

Samgrahani Sutra: A Rare 17th Century Jaina Illustrated Manuscript in the Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad, India

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Abstract

The article analyses a rare and interesting illustrated manuscript on paper from the 17th century at the Salar Jung Museum Library, the Jaina 'Samgrahani Sutra' with 27 one sided illustrations and 11 illustrations on both sides of the paper. In its entirety the loose leaves are 76 including the illustrated papers. The origin of the manuscript is from Gujarat, Western India.

Keywords

Samgrahani Sutra, Jaina illustrated manuscript, Janism

The Salar Jung Museum is a treasure house of the artistic achievements and accomplishments of European, Asian and Far Eastern countries of the world. Nestled on the Southern bank of the river Musi which flows through Hyderabad, it is one of India's national museums. The major portion of the collection of artefacts was done by its founder, Nawab Mir Yousuf Ali Khan, popularly known as Salar Jung III, who had been a prime minister in the erstwhile Nizam rule of the region. After Salar Jung III passed away in 1949, the heirs of Salar Jung Bahadur graciously agreed to donate the entire collection kept in his palaces to the Government of India. The library of the museum of printed books and manuscripts in various languages is an integral part of the institution, the inception of the collection dates back to 1656 A.D./1067 H. till the death of Salar Jung III in 1949 of around 40,000 books and 8200 manuscripts[1]. Additions have been made to the printed collection after the initial Salar Jung Collection, which stands at 69,000 books.

A world of manuscripts

The rich manuscripts collection from different centuries covers languages such as Arabic having more than 2500, Persian nearly 4900, Urdu is around 1075, a few of Turkish, Dakhni, Pushtu, Hindi, Sanskrit, Telugu and Oriya which cover many subjects. The manuscripts are related to Indian religions including Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism and are in various media like parchment, textile, palm leaf, paper, glass, wood, and stone[1].

A rare Jaina manuscript

Do not injure, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, torment, torture, or kill any creature or living being... thus spake Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara.

Jainism is an ancient Indian religion. The three main pillars of Jainism are *ahimsa* or non-violence, *anekantavada* or non-absolutism, and *aparigraha* or non-attachment. Asceticism is an important principle, so also self-discipline. The Indian subcontinent has been the birthplace of major world religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Each religion has its own texts which have been initially passed on orally but later written down on stone, palm-leaf and paper, still later printed and now available online via the Internet which has revolutionised the way content is shared. Before the advent of paper technology, palm leaf was an important medium for writing. We still find manuscripts all over the world in the medium of both palm leaf and paper which have survived into the 21st century. One rare and interesting paper illustrated manuscript on paper from the 17th century at the Salar Jung Museum Library is the Jaina 'Samgrahani Sutra' with 27 one sided illustrations and 11 illustrations on both sides of the paper. In its entirety the loose leaves are 76 including the illustrated papers. The origin of the manuscript is from Gujarat, Western India[2].



Figure 1: Diagram illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.

What is the **Samgrahani Sutra**? It is a compendium of texts with details of the Jaina universe. The well known one is the one composed by Svetambara Jaina monk Srichandra Shastri in 1136 A.D. He was a disciple of Acharya Maladhari Hemacandra and that he wrote in chaste Maharashtri Prakrit. His *Sangrahanani Sutra* is an elegant work of 319 verses which describes Jain cosmology in a clear and precise manner. The text has very interesting illustrations. The illustrations describe in detail the world of man, the heavens above and the world of hell below. In fact they are cosmic diagrams. Jaina illustrations have been made after this too in later centuries and are a living tradition. Most of them are from the Srichandra Shastri version. Robert J. Del Bonta says in his reserach in 2013 on the subject” His Prakrit *Samghayanarayana* is also known by its Sanskrit name *Samgrahaniratna* ”Jewel of the compilation” and titled *Trailokyadipika*, illumination of the triple world. The text is a summary

of the sixth century work the *Brhatsamgrahani* or “Large compilation” by the monk Jinabhadragani. The later work by Srichandra Sastri is called *Laghusamgrahani* or ‘Short compilation’[5].

The Jaina universe

Jain cosmology considers the universe as an entity that has existed since infinity with no beginning or end. The whole universe is depicted in a human person called “Lokapurusha”[3]. Jain texts describe the shape of the universe as similar to a man standing with legs apart and arms resting on his waist. It is broad at the top, narrow at the middle and broad at the bottom. The Universe is made up of six simple and eternal substances called *dravya* which are broadly categorized under *Jiva* (living substances) and *Ajiva* (non-living substances). The universe has an unchangeable shape, which is measured by a unit called *Rajlok*, which is very large. Apart from the apex, which is the abode of liberated beings, the universe is divided into three parts. The world is surrounded by three atmospheres: dense-water, dense-wind and thin-wind. It is then surrounded by an infinitely large non-world which just emptiness. The whole world is filled with living beings. In all three parts, there are very small living beings called “nigoda”. Nigoda are of two types: nitya-nigoda and Itara-nigoda. Nitya-nigoda are those which will reincarnate as nigoda throughout eternity, where as Itara-nigoda will be reborn as other beings. The mobile region of universe or *Trasnaadi* is one *Rajlok* wide, one *Rajlok* broad and fourteen *Rajloks* high. Within this region, there are animals and plants everywhere; where as Human beings, *manusya gati* are restricted to 2 continents of the middle world. The beings inhabiting the lower world are called *Naraka-gati* or Hellish beings. The “Devas” or *deva gatis* (gods) live in the whole of the top and middle worlds, and top three realms of the lower world. Living beings are divided in fourteen classes or *Jivasthanas*. Human beings are the only ones which can attain salvation. And can be liberated from the cycle of birth.

As per Jain texts, sixty-three illustrious beings, called *salakapuruṣas*, are born on this earth in every *Dukhama-sukhama* era of “happiness with little sorrow”. The Jain history is a compilation of the deeds of these illustrious persons. They comprise twenty-four *Tirthankaras*, twelve *chakravartins*, nine *balabhadra*, nine *narayana*, and nine *pratinarayana*.

A *chakravarti* is an emperor of the world and lord of the material realm. They are golden in complexion. Jain *puranas* give a list of twelve *chakravartins*. One of the *chakravartins* mentioned in Jain scriptures is Bharata Chakravartin. Jain texts like *Harivamsa Purana* and Hindu Texts like *Vishnu Purana* state that Indian subcontinent came to be known as *Bharata varsha* in his memory.

There are nine sets of *balabhadra*, *narayana*, and *pratinarayana*. The *balabhadra* and *narayana* are brothers. *Balabhadra* are nonviolent heroes, *narayana* are violent heroes, and *pratinarayana* are the villainous type. The *narayana* ultimately kill the *pratinarayana*. Of the nine *balabhadra*, eight attain liberation and the last goes to heaven. On death, the *narayana* go to hell because of their violent exploits, even if these were intended to uphold righteousness.

The worldly cycle of time is divided into two parts; *avasarpini* and *utsarpini*. According to Jain cosmology, in every half-cycle of time, twenty-four *tirthankaras* are born in the human realm to discover and teach the Jain doctrine appropriate for that era. The word *tirthankara* signifies the founder of a *tirtha*, which means a difficult passage across a sea. The *tirthankaras* show the 'path' across the sea of births and deaths. Rishabhanatha is said to be the first *tirthankara* of the present half-cycle (*avasarpini*). Mahavira (lived 6th century BC) is revered as the twenty fourth *tirthankara* of *avasarpini*[6].

According to the Jain texts, the universe is divided into three worlds; *Urdhva Loka* – the realms of the gods or heavens, *Madhya Loka* – the realms of the humans, animals and plants, *Adho Loka* – the realms of the hellish beings. The cosmic man is a stylised human figure divided into three parts, each standing for one of the three worlds. Always presented from the front, the cosmic man's three elements represent the three worlds as follows: the lower pyramid of the area below his waist represents the lower world – *adho-loka* – which has seven levels, indicating the seven hells, his waist symbolises the middle world – *madhya-loka*, the upside-down pyramid that is his torso denotes the upper world – *urdhva-loka* – with the various levels standing for the different heavens [4].



Figure 2: *Triloka*, the shape of Universe as per Jain cosmology in form of a cosmic man, *Samgrahaniratna*, Gujarat, 17th century.

Meaningful illustrations

The most defining character of the “sutra” in question, is its description in detail about the three worlds which man encounters in the Jaina universe. It is a cosmological work with the inclusion of rivers, plants and animals. The text is in Devanagari script, mostly Prakrit with Gujarat commentary. Some illustrations are enlisted from the 17th century set available at the Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad. The main part of the diagram in Figure 3 consists of concentric circles around a central circle. In the centre of the diagram is Mount Meru, shown as a yellow disc, the heart of the “Two and a Half Continents” or *adhaidwipa*. On Mount Meru sits a “Jina” on a throne but this is now hardly visible. Mount Meru is in the middle of the circular continent of Jambu-dvipa, shown with a pale background. Around Jambu-dvipa is the ocean of Lavana-samudra, shown as a purplish-grey circle. Around Lavana-samudra is the continent of Dhatakikhanda. Around that is the ocean of Kalodadhi, again a dark blue circle. Around Kalodadhi is another circle of land. This is half of the Pushkara continent. Together, these continents and oceans form *Adhai-dvipa* or 'Two and A Half Continents'. Thus the painting is a map of the cosmological concept of Two and A Half Continents. The *Two and a half continents* are in the centre of the middle world – *madhya-loka*. There are three worlds in the Jain conception of the universe. The *Two and a half continents* is the only part of the Jain universe where human beings can be born so it is also known as 'the world of humans' – *manusya-loka*. At the perimeter of Pushkara-dvipa is a slim yellow band. Outside this runs a repeated floral pattern in blue. The yellow band is the outer mountain range beyond which no human beings live[7]. The central diagram is flanked by two shrines.



Figure 3: The two and a half continents, *adhaidwipa pata*, Illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.

Figure 4 is another representation of the two and a half continents, *adhaidwipa*. It is a version of the *madhyaloka* and shows Jambudwipa and its surrounding waters.

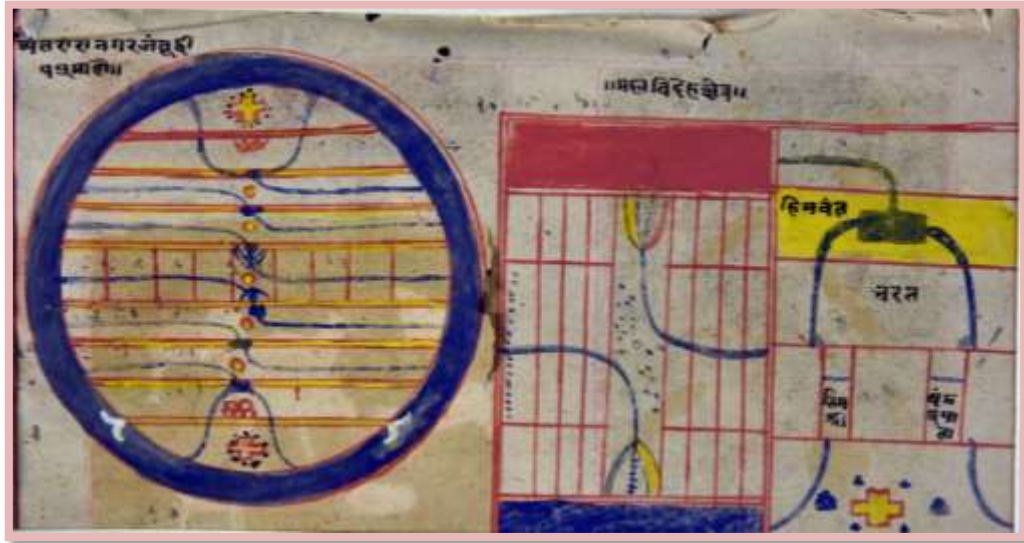


Figure 4: The two and a half continents, *adhadwipa pata*, *madhyaloka*, and the universe depiction, Illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.

Mount Meru is considered the sacred mountain in Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist cosmology and is thought to be the centre of all the physical, metaphysical and spiritual universes. According to Jain cosmology, Mount Meru is at the centre of the world surrounded by Jambudvīpa, in form of a circle forming a diameter of 100,000 *yojnas*, a unit of measurement. There are two sets of sun, moon and stars revolving around Mount Meru; while one set works, the other set rests behind Mount Meru. The 24th and last Tirthankara, Lord Mahāvīra, was taken to the summit of Meru by the God Indra shortly after his birth, after putting his mother Queen Trishala into deep slumber. He was bathed and anointed with special substances and consecrated [6]. Figure 5 depicts Mount Meru with vegetal and floral elements with Jain shrines around it. Birds are depicted at the lower end.

A celestial or astronomical object is a naturally occurring physical entity, association, or structure that exists in the observable universe. In astronomy, Celestial objects include planetary systems, star clusters, nebulae, and galaxies, while asteroids, moons, planets, and stars are astronomical bodies [9]. Figure 6 depicts the mountain Meru, stars, the sun, moon, galaxies, and few planetary bodies from the Jain Universe.



Figure 5: Mount Meru, illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.



Figure 6: Celestial objects, Illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century

Figure 7 depicts Arihant, Siddha, Acharya, Upadhyay and Sadhus who are five Supreme Souls (Parmeshthis). One is relieved of his sins by bowing before them. Arihant-One who has destroyed the four *Ghatiya Karmas*, is embodied with forty six virtues and who is devoid of the eighteen faults are called *Arihant Parmeshthi* (Worthy Soul). *Siddha*-One who has destroyed all the eight *Karmas*, having eight virtues and live on the upper most end of the universe are called *Siddha Parmeshthi* (Liberated Soul).

Acharya-One who possesses thirty six virtues, is the head of a *Sangh* (consisting of *Munis, Aryikas, Shravakas & Shrivikas*), teaches, initiates (gives *Deeksha*) and gives *prayaschit* (rule of repentance) to disciples is the *Acharya Parmeshthi* (Preceptor). *Upadhyay*-One who has the knowledge of all the eleven *Angas* and fourteen *Purvas* or has read (studied) all the main scriptures of that time and teaches the pupils of the *Sangh* is called *Upadhyay Parmeshthi* a meaning spiritual teacher. *Sadhu* is one who observes the twenty eight basic principles or *Moolgunas* and is busy in learning and meditation[7].

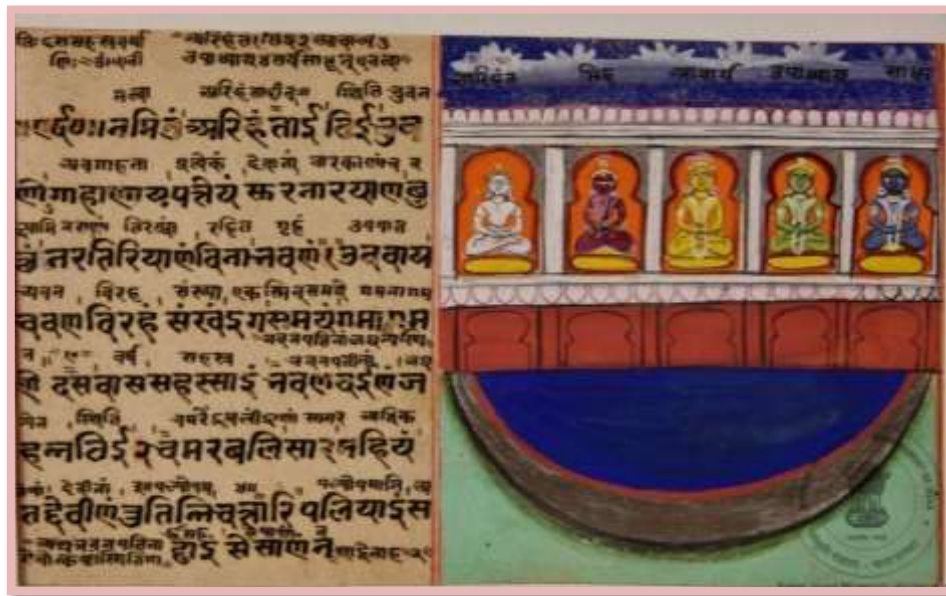


Figure 7: Parmeshthis or Five Supreme Souls , Illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.

The *vijnaptipatras* were invitations chiefly sent to a learned Jain *acharya* to stay with a Jain *sangha* or community of a particular locality during the next *chaumasa*, the period of the four months of monsoon when touring is difficult for a monk. While conveying the invitation, these letters were meant to atone for any acts of commission and omission by the members of a *sangha* and to convey their good wishes for the whole of humanity[7]. They were made in the form a scroll painting[3].

In Jainism, the abodes of lower level Gods are not in heavens or “*swarga*” but in the upper region of the first hell. The first level is called “*ratna prabha*”. There are ten classes of these gods – they are powerful and youthful; *asura kumara, naga kumaras, vidyut kumaras, suparna kumaras, agni kumaras, vata kumaras, stanita kumaras, udadhikumaras, dvipa kumaras*

and *dik kumaras*[8].Figure 9 represent these beings who are also *bhavanavasi* meaning “mansion gods”.

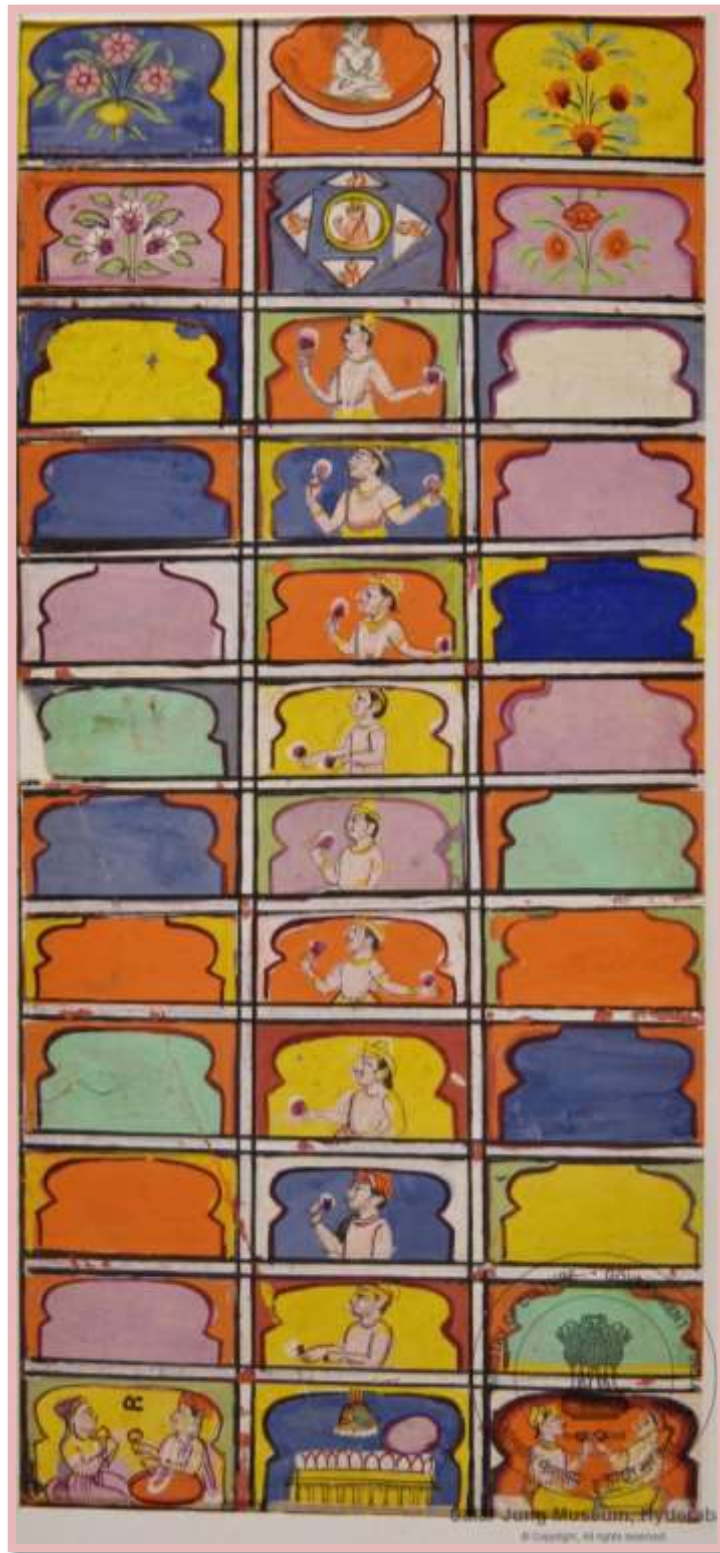


Figure 8: Invitation to a monk, *vijnaptipatra*, a scroll, Illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.



Figure 9: The kumaras, Illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.



Figure 10: Depictions of violence, relating to the *madhya loka*, Illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.

As per Jain texts, Mahavira underwent as many as 27 births before his 6th-century birth. They included a denizen of hell, a lion, and a god or *deva* in a heavenly realm just before his last birth as the 24th *tirthankara*. Svetambara texts state that his embryo first formed in a Brahman woman before it was transferred by Hari-negamesi, the divine commander of Indra's army to the womb of Trishala, Mahvira's mother and Siddhartha's wife.; King Siddhartha of the Ikshvaku Dynasty and Queen Trishala of the Licchavi dynasty. The embryo-transfer legend is not believed by adherents of the Digambara tradition.

Jain texts state that after Mahavira was born, the god Indra came from the heavens along with 56 *dipkumaries*, anointed him, and performed his *abhisheka* or consecration on Mount Meru[6]. The illustration in Figure 11 is from Mahavira's life story; Sakra, identified as Indra is seated in front of Harinegamesi and female figures, called "apsaras". Sakra has learned of the future Jina's conception and is preparing to send Harinagamesi to transfer the embryo between the two women[4].

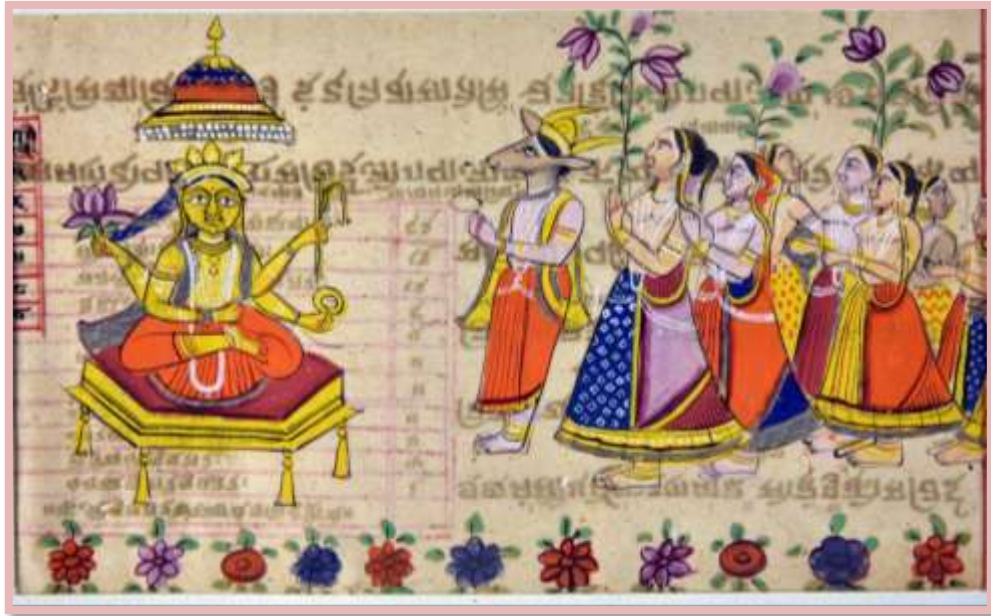


Figure 11: Sakra with his wives and Harinegamesi, Illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.

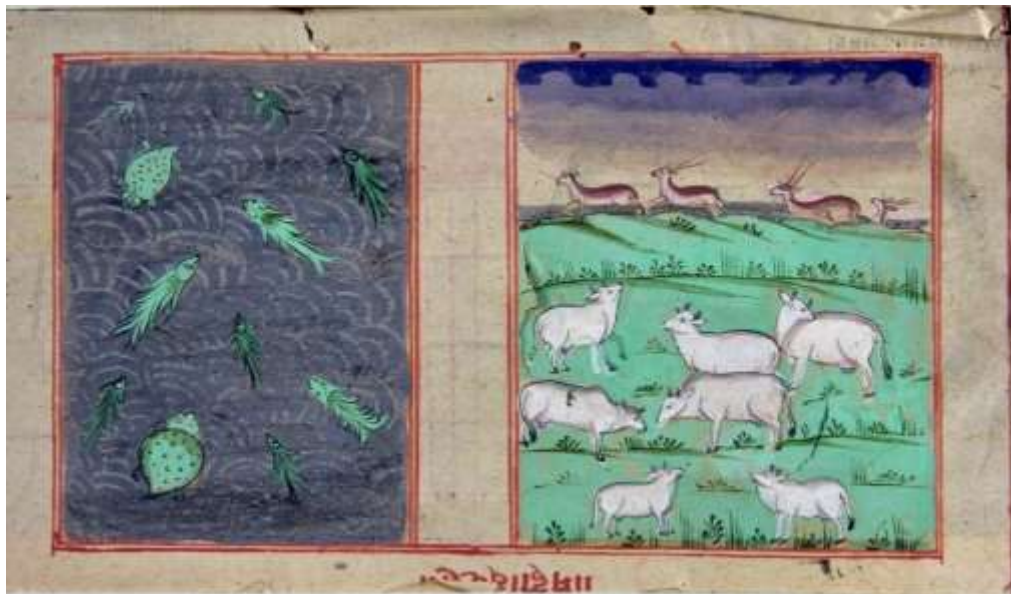


Figure 12: Probably "nigodas" and land animals from the *madhya loka*, Illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.

Leshya, is the character of the soul depicted by a colour on account of its 'karma'; related to the deeds/actions and misdeeds in one's life. There are six main categories

of *leshya* represented by six colours – black, blue, grey, red, yellow and white. The colour of *leshya* differs from person to person depending on the psychic states and mental activities behind a deed/misdeed. The Jaina texts illustrate this concept beautifully with the reactions of six people who are hungry travellers, on seeing a fruit-bearing tree. In Figure 13 the story is depicted. The men have seen a tree full of fruits and wonder how to get the fruits: one suggests uprooting the entire tree and eating the fruits; the second one suggests cutting the trunk of the tree; the third one suggests cutting the branches only; the fourth one suggests cutting the twigs; the fifth one suggests plucking the fruits only; the sixth one suggests picking up only the fruits that have fallen down. The thoughts, words and bodily activities of each of these six travellers are different based on their mental dispositions and are respectively illustrative of the six *leshya*s. The person with the black *leshya*, having evil disposition, thinks of uprooting the whole tree even though he wants to eat only one fruit. The person proposing to cut the tree trunk has blue *leshya*, the one suggesting cutting branches has grey *leshya*, the person suggesting cutting twigs has red *leshya* and the person thinking of simply plucking the fruits has yellow *leshya*. On the other hand, the person with the white *leshya*, having pure disposition, thinks only of picking up fruits fallen on the ground and not harming the tree[4].



Figure 13: The Leshya Tree, Illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.



Figure 14: The nine planets, Illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.

In Jainism, Samhanana refers to the “six varieties of joints”; *vajrarsabhanaraca*, *rsabhanaraca*, *naraca*, *ardhanaraca*, *kilika* and *sevarta*. This as per the *Tattvartha Sutra*, refers to “bone-joint karma” and represents one of the various kinds of Nama, or “physique-making” “karmas”, which represents one of the eight types of Prakirti-bandha (species bondage): one of the four kinds of bondage or *bandha*. The “karmas” on the rise which the different types of bone-joints in the body get particularity are called bone-joint body-making karma. These are of six types, namely: perfect joint *vajravrsabhanaraca*, the less perfect joint, *vajranaraca*, inferior joint, *naraca*, weak joint *ardhanaraca*, very weak joint (*kilaka*), fragile joint, *asampraptasrpatika*[8]. This is represented visually in Figure 15.



Figure 15: Samhanana, Illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.

Rishabhanatha is the first *Tirthankara* of Jainism and is the founder of Ikshvaku dynasty. He was the first of twenty-four teachers in the present half-cycle of time in Jain cosmology. He was the spiritual successor of Sampratti Bhagwan, the last *Tirthankara* of previous time cycle. He is also known as Adinatha which translates into First or *Adi*, Lord or

- 15 | 4. Granoff, Phyllis (1999) *Victorious Ones: Jain Images of Perfection*, Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing, pp 35-47, 77, 250,261,274.

natha[10]. Figure 16 depicts consecration of jina Rishabha, the first God-king or “Prathamarajeshwara” as he is also called.



Figure 16: Adoration of a “jina”, illustration, Samgrahani Sutra, Gujarat, 17th century.

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