Chapter - VII

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to examine the corpus of illustrated manuscripts and paintings from the relatively unknown and untapped Digambara Jain *bhandaras* in Vidarbha in northeastern Deccan. An attempt has hereby been made to tackle the multifarious issues that since long have been the concern of the art historian, pertaining to stylistic and iconographical analyses and chronology, while simultaneously endeavoring to position the paintings in the socio political, economic, religious and cultural milieu of the region where they were located, and to a large extent produced.

Historiography reveals that painting activity for the Digambara Jains was far less prolific than that carried out for the Svetambaras, so much so that in its early phases of scholarship, Jain painting was almost synonymous with works produced for and preserved by the Svetambara Jains . Subsequent research by eminent scholars unraveled a sizeable number of illustrated manuscripts from Digambara temple repositories in Delhi, Gwalior and Jaipur, among other places that went on to establish that patronage towards painting was not the sole prerogative of the Svetambara sect, and the Digambaras too patronized painters to produce works based on their own set of religious themes.

Even in the early phases of art production related to temple building and its sculptural adornment, there appears to have been no distinct line of demarcation between Digambara and Svetambara Jain patronage. While some of the most opulent of the Svetambara Jain monuments such as the temples at Mount Abu in Rajasthan, were patronized by Vimala Shah, Vastupala and Tejpala, the wealthy and munificent ministers of the Solanki rulers of the thirteenth century, there were others such as the gigantic free standing Bahubali image at the Digambara site of Sravana Belagola in Karnataka, commissioned by Chamundaraya, the minister of the Ganga ruler in the tenth century. Numerous monuments in Gujarat, Rajasthan, north and central India, largely temples and images, apparently patronized by both the sects, have been ravaged by repeated Islamic invasions. However, somewhere in the later medieval period, the Svetambaras emerge as the more visible and forthcoming patrons of art

activities such as temple building, image making and undertaking ambitious programs of illustration of manuscripts, there cultural products underlined by a certain degree of opulence that set them distinctly apart from the relatively understated artistic statements produced for the Digambara community

The outlining and execution of commissions of illustrating manuscripts has largely been the privilege of the Svetambara community, who easily emerge as its more affluent and zealous patrons. Several reasons could be cited behind the relatively meager output of illustrated manuscripts or paintings produced for the Digambara patron, one of them being the geographical positioning of the Digambara community in the Indian sub continent. It is observed that while the Svetambaras made great economic strides in their home territories of Gujarat and Rajasthan, and to an extent in north India, and emerged as a prosperous business class in the medieval period, the Digambara community was considerably reduced in numbers and also thinly spread out, occupying pockets of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Malwa and Bundelkhand as well as parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka in the Deccan. Thus, during the formative stages and efflorescence of the western Indian idiom of manuscript painting, the Svetambaras by virtue of their overpowering physical presence and material propensity acquired the distinction of being its most celebrated patrons. With the threat of Islamic invasions looming large, it became all the more imperative for every devout Jain to make substantial donations towards copying and illustrating of religious texts. This concept of *shastra dana* which ultimately was supposed to lead to *punya* or salvation was the prime cause why donations were made on a massive scale by the *sravaka* and *sravika*, male and female lay devotees of the Jain sect.

This notion of *dana* was shared by the Digambaras as well, and their collection of religious and canonical works preserved in the various *shastra bhandaras* matches those of the Svetambaras. However, a relatively modest number of paintings and illustrated manuscripts were produced for the former. One of the reasons behind this may be the more austere and self imposing life style of the Digambara sect at large, which permitted little deviation into other areas of

activity. Their isolation from the mainstream centers of art production may also have imposed certain limitations on the mode of production. Despite this glaring differences in numbers, both Svetambara and Digambara manuscripts were governed by the same aesthetic. The earliest known Digambara illustrated manuscript of Shatkhandagama, dated 1112 CE, and painted on palm leaf shares many stylistic features with the western Indian style employed by the Svetambara Jains.

However, while Svetambara manuscripts even when executed outside western India, their immediate sphere of operation, bear the indelible stamp of the western Indian region in their iconography and style, in the Digambaras, the force of tradition is not overwhelmingly assertive, the prevailing tendency being to employ the local idiom for illustrating manuscripts, with the result that the manuscripts are painted in diverse stylistic exprsessions.[1]

The early illustrated Digambara manuscripts, such as the fragmentary Mahapurana from Naya mandir, Delhi, painted c. 1420 and the Pasanaha cariyu dated 1441 CE, and executed at Gwalior, exemplify that both the sects availed of the same artistic sources and although certain regional deviations may be discerned in the Digambara works, they essentially stem from the western Indian school. It is evident that painters working for the Svetambara and Digambara patrons alike were employing the idiom that had already gained credibility in the north Indian belt, which explains that there is no tangible difference between works such as the Kalpasutra of 1439 CE from Mandu and the Kalpasutra dated 1465 CE from Jaunpur, and the contemporaneous Digambara works from the Delhi -Gwalior area.

The style designated as the Caurapancasika style, which evolved around the Mewar- Gwalior region around his period was also employed for some Digambara manuscripts such as the Adipurana of c. 1450 and Mahapurana of c. 1540 from Delhi wherein the most noticeable departure from the western Indian idiom is the elimination of the further eye besides several innovations in composition and color schemes In Gujarat where the western Indian style proceeded to its opulent best in the late fifteenth century, the lavishly painted

Kalpasutra from the Devsano pado *bhandara* in Ahmedabad , of c 1475- 1500 CE, had its counterpart in an equally extravagant Digambara manuscript of the Yashodhara carita of 1494 CE.

The winds of change discerned in the Delhi- Gwalior region where the Caurapancasika style influenced the Digambara manuscripts soon affected the hieratic western Indian idiom in Gujarat and Rajasthan, as is evinced from the Sangrahani sutra from Matar, dated 1583 CE, painted by Govinda. Here, the further eye is discarded and costumes such as the *chakdar jama* are introduced, besides an overall softening of the angularity of the figures discerned in the Western Indian manuscripts. The Matar manuscript is not an isolated example, it paved the way for a new eclectic style inspired by the Caurapancasika and popular Mughal idioms which was employed to illustrate both religious and secular works in an expansive territory covering Gujarat, parts of south Rajasthan and north India. Manuscripts such as the Pancakhyayana Balavabodha in the collection of the Oriental Institute of Maharaja Sayajirao university of Baroda, datable to the last lap of the sixteenth century and the Sangrahani sutra of 1587 CE painted at Khambat are representatives of these changes

It is evident that a cohesive and coherent pattern of development is not discernable in the evolution of Jain manuscript painting from the late sixteenth century onwards, while the seventeenth century witnessed a further dissemination of styles with painters moving away from hieratic injunctions, which of course led to inspired works as well as paintings of indifferent aesthetic merit. The manuscripts form a heterogeneous group which include those inspired by the popular Mughal idiom as observed in manuscripts such as the Nala Damayanti katha dated to c. seventeenth century in the Prince of Wales museum. A Sangrahani sutra manuscript dated 1630 CE, from Wadhwan in Gujarat was also inspired by the popular Mughal style. The finest example of the popular Mughal idiom employed for Jain painting is without doubt the *vijnaptipatra* of 1610 from Agra by Salivahana. Though traces of popular Mughal influences lingered in the region there exist several manuscripts where regional idioms predominate as in the Meghduta of 1669 CE, painted at Asani

near Jaunpur, and an incomplete Kumarsambhava dated 1644 CE, in the collection of the L.D. Museum, Ahmedabad. In this state of flux, manuscripts do not conform to a single style and are also inconsistent in terms of workmanship, Several manuscripts such as the Sangrahani sutra of c. 1650 from Gujarat, the Candarajano rasa painted in Surat in 1659 CE, and the manuscript of Ardrakumara rasa, datable to the late seventeenth century, all in the collection of the L.D. museum, are cruder versions of the eclectic style.

The manuscripts of the undated Trisastisalaka purusa carita compendium and the Yashodhara carita of 1636 from Idar, in the Karanja collection may be viewed against this backdrop of stylistic manifestations. It now becomes evident that the Trisasti salaka purusa carita compendium is the only known example of its kind outside Rajasthan and Gujarat, and was painted for some Svetambara patron not later than the close of the sixteenth century. The provenance of Surat has been suggested as another manuscript of the Prashnasakunavali painted in the same decadent western Indian style, sharing iconographical and textual characteristics of the Karanja manuscript, has been discovered from this place. The discovery of this manuscript, despite its indifferent degree of workmanship, is significant as it suggests the existence of another genre dealing with astrological predictions and fortune telling usually not common in Jain painting.

The Yashodara carita of 1636 CE, from Idar on the other hand represents the eclecticism of styles in early seventeenth century at one of its finest. It is also one of the rare instances where the identity of the painter, Nanji in this case, is known. Despite its affiliations with idioms ranging from the western Indian to the Caurapancasika to the popular Mughal, it exemplifies how, in the hands of a competent painter, even varied influences may be assimilated to advantage to produce a work of aesthetic merit. Its close affiliations with the Rasamanjari of Mewar has already been pointed out. One may tentatively attribute the latter, on the basis of style, to Nanji, who perhaps hailed from the Mewar region and may have moved to Idar to execute the Yashodhara carita manuscript for the Vakhariya family. Nanji appears to be a painter of considerable merit and has successfully synthesized the various stylistic traits prevalent in the region. The

Idar manuscript emerges as one of the finer efforts of the eclectic style, for which the painter must be accorded his due, a manuscript of Yashodhara carita painted in the same year at Jobner appears far less refined and perhaps was executed by a painter with a lesser hand.

Attention has also been drawn to the so called school of Surat of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries The inconsistency and unevenness marking Jain painting from the end of sixteenth century onwards leads to an even greater chaotic condition towards the close of the seventeenth century, when Surat emerges as the principal center of painting activity, the styles employed here ranging from variants of the Mewar, Marwar and Sirohi schools to works bordering on the crude and folkish, with its adumbrations extending to places such as Jodhpur, Sojat, Ahmedabad, and Bhavnagar .The influences varied, the Mewar -Sirohi idiom predominating in works such as the *vijnaptipatra* of 1737 CE, from Sirohi in the National museum collection as well as the *vijnaptipatras* painted at Sojat in c. 1750 and Jodhpur in 1835 CE. A Yashodhara carita manuscript datable to c. 1700 –1710 painted in Sirohi style is attributed to Sirohi, while a manuscript of Kalpasutra painted in 1804 CE, from Ahmedabad, Sripala rasa painted in 1829 CE at Surat and another painted at Pethapur in 1821 CE, also display affinities with the Sirohi style. Many manuscripts from Surat exhibit influences of not just the Mewar- Sirohi, but to an extent also Marwar, and include works such as the Salibhadra caupai of c. 1700-1750 in a private collection in Baroda and the Paryusana ksamapana scroll dated 1796 CE, painted at Ahmedabad in the L.D. Institute. A sizeable number of manuscripts from Surat are on the other hand rather crude, and have been designated therein as products of a 'popular' style, represented by the manuscripts of a Sripala rasa dated 1729 CE, Jambuswami rasa of 1718 CE, and Vijay seth –Vijaya sethani rasa datable to c 1700, Kiratarjuniyam of c. 1700 – 1750 from Ahmedabad, and a Candarajano rasa of 1769 CE, painted at Bhavnagar, as also another Kiratarjuniyam dated 1768 from Khargon near Indore in Malwa. Thus several styles clubbed together for want of a nomenclature earlier as the Gujarat school of the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries was operational in a fairly wide area, not limited to Gujarat but covering parts of Rajasthan and Malwa as well. Mapping these artistic activities leads us to the conclusion that styles prevalent in and around Surat do not display a linear progression, rather the port city was a meeting ground of diverse floating idioms which were employed in the services of both Svetambara and Digambara patrons who do not appear to have been unduly fastidious about stylistic preferences or degree of workmanship It is against this background that the illustrated eighteenth century manuscripts from Karanja, such as the Sugandhadasami group or the Yashodhara carita group, which constitute the bulk of visual material from the town, may be viewed. The Vidarbha manuscripts thus were clearly products of painters versed in these multifarious idioms prevalent in Surat , and who employed their varying levels of skills to execute among other works, certain local themes peculiar to the region of Vidarbha.

The *pitha* of Karanja as already discussed earlier, was in every way a focus of the hub of religious and cultural activities of the sect and by virtue of it being the only seat of the *bhattarakas* in the area, witnessed a conscious effort on the part of the authoritarians as well as the laity in contribution to its growth It was the center of not one but three monastic orders of the Digambaras, the Sengana, Balatkar gana and Kastha sangha, each of which had a separate temple for worship, the laity divided between the three, with the Sengana and Balatkara gana temples having the largest number of worshippers. The *shastra bhandaras* of the these temples as a consequence, were accumulated with a vast number of manuscripts over the years by virtue of generous donations or *shastra dana*. Of these a small fraction comprise of illustrated manuscripts, and also include the magnificent cloth scroll, all of them displaying a disparity in styles and workmanship. This corpus of material belongs to the third of the distinct areas of Digambara painting identified.[2]

Taking into consideration the various political, economic and cultural factors that contribute towards the making of a distinctive school, this study pivoting around the Digambara center of Karanja, whose temple repositories posses in

their collection most of the visual material from the entire region throws open a range of queries, the foremost among them being the significance of Karanja in shaping up an individual school of painting in Vidarbha territory of the Deccan. What was the form and extent of patronage of painting in Vidarbha? Who exactly were the patrons and what was the identity of the artists who worked for them? Did art production occur uninterrupted or sporadically? The moot point is that can one postulate a Digambara school of painting at Karanja?

The analysis of the illustrated manuscripts and paintings and the pattern of art production in the socio cultural context of this region brings us to the conclusion that the existence of a single unified style or its organic development was out of question in a place like Karanja and its vicinity, where works such as the elegantly executed scroll of the *pancakalyanaka* in the style of Aurangabad was produced on the one hand and the indifferently handled Sugandhadasami katha painted in the late Surat idiom, on the other. A close scrutiny reveals that even contemporaneous illustrated manuscripts do not conform to a single idiom.

It is all too obvious that Karanja, though a center of painting activity late seventeenth century onwards, lacked the prerequisites essential for the formation of a new school.

Jain patronage to art, be it temple building, making images or commissioning manuscripts has largely been an individual endeavor, where a king, a minister or a wealthy layman contributed to the activity in the name of *dana* Such activities often bore the mark of the individual preferences of the patron, and produced works in diverse styles. This was in sharp contrast to Brahmanical patronage extended by royalty or collective Buddhist patronage, where everyone from the top to the bottom of the social hierarchy contributed as a part of *dana.* This assertion and a sense of direction was responsible for an ambitious and considerably more organized form of art patronage which witnessed the efflorescence of Buddhist or Brahmanical art. Among the Jains, *dana* towards a temple, or an image or manuscript being the onus of an individual rather than a group, lacked stylistic direction.

These individual enterprises largely by the adherents of the Svetambara sect, led to magnificent temple building activities such as the temples at Dilwara which in their Baroque extravagance reflect the personal preferences of its patrons, Tejpala and Vastupala. Other anonymous donors were behind the commissioning of several illustrated manuscripts of popular Svetambara texts such as Kalpasutra and Kalakacarya katha, the more opulent ones employing gold and lapis lazuli to achieve dazzling effects.

The Digambara Jains on the other hand, always appear to have been passive patrons of manuscript painting in comparison to the more enterprising Svetambara community. In fact even in its early history, painting for the Digambaras remained an isolated and sporadic activity, the works produced being of a 'flash in the pan' kind of nature, with no coherent pattern of development, for instance, the incomplete Adipurana painted in c. 1404 in Delhi, has a sole surviving miniature which displays a further growth in the style practiced in the palm leaf period, while other Digambara manuscripts such as the Yashodhara carita of 1494 CE, ascribed to Gujarat and the Santinatha carita of c. 1460-1470 CE, ascribed to Gwalior, are in the conventional western Indian idiom. On the other hand manuscripts such as the Adipurana of 1450 CE, and the Naya mandir Mahapurana of 1540 CE, from Delhi displays echoes of the Caurapancasika style. It is significant to observe that while Svetambara painting remained essentially hieratic during its period of growth till the end of the sixteenth century, Digambara works display a gamut of influences even in its early phase of production, reiterating the fact that Digambara painting was more adaptive and receptive to what one may term as morphological processes that attend a style during the successive stages of its growth and its disintegration into regional idioms[3].

It may be observed that while Svetambara painting shows gradual progression from the simple iconographic delineations of the palm leaf period to complex narrative representations and finally to the opulence of the later manuscripts such as the Devsano pado Kalpasutra of the last quarter of the sixteenth century, Digambara painting displays no such linear pattern of growth despite displaying

its flashes of individuality and brilliance, neither does it match in terms of output and workmanship the rich tradition of Svetambara works.The Svetambara Jains, forming a majority in the economic, political and social spheres in Rajasthan and Gujarat as also in the adjoining Delhi-Gwalior region therefore in every way in a better position engage the services of accomplished painters for illustrating manuscripts and thus it is they who doubtlessly essay the role of the true patrons.

The Digambaras on the other hand were restricted to certain pockets in western India, primarily in the Bundi-Kota region of Rajasthan, Idar, Ghogha and Surat in Gujarat, and parts of Delhi, Gwalior and some settlements in the Malwa and Bundelkhand region, as well as some towns in the Decan heartland and Karnataka. It is interesting to note that satellite settlements of the Digambaras were formed around places designated as *pithas* or seats of power of the pontifical heads or *bhattarakas*, which remained in days of political strife and social insecurity, the sustaining religious and spiritual fountainhead for the laity and the authoritarians alike.

The *pithas* as it were, had more serious implications in the cultural politics of Digambara Jain society than what is gleaned from the surface They were the symbols of power, the religious and social havens, the reaffirmation of a marginalized society in alien lands. It is significant to note that illustrated manuscripts painted for the Digambara Jains, from the earliest Shatkhanadagama of 1112 CE from Mudabidri to the incomplete Adipurana of 1404 CE, from a *shastra bhandara* in Delhi to numerous works dating from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries are located in temple collections in places considered to be prominent *pithas*- the seats of Delhi, Jaipur, Gwalior, Idar and Surat in north and western India, and Karanja, Kolhapur, Mudabidri and Sravana Belagola in the Deccan being the more prominent ones. Each of these seats of power lays claim to a genealogy of *bhattarakas* going back in history to at least as early as the thirteenth century which is in consonance to the development of Digambara painting. The *bhattaraka* tradition, in its nascent stages, perhaps had little involvement in art production but as the *pithas* grew

from strength to strength, and with it the power of the *bhattarakas*, it is quite likely that the pontifical heads begun to initiate manuscript illustration programs, along with their endeavors to accrete manuscripts in their temple libraries through generous activities of *dana*. We are aware, through epigraphic and literary records that the seats, though being autonomous centers of power, isolated and separated physically from one another, maintained close links with each other as well as displayed a religious bonding with the various pilgrimage destinations.

This brings us back to the paramount question of patronage in Digambara painting with several arguments in support of the *bhattarakas* being its most likely, if not exclusive patrons. Jain patronage as one is aware, has always inclined to be of an individual nature, and the manuscript production in profuse numbers in Gujarat, Rajasthan and parts of north India till the end of the sixteenth century is attributed almost entirely to ministers and affluent merchants and traders of the Svetambara sect whose generous donations in the wake of Islamic invasions and religious uncertainties made possible the production of illustrated manuscripts on such a grand scale, which despite its hieratic nature, impresses by its aesthetic refinement and at a later date, by the liberal use of gold and ultramarine which created dazzling effects. The isolation of Digambara settlements and the relatively modest number of Digambara adherents as compared to the Svetambaras may be cited as some of the reasons why manuscript productions could never be taken up on a truly ambitious scale, though exceptional instances of high standards of workmanship and style of Digambara manuscripts has already been pointed out. Factors such as economic constraints and a general weariness towards materialistic achievements could also be the causes of a certain detachment on the part of the Digambaras to undertake frequent and highly ambitious projects

While one may harbor certain doubts regarding the active involvement of the laity in formulating an aesthetic in Digambara Jain painting in Vidarbha, we have certain indications of taste and connoisseurship with respect to the *bhattarakas* of this area, whose role in the religious and cultural makeup of the

migrant Digambara society with roots in faraway Rajasthan and Gujarat has been of vital importance. The argument in favor of the *bhattarakas* poised as the most likely patrons has primarily been attributed to their greater mobility different places where manuscripts were illustrated on a large scale and accessibility to painters therein. While their travel itineraries also included a sizeable number of lay pilgrims, it was the *bhattarakas* who by virtue of their long standing association with their brethren based in the other seats, in the most viable position to source painters and invite them to their *pithas* to execute manuscripts. It would also be convenient for such painters to accompany the *bhattarakas* and their retinue of pilgrims on their return journey. Occasionally, an influential *bhattaraka* also managed to bring back an illustrated manuscript to augment the collection in his *shastra bhandara*, it is fairly certain that the Yashodhara carita painted at Idar in 1636 was procured by the way of a gift by a contemporaneous authoritarian from the seat of Idar , which was an eminent seat of the Balatkara order of the Digambaras and had its counterpart in Karanja as well, or received as *dana* by a zealous devotee.

The thesis has also dwelt on the question of connoisseurship of the authoritarians and probed into the nature of patronage and its role in art production. One cannot make generalizations that all *bhattarakas* were avid art lovers , but one certainly encounters several among them who had a discerning eye for painting, enough to induce itinerant painters to execute selected works for them. The *pancakalyanaka* scroll exemplifies this kind of endeavor, realized through the unstinted efforts of *bhattaraka* Jinasena and his close followers It clearly emerges as the best example of patronage extended by a pontifical head of the Vidarbha region to a painting commission, and displays the Aurangabad style at its grandest However, patronizing painting activities in Vidarbha were never routine events, and were dependent not merely on the interest of the pontiff but also availability of artists to execute the works. It has already been pointed out that no activity in the Deccan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was possible without the intervention of peripatetic painters, who moved from place to place and worked for both Hindu and Jain patrons Thus

commissioning illustrated manuscripts or paintings was not just an individual [4] act but was also contractual [5] in nature, wherein a painter was involved in a commission or a couple of them, confined by time and space that offered a remote chance to make major advances or modifications in the idiom that he was acquainted with. This phenomenon is observed in the two major groups of illustrated manuscripts from Karanja, the Sugandhadasami group and the Yashodhara carita group both of c. 1730 which despite subtle traces of regional traits remain allied to the style of Surat, which itself was a pot pourri of several styles. In the absence of institutional patronage art activities in Vidarbha were bound to occur in fits and starts. This explains the unevenness and sporadic nature of the Digambara works produced in Vidarbha. The fact that painters had to be brought from considerable distances also hampered art production, it must have been a cumbersome task getting painters to travel all the way to the Vidarbha region to paint commissions. Art activity in Rajasthan and Gujarat in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from where painters were sought, was at its peak and it is unlikely that patrons in Vidarbha got hold of the best of talent to work for them. Such commissions were in all likelihood taken up by painters with limited accomplishments, though there are as noted earlier exceptions, as witnessed in the scroll of the *pancakalyanaka*, which may be considered the most brilliant representative of the Aurangabad school, and for which accomplished artists were sought from this region to Karanja. The job of getting access to artists could not have been possible without the intervention of a personality with considerable clout and social standing, and there is reason to believe that this authority was *bhattaraka* Jinasena, head of the Sengana order of Karanja from 1655 –1695 CE, a man widely traveled and well versed in the letters. The finances for the project were in all possibility raised through donations made to the Karanja *pitha* by the Digambara laity of the town which we are aware by this time, to have become considerably wealthy and resourceful.

The illustrated manuscripts of the Sugandhadaasami katha may likewise have been realized through the efforts of Devendrakirti, pontiff of the Sengana order

in Karanja from 1699 to 1729 CE., who was in a position to invite painters from the Surat region to execute commissions These manuscripts constituted a part of a much larger group which have now been lost and of the entire oeuvre of Vidarbha manuscripts displays the closest affinities with the school of Surat of the late seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries. Devendrakirti was a frequently traveled person, and epigraphic and literary evidences reiterating his close association with the seat of Surat have already been figured in this discussion. It is possible that painters then were invited on his return journey from the extended pilgrimage tour to Gujarat and Rajasthan a little before 1729 CE during his halt at Surat . The author Jinasagara who had accompanied his entourage being among his favorite pupils, it is likely that a number of is literary works, including the dramatic Sugandhadasami katha, were taken up for illustration immediately upon touching the home base. Interestingly, the illustrated texts also feature *bhattaraka* Devendrakirti receiving the book from his pupil, Jinasagara. No mention of any other patron is available, leaving one to surmise, that the patron was none else but the pontiff Devendrakirti himself, who thereby is glorified by the painter in the illustration, perhaps at the insistence of the *bhattaraka* himself.

It was not unusual for *bhattarakas* to assert their importance by introducing themselves in the illustrated manuscripts, a phenomenon observed as early as the Tatvartha sutra of 1469 CE, from Surat, featuring *bhattaraka* Vidyanandi, or later works such as the *bhattarakas* in the Digambara matha at Sravana Belagola It is almost a persistent feature in the illustrated manuscripts from the Vidarbha region, where the *bhattaraka* is featured either on the opening folio, as in the Yashodhara carita of 1736 CE, from Balapur, or the concluding pages, as in the Adityavara vrata katha manuscript, dated 1693 CE The pontifical heads also appear several times in the incomplete manuscript of previous births of Santinatha. Their presence in Digambara Jain manuscripts indicates their preeminent social and religious standing as well as lends support to the assumption that they were indeed the patrons. This form of patronage helped project the individual into posterity and inevitably involved wish fulfillment and

self announcement [6]. This view is also substantiated by the fact that none of the manuscripts illustrated at Karanja bear the names of a lay donor, who are otherwise featured frequently in inscriptions from images of Tirthankaras, goddesses and *yantras*

Painting in Karanja , like most Digambara centers, was an erratic activity and appears to have been entirely dependent on the discretion of the authoritarians and the extent of patronage, as also the availability of painters. The majority of manuscripts illustrated at Karanja display close affinities with the Surat school of the late seventeenth – early eighteenth centuries, with which it shares several formal and stylistic features, including the division of pictorial space, the physiognomies of the men and women, costumes and color palette and one can surmise with certainty that the region of Surat, and not any other place in the Deccan where painting activities were carried on in the same period, was the territory from which the painters from Vidarbha hailed. After the hieratic western Indian school after the sixteenth century disintegrated into several idioms under varying degrees of influences of the Caurapancasika, popular Mughal and early Mewar styles in the seventeenth century, there is witnessed a further mitigation and dissemination of styles in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century in the Surat -Ahmedabad region, this area becoming a melting pot of several styles that included watered down versions of the early traditions at Mewar, Sirohi and Marwar schools as well as some idioms that were outlandishly crude and folkish. Both Svetambara and Digambara paintings executed in this period in the region reflect this eclecticism, the Vidarbha manuscripts essentially being no different from the so called school of Surat barring traces of individuality of the painter in certain respects such as some innovations in composition, tree types and delineation of the human figures.

It may be observed that Digambaras have tended to show a predilection for the idiom prevalent in the region where the manuscript commission was take up, instead of indicating any particular stylistic preference. The murals painted in the *matha* at Sravana Belagola pursue the ornate and linear style of the Mysore school, while the manuscript of the Pratistha Sarodhara Jina Yanja kalpa and

Pratshtha tilaka, from the Digambara seat of Kolhapur in western Maharashtra displays echoes of the style of Chitrakathi paintings in the neighboring region of Sawantwadi. The Vidarbha region had no such immediate tradition to fall back upon, as Deccan , with the exception of the Islamic courts of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda, and to and extent the smaller ruling houses of Hyderabad, Kurnool and Adoni, and Aurangabad in the northern Deccan, produced little by the way of a continual tradition in manuscript painting. Again the ravages of war and political turbulences had preserved extremely meager numbers of Deccani painting once produced.

Maratha manuscripts executed in the Deccan for the Peshwas of Pune and the Bhosales of Nagpur in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are not logical extensions of the Deccani tradition but works of itinerant painters from Rajasthan, who traveled to these late Deccani courts to execute commissions on a piece work basis, as these rulers do not appear to have maintained independent ateliers. They may have been responsible for the murals as well, as their no distinctive stylistic distinction between the Maratha manuscript illustrations and murals. The quality of the work thus produced depended solely on the discerning eye of the patron and the expertise of the artist he employed , hence Deccani works of this period display a variety of styles , ranging from the robust provincial types to those imbued with the elegance of Rajasthani and Mughal court painting

In absence of a tradition of painting in the region where Digambara settlements had been established, it was only logical that the patron from Vidarbha should turn elsewhere for commissioning artists, to Aurangabad, where a school flourished in the late seventeenth century, and later, to Surat-Ahmedabad territory. This was of course facilitated by various occasions such as pilgrimages, and installation and consecration ceremonies of images, by which a continual and close interaction between the Digambaras in Rajasthan and Gujarat with their kin in Vidarbha and the rest of the Deccan was maintained. The fact that folios of manuscripts such as the Santinatha carita carry summary labels of the narrative in Gujarati is another indication of the painters origins

lying somewhere in *lata desa* or Gujarat, the labels intended as guidelines of the episodes of the text. It is significant that while Deccani painting of this period patronized by the Hindu rulers despite their clear affiliations with the Rajasthani and Mughal idioms, incorporate regional traits, particularly in the costumes of the men and women, the painted documents from Vidarbha adhere largely to the Surat style, including the dress codes.

This reiterates the contention that painters invited to Vidarbha by the Digambara patrons stayed here for brief interludes, which afforded little scope for developing any specific regional traits which could be identified as peculiar to Vidarbha. Though one must concede that on an individual basis, the painter did make some efforts in that direction, and strove to leave his stamp, as observed in the folios of the Sugandhadasami katha from Nagpur, wherein he attempts new pictorial composition according to the requirements of the narrative, or when he introduces traditional Deccani costumes such as the diaphanous *jama* and the *guldasta* motif in the manuscript of the Adityavara vrata katha. In this manuscript the painter was also expected to derive new pictorial equivalents of iconographies of deities such as Padmavati and Dharanendra, which had never been represented in painting earlier, and his unease becomes evident in the summarily treated forms of both. As the incomplete manuscript of the previous births of Santinatha indicates, commissions were occasionally abandoned midway due to lack of patronage or non availability of artists Despite the limitations of artistic services available a number of manuscripts were illustrated in the Vidarbha region, the group comprising of the dated Yashodhara carita of 1736 CE, the undated Santinatha carita, the set delineating various classes of deities, and the Candana malaygiri katha of 1733 CE, now untraceable, displays strong affiliations with the Mewar Sirohi idioms, while the other contemporaneous group comprising of three illustrated texts of the Sugandha dasami katha, one now missing, an Adityavara vrata katha, Ananta vrata katha and Jivandhara carita, all datable between 1725 and 1750 CE, the whereabouts of the last three not known. The other documents, such as the *pancakalyanaka* scroll and the Adityavara vrata katha of 1693 CE, form of the upper and lower

ends respectively of the styles practiced in Vidarbha region. The painter engaged to execute these works was more often than not more imitative than innovative in his approach, merely putting to use his skills as an image maker for a patron whose own interest appearing to have extended not beyond supervising the commission and its preservation in the temple libraries. This tepid patron -artist relationship is not only the hallmark of painting in Vidarbha but of late seventeenth and eighteenth century Jain painting in and around Surat in general, and is reflected in the aesthetic merit of the illustrated manuscripts and scrolls, as well as the murals in the Digambara temple at Jamod.

All artistic activity was generated and motivated by religious considerations. Commissioning a painter to illustrate a manuscript was not a collective but rather an individual effort, as much as copying and donating a manuscript to the *bhandaras* was, both part of a larger meritorious act of *dana* Possibly, the dividing line between copying a text and commissioning a painter to illustrate a manuscript was thin, and perhaps non existent. Donating was important, irrespective of the aesthetic merit of the donation. As *dana* was considered a pious act, it often led to indiscriminate accretion from unknown destinations which saw the fragmented Svetambara manuscript of the Kalpasutra and rare manuscripts such as the compendium of Trisastisalaka purusa carita and Vasudevahindi, both illustrated in the western Indian style and datable to the end of sixteenth century, finding a place in the Digambara *shastra bhandaras* in Vidarbha. The latter's significance lies in it being the only known document on the theme of the Trisastisalakapurusas or luminous personalities enumerated in the complex warp and weft of Jain mythology. The form and content of its text differs vastly from the usual Jain narratives. Despite the inferior draftsmanship and clichéd compositions suggesting a date of its execution at a time when the western Indian school had already slipped into a state of decadence, the manuscript assumes significance for its introduction of subjects and characters such as Arjuna, Kumbhakarna, Hanumana and Harishchandra, among numerous others, picked up from the vast repertoire of Jain mythologies which had over the ages, been expanded to encompass numerous Hindu legends.

It is obvious that patronage and connoisseurship of painting lay deeply and inextricably rooted in the cultural politics of Digambara society in Vidarbha with Karanja as its nucleus. The ambitious *dana* program entailed the involvement of everyone from the top to the bottom of the social hierarchy, with some of the erudite *bhattarakas* preparing abridged versions of canonical literature, while their disciples in addition, writing extensively. Zealous devotees not to be left behind, also engaged themselves in the sacred act of copying religious texts and gifting the results of their endeavors to visiting monks, as is observed in the case of the lay devotee named Ananda, who gifted a copy of the Nagakumaracarita to *bhattaraka* Devendrakirti on the latter's visit to Surat

A shift in content is observed in the religious literature of the Jains of both the Digambara and Svetambara sects sometime around the close of the sixteenth century Towards the late seventeenth century particularly, this change becomes more glaring as religious ideologies garbed in popular literature, such as the *rasa* and *chaupai* were widely favored by the Svetambaras in and around Gujarat, while the Digambaras countered with their own set of hymns(*stotra*), ditties to Tirthankaras(*palana*) and tales pivoting around ritual practices(*vrata katha*). It was this form of literature that was mostly authored and also copied in impressive numbers by both monks and the laity. In Gujarat and Rajasthan, the Kalpasutra and Kalakacarya katha gave way to popular tales such as Candarajano rasa, Vijay seth Vijay sethani rasa and Sripala rasa while in Vidarbha several local texts such as the Sugandhadasami katha and Adityavara vrata katha enjoyed immense popularity. While manuscripts were written and collected in *shastra bhandaras* of Vidarbha in such overwhelming numbers, only a few were taken up for illustration. This may be attributed to the constraints and limitations imposed upon the patron due to the sheer dearth of painters working in this region. Even when a manuscript illustration program was initiated, it could have made headway when *bhattarakas*, by virtue of the social and religious standing, procured painters to execute commissions. There is good reason to believe that the authoritarians masterminded every detail from

the selection of the texts to be chosen for illustration to sourcing and commissioning peripatetic painters.

Vrata kathas or tales revolving around the significance of rituals topped the list of favorites as they enclosed *karmic* deeds as the leitmotif and involved the journey of the soul through a series of births. No opportunity was lost within the texts to add religious sermons, dogmatic details and doctrinal discourses through the mouth of the teacher who was often gifted with a vision of the past and the future.[7] At least three illustrated manuscripts of the Sugandhadasami katha authored by the high profile disciple Jinasagara of *bhattaraka* Devendrakirti are known. The pivotal moral message in the narrative is explicit- if a person commits the blasphemy of dishonoring the act of *dana* to monks, it would entail him /her to go through an agonizing series of births, with redemption possible only through rituals. The moral is conveyed to the reader through the ordeals of the queen who disrespects her religious and spiritual duties as a *sravika* Significantly, the manuscript was subjected to public reading on the tenth day of the month of *bhadrapada* during the *paryusana parva,* to a deferential audience, the didacticism being directed towards one of the *sravaka's* most vital duties-offering *annadana* or food as alms to peripatetic monks. This practice, referred to as *chauka* in common parlance today, is binding to the lay devotees, and continues to be observed in the present context when itinerant monks and nuns remain stationed at one place during the four months of the monsoon.

Texts such as the Yashodhara carita appear to have been preferred above others among the Digambara Jains owing to the explicit social and religious messages encoded in the narrative. It also contains powerful imageries of dark characters and dark deeds and sins- Bhairavananda, the sorcerer, the promiscuous queen, her leprosy stricken paramour, cock sacrifice and other inane rituals for the so called liberation of the soul. The success of texts such as the Sugandhadasami katha and Yashodhara carita lie in fact that they are replete with religious sermons, mouthed by monks who 'prescribe' certain religious duties to improve one's 'destiny'. The Yashodhara carita in fact also makes subtle insinuations at

Brahmanical rituals such as animal sacrifices and misplaced conceptions of redemption through performing *dana* to Brahmin priests and goddesses

The Digambara community in Vidarbha region appears to have laid greater emphasis on installing images of Tirthankaras such as Santinatha and Rishabhanatha, which could explain the commissioning of an illustrated biography of Santinatha as well as the Tirthankara's previous births, a manuscript which for some reason was left incomplete. Very few illustrated manuscripts of Santinatha carita are known from Digambara *bhandaras* all over while the legends of early births of Santinatha have not known to be handled in illustrated manuscripts earlier.

Other texts grant preeminent positions to goddesses hitherto considered secondary, the Adityavara vrata katha being the best example, wherein the *yaksa* and *yaksi* of Parsvanatha, Dharanendra and Padmavati are central to the narrative. The *yaksi* Padmavati appears to have enjoyed an independent and highly exalted status in the Deccan and Karnataka, with separate shrines built in her honor. Many of the Vidarbha temples have images of Padmavati, with exclusive hymns and ritual texts composed for her, a procession of her images, known as *vahana utsav*, being ceremonially conducted for the goddess in the month of *chaitra* Again iconic adoration of the goddess is manifested in the *dirhadi puja*, a bi annual ritual in Vidarbha in which the Digambaras congregate to invoke the goddesses' blessings.

Paradoxically, the spirit of asceticism advocated through such texts appears antithetical to the ostentation marking the lifestyle of the *bhattarakas* whose self indulgence extended to the laymen, both plunging headlong into elaborate rituals and long drawn ceremonies. The ideas, beliefs and values expressed in cultural products are ideological, and related in a systematic way to the social and economic structures in which the artist is situated [8]. No other document supports this view better than the exquisitely painted cloth scroll of the *pancakalyanaka*, delineating the five key events of Tirthankara Rishabhanatha's life, and unarguably the finest cultural product from Karanja. Its sheer size and narrative suggests its utilitarian significance, it was obviously intended to be

displayed in the vicinity of the temple, much in the manner in which pilgrimage banners or *vividha tirtha patas* were hung, and served as an appropriate backdrop for numerous installation and consecration ceremonies that were a regular feature of a *bhattaraka's* tenure. Every image was deemed fit for installation only when subjected to an elaborate ceremony involving the five rites of passage, the *pancakalyanakas,* namely the *garbha, janma, diksa, kevalajnana* and *moksa.* These events were performed with laymen and women enacting the diverse roles of the key characters from the events. The scroll was possibly painted to commemorate such an event and thereafter as a prop for subsequent ceremonies, with the *bhattaraka* and the thousands of devotees participating in such socio religious extravaganzas being its cultural consumers[9]. It would be pertinent to note that while early Digambara painting dealt with illustrations of the entire narratives of the Adipurana and Mahapurana, the scroll painted in seventeenth century Deccan shifts the focus from the narrative to those events acquiring ritualistic connotations and directly concerned with the performance of consecration. The *pancakalyanakas* are also observed to have been painted in the murals at the Digambara temple in Jamod and are featured in the sculptural representations of the wooden *mandapa* in the Balatkara temple in Karanja. One may at this juncture draw attention to the parallelism between the *pancakalyanakas* of the Jina and the *astamahapratiharyas* of another historical figure, Buddha, wherein in the process of deification/valorization, myth and historicity overrun their boundaries and overlap each other.

As patronage came intermittently and was mostly of individual nature, it thwarted the chances of the development of a distinct school. In fact no school in the true sense did ever develop in the Deccan after the fall of the Bahamani kingdoms and what one witnesses is brief stints of painting activity for patrons as diverse as the Rajput chieftains in Aurangabad region, the smaller Muslim kingdoms of Hyderabad, Kurnool and Adoni, and later, the Peshwa or Bhosala ruling houses and the migrant Digambara community of Vidarbha. Most of these activities thrived on the services of itinerant painters who were willing to travel out of their home bases in Rajasthan and Gujarat in search of work. As painting

activity in the Rajput courts of Rajasthan was at its peak, it is likely that painters of lesser merit sought commissions from patrons in the Deccan, their style barring occasional modifications in costumes and other paraphernalia, remaining essentially Rajasthani. The patron on his part was perhaps not discerning enough or was not in a position to impinge his preferences on these peripatetic painters most of whom possessed limited merit. The finest of the exceptions being the *pancakalyanaka* scroll from Karanja, which despite its strong affiliations with the school of Aurangabad , remains by far superior to any painted document in late seventeenth –eighteenth century Decani painting, and we may attribute it to the Aurangabad master, who so seamlessly synthesized Rajasthani, Mughal and the Deccani idioms prevalent in Aurangabad and was perhaps awarded handsomely for his efforts by the Digambara community of Karanja.

One may sum up with the statement that Karanja flourished as a center of painting from the late seventeenth to the mid eighteenth century, as the body of manuscripts and paintings evaluated in the present study indicate , though a fair number of manuscripts bearing illustrations are now untraceable[10]. Though Karanja lacked the potential for the emergence of a new idiom the fact that painters were sought out from great distances and engaged in painting commissions itself speaks a good deal about the matters of taste, and to an extent connoisseurship, albeit governed by an ulterior motive of asserting one's own social standing. Painting activity carried out in Karanja is thereby comparable to the kind that proceeded in other Digambara centers which also tend to preserve a mixed collection that does not subscribe to a particular school The disparate styles of Karanja were essentially hybrid styles, evolved out of aesthetic morphological processes wherein styles change and overlap, and overflow their boundaries[11]. Further like all artistic hybrids, they display a certain eclecticism and are composed of inconsistent, conflicting elements which stood little chance in the present environment of harmonization. The Vidarbha manuscripts are significant from the viewpoint that they illuminate art production by a minority community in circumstances scarcely conducive to painting, while throwing light on a number of unknown religious themes and

iconographic representations Above all, the illustrated manuscripts and paintings from Digambara Jain *bhandaras* of Vidarbha, with Karanja as its pivotal axis, exemplify how the religious ideologies and socio economic and political tapestry of the Digambara Jains translated into distinctive cultural forms in the Deccan heartland.

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