

Nalini Balbir,

Professor, University of Paris-3 Sorbonne-Nouvelle, France

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Jain treasures of the British Library

Abstract: The British Library is a home to numerous and valuable manuscripts from India. Those produced among the Jain communities in Rajasthan and Gujarat are worthy of note. Many of them are enriched with lively and colourful paintings. From the medieval period onwards, they were a favourite media of teaching life-principles, stories and all areas of knowledge. Jain business communities have always been keen on sponsoring artefacts and manuscripts meant to propagate their culture. On the other hand, in the 18th and 19th centuries the discovery of manuscripts was crucial for recognizing the existence of a clear Jain identity, distinct both from Hinduism and Buddhism. The talk will highlight some of these treasures and explore their themes.

(The talk was accompanied by numerous slides of Jain manuscript pages which cannot be reproduced here. Some of them are on temporary display in a special case in the Sir John Ritblatt Gallery. This display was curated by Nalini Balbir, Marina Chelline and Burkhard Quessel. See *Jaina Studies. Newsletter of the Centre of Jaina Studies*, SOAS, March 2011, Issue 6, pp. 55-57; <http://www.soas.ac.uk/jainastudies/newsletter/file66850.pdf>).

Oral transmission of Jain teachings, centrality of written scriptures to Jain culture

It is well known that the Jain teachings, which go back more than 2500 years, were primarily handed down orally from master to disciple through generations (*paramparā*) of mendicants and laypeople. But had reading and writing not been valued by the classical doctrine and had there not been any written artifacts, we would not be assembled here for a talk on the Jain treasures of the British Library, as these treasures are manuscripts.

Despite the oral origins of the tradition, manuscripts and, in recent times, printed books are central to Jain culture. For instance, all Jains know that during the Paryuṣaṇ festival, one of the most important of their religious

calendar, copies of the famous *Kalpasūtra* are carried in procession and worshipped. Among the Digambaras, the counterpart of Paryuṣaṇ is the Daśalakṣaṇaparvan which features another authoritative work, the *Tattvārthasūtra*. Another festival, celebrated by the Śvetāmbaras as Jñānapañcamī and by the Digambaras as Śrutapañcamī at two different times of the year, has the transmission and knowledge of scriptures at its centre. It is dedicated to Sarasvatī and to all religious books in general. Such events developed in the course of time but have now become facts in the life of the Jain community. On the other hand, copying the sacred texts and giving them to monks and nuns for reading and studying is one of the seven fields where pious laypeople (*śrāvakaś*) are invited to sow their wealth, as the Jains put it. Along with other factors it explains that the Jain libraries (the so-called *bhaṇḍārs* or *jñānabhaṇḍārs*) are real treasure-houses where an immense wealth of manuscripts of all types, all periods and all origins can be found. The Jaisalmer temple-library is one of the most important because it contains old manuscripts dating back to the 11th century. Further, the names of Patan, Cambay, Ahmedabad, Surat, Jaipur, Bikaner in Western India, or Moodbidri in Karnatak, also deserve a mention in this connection.

Jain manuscripts outside India

But, outside India too, Jain manuscripts are housed in the great libraries of the world. Among them the libraries of United Kingdom have a prominent place. Among the libraries of United Kingdom, the British Library is the most special institution as far as Jain manuscripts are concerned. The number of 1100 it holds is rather impressive, when compared with other libraries outside India. The quality of the manuscripts is as noteworthy because they were acquired by scholars who knew what they were doing and what they wanted, and then preserved and enriched by a responsible institution. Almost all the Jain manuscripts of the British Library are complete, not fragmentary bits and pieces. They represent a wide range of texts. And, among them, there are, indeed, treasures, that are visually very attractive. You are able to see a small selection displayed in the special case organized in the John Ritblatt Treasure Gallery. But there are many more. They have been digitized as part of the

Jainpedia project, are being described and will be available for all to see as the Jainpedia website goes live and is fed with groups of them at a regular pace.

What is a Jain manuscript?

A Jain manuscript can first be defined as a manuscript where a text belonging to the Jain tradition has been copied by a scribe, who can be a professional copyist, not necessarily belonging to the Jain community, a Jain layman, a monk or a nun. This in itself gives an idea of how numerous Jain manuscripts can be, given the wide scope of the texts concerned, as we will see. But Jains, for whom knowledge in all fields is a value, have also copied works authored by non-Jains, and the Jain temple-libraries are well-known as storehouses which preserve Buddhist or Hindu texts which would have remained unknown without the Jain care for preservation of Indian cultural heritage as a whole. The languages used by the Jains in the course of their tradition represent a wide range as well: several varieties of Prakrits for the earliest authoritative scriptures of both Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras, but also Sanskrit, and, later on, all the vernacular languages written and spoken in the regions where Jain communities were or are present. Forms of Gujarati, Rajasthani, Hindi and Marathi in north India, forms of Tamil and Kannara in south India. For Prakrits, Sanskrit and the northern Indian languages, the script used in Jain manuscripts is Devanāgarī with some variants, while the south Indian languages are noted in the local scripts. The oldest available manuscripts date back to the 11th century – all that had been written before has not survived. The most recent ones were written in the 20th century, as writing by hand was never totally superseded by printing. Even now, Jain monks and nuns are encouraged to copy and to write by hand, sometimes producing true artefacts. From the 11th to the 13th century, in Western India palmleaf was the material used, then local paper became the rule, whereas in South India, palmleaf always remained common. Jain palmleaf manuscripts from Western India are exceptionally found in non-Indian libraries. The British Library can boast of two which were written in 1201 CE (Or. 1385-1386).

The present collection of Jain manuscripts in the British Library is the result of successive enrichments to which various kinds of individuals have contributed in the last 250 years. Today's British Library itself is the produce of a complicated institutional history where manuscripts originally belonging to the India Office Collections and to the British Museum came together.

Western discovery of Jainism

Jain manuscripts are important in themselves. But Jain manuscripts in Western libraries are also significant for what they tell us about discovery and knowledge about Jainism. How did Westerners discover Jainism?

Astonishment in front of striking Jain behaviours

Portuguese, Dutch, British, Italians or French who happened to travel to India for trading or missionary purposes in the 16th and 17th centuries on the Western Indian coast came face to face with people whom they often designated as Baniyans. In their parlance, this means Jains. Occasionally they came across people they called "Vartia" or "Vertea". This term refers to Jain monks. These travellers often mention the wearing of a mouth-mask in order to avoid killing insects and the carrying of a cotton broom to the same effect. The *muhpatti* and the *rajoharana*, along with plucking out of the hair, prohibition to eat at night and fasting unto death are recurring features in their accounts. Records of these encounters show that travellers were rather puzzled and embarrassed. In a few cases, they went into more details. Alexander Hamilton, a Scots sea captain describes the monastic equipment of Śvetāmbara ascetics rather precisely. Henry Lord, an Anglican chaplain, is the first to name the Tapā and Kharataragacchas, as well as the festival of Paryushan – "Putcheson" as he calls it, while Thomas Ovington, an Anglican clergyman, the author of *A Journey to Surat in the year 1689*, went a step further because the descriptions of behaviours are supplemented with explanations as he must have got them from oral informants. Mostly, all were struck by a foreignness about which they did not know what to think, and by all behaviours favouring respect of life - *ahimsā* - to an extent which was, for them, beyond understanding. But they could only remain at the surface,

describing only the visible signs of practices which were devoid of background and totally alien to their intellectual frames.

Wonder and surprise in front of Jain monuments

Coming face to face with people was one aspect of the cultural shock. Another one was being placed in front of landscapes and monuments. Marianne North, a well-travelled British lady who documented plant-life of India and other countries painted Shatrunjaya hill which she visited at the end of the 19th century (www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/other.019wdz000003264u00000000.html):

“We were taken up the hill on two square trays suspended on bamboos. The whole way is a steep ladder of stone, but the men never seemed tired. The hill is divided into two summits. The valley between them is entirely covered with temples of all sizes and ages. Seven years ago there were four thousand statues of Buddha; now there are many more. Most of the temples are of dark gray stone; some are of marble (...) They were crowds of people that day on the hill, red being the preponderous colour. They looked like a long garland of flowers against the hillside, climbing the steep steps. (...) I felt thankful as I descended the hill for the last time that I should have no more temples to puzzle me, but it was a glorious spot, with wide distant views of the plain and sea beyond its temples. All the way down there were little temples every few hundred years, like the stations of a Sacro Monte in Italy, with banyan trees shading them and tanks of water” (*Recollections* vol. II, pp. 77-78).

An interesting account for its combination of wonder and inaccuracy. The 18th-19th centuries saw a growing interest for Indian religious architecture and the beginning of systematic archaeological explorations. The famous temple-cities of Shatrunjaya, Girnar and Abu were often represented, as also the colossal statue of Bāhubali at Shravana Belgola (www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac./other/019wdz000000576u00000000.html).

Lesser known places were not toured systematically, but they occasionally found interested viewers as well (e.g., Colossal Bāhubali at Karkala, (www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/other/019wdz00000023u00000000.html)). British officers working officially in India in connection with the Archaeological Survey of India and its provincial branches started thorough investigations. The *Temples of Shatrunjaya* by Henry Cousens and James Burgess is such a reference study, the reading of which remains beneficial even today.

Role of manuscripts for recognizing a Jain identity and specific tradition

So there were intriguing people and there were uncommon artistic achievements which caught the attention of observers. But it took time before all the pieces of the puzzle would hold together to make sense. Manuscripts were highly instrumental in this process. They appeared as *the* source for original information. They played an important part in the discovery of Jainism as a full fledged tradition with a long history and an enduring presence in India through individuals, artistic and literary works. It was through manuscripts that European scholars realized that the Jains have their own scriptures, that Jainism is a specific trend of thought distinct from both Hinduism and Buddhism but well-rooted in the Indian environment. One of the pioneering figures is Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765-1837). Having gone to Bengal as a “writer” in 1782, he remained in the service of the East India Company for thirty years. Mainly based in Calcutta, he has been recognized as a pioneer in many branches of Indian studies – a role he could not have played, however, without the collaboration of many Indian pandits or informants. His broad interests also extended to the Jains, as is evidenced primarily from his “Observations on the Sect of Jains” (1807). Whereas others, he specifies, got information on the Jains from “Jain priests” and oral information, he made use of both conversation with Jaina priests, *and from books in his possession, written by authors of the Jaina persuasion* . He then goes on giving the contents of these books, the *Kalpasūtra*, two cosmological treatises and a Sanskrit lexicon by the 12th Śvetāmbara author, Hemacandra, which opens with fundamental concepts of Jainism. Colebrooke is thus able to note:

“[Jinas] appear to be the deified saints, who are now worshipped by the Jaina sect. They are all figured in the same contemplative posture, with little variation in their appearance, besides a difference of complexion; but the several Jinas have distinguishing marks or characteristic signs, which are usually engraved on the pedestals of their images, to discriminate them”.

Colebrooke was the first to realize that Jainism was independent from Buddhist, but still regarded it as a sect of Hinduism, albeit “differing, indeed, in some very important tenets”. It was only later, in 1879, that the identity of the Jain tradition was recognized beyond doubt, that the existence of Mahāvīra as a founder or reformer, more or less contemporary with the Buddha, was demonstrated.

Neither Colebrooke nor others could get access to manuscripts on their own. They had to take the help or close collaboration of the Indians. Colebrooke, for instance, obtained part of the collection of Jagat Seth of Murshidabad in Bengal, after the latter’s renunciation of Jainism to become a Vaishnava Hindu. This collection of Jain manuscripts later reached the India Office Library like all those belonging to Colebrooke. Mackenzie (1753-1821) and Burnell (1840-1882), who contributed to the discovery of a specific Digambara identity in South and Central India, were helped by local pandits in getting manuscripts of scriptures. A few of the Jain manuscripts in the British Library are isolated items which came on to the art market or were part of much wider collections. Others were collected by British civil servants who occupied administrative or military functions in India, without having any special interest for Jainism as such. But the superiority of the British Library Jain manuscripts over other similar collections outside India comes from the fact that they were acquired or donated by academics committed to Indian philological studies in their diversity. In the 1870s systematic tours in search for Sanskrit manuscripts were undertaken especially in the well-organized Bombay Presidency. Non-Indian scholars, often of high caliber, were keen on getting always more material, and Indian agents who were the ones to know the local conditions, the temple-libraries and the manuscript owners, were employed in the institutions of British India. Jain manuscripts from Western

India came up in large numbers and were bought on the spot or sent to European libraries. Bhagavandas Kevaldas (1850-1900), a native from Surat, was such an agent. He was instrumental in providing Jain manuscripts to several libraries in France, Germany and England. A part of the British Library Jain manuscripts is marked as coming from him. In the winter of 1873-74, the German scholar Hermann Jacobi (1850-1937), who precisely demonstrated that Jainism and Buddhism were independent despite their similarities, undertook a tour in Western India along with the Austrian Georg Bühler and purchased a full lot of Jain manuscripts which were the basis of several editions and translations he procured. In 1897 his collection was bought by the then British Museum. Its importance was soon recognized as it was built up consistently and represented all branches of Śvetāmbara scriptures – canonical books but also treatises and hymns fundamental in daily liturgy. More generally, the then British Museum rapidly turned into a focal point attracting collections and donations from all over. The Jain manuscripts kept there also come from German, Austrian and Indian scholars who felt it was the best place to keep them. This was the result of an international cooperation, which was specially active at the end of the 19th century, combined with enlightened purchases by the institutions' staff, often librarians cum scholars.

In the late 20th century, after India's Independence, the British Library remains one of the rare Western national libraries where Indian manuscripts continue to be acquired. Jain manuscripts are part of this process. The most recent acquisition dates back to 2005. There was a peak in the 1970s when several illustrated manuscripts were bought in connection with the presence of J.P. Losty, a specialist of Indian book painting, at the British Library. Hence, when put side by side, the parts which make up the complete collection of Jain manuscripts in the BL correspond to more than two centuries of regular acquisition by this institution.

The British Library Jain treasures belong to the following groups of works:

- Shvetāmbara Canonical literature: **Kalpasūtra, Uttarādhyayanasūtra**

Dogmatics and ethics: Jain universe (Samgrahanîsûtra, Laghukshetrasamâsa)

- Narrative literature:
- ✓ Shvetâmbara: Kâlakâcâryakathâ, Shâlibhadra story, Shrîpâla story, etc.
- ✓ Versions of non-Jain stories written by Jain authors: e.g., Dholâ-Marû
- ✓ Stotra literature: e.g. Bhaktâmarastotra with yantras, Yashovijaya's hymns to the 24 Jinas with images of Jinas, worship of Jinas illustrated
- Vrata literature: e.g. Digambara: Âdityavâravratâkathâ
- Sciences: mathematics, palmistry
- Special objects: mandala, invitation scroll

Among them, Kalpasûtra illustrated manuscripts and works depicting the Jain universe are represented by several different items. Indeed, these are the two predominant sources for illustrated manuscripts in general. But the British Library can boast of more than that, providing a full range of paintings that are unrivalled in libraries outside India.

Kalpasûtra manuscripts were subject to mass production in Western India from the 14th century onwards. This situation is connected with the performative role played by the Kalpasûtra as a religious scripture among the Śvetâmbara communities of this area during the festival of Paryushan. An encouraging external factor also probably came from the general environment in Gujarat, in the form of the development of the Arabo-Persian manuscripts, especially that of the Qurân where gold and silver and calligraphic script were profusely used. The contact of Indian and Persian paintings had creative results. The influence of Persian manuscript painting is perceived in the paper manuscripts of the Kalpasûtra through the use of gold pigment, flower ornamentation of the borders. Paper painted with colours different from page to page in the same manuscript was also used (I.O. San. 3177). The Kalpasûtra became the visible sign of Śvetâmbara Jain identity. Commissioning Kalpasûtra manuscripts became a prestigious activity among wealthy merchant communities who could thus display their financial power and mark their place within the society.

The first part of the Kalpasūtra, the Jinacaritra, deals with the careers of four main Jinas: Mahāvīra, Pārśva, Nemi and ṣabha. The artists clearly focus on the five kalyāṇakas or auspicious events: last incarnation on earth, birth, initiation, omniscience and nirvāṇa. Among the topics which become somewhat central in the illustration process is what relates to the transfer of the embryo. Manuscripts generally describe each phase of the episode so as to produce the equivalent of a film sequence:

- Śakra reveres Mahāvīra's embryo
- Śakra commands Hariṇaigameṣin
- Hariṇaigameṣin takes the embryo from Devānandā's womb
- Hariṇaigameṣin carries the embryo to Trīśalā's womb

But the paintings of the Kalpasūtra manuscripts are not all extremely sophisticated productions in the traditional Western Indian style. There are instances which show other illustrative options and other stylistic choices. The British Library manuscript **Or. 13701** is a case in point. From the outset it is distinct from the usual stuff. One of the themes developed in a prolific manner is the topic of the 27 previous births of Mahāvīra before his last one when he will reach final liberation. This topic is popular in Medieval Gujarati literature. In the present manuscript, each of these births is illustrated separately. The dynamic of the commentary creates a dynamic in the illustration. The presence of innovative material in such a manuscript shows how the Kalpasūtra became a centre with attracting power for both narrative and illustrative material. Another noteworthy characteristic of this manuscript is its informal and almost naive style in the representation of characters combined with realistic features. It is incomplete and not dated. But the costumes suggest the Mughal period.

Thus for the artists, the Kalpasūtra is a network and a global entity: there are many more topics for illustration than what the facing Prakrit text contains explicitly, or even implicitly. The Prakrit text is silent about the details of Mahāvīra's childhood, but external literary traditions which were incessantly retold and kept alive through the preaching of the monks, narrate that at the age of 8 he was taken to school and that he overcame the first attack of a god in disguise who wanted to test his courage and absence of fear. Details about

the numerous tests Mahāvīra had to pass before he reached omniscience are also not in the basic text, but they are narrated at length in other sources. So there was no reason why such scenes should not become appealing paintings.

Chapters 2 and 3 of the *Kalpasūtra* are generally much poorer in illustrations than the *Jinacaritra*, if not lacking it completely. The *Sthavirāvalī* “The string of Elders” unfolds a list of names of prestigious teachers and forms a hymn of praise, where faithful devotees, especially monks, pay homage to the contribution of their predecessors. One way to capture the essence of the chapter is to show members of the fourfold Jain community in respectful attitudes, or Mahāvīra’s eleven *gaṇadhara*s in a teaching attitude. A second option is to depict episodes relating to the lives of individual teachers. The names function as hooks. *Vajrasvāmin*’s childhood is eventful. As for *Sthūlabhadra*, who could overcome the alluring behaviour of the courtesan *Kośā*, he is an edifying figure embodying the fundamental virtue of celibacy which so difficult to observe. Such figures are familiar heroes of the Jain heritage and appeal to all types of audiences, There is yet another religious teacher whose name occurs in this section and who has generated his own group of texts and stories, namely *Kālaka*.

The third part of the *Kalpasūtra*, the *Sāmācārī* is the most austere one. It details how monks and nuns of all ranks should behave in daily life situations during the heart of the rainy season and how they should be extra careful about not damaging the minute forms of life that surge up during this period. Very often this section remains without illustration, or only with one or a few static ones representing the fourfold community shown in a respectful attitude. This in fact functions as a conclusion to the whole manuscript.

Jain views about **the universe** are both original and sophisticated. Imparting knowledge on this topic has been and remains a fundamental concern in the perspective of *karman*, rebirth and final liberation. Visualization has always been regarded as an indispensable media helping to grasp the complexity of the ideas. The teachings on cosmology have been handed down by generations of authors, but the *Jinas* are their ultimate source. It is

therefore appropriate to pay homage to them and to other teachers – the Pancaparamēṣṭhins at the outset of such a manuscript: Arihantas, Siddhas, Āyariyas, Uvajjhāyas, Sāhus united in the Pancanamaskāra mantra are depicted as located at the top of the universe, represented by a white crescent (the siddhaśilā), each in the specific colour which has become associated with them (Or. 2116 C). The representation of the three levels that make up the world – *loka* which has become familiar is in the form of a man - *lokapuruṣa*. The world of gods is at the upper level, that of hells at the bottom, the central part is that of humans. Here only the main continent, the Jambūdvīpa, and the ocean around it are shown. But there are many of them in succession as shown on **Add. Or. 1814**. At the centre of the Two and a Half Continents, lies Mount Meru. Like all the parts of the Jain universe, it has components, which are shown here. It has Jain temples all over, and even the branches of the tree which is at its top has temples as well (**Add. Or. 26374**). The world of gods has several tiers. In this lively painting (Or. 2116 C), the lowest one, the heaven ruled by god Śakra or Indra is shown. The four-armed god is sitting on his throne at ease. Facing him with folded hands is Hariṇaigameṣin his commander-in-chief. Female attendants also join in a respectful attitude. In sharp contrast stands the depiction of the seven hells (Or. 2116 C) that form the lower world: the lower you go, the worse they are. The type of rebirth you undergo depends on how you behaved in this existence. So beside highly technical and numerical information shown in tables, Jain treatises on cosmology deal with matters of behaviour: they determine where in the world you are going to be reborn. Committing suicide in either one of the eight ways shown here is, indeed, a fool's death. It implies violence against oneself, which means that one is mentally disturbed by passions such as anger or despair, for instance. Only a prepared death with a peaceful mind and practices that help purifying it would guarantee a proper rebirth.

Praising and worshipping the Jinās is an important area of the daily life of faithful Jains. Among those who are not against image worship, Jinās are represented as a material support for worship and meditation in the form of statues. (**DIA**) Painted Jina images are among the noteworthy British Library

treasures (Or. 13623). The 23rd Jina, Pārśvanātha, seated in meditation under the royal parasol, is easily recognized through his seven snake hoods and the typically green colour of his body. The image faces *Vāmānandana Jinavara māṃhiṃ vaḍo re*, the beginning of a short Gujarati song of praise in his honour, composed in the 17th century by Yaśovijaya, a leading Śvetāmbara monastic figure and writer. Two temple scenes, coming from an album without text (Add. 26519) sound familiar. They depict the daily pūjā in Śvetāmbara temples in a realistic manner. Devotees grind sandalwood powder and other materials for the pūjā, the pujārī and those who approach the central images of Neminātha and possibly Candraprabha wear a cloth around their mouth. Numerous implements and different individuals, including ladies, vividly render the atmosphere of joy and activity. Quite an exceptional presence in libraries outside India, the Digambara manuscript Or. 14290 narrates an eventful story of grief, poverty and wealth regained - as a reward for proper worship. Men and ladies are sitting in the temple, at the sound of music, while devotees perform the ritual bath of the Jina. In fitting with the Digambara conception, the Jina image is fully naked and devoid of all ornaments. A Jina preaching to the whole world is seated in meditation posture within the archetypal form of the *samavasaraṇa*, marked by three successive walls, and surrounded by the eight auspicious symbols (Or. 13701). This archetypal circular shape is translated into many forms or objects of worship. The metal object Or. 13472 delicately painted features Mahāvīra at the centre, surrounded by the remaining 23 Jinas in two successive circles. This is the typical design of maṇḍalas and yantras. The eight-petalled lotus, with a ninth place at the centre, is another fundamental design used in worship. A painted *siddhacakra* (Or. 13622) gathers the Five Entities (pancaparameṣṭhins) and the main four fundamentals (right faith, right knowledge, right conduct and right asceticism). It is at the heart of the famous Jain story featuring king Śrīpāla and his wife Madana (or Maina)sundarī, of which the BL has two nice illustrated manuscripts. Diagrams and mantras are closely connected in a unique manuscript outside India (Or. 13741) containing the full text of the *Bhaktāmarastotra*, a fundamental Jain hymn in Sanskrit. Here each stanza is followed by the appropriate mantra that will make it powerful and illustrated by

diagrams. The hand has been promoted in recent times as a Jain symbol. But many more shapes, in fact 48, as many as the number of stanzas, have been evolved as well. This British Library manuscript should certainly be given an adequate position in any study, yet to be done, of such religious forms. The use of mystic syllables – mantras – such as *om̐*, *hrīṃ*, *klīṃ*, etc., still needs exploration. But the fact that they are associated with Jain teaching, especially with Mahāvīra's first disciple Indrabhūti Gautama, and, as a consequence, with all the *gaṇadharas*, is attested by the frequent presence of *hrīṃ* within paintings depicting them all.

Several scenes in the BL Jain manuscripts show how the laity interacts with Jain monks in daily life. Noble men carefully listen to the teaching of a Śvetāmbara senior monk installed on a raised seat, whereas other monks stand behind him (Or. 13524). - Offering alms is one of the most common modes of interaction. Here (Or. 13524) a Śvetāmbara monk receives food given by a lady in the begging-bowl which is part of his monastic equipment, along with the long staff and the white robe. Not so commonly seen in paintings, the typically Digambara style of giving and receiving food is depicted precisely in the rare Digambara manuscript Or. 14290: the monk signals his wish to receive food by a special gesture, and will receive it directly in his hands.

Goddess Sarasvatī, the goddess of speech and arts, is revered by all authors, and she is often painted at the beginning or at the end of Jain manuscripts. The author of the *Śrīpālarāsa* (Or. 13622) associates the Jina and her in his respect, thus ensuring the success of his work, and is shown listened to by an attentive audience. A Digambara author (Or. 14290) does exactly the same: laypeople listen to him, he, in turn, is protected by both a Jina and Sarasvatī. Again seated on her vehicle, the royal swan, and holding a manuscript in her hand, Sarasvatī is considered an adequate closure for a manuscript containing teaching about mathematics, copied by prominent Śvetāmbara monks who have given their names in the facing colophon (Or. 13457).

Finally, the British Library has exquisitely painted copies of a good selection of the **stories** that are dear to the Jains. One of the main old sources of story

telling lies in the Uttarādhyayanasūtra, which belongs to the Śvetāmbara canonical scriptures (Or. 13362). The story of king Sañjaya who went for hunting, killed a deer, realized that he could have also killed a Jain monk in meditation and converted to Jainism, is displayed in the current exhibition, as also the famous story of Nemi's renunciation right before his marriage to Rājimatī motivated by a strong repulsion before violence. Among the heroes known for their pious behaviour are Śālibhadra and Dhanya (Or. 13524), two young men who lived the lives of wealthy men in nice mansions before they renounced worldly life and died by fasting unto death.

Last but not least, the latest treasure to have entered the British Library, in 2005, is quite unique (Or. 16192). It is **an invitation scroll – a *vijñaptipatra***. Such artefacts are very rare in non Indian libraries or museums. These scrolls were letters which were sent by local Jain communities in order to invite a monk's group to select their place for staying during the rainy season. They were common among Śvetāmbaras of Western India. There pictorial and textual discourse combine to highlight the assets of the locality in point. Often starting with the depiction of the eight auspicious symbols, like here, it goes on showing temples but also markets and various professions. This is a way to express that all that is required is available, whether it is food or proper places for teaching and worship. Praise in pictures is followed by praise in words in the text, which occupies the end part of the scroll.

With these samples I hope to have shown you that the British Library collection of Jain manuscripts is unique because, with all the treasures it preserves, it offers a full picture of living Jainism in a variety of pictorial styles. – There are many other treasures, some of which have no paintings but crucial texts: they are better left for a study in the quietness of the Asian collections reading room...