disposal as mere 'imports' from Rajasthan or Gujarat, for such manuscripts represent only a fraction of the collection. The other manuscripts namely the 'Sugandhadasami katha' and the Yashodhara carita' are very clearly products of a style that despite its affiliation with idioms such as Sirohi and Surat, bears a distinct identity establishing its origins in Vidarbha region

Painting activity, notwithstanding the miniscule output, did exist in the northern Deccan, as early as the mid seventeenth century, as the dated ' Rasamanjari' from Aurangabad illustrates. Painting in the Aurangabad region is attributed to peripatetic painters accompanying the Rajput noblemen serving in the Mughal army of Aurangzeb stationed at the city of Aurangabad, the Mughal headquarters in the Deccan. The *pancakalyanaka pata* from Karanja, with certain stylistic affinities with the 'Rasamanjari' manuscript, could have been painted by one of these itinerant painters who might have traveled further into the Deccani hinterland on invitation by an influential patron, perhaps a *bhattaraka*. The city of Burhanpur, the other prominent base of the Mughals in the Deccan, to which a single page of ' Ragamala' is attributed ³⁵, could also have been once a bustling center of art production. It had already gained popularity as a flourishing trade center of hand painted cotton textiles and wall hangings and could well have offered asylum to painters. Even if the cloth scroll be considered the earliest evidence of painting activity for Jain patrons in the Deccan, it is obvious that artists did receive patronage from this community intermittently as is evinced from the murals painted sometime around the middle of the eighteenth century in a Digambara Jain temple in possession of a wealthy family of landowners at Jamod, close to Burhanpur and the now effaced wall paintings from the temple at Bazargaon, not far from Nagpur.

It would be relevant at this juncture to introduce an incomplete manuscript from a collection in Karanja. The manuscript whose theme revolves round the previous lives of the Tirthankara Santinatha, appears to be a part of a larger manuscript program, abandoned midway due to reasons unknown after about five or six illustrations were completed. In the remaining the folios the *alekhyasthanas* contain only linear drawings. In style and format it is identical to the complete

manuscript of the 'Santinatha carita' housed in the same *bhandara* and perhaps was meant to be a sequel to it. Interestingly both these manuscripts bear short labels in Gujarati, indicating that the place of origin of the painter to be Gujarat or a Gujarati speaking region such as Sirohi on the fringe of north Gujarat

A major document in support of the painting activities in Vidarbha region is the dated 'Yashodhara carita' whose colophon mentions it having been painted in 1736 CE at Balapur, a Digambara town not far from Karanja. Its debt to the schools of Mewar and Sirohi is obvious and yet it retains a distinct character that identifies it as a product of the late school of Deccan not very different from such manuscripts as the 'Candana Malayagiri katha' dated to 1733 CE.³⁶ Two illustrated manuscripts of the 'Sugandha dasami katha', a local text highly popular among the Digambaras of the Deccan, are housed in the repositories of the Sengana temples in Nagpur and Karanja respectively. The Nagpur manuscript with its strong color palette, horizontal compositions and figure types, faintly recalls the styles of Mewar and to an extent even late Malwa, with strong affiliations with the school of Surat, sharing several traits with the *vijnaptipatras* of Jodhpur and Surat, and is closest to the 'Paryushana kshampana patra' painted in Ahmedabad in 1796 CE. It would be of relevance to point out that a Digambara seat of the Senagana order had been established at Surat as early as the fifteenth century and the authoritarians maintained cordial relations with their counterparts in the seat at Karanja in Vidarbha.

In the Digambaras the force of tradition not being overwhelmingly assertive, the prevailing tendency was to employ the local idiom for their illustrated manuscripts, the result being that the manuscripts are painted in diverse stylistic expressions³⁷. Owing to the dearth of a distinct local idiom, the Jain patron in Vidarbha apparently displayed a preference to engage itinerant painters who were willing to take up commissions on a piece work basis, thus giving rise to bewildering variety of styles that led to a 'formalistic chaos'. This, in fact, holds true not merely with respect to Digambara Jain painting in the Deccan but for the scattered manuscripts, paintings and murals painted for the Hindu patron as well. The manuscripts and scrolls executed for the Bhosala rulers of Nagpur as

also the works commissioned by the Peshwas of Pune prove that Maratha painting was also a product of peregrination of artists from Rajasthan or Gujarat.

It is against this background that a need was felt to document and view the pictorial material available from the Digambara Jain *bhandaras* in Vidarbha and scrutinize it from multiple viewpoints- social, political, cultural and aesthetic. In a major geographical displacement of a community its cultural make up needs to be looked at from diverse perspectives. It is significant to note that all Digambaras in various settlements dotting Vidarbha converge on Karanja, the focus of religious and cultural activities of the sect. It is believed that the *pitha* of Karanja was founded by the *bhattaraka* Dharmabhushana in 1518 CE from the parent seat of Malaykheda near Karnataka³⁸. The inflow of the Digambara Jain families from Rajasthan into north Deccan and further down south into Karnataka appears to have gained momentum in the early seventeenth century, owing as much to Karanja's new sanctified status as to the threat of Mughal invasions of Rajasthan.

The question that arises is that what effected such a major migration of the Digambaras thousands of miles away from their homeland? Was it the lure of lucrative business prospects in the face of a changing socio economic scenario? Or did it stem out of a need to seek refuge in centers that had gained credibility- as strongholds of Jainism? Some of these queries have their answer in the strategic location of Karanja as a center of trade and commerce, considering its relative proximity to Aurangabad and Burhanpur, two principal political bases of the Mughals in the Deccan. As vestiges of Jain culture have been discovered at both these places, it is quite likely that Jain families from Rajasthan whose presence was already tangible in the Deccan as epigraphic evidences suggest³⁹ may have seized opportunities opened up as a consequence of political and economic circumstances owing to the extended Mughal campaigns in the Deccan. In fact Burhanpur could well have been one of the entry points for Digambara Jains traveling via the Malwa route, where Jainism was considerably consolidated since the medieval times.⁴⁰ An alternative route

originating from Rajasthan and north Gujarat via Surat could also have been in existence, leading to the Khandesh- Marathwada belt in western Deccan, and finally into Vidarbha.⁴¹

It is evident again from various epigraphic sources that the cultural and economic ties between Karanja and Surat were close, the former being known as 'Karanja -Lad', here the word 'lad' being the distorted version of the 'lata desa', implying the region of south Gujarat, wherein Surat is situated. Whatever their trajectories, it is certain that Digambara families had formed several flourishing settlements dotting the Vidarbha region by the end of the seventeenth century and Karanja witnessed unprecedented prosperity. The town's legendary wealth is corroborated by its historic plunder by the Maratha leader Shivaji's forces, when under his general Pratap Rao, Karanja was looted completely. Four thousand oxen and donkeys were loaded with the booty, consisting of fine cloth, silver and gold to the value of a crore of rupees captured here⁴²

Karanja thrived, and so did the *bhattarkas* in their new found prosperity and position of privilege as the theological elite. The town's significance as a center of painting activity is therefore intricately linked with the *bhattarakas'* multifaceted roles as religious overlords, manifested in activities of commissioning manuscripts, installing images and *yantras* and supervising long pilgrimages. The *bhattaraka* system was fairly well integrated and by and large their prevailed an air of consanguinity between *bhattarakas* of different seats of power with rare exceptions of discord. For instance, the *bhattarakas* of Karanja maintained a cordial relationship with their counterparts in the seat of Surat, which in turn, was linked closely with the Idar seat. In fact many of the ordained pontiffs of Surat owed their positions to the *bhattaraka* Sakalakirti of Idar.⁴³ Numerous epigraphic and literary evidences adduce the fact that the *bhattarakas* were never stationed for extended periods at one place and were on the move, involved either in pilgrimages, installation ceremonies of images or undertaking writing of manuscripts at various centers. These visits under the headship of a *bhattaraka*, included a coterie of disciples as also devout Jain families. These

journeys would have facilitated the Karanja *bhattarakas*' conversance with the tradition of painting manuscripts and extension of patronage to such projects in their own domains. As the Vidarbha hinterland lacked such a tradition of painting of its own, itinerant painters were possibly sourced and invited to undertake commissions when the *bhattarakas* combed the regions of Gujarat and Rajasthan during the course of these lengthy visits, and were possibly brought back along with the traveling entourage of pilgrims. The opportunities to retrieve some manuscripts from other *bhandaras* was also obviously the outcome of these visits and the amicable relationship with the authorities of other centers of power. At times manuscripts were even donated by devotees to visiting monks.

Even if the *pancakalyanaka* scroll, datable to c. 1680 CE, be considered the earliest evidence of a painting commission undertaken for Digambara patrons in the Deccan, it is obvious that artists continued to receive patronage intermittently for illustrating manuscripts as is evinced from works such as the 'Sugandhadasami katha' and the dated 'Yashodhara carita' from Balapur, and to an extent to execute murals like the ones painted at Jamod or Bazargaon. The 'Yashodhara carita' painted at Balapur in 1736 CE, shares many stylistic and compositional traits with the 'Candana Malaygiri katha' manuscript of 1733 CE, but now lost. These manuscripts, together with the undated 'Santinatha carita' and the loose folios delineating gods and goddesses form a group and could be attributed to a single painter or perhaps a couple of painters trained in the same idiom, the idiom itself displaying a *pot-pourri* of influences ranging from Mewar and Sirohi to the Deccan. This cluster also includes the incomplete manuscript of Tirthankara Santinatha's previous lives. In terms of workmanship the 'Yashodhara carita' is by far superior to the remaining illustrated manuscripts among the group.

The next group, to which belong several illuminated manuscripts such as the three copies of 'Sugandhadasami katha', of which two are housed in the Senagana temples of Karanja and an Nagpur respectively, another manuscript of the same text now missing, and the presently untraceable manuscripts of

Anantavrata katha Adityavara vrata katha and Jivandhara carita, are products of the same idiom, which again combines traits from Mewar, Marwar and Sirohi discernable in Surat- Ahmedabad territory in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Though these manuscripts have affinities with the school of Surat, certain traits indicate their Deccan origin. It is significant to note that these manuscripts were literary outputs of local authors, Jinasagara being responsible for the 'Sugandha dasami katha', Jivandhara Purana and Ananta vrata katha, while the 'Aditya vara vrata katha' was penned by Pandit Gangadasa. Both these men of erudition were not *bhattarakas* themselves but close disciples of the pontiffs of the Karanja seat *bhattaraka* Devendrakirti and *bhattaraka* Dharmachandra respectively. The text of the 'Sugandhadasami katha', in Marathi as well as the roots of its author, Jinasagara, also pin down the manuscripts to the Deccan.

The 'Adityavara vrata katha', from a private collection, executed in a style markedly distinct from the other painted manuscripts from Vidarbha. Its compositions, figure types, and color palette have no precedent in other illustrated works executed in the area, it shares certain stylistic traits with manuscripts from Gujarat such as the 'Salibhadra carita' of 1621 CE, it displays features such as floral sprays or '*guldasta*' that are very particularly Deccan, and found nowhere else outside Deccan. These motifs are abundant in the murals from Jamod, which again exemplify the curious hybrid style prevalent in the Deccan.

IDENTIFYING PAINTERS

The question that arises is that who exactly were the painters who worked for Digambara patrons in the Deccan? A close scrutiny of the paintings points out the most visible influence in these works to be that of the late Mewar, Marwar and Sirohi schools, also discerned in manuscripts from the Surat region. One also needs to take into consideration the possibility of the itinerant painters hailing from Malwa, keeping in mind its significance as Digambara Jain territory, as also the works of painters under the employment of Maratha courts

of Pune and Nagpur. Though scarce documentary evidence of painting activity in Malwa beyond the seventeenth century has come to light, the miniature and the mural tradition were both popular during Maratha rule in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. A formal and stylistic analysis of these traditions gives us reasons to believe that the painter versed in the idiom of executing the smaller, compact format of manuscript painting was the same as the one who employed his skills in the vast expanses available in the interiors and on exteriors of architectural monuments. For instance the wall paintings of Menavali and Satara near Pune display close stylistic affinities with Maratha manuscripts. The eighteenth century Jamod murals as well as the ones painted roughly around the same time in the Digambara Jain *matha* at Sravana Belagola, display several traits such as spatial divisions and draftsmanship that suggest the painter's acquaintance with the art of manuscript illustration.

With substantial evidence to prove the patronage extended by Marathas to painting, and its clearly discernable debt to the schools of Rajasthan, the point that arises is who were the artists working for such patrons? Particularly at a time when painting activity in the courts of Rajasthan was thriving, and Gujarat too had its centers of art production in Surat and Ahmedabad, who were the painters to venture out to seek commissions in alien lands? What was the origin of the '*chitaris*', the Marathi nomenclature for painters, who were popular throughout the Deccan during Maratha rule? It is probable that the word is a variant of the terms such as *chitara*, *chitaro* or *chataro* commonly employed for painters in both Gujarat and Rajasthan and such painters undertook commissions for the Marathas occasionally. In fact a large number of *chitaris* settled in Nagpur, drawn by the liberal patronage of the rulers of the Bhosale dynasty, who celebrated Hindu customs and traditions with great pomp and reverence⁴⁴. The paintings of these *chitaris*, who were well versed in multiple jobs such as making artifacts of wood, clay and paper, much like the non *odedar* community of artists in Rajasthan, also needs to be considered and their probability of being employed by Digambara patrons looked into, keeping in view the fact of Nagpur being comfortably close to Karanja, as well as the location of an illustrated

manuscript of the 'Sugandha dasami katha' in a *bhandara* at Nagpur, in addition to the murals that once adorned the Digambara temple at Bazargaon

In Rajasthan, Jain patronage has been extended to a separate category of painters in the eighteenth century. This distinctive later Jain style used in *vijnaptipatras* was developed by professional Jain artists called *mathens*⁴⁵ who were sometimes former monks. Though few works actually assignable to such painters are known,⁴⁶ it is evident that a style of painting which presumably originated in Sirohi, was prevalent in its minor variants throughout South Rajasthan from the late seventeenth to nearly the end of the eighteenth century.

We may now turn our attention towards Surat, a flourishing center of painting activity from the late seventeenth till the beginning of nineteenth century. The paintings executed here display diverse idioms, many of them have been ascribed to the school of 'Sirohi'⁴⁷ within which there exists a yawning gap in terms of style, the *vijnaptipatra* of 1737 CE, in the National museum, executed at Sirohi representing one end while the 'Sripala Rasa' painted at Surat in 1829 CE representing the other extreme.

Again the Ragamala folios painted around 1680 CE, from Sirohi, combine elements from both Mewar and Marwar schools, and yet exude a distinctive charm of their own. In other words the nomenclature 'Sirohi' is a rather loose knit term and encompasses in varying degrees diverse stylistic traits from Mewar, Marwar, Popular Mughal and Gujarati schools. Its adaptability accounts for its prevalence over a wide area including places like Masuda, Jodhpur and Sojat in Rajasthan, and Surat and Ahmedabad in Gujarat. Whatever the origins of this school may have been, it is certain that Surat remained a center of this school from almost the known beginning of this school and hence it is advisable to recognize this school as Gujarat school of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century⁴⁸. Apart from arriving at an understanding of Digambara Jain paintings in Vidarbha traversing the oft beaten paths of art historical methodologies that include the analysis of styles and content, assigning dates, attributing works and tracing painters' trajectories, an attempt has been made by the researcher to place the works of art in their socio cultural context. The localization of the

migrant Digambara community in Vidarbha witnessed certain digressions in social and religious practices, for instance, the elevation of the status of Padmavati, the *yaksi* of Tirthankara Parsvanatha and her worship as an individual goddess. This witnessed a sudden spurt in the making of images of Padmavati and their installations accompanied by elaborate ceremonies. Installation and consecration of images, as it appears, were the highlights of public life and are dealt with at length in epigraphs and literary works. Behind every such mega event lay the enterprise of the ruling *bhattaraka*, for whom such ceremonies were a reassertion and reaffirmation of his exalted status

THE ROLE OF THE BHATTARAKAS

The *bhattarakas*' interests were directed towards an arbitrary and indiscriminate collecting of manuscripts, as a consequence of which thousands of them in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Kannada, Gujarati, and Marathi accreted from every possible source, the oldest of these, a palm leaf manuscript of the 'Upasakacara' being dated to 1359 CE. The presence of some Svetambara documents in the Digambara *bhandaras*, including an illustrated manuscript of the Kalpasutra, explains this arbitrary nature of collection. It is likely that the *bhattarakas*, or their close coterie of disciples, determined the choice of texts to be selected for manuscripts to be copied by the devotees. Religious ideologies garbed in popular literature –hymns (*stotras*), ditties to Tirthankaras (*palanas*) and tales pivoting around ritual practices (*vrata kathas*) were authored and copied in impressive numbers. The ambitious *dana* program involved everyone from the top to the bottom of the religious hierarchy and the *bhattaraka*, his disciples, the lay persons all considered it a part of their religious duty to contribute to it, as Sakubai, a female devotee writes in the colophon of the manuscript she prepared, 'written by self, to be read on religious occasions, as a part of *dharma karya*'⁴⁹

With manuscripts pouring in such a manner, the question that again comes to mind is that who dictated the choice of texts to be taken up for illustration? There is enough reason to believe that the *bhattarakas* masterminded each step,

right from the selection of the text, to scouting peripatetic painters and assigning them the commissions. It is interesting to note that while images of Tirthankaras bear inscriptions pertaining to family names and *bhattaraka* genealogies, they are conspicuously absent in the illustrated manuscripts. Only a solitary manuscript in the Dīgambara *bhandaras* in Vidarbha mentions a family besides the genealogy of the *bhattarakas*, and this too has been executed at Idar. Again all the manuscripts, barring the scroll, feature a *bhattaraka* at some point or the other, in addition to their names being prominently figured in the written passages.

The handful of Vidarbha manuscripts display a preference for texts penned by local authors, while major Dīgambara texts such as the ‘Adipurana’ and the ‘Uttarapurana’, chief themes of painting in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, have been ignored. Interestingly, while narratives of the likes of the ‘Adipurana’ have not been taken up for illustration in its entirety, the *pancakalyanaka* scroll depicting the five key events in the life of Tirthankara Rishabhanatha, is based partially on the ‘Adipurana’, wherein the focus shifts from the narrative and concentrates on the five principal events—that of *garbha*, *janma*, *dikṣa*, *kevalajñana*, and *mokṣa*. This scroll remains the only known document in the realm of Jain painting devoted exclusively to the *pancakalyanaka* theme, the reason for which perhaps has its answer in the installation and consecration of images in massive numbers. Installation of images amidst lavish consecration ceremonies was a frequent event during the tenure of the *bhattarakas*, it was not unusual to witness four to five such consecrations during each *bhattarka*’s tenure. Every new image was deemed fit for worship only when it was subjected to the ‘*pancakalyanaka*’ ritual, to which several images to be installed in different temples were generally subjected to in one grand ceremony, which was presided over by the reigning *bhattaraka* and involved active participation of hundreds of members of laity. During the rituals, Dīgambara laymen and laywomen posed as *dramatis personae*, and enacted roles of the Tirthankaras’ parents, Indra, Indrani, the Dīkkakumaris and so forth, as etched out in the ‘Adipurana’. For instance, the birth of the Jina was celebrated

by placing the image in a cradle, while a Digambara couple playing his parents, Nabhiraja and Marudevi, went through all the rigors of the 'janma' rituals, in which Indra enacted by yet another layman, accompanied by a laywoman playing Indrani, had a major role, including leading the ceremony of *janma abhisheka* of the child Tirthankara on Mount Meru, for which an elephant, meant to be Aravata, Indra's mount who according to legend carries Indra along with the child to the mountain, was also roped in. These events facilitated the gathering of Digambara devotees from far flung places and may be viewed as some kind of statement of solidarity to project their distinct social and religious identities. The *pancakalyanaka* scroll was perhaps painted on such an occasion to commemorate the event, and later utilized as a backdrop on subsequent ceremonial occasions.

The thesis therefore aims to present paintings and illustrated manuscripts from the *shastra bhandaras* in Vidarbha, dwell at length on their varied themes, attempt a stylistic analysis of the paintings and review them in their new milieu. It also attempts to highlight their distinctiveness as cultural products of a different territory, while simultaneously also forging a link with painting in Gujarat and Rajasthan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Painting in the Deccan calls for an understanding of its complex, unstable history and mapping the paths of the Digambaras who were essentially migrants with origins in western India. It also becomes imperative to comprehend the intricacy of a monastic system that was inseparably and inextricably entwined with art production in Vidarbha. Chapter Two is titled '**The Birth of the Sanghas, the Bhattaraka tradition and its significance in Jain Art**', and makes a brief historical survey of the fragmentation of the Svetambara and Digambara into separate sects and the birth of a new monastic discipline known as '*mandalas*', with *mandalacaryas* or *bhattarakas* as they later came to be designated, as the religious heads. The chapter also emphasizes the role of pontifical seats of power called *pithas* and delineates various duties of the

bhattarakas –handling of land grants, maintenance of temples and images and supervision of temple rituals. It also dwells on the physical and ideological changes brought in with the *bhattarka* system, the austerity of monastic life giving way to one of luxury and self indulgence.

The role of the *bhattaraka* as a man of learning has been highlighted, outlining his scholarly accomplishments as those of his disciples contributing in large measure in generating an interest among the laity in matters of *dana* of all kinds, including *shastra dana* or writing and copying of texts to enrich temple libraries. Details of various forms of literature, actual events of installation and consecration of images and details of pilgrimages have been included in support of the powerful role of the *bhattaraka* in the religious and cultural outfit of Digambara Jain society, particularly in the Deccan.

While one may harbor little doubt about the role of these authoritarians as preservers and propagators of art and culture, the question remains as to how significant was their role as patrons? Considering that many of the *bhattarakas* were widely traveled and maintained cordial relations with members of their fraternity in Rajasthan and Gujarat, they were in a position to commission itinerant painters and invite them to their own *pithas* and also decided the themes to be taken up for painting. But how enlightened and involved were these patrons in the actual execution of the work? Were commissions assigned with a sole desire for accretion with scarce regard to their aesthetic merit? Could then the *bhattarakas* be called ‘connoisseurs’ in the true sense of the term? Queries pertaining to these issues have also been raised in this chapter.

Chapter Three, titled ‘**Jains and Jainism in the Deccan**’, focuses on the social and cultural history of the Deccan. Highlighting the Vidarbha region, the area of research, an attempt has been made to trace its past, particularly with reference to the antiquity of Jainism in this territory. There is evidence that Jainism was indeed prevalent in this region as early as the ninth century in the form of a group of splendid bronzes, including an image of Saraswati, the *yaksi* Ambika and a *yaksa* couple, retrieved from a well from Rajapur Khinkhuni, not very distant from the nerve center of the Digambaras, Karanja. Subsequent

discoveries of scattered sites- Padampur, Devtek, Keljhar, Paunar, Bazargaon, Ramtek, Achalpur, Satgaon, Mehkar and Rohinkhed have yielded enough archeological evidence to reiterate the fact that Jainism was fairly widespread in the Deccan by the fourteenth century. The Antariksa Parsvanatha temple at Sirpur is the best known example of temple building activity in the region. A stone inscription at the site mentions its date of construction as 1277 CE and its patron being one Jagsinha⁵⁰. The chapter also traces the origins of the various clans of Dīgambara Jains to their roots in Rajasthan, the principal clan of Baghelwars who exist in a majority in Vidarbha region belonging to Baghera near Kota in Rajasthan and also goes on to identify the early settlements of this community in Vidarbha and trace their possible trajectories. Enquiries pertaining to the reasons of their migration are raised followed by outlining the significance of Karanja as the religious and cultural nucleus of the Dīgambara sect in Vidarbha, and elaborates on its historicity, the main Dīgambara temples, the *shastra bhandaras* and their rich collection of manuscripts.

Chapter Three, titled ‘**The Painted Documents**’ is the core chapter and deals with the collection of illustrated manuscripts and paintings from the Vidarbha bhandaras mostly from Karanja. The collection being highly heterogeneous, each document has been studied separately from multiple viewpoints- theme, style, chronology, provenance and patronage. The *pancakalyanaka* scroll opens the discussion, it being unarguably one of the finest and also the earliest representatives of the Deccan school for Dīgambara Jain patrons. The narrative structure of the 1220 cm x 80 cm cloth scroll has been analyzed on the basis of the ‘Adipurana’ and a deconstruction of the coalesced idioms - the Rajasthani, Mughal and Deccani, in play in the ‘Aurangabad school’ in the Deccan has been attempted. The chapter also endeavors to trace the identity of the painter and patron responsible for a work of such magnitude and magnificence, and also attempts to place it in its socio - religious context.

Two manuscripts of the ‘Yashodhara carita’ are dealt with next – both bearing colophons, one of these dated 1636 CE, being painted at Idar in Gujarat and the other, bearing the date 1736 CE, produced at Balapur in Vidarbha. Interestingly

both are products of eclecticism, the Idar manuscript owing a debt to early Mewar, Gujarati and Popular Mughal schools, while the manuscript from Balapur combining several traits of late Mewar, Sirohi and Deccani styles.

Two illustrated manuscripts of a local text, 'Sugandha dasami katha' follow, though none of them bear a colophon, it is possible to place them on the basis of their style roughly to the middle of the eighteenth century. They display close affinities with the Surat school and the researcher brings forth an argument that the Vidarbha manuscripts were in all likelihood executed by itinerant artists sourced from the Surat-Ahmedabad area.

A solitary manuscript of 'Adityavara vrata katha' is featured next, wherein some of its unique formal elements such as the introduction of the '*guldasta*' or motif of the floral spray have been focused upon, as also its stylistic incompatibility with other manuscripts from the region.

A manuscript of the 'Santinatha carita' is dealt with, its features recalling both Mewar and Sirohi, while another interesting work, an incomplete manuscript depicting the previous lives of the Tirthankara Santinatha, a kind of sequel to the Santinatha manuscript, its folios displaying linear drawings is also drawn attention to.

Iconographical representations of various classes of heavenly beings enumerated in the Jain pantheon, a rather unusual subject, is dealt with in the following chapter. Despite the absence of narrative content this set of folios may be cited as the only known example of its kind from Digambara *bhandaras*

The following two manuscripts, though vastly different in subject, may be categorized into a group as the representatives of products of the Western Indian school in the Deccan. Again one comes across an unusual theme in the manuscript of what seemingly is a compendium of the 'Vasudevahindi' and 'Trisastisalaka purusha carita', the folios delineating various characters such as Sagara, Ravana, Hanumana, Arjuna and more, accompanied by an equally distinctive text. Finally, a manuscript of a fragmented 'Kalpasutra' is featured, though it clearly does not belong to its present locale, and stands out sorely amongst the motley group, the researcher considered its inclusion necessary to

reiterate the fact that some of the Vidarbha manuscripts were mere acquisitions, and had no direct relation with the actual painting activity that was carried on in the region.

In Chapter Five, ‘ **Mural Tradition in Vidarbha: The Wall Paintings of Jamod**’ the researcher also includes a sweeping survey of the murals in the Digambara temple at Jamod in Vidarbha to drive home the argument that Digambaras did extend patronage to artists intermittently despite the fact that the latter had to be procured from distant places. The Jamod murals are significant from another viewpoint in that they are representative of the eclecticism which is characteristic of most Deccani works of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century.

Chapter Six is titled ‘ **Karanja- Cauldron of Varied Styles**’ and attempts to form stylistic categories. Four distinct styles have been identified by the researcher in the course of the study, the earliest being the ‘Aurangabad’ idiom as represented in the *pancakalyanaka* scroll, the Mewar-Sirohi- Marwar styles of which the two manuscripts of the Sugandhadasami katha are representatives, the Mewar- Sirohi idiom as seen in the ‘Yashodhara carita’ of 1736 CE and other related documents, and finally the provincial Deccani style with certain traits of schools of Gujarat and Rajasthan as exemplified by the ‘Adityavara vrata katha’ manuscript. The researcher also elaborates on the affinities of the Karanja manuscripts with the Surat-Ahmedabad manuscripts with specific examples. The chapter elaborates on the Aurangabad school and its relevance in Deccani painting and also includes a discussion on the stylistic coalescences observed in contemporaneous Maratha manuscripts in the Deccan and comments on why Deccani- Jain painting remained distinctly aloof from Maratha influences. Some observations on the painters’ origins, the extent of art activity and forms of patronage in the northeastern Deccan have also been included. Considering that some of the Digambara manuscripts were indeed products of the Deccani soil, the ‘Deccani’ idiom has been highlighted. The parallels and differences between the Maratha school and Deccani-Jain painting have also been brought out herein.

Chapter Seven ‘ **Conclusion**’, sums up the ‘Digambara School of Deccan’ and dwells on its strengths and drawbacks. It also prominently figures a discussion on the significance of Jain patronage in general and Digambara patronage in Vidarbha in particular and its role in art production. Digambara patronage through the ages has been evaluated in comparison to that extended by the more affluent and forthcoming Svetambara community, while emphasizing on the stylistic similarities between the paintings produced for both the sects.

The researcher has also commented on the limitations of Digambara patronage due to socio political, economic, religious and even geographical constraints, stressing on the significance of the pontifical seats of power and the role of the authoritarians in mobilizing activities related to art production.

The *pitha* of Karanja has been taken as the focal point to discuss the nature of painting activity in Vidarbha in the Deccan, while weighing down its significance in nurturing of a school of painting in Vidarbha region. The form and extent of patronage in Vidarbha has been discussed, with specific examples of how paintings of extremely high quality such as the *pancakalyanaka* scroll were produced at Karanja on rare occasions, at the intervention of a *bhattaraka* gifted with a discerning eye and interest of a connoisseur, or how another *bhattaraka*, who himself traveled frequently to Gujarat, was responsible in sourcing painters from Surat area and assigning them commissions of illustrating manuscripts in Vidarbha. The discussion includes the pattern of individual patronage in this area and comments on its limitations as compared to institutionalized or royal patronage, and attributes this to the inconsistency and lack of stylistic direction in case of the Vidarbha manuscripts.

Finally, the researcher concludes the discussion as to how Karanja in Vidarbha region fails to qualify as a school, but nonetheless remains significant as a flourishing center of painting activity. Despite the failure of a new idiom to emerge here, the fact that painting activity was generated in a region far removed and isolated from centers of art production speaks eloquently of matters of taste, and to an extent, connoisseurship. The Vidarbha manuscripts, therefore assume significance as they illuminate art production patronized by a

minority community in circumstances scarcely conducive to painting and bring into focus several unique themes and iconographic representations peculiar to this territory

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- ³⁴ Doshi Saryu, *op cit* Homage to Kalamkari
- ³⁵ Zebrowski Marc, *op.cit*, pp 50, pl 24
- ³⁶ Doshi Saryu, 1971 ‘ Illustrated manuscripts from Digambara Jain bhandaras’, Doctoral thesis, Bombay University,
- ³⁷ Doshi Saryu, *op cit* ‘Jain miniature painting’,pp 84
- ³⁸ Rai Bahadur Hiralal, 1926, ‘ Karanja, wahan ke gana aur shastra bhandar,’ Catalogue of Sanskrit & Prakrit manuscripts of the Central Provinces ’
- ³⁹ Johrapurkar, *opcit*, Baghelwar jati ka itihās,pp 42-43

⁴⁰ Jain Balbhadra , 1976, 'Bharat ke Dīgambara Jain tirtha, Darshana Vidarbha eva Malwa Avanti janapada Mumbai

⁴¹ Johrapurkar Vidyadhara, Bhattaraka Samradaya, op cit pp 9, 17, 21, 51

⁴² Sarkar Jadunath, 1912, History of Aurangazeb, Orient Longman, Kolkata, pp 155

⁴³ Johrapurkar, op cit Bhattaraka samradaya, pp 20

⁴⁴ Andhare Shridhar, 1985 ' The chitaris of Nagpur, ' Marg- Maharashtra, ed Doshi Saryu, Marg Publications, pp 99 -100

⁴⁵ Gill Rosemary, 1995, ' Marwar paintng' India Book house, New Delhi pp 28

⁴⁶ ibid, pp 28

⁴⁷ Shah U P op cit p 39

⁴⁸ ibid pp 40

⁴⁹ Johrapurkar op cit, Baghelwar jati ka itihas pp 100

⁵⁰ Gupta Chandrashekhar, 1972 'Vidarbha mein Jain dharma', KsullakaChidananda smriti grantha, Dronagiri pp 164