## Jain Mural Paintings of South Gujrat

The work under review is the survey as well as a research and documentation work of *Mural* Paintings in the Jain Temples of south Gujarat. The writer Vasudeo smart, died in 1999, was a diploma holder in Painting from J.J. school of Painting, Mumbai. He was assigned for documentation of wall paintings of caves by Government of India. Vasudev Smart had documented and copied the frescos and Jain Kashthapat paintings from Surat, Bharuch and Ankleshwar and tried to preserve and value the Jain art.

The study of Gujarat Painting is a recent growth and before Dr Coomaraswami wrote his article on Jain Paintings in 1914 little was known of its existence. After the publication of another article Jain Art by the same author in 1924, the study of western Indian Painting received a great impetus and various scholars such as Dr. W. Narnam Brown, M.C. Mehta, O.C. Ganguli, Ajit Ghosh and Dr. M.R. Majumdar joined hands in discovering new documents of western Indian Paintings and throwing light on their technical and aesthetic achievements. Vasudeo Smart's work which was edited by Jagdeep Smart is the latest in this area.

The original monograph was written in Gujarati by Smart and its English version has been completed by Sanat Bhatt. In the editorial note, the editor makes two points, one that he has accommodated two wall paintings done in fresco styles besides the wooden pat paintings because both of them are in a highly damaged condition and on the verge of being lost soon. They are the paintings of Nandi-swardwip in the temple of Adishwarnath at Rander and Dhaidwip in the temple at Ankleshwar. Secondly the monograph aims at incorporating in itself all that has been fortunately saved till now. The photographs were added to make these

more authentic.

Besides the introductory first chapter of Jain Architecture, Sculpture and painting, the monograph has five more chapters on Jain Pat paintings, Jain temple of Rander and Surat, Jain temples of Bharuch, Jain temples of Ankleshwar and lastly the Epilogue. It has an appendix of the names of places visited during the completion of the Project, a short bibliography and a number of photographs and documentation of *Mural* paintings in the Jain temples of south Gujarat.

In the chapter 'Jain Architecture Sculpture and painting' the writer has described Indian Art in a nutshell and hurriedly shifted to Jain art and architecture giving a short description of paintings of Ajanta, Kailashnath, Lankeshwar, Indrasabha and Ganeshan. He has described in detail the Swetambar and Digambar centres of art architecture and sculpture. He essentially speaks from the Swetambar Jain tradition which has a large following in the western and northern India. He has given a religious and cultural history of Gujarat and the evolution of Jain school of paintings which is also known as Apabhransh school or the Gujarat school of painting.

Pat painting is religious and ritualistic in character. It is a painting on a length of cloth. It has to pass through four stages of preparation, viz.-Dhaut (washed), Ghatil (rubbed and polished), lanchhit (stretched), and Rangit (dyed). The writer describes the preparation of Pat chitras which are painted on Khadi or hand woven cotton cloths. The artists begin their work with sketching lines in red ochre and fill it with different colours and finally decorate whole painting with gold and silver.

According to the theme and the purpose, the Pat can be divided in four major types – 1. Map of Jain astronomy and Geography, 2. Spiritual and tantric

Jain Kashthapat Chitra by Vasudeo Smart ed. by Jagdeep Smart, English version.
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2002., pp. 75, plates 98, Rs. 1000.00

pats, 3. places of pilgrimages and 4. Miscellaneous pats of appeals or requests, flags and flaglets. The purpose of the first type of pat painting is to instruct Jain munis and followers and the purpose of tantra based pat is spiritual and worldly benefits; mystical symbols and letters of mantras are written in Devnagari script in red. The purpose of tirth pats, the third type, is to understand and offer prayers at the major tirthas while miscellaneous pats have different purposes - Vignapti patra pat is to invite some Jain Muni to spend chaturmas; Kshamapana patrika is for forgiveness; and Vahi is a record book. These pats depict the genealogies of the Jain temples.

In the third chapter of this monograph, the writer has described pat paintings of Jain temples of Rander and Surat. Rander is now an integral part of Surat. The temples of Adiswar, Neminath, Manmohan Parshvanath, Ajitnath and Chandraprabhuji of Digambar sect are found in Rander. Adiswar temple is one of the oldest and the best. This has beautiful pat painting along with some miniature paintings.

This temple has one fresco which depicts the subject of Nandiswardwip, the eighth of the mythological islands is described in this book. The painting describes the Gods with their hands folded in prayers along with natural objects, flora and fauna, animals and the Mulnayak sitting on padmashana. This fresco is remarkable for its masterly and balanced composition, careful delineation of minute details of the figures painted on bold lines with the use of a limited number of colours such as red, yellow, black and gold. The entire fresco is decorated with tiny dots of colours.

Surat has also very beautiful and magnificent pat paintings in its temples. The important ones are Chinta-mani Parshvanath and Chandraprabhu Swami Mulnayak sitting on padmashana. This fresco is remarkable for its masterly and balanced composition, careful delineation of minute details of the figures painted on bold lines with the use of a limited number of colours such as red, yellow, black and gold. The entire fresco is decorated with tiny dots of colours.

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The fourth chapter deals with the temples of Bharuch of which a special mention of the two panchtirth pats of Shri Suvratswami temple is essential. The larger one is a painting of Sametshikhar ji and the other is that of a pilgrimage of Girnarji. The first one is painted on the pat of 8'3" x 7'00 and contains the pictures of 18 temples. These are surrounded by hills and trees, especially the mango trees. There are animals, birds and natural objects. Female figures wear Gujarati and Rajasthani clothes such as blouse, petticoat, upper garments, sari and ornaments like nose ring, earring, bangles, waist, band, etc. Some of them carry their children on their waist with folded hands in prayer.

In the fifth chapter the writer has described many temples of

Ankleshwar. The colour map of Adhaidwip on the walls of the Srichintamani Parshvanath Digambar Jain temple is in a highly damaged condition. It contains many oceans, mountains, forests and rivers. This has marvellous configuration of straight lines and carved lines. The colours used are yellow, coffee, dark green and black; straight lines depicts various *Khetras, Khands*, mountains, rivers, oceans etc.

In these pat paintings the influence of Rajput, Mughal and Maratha styles can clearly be seen. The clothes and ornaments men and women wear in these paintings lead us to believe that the artists were Maharashtrians and so was the style of their paintings. The influence of the folk paintings of Gujarat and that of Rajasthan can also clearly be marked in the paintings on the ceilings of the temples of Shri Chandraprabhu Swami.

The themee of the paintings are events, activities and festivities related to Jain way of life and thought. Tirthankaras, Panchtirthas, monks and munis, Jain laichies, different incidents in the lives of Rushabhdev and Naminath, the manifestation and sermonising of the Lord, different activities of the village people, presiding Goddesses, divine figure, forms of Gods and Goddesses, musicians playing upon various musical instruments, Gods seated in their heavenly chariots, birds, animals, and so on are found in these paintings. Besides these, one can see dense groves, wells, tanks, large ponds, magnificent temples, forts and highly decorated bullock-carts, horse carriages, camel-carts, flying chariots and elephants with howdahs on their backs and golden palanquins.

These paintings can be divided into three major groups, viz. *murals* or paintings on the walls, wooden *pat* paintings and *pat* paintings on cloths.

The back drop pieces, exquisitely woven and embroidered with gold and silver threads, were hung behind the Mul Nayak in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. Unfortunately the age old tradition of Jain art is fast disappearing. Priceless pieces of art are simply destroyed or sold at the time of renovating or rebuilding the old temples. The newer temples are not of that quality which could be compared with the older ones. The old hanging lamps of glass, pat paintings, wooden pillars and bases with exquisite carvings or paintings, celestial damsels and other ornamental pieces, etc. are fast disappearing from the Jain temples of recent times.

Anyway this art book, enriched with the photographs of the wooden *pat* paintings in the Jain Temples of South Gujarat remind us of our past glory and rich heritage. Though there are some printing and spelling mistakes yet the book is a good study of mural paintings in the Jain Temples and can safety be recommended to all readers who want comprehensive and thorough knowledge of *Jain Kashthapat Chitra*.

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