VICTORIOUS ONES

Jain Images of Perfection

IN HONOR OF MY TEACHER
John M. Rosenfield
AND
IN MEMORY OF MY MOTHER
Dorothy R. Granoff

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Captions:
Jacket front | Aḍhāī-dvīpa Paṭa, the Two-and-a-Half Continents (see pages 262–263)
Jacket back | Seated Jina (see pages 172–173)
Page 1 | Seated Jina (see pages 172–173)
Page 2 | Standing Jina (see pages 216–217)


लोकना
त्रिरूप

The Cosmic Man and the Human Condition

JOHN E. CORT

The Cosmic Man
stands fourteen *rājus* tall.
Within him
countless souls
wander without knowledge.[1]

This is the eleventh verse in a thirteen-verse hymn in the Braj language; many Digambar Jains of northern India sing it every day. The hymn is found in all of the hymnals published in northern India, of which dozens of well-used copies are found in every temple. It is popular enough that it is even found painted on the inside walls of some temples.[2] It was composed by the poet Bhūdhardās (also known simply as Bhūdhar), a layman who lived in Agra in the first half of the eighteenth century. This hymn, "Bārah Bhāvnā" or "Twelve Reflections," is a short vernacular summary of the twelve *bhāvanās* or *anuprekṣās*.

The practice of concentrated reflection has roots in the Śvetāmbara scriptural canon and probably dates from the earliest Jain communities, before the gradual split into Śvetāmbara and Digambara sects in the early centuries of the common era.[3] In this practice, the meditator engages in the consideration of negative subjects, such as the inevitable impermanence and decay of all things in the world and the lack of any deity or other being who can save us, as well as positive subjects, such as the need to understand the workings of karma and the salvific nature of the Jain *dharma*.

2.1 | The Jain universe in the shape of a cosmic man or *lokapuruṣa*
Folio from *Samghayaṇarayaṇa* loose-leaf manuscript
Gujarat or Rajasthan; early 17th century
Ink and opaque water color on paper
10 x 4 ⅜ inches (25.4 x 11.1 cm)
Collection of Bina and Navin Kumar Jain
Photograph by Bruce M. White

A list of twelve reflections was standardized at least as early as Umāsvāti, who lived between the second and fourth centuries.[4] The reflections have also been a popular topic for Digambara authors for the past fifteen hundred years; many authors, both monks and laymen, have composed independent texts and portions of larger texts in which the reflections are the subject of extensive poetic renditions.[5] Bhūdhar composed his short Braj précis of the reflections within this long-standing literary tradition.

Singing the human condition

By the time the singer of Bhūdhar's hymn reaches the verse on the cosmic man (*lok puruṣ*), he or she (the hymn is sung as often, if not more so, by women as by men) has already sung verses describing the fundamentally unsatisfactory nature of the material universe. The very first verse states that the world is marked by impermanence, and therefore, every one of us—who, as Bhūdhar says, includes both the lofty king and the simple elephant driver—is due to die, "each at his own time." We cling to social and divine relationships in the hope of forestalling the inevitable, but none of these is of any avail. Bhūdhar says in his second verse that there is no external shelter (*śaraṇa*): neither deities nor human relations—not even one's mother or father—can "stop the soul from going at the moment of death." We are entranced by the world and spend our time seeking wealth, but Verse 3 asserts, "Nowhere in *saṃsāra* will you find happiness, no matter where you look in the world."

Part of our spiritual problem is that we are ignorant of who we really are. We think that all our connections in this life are substantial, but in fact "you came here alone, you will die alone" (Verse 4): all these relationships are ephemeral. We think that we are our bodies and so are deeply attached to them. But they are not really ours and in fact are loathsome and impure, as if we were all untouchable scavengers (Verses 5–6).

A person needs to understand that the body and the entire material universe are other (*anya*) than one's true spiritual essence. What drives the world is karma: "The thieves of karma loot everyone, but we pay no attention . . . [instead we] wander forever under the sway of a delusional dream" (Verse 7).

These reflections present a grim vision of the world. The Jain teachings are not misanthropic, however. Their goal is for each and every one of us to wake up to the true nature of reality. This awakening to a true knowledge of what is appropriate is difficult to find. In contrast, worldly goals such as wealth, prosperity, and power all come to us easily (Verse 12). If we have the true knowledge of our spiritual essence, then we can practice the five great vows (*mahāvrata*) and the five mindfulnesses (*samiti*) of a monk or nun. We can tame our senses and establish ourselves in the elimination of karmic bondage (Verse 10).

How do we find this salvific knowledge? How do we stop the influx of binding karma that causes us such suffering? How do we learn the rituals we need to follow to expel the "karma thieves" (Verses 8–9) who have entered our homes and stolen our souls? Bhūdhar says the answer is simple: listen to the words of the true guru, who wakes each of us from our delusional dreams (Verse 8) and teaches us the true *dharma* that "gives every joy" (Verse 13).

Saving knowledge of the cosmos

According to Bhūdhar's hymn, the Jain who understands the nature of reality sees that the cosmic man, the standing figure who presents such a striking image, represents a world filled with "countless souls [who] wander without knowledge." Placing these paintings within a Jain understanding reveals how they were used by the "true gurus" who endeavored to "wake up" people to the ignorance that causes vast suffering. Depictions of the cosmic man are often found in Jain temples, precisely to remind the worshipers of where they are in the universe and what they should be striving to do in this life (Fig. 2.1).

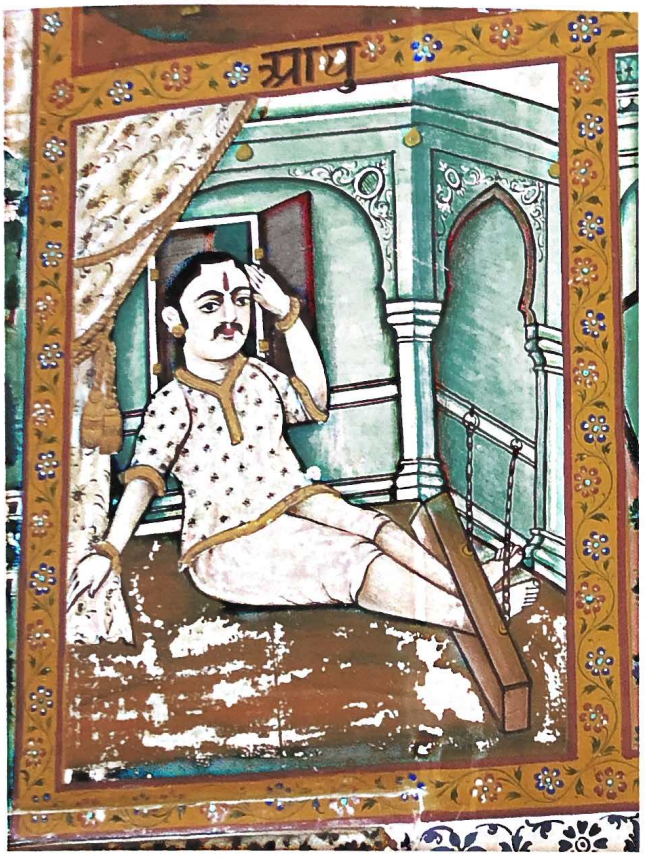
These large depictions of the cosmic man are visually attractive in order to draw the viewer to the painting for closer inspection. The universe, according to the Jains, is uncreated: it has existed from beginning-less time and will continue for endless time.[6] The part of the universe located within the body of the cosmic man is space, which is immense. While it is not infinite, it is so vast that its size is almost impossible to imagine, like the size of the universe of contemporary scientific astronomy. Bhūdhar said that the cosmic man stands fourteen *rājus* tall. A *rāju* (also *rajju*), or "rope," was defined by medieval Jain cosmographers as "the distance covered by a god flying non-stop for six months at a speed of 2,057,152 *yojanas* (say 10,000,000 miles) a second."[7]

Outside the cosmic man is non-space. While non-space is infinite, it is irrelevant to the religious drama of the souls, for they exist only in space. The number of souls in the universe is infinite. They are uncreated and so have existed and will exist for all time.

In common with other indigenous cosmologies of South Asia, the Jain understanding of the universe divides it into three basic regions. Above the earth is a series of ten or twelve heavenly realms (the calculations vary) inhabited by beings whose lifespans, powers, and lives of enjoyment make them seem divine in comparison to humans, animals, and plants. The beings that reside here—in the chest, shoulders, neck, and head of the cosmic man—experience lives of such pleasure that the very idea of suffering is absent. Each of these heavens is ruled by a king and queen, an Indra and Indrāṇī. Above the heavenly realms, but separated from them by impassable differences in the karmic conditions of the residents, is a slightly bent realm. Here are all of the souls who have attained perfection (*siddha*) and so escaped the karmically driven circle of rebirth and re-death. These souls reside eternally in the four perfections of perception, knowledge, potential, and bliss.

Below the earth is a series of seven hellish realms that occupy the pelvic cavity, legs, and feet of the cosmic man. The inhabitants of these realms experience varying degrees of constant physical and mental anguish, which prevent them from fully imagining a virtuous life. These realms seem like hells in comparison to our lives. This area is slightly larger than the heavenly portion of the cosmic man, so at any given time more souls are in a state of suffering than in a state of pleasure.

Neither Jain texts nor paintings devote much effort to detailed descriptions of the heavens. In part this is because while life in them is very enjoyable, it is also impermanent, and one will eventually die and be reborn in another place. These heavens



2.2 | Mural painting of *āyu* (longevity) karma
Jaipur, Digambara temple, Divān Badhīcand; 2008
Photograph courtesy John E. Cort

2.3 | Mural painting of *vedanīya* (pleasure- and pain-causing) karma
Jaipur, Digambara temple Divān Badhīcand; 2008
Photograph courtesy John E. Cort

are not the ultimate goal of Jainism, and the Jain authors and painters have not wanted people to focus on the heavens; at best, they are gilded cages. But there is perhaps another reason authors and painters have paid relatively little attention to the heavens. Over the centuries, many literary critics have noted that the most interesting book of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* trilogy is the first, *Inferno*, in which he details the many levels of hell in a medieval Christian cosmography. In contrast, the third book, *Paradiso*, is relatively uninteresting and even boring. It seems to be a universal feature of human nature that we find depictions of hells more gripping than depictions of heavens.

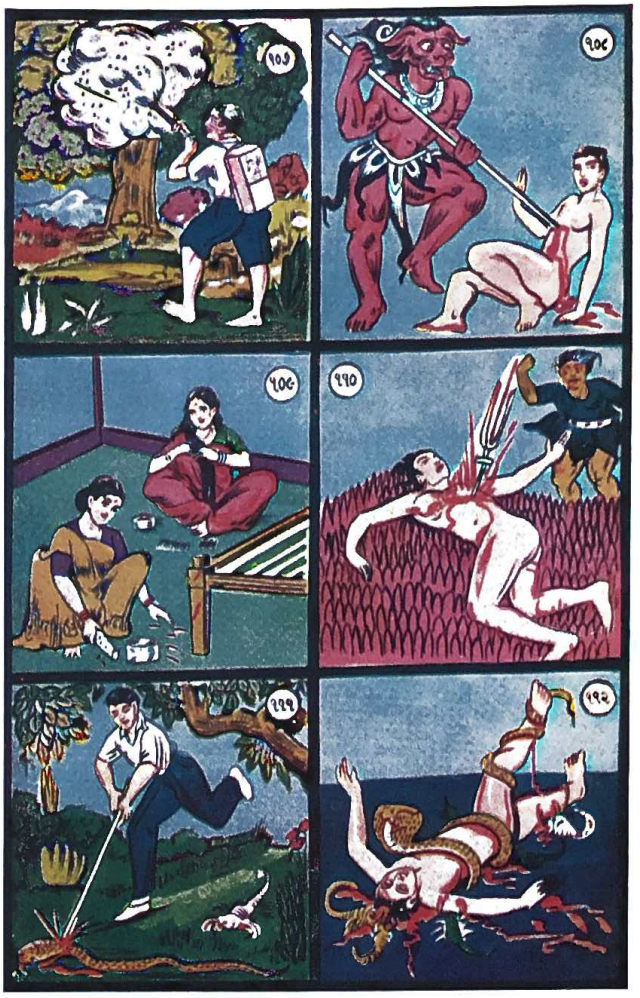
Accordingly, Jain authors have devoted more pages to describing the hells than the heavens. They do not ignore the heavens, and there are ample depictions of them in this catalog, but the hells receive far more attention. These descriptions also allow the authors to amplify a rather simple but highly graphic understanding of the workings of karma. They do not delve into the details of the specifically Jain philosophy of eight kinds of karma but instead relate a simple "as you sow, so shall you reap" cause-and-effect understanding of karma.

Evidence suggests that the Jains did not develop an elaborate tradition of independent paintings that depict the hells, such as the medieval Japanese Buddhist Jigoku Zōshi, literally "Scroll of Hell." These paintings of the eight great and sixteen lesser hells show in graphic and captivating detail "the unremitting torments suffered by those who have fallen into Hell."[8] In some Jain temples, one finds a set of eight paintings illustrating the eight karmas of Jain philosophy: delusional (*mohanīya*) karma depicted by a man being offered pleasant food; lifespan (*āyu*) karma by a set of shackles (Fig. 2.2); and the karma that causes mundane pleasure and pain (*vedanīya*)

2.4 | Images of Hell
Folio from *Saṃghayaṇarayaṇa* loose-leaf manuscript
Gujarat or Rajasthan; early 17th century
Ink and opaque water color on paper
4 ⅜ x 10 inches (11.1 x 25.4 cm)
Collection of Bina and Navin Kumar Jain
Photographs by Bruce M. White

by a man drawing a sword across his own tongue (Fig. 2.3). If one looks closely at the hells in the large paintings of the cosmic man, one can see all manner of tortures.[9] There are, however, many manuscripts of cosmographical texts such as the *Saṃgrahaṇī Sūtras* that were copiously illustrated with depictions of the hells, along with other cosmographical details (Fig. 2.4). A monk preaching about the inevitable hellish results of karmically bad deeds, words, and thoughts would point to these illustrations in order to underscore his message. In that manner, the illustrations of the lives of Mahāvīra and the other Jinas in the *Kalpa Sūtra* are displayed to accompany the monastic sermons during the autumnal observance of Paryuṣaṇā.[10] This can be seen, for example, from the many illustrated folios of *Saṃgrahaṇī Sūtras* from western India that date from the sixteenth through the eighteenth century at K.C. Aryan's Home of Folk Art in Gurgaon (and recently published in the catalog of the collection).[11] Most of them were designed for public display. Each page is largely devoid of print; the illustration is prominent and can be easily seen from a distance.

Only recently has a Śvetāmbara Mūrtipūjaka monk, Ācārya Vijay Jinendrasūri, published a popular set of books in Gujarati, Hindi, and English that illustrates the "pictures of hell." Here again the karmic consequences of negative actions are depicted as simple causes and their effects. The man who tells lies is reborn in hell, where an ogre yanks out his tongue, time and again. The housewife who pounds grains without adequately ensuring that she isn't harming any minute life forms is reborn in a hell where demons continually pummel her with an iron pestle. The farmer or gardener who kills many small creatures through the indiscriminate use of pesticides is reborn in hell and pierced repeatedly by a fiend. Each of these results is graphically illustrated in a color painting (Fig. 2.5).[12]



2.5 | Pictures of Hell
Ācārya Vijay Jinendrasūri, *Nārakī Citrāvalī*, fourth edition (Lakhabaval: Śrī Harṣpuṣpāmṛt Jain Granthmālā) 1980, page 39.

The thin human realm

In between the heavens and the hells is the wafer-thin middle region, which corresponds to the waist of the cosmic man. This is the only part of the universe where humans live. Compared to the upper and lower regions, it comprises an almost negligible portion of the cosmic man. This is also the only part of the universe where there is a sufficient mixture of pleasure and pain, of good and bad, and therefore of ethical and spiritual awareness for liberation to be possible.

While this middle region is minute when one looks at the cosmic man from the front, it is vast when one rotates one's perspective ninety degrees and looks at it from above. The frontal portrayals of the cosmic man emphasize just how little of the universe is inhabitable by humans on one axis; the circular maps of the continents and oceans of the middle region reinforce this understanding on another axis (Fig. 2.6).

The middle region contains an innumerable series of concentric continents and oceans. Most of this realm, however, is again uninhabitable by humans, who can reside only on the innermost two-and-a-half continents: Jambūdvīpa, Dhātakīkhaṇḍa, and the inner half of Puṣkaradvīpa. Jambūdvīpa is the innermost

2.6 | Aḍhāīdvīpa Paṭa, the Two-and-a-Half Continents
Gujarat, India; 1810
Ink and opaque watercolor on cloth
42 ⅜ x 40 ⅜ inches (107.6 x 102.6 cm)
Collection of Bina and Navin Kumar Jain
Photograph by Bruce M. White

continent. It is divided into seven countries by six parallel mountain ranges that cross it from ocean to ocean and from east to west. While humans can reside in all seven countries, only two-and-a-half of them offer the karmic conditions sufficient for the birth of a Jina, the spiritual conqueror who realizes the truth and then teaches it to others. Religion, therefore, is possible only in these countries: Bharata in the south, Airāvata in the north, and half of Mahāvideha in the middle. Bhārata is the land of India.

A cosmos teeming with life

Two other important factors in the Jain understanding of the cosmos are less easily represented in a graphic form than the cosmic geography: biology and time.

In Jainism, unlike the three Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, souls and therefore religion are not restricted to humans. According to the Jains, everything that lives has a soul. In their innate capabilities, all souls are equal: all souls have the potential to liberate themselves from karma and achieve perfection.[13]

Jain biology recognizes four possible states into which a soul can be born. Only one of these is as a human. The other three are the heavenly beings, the hellish beings, and the combined class of plants and animals. In number, humans constitute the smallest of these four possible conditions. As we see in the diagrams of the cosmic man, the heavenly and hellish realms are more vast than the possible areas of human inhabitation, and so it is not surprising that the heavenly and hellish populations are correspondingly larger. By far the largest category, however, is that of plants and animals—an observation that anyone can confirm simply by considering the seemingly endless number of plants, animals, birds, and insects one can see at any moment.

Jain biology further categorizes the bodies that souls can inhabit according to the number of senses. The most numerous, crudest, and most ignorant form of single-sensed bodies is the *nigoda*, that can exist only clustered into groups. P.S. Jaini has described them as follows:

> These creatures are sub-microscopic and possess only one sense, that of touch. They are so tiny and undifferentiated that they lack even individual bodies; large clusters of them are born together as colonies, which die a fraction of a second later. These colonies are said to pervade every corner of the universe.[14]

The single-sensed bodies also include plants and bodies made of earth, water, fire, and air. Most of these bodies are too minute for an average human eye to perceive, so the Jains understand the world around us to be teeming with an infinite number of visible and invisible beings, each with its own soul. Other bodies contain an increasing number of senses—taste, smell, sight, and hearing—with five-sensed bodies being the most complex. Within this considerable number of possible embodiments of a soul, only a human soul has the adequate wisdom and perception to perceive good and bad and therefore make the moral decisions that constitute a fully religious life.

Beginning-less and end-less time

Not all human beings have this capacity, however. Humans inhabit all seven countries of the continent of Jambūdvīpa, as well as the continent of Dhātakīkhaṇḍa and half of Puṣkaradvīpa. As mentioned above, however, Jinas are born in only two and one-half of the countries of Jambūdvīpa, and so only in them is a religious life truly possible. Birth in one of these countries is not necessarily sufficient, though, for the nature of time and change means that the spiritual potential of these countries varies. The quality of time does not change on the half of Mahāvideha where liberation is possible, and so liberation is always attainable from there. This is not the case on Bharata and Airāvata.

In Bharata, time proceeds through an eternally repeating cycle. Time is envisioned as a wheel with twelve spokes, designating the twelve periods that compose one full cycle. For six periods, the quality of existence regresses: from a very happy period to one that is simply happy, to one that is more happy than unhappy, to more unhappy than happy, to simply unhappy, and finally to very unhappy. The sequence is then reversed for the next six periods.

During the very happy and happy periods, life is easy and enjoyable. There are no troubles and sufferings to afflict people. Without knowledge of suffering, however, people cannot develop a full understanding of the nature of life and thus are incapable of making the moral choices that define a religious life. On the other hand, during the unhappy and very unhappy periods, people's lives are so conditioned by

troubles and sufferings that they do not have the ability to act fully upon those moral choices, and therefore it is not possible to break fully the bonds of karma and to attain liberation from rebirth and suffering. Only in the middle two periods of each half-cycle is there an adequate balance of pleasure and pain—and the adequate spiritual potential—for people to achieve spiritual perfection.

Just as the Jain cosmographers worked in unimaginably vast numbers in their description of the physical layout of the universe, so they worked in equally vast numbers in their description of time. The six periods in any half-cycle are not of equal length. The happiest periods last for four and three crores of crores of *sāgaropamas*. A crore is ten million, a *sāgaropama* is one-hundred million of one-hundred million *palyas*, and a *palya* is simply defined as an uncountable (but not infinite) number of years.[15] The periods that are more happy than sad last for a total of two crores of crores of *sāgaropamas*, and the periods that are more sad than happy last one crore of crores of *sāgaropamas*, less forty-two thousand years. Finally, each of the two unhappiest periods lasts for twenty-one thousand years.[16] In other words, each half-cycle lasts for ten crores of crores (one hundred trillion) *sāgaropamas*. While our current unhappy period will be of short duration within this overall scale, liberation is possible from Bharata only slightly less than thirty percent of the time. The rest of the time, the condition of life is either too happy or too miserable to support a fully religious life.

During these two middle periods of each half-cycle, twenty-four special individuals are born in Bharata. Through their correct understanding, knowledge, and conduct, they are able to come to a full understanding of the nature of karmic bondage and are also able to act fully upon that understanding to break that bondage forever. While still embodied, they become enlightened, and when the last karma that determines the lifespan of the body falls away, each one of them rises to the top of the universe to exist forever in a state of perfection. Between the experience of enlightenment and the final liberation from the body, due to a very rare and special form of karma, these twenty-four enlightened beings teach people (as well as animals and heavenly beings) the truth of karmic bondage and the spiritual path one must follow to overcome that bondage. Because the twenty-four have defeated ignorance and karmic bondage, they are known as Conquerors (Jinas). People who follow their teachings are therefore known as Jains. Through their teachings, the twenty-four establish the fourfold Jain community of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen known as the four *tīrthas*; thus, these twenty-four individuals are also known as Community Establishers (Tīrthaṅkara).

According to the Jains, we are currently in the early years of the fifth period of a downward cycle of time. Complete faith, knowledge, and conduct are not possible for us, and so liberation is impossible. But we live close enough in time to the twenty-fourth and last of the most recent series of Jinas that we can still lead a religious life: we can still be Jains. The twenty-fourth Jina was Mahāvīra, who lived about 2,500 years ago in the northeastern part of what is now India.

The details of the Jain universe can be overwhelming, as the numbers used to describe its extent, its time cycles, and the number of beings are all so large that they are incomprehensible. There is a point to this vastness, and Jain teachers want to drive home this point to the faithful: the universe is physically vast, and the portion of it where humans can live and, even more important, where humans can follow a fully religious life is almost negligible. All souls have been in this universe from beginning-less time and will continue for endless time. Jain biology indicates that, for almost all of that time, one's soul will inhabit a non-human body; the odds indicate that it most likely will be a less-developed body that, due to its ignorance and physical suffering, will act in ways that only further enmesh the soul in karma. The odds of being born as a human being are minuscule; even if one is born as a human, there is a good chance one will either be born in the wrong place or the wrong time to follow the Jain spiritual path and achieve liberation. The ultimate goal of liberation is currently unattainable from this planet, but humans born today live in a good place and are close enough in time to Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth and last Jina of this cycle of time, to lead a righteous and spiritually productive life and thereby at least be reborn in a better place and time. The message of the mind-numbing lesson of Jain cosmology is that a person should understand just how precious and rare this human life is and make the best of it.

Picturing the cosmos

While Jains did not develop a tradition of independent illustrations of the hells, they did develop a tradition of illustrations of the entire cosmos with its hells, heavens, and human realms.

For centuries, Jain teachers have used visual tools such as the cosmological paintings in this catalog to convey their message of the stark reality of existence. Some of these paintings have been miniature, found in manuscripts of cosmological texts. Nowadays these have been replaced by the copious illustrations found in printed books on cosmology. Other monumental paintings are found on the walls of temples and monasteries, where they can be seen and reflected upon daily.

Jain preachers have also used portable paintings to accompany their sermons. The medieval Śvetāmbara monk Jinaratnasūri relates this practice in his *Līlāvatīsāra*, which he composed in 1285. He describes an itinerant displayer of pictures (*maṅkha*), who presented a painted scroll (*citrapaṭa*) with a picture of the cosmos (*jagatcitra*), presumably similar to the ones in this catalog.

The *maṅkha* pointed to particular sections of the scroll as he related his stories. He characterized the pictures as telling "the story of the soul."[17] Due to evil acts, the soul was reborn as a vegetable, a worm, an insect, and a bug. Then it was reborn in a series of hells, and the preacher described in lingering detail how it was "continually cut, roasted and pierced."[18] After a long time, the soul had worn off enough karma that it was reborn into a series of lives as animals that were better but nonetheless still miserable: a buffalo sacrificed to a bloodthirsty goddess, a donkey made to carry great burdens, a diseased hog that ate feces and other filth. Finally the soul reached human states, but these were also full of suffering: a stillborn fetus, a man with smallpox, a leper, a man burdened by great poverty. When born as a rich man, the soul still suffered, for the man's wife died at a young age. Even heavenly existences were defined by suffering: after living as an Indra, a king of the gods, the soul nonetheless died and, "pained by his fall from heaven,"[19] once again entered the round of rebirth. After relating a seemingly interminable series of lives, each one marked by great suffering, the wise *maṅkha* turned to his viewer and said: "And he is you, certainly. There is no doubt whatsoever about it.... This scroll of paintings was designed by me to enlighten you. So, excellent Prince, be enlightened now! Perform asceticism. And these endless existences portrayed on it are by way of possibility only."[20] The prince who had seen all the pictures and been told all the stories made the only logical choice: the very next morning, he approached a venerable Jain monk, renounced the world, and took initiation as a monk himself.

This difficult-to-attain human life

In a number of his hymns, Bhūdhar reminds the listener that, because of karmically beneficial past actions, he or she has attained something that is difficult to attain (*durlabh*). He says, "It is difficult to get a human birth, and to meet with good companions is also difficult."[21] Bhūdhar admonishes his listener,

> Don't throw away this body,
> so difficult to attain,
> just for the sake
> of a little sensual pleasure.
> You won't get another opportunity
> so don't sleep it away dreaming.[22]

In a third hymn, he emphasizes that the listener is not just a human; he is even more fortunate, for he has been born a Jain:

> This human life of yours
> is in a family of *śrāvakas* [lay Jains].
> This is very difficult to attain
> on this earth.[23]

This theme is repeated by Jain poets in all the languages in which they have written, preached, and sung. A hymn by Daulatrām—a Digambar layman of Mathura and Gwalior who lived in the first half of the nineteenth century, one century after Bhūdhar, and composed hymns in the same style—describes the difficult procession of a soul through different bodies until it takes birth as a human in a Jain family. The message is: To waste this rare opportunity would be the height of ignorance.[24]

> Sing pure songs to the Jina
> with your mind, speech and body.
> Seize this good occasion.
> You won't find
> another such opportunity—
> so says the true guru.
>
> From beginningless time
> you lived as a *nigoda*.
> Leaving them
> you took on immobile [*sthavir*] bodies.
> For an uncountable time
> you lived in unsuitable ways
> without understanding what is good.

A wishing gem
is difficult to obtain.
You took on mobile [*tras*] bodies,
you were born as a weevil, an ant, a bee.
How could you gain knowledge?

After much difficulty
you became a five-sensed beast
but still with no wisdom.
Devoid of understanding
of self and other,
without equanimity,
you passed your nights and days.

As if finding a jewel
while walking in the crossroads,
you attained a human body.
Here you are
in a good family
in the Jain religion,
with good companions.
Brother,
this is so difficult to attain.

When you finally get
this human body
that is so difficult to attain
all you do
is eat sense objects.
This man is a fool.
He doesn't know
what to do with true nectar,
just uses it to wash his feet.

Take the nectar
of this human birth
which is difficult to obtain
and follow the Jain religion.
Daulat says
go to the state
that is unending and undecaying,
go to the joy of liberation.

Aesthetic and spiritual shock

The wise Jain who views a painting of the cosmic man or a map of the middle realm where humans live, who contemplates the immensity of the ever-repeating wheel of time, and who studies and understands the large number of bodies in which a soul may find itself experiences a combination of cognitive understanding and existential feeling that simultaneously evokes wonder and fear. The immensity of the universe according to Jain cosmology is amazing, and the contemplation of its orderliness and symmetry can bring a great sense of comfort and pleasure. At the same time, a deeper consideration of the implications of Jain cosmology for one's spiritual well-being can—and, in Jain opinion, should—come as a great shock.

The Jain term for this combination of attraction and repulsion, of aesthetic beauty and spiritual angst, is *saṃvega*. It denotes simultaneously a fear of *saṃsāra*, the world of endless rebirth and re-death, and a joy at the perception and understanding of the salvific message of *dharma*, the Jain teachings of the path to liberation.[25] While desire (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*) are the two primary *kaṣāyas*, or passions, that bind one karmically to *saṃsāra*, Jains recognize that a person will set foot on the path to enlightenment and persist through all the difficulties one encounters in the spiritual life only if there is a desire to escape suffering and find eternal peace. This positive form of desire is *saṃvega*.[26] The term is most commonly associated with the Śvetāmbara Mūrtipūjakas, who use *saṃvegī* to designate the true monks and nuns whose sole objective is liberation, but it is found in all Jain traditions.

In a 1943 essay, the art historian A.K. Coomaraswamy discussed the connotations of the term *saṃvega* (which he glossed as "aesthetic shock") in the Pali Buddhist tradition.[27] He noted that in some contexts it denotes "the shock or wonder that may be felt when the perception of a work of art becomes a serious experience" and in others it "implies a swift recoil from or a trembling at something feared." He went on to explain, "*Saṃvega* is a state of shock, agitation, fear, awe, wonder, or delight induced by some physically or mentally poignant experience. It is a state of feeling, but always more than a merely physical reaction." He concluded his exploration by commenting, "In the deepest experience that can be induced by a work of art (or other reminder), our very being is shaken (*saṃvijita*) to its roots."

For Coomaraswamy, *saṃvega* is an experience that is at once aesthetic and intellectual, in which the sensitive person is profoundly shaken "by any perfect and therefore convincing statement of truth." His examples from his own life included his response to hearing Gregorian chant and reading Plato's *Phaedo*. In Buddhism, *saṃvega* is the desired response of any faithful person upon either visiting the actual location or seeing an artistic representation of the four most important places in the life of the Buddha: where he was born, where he was enlightened, where he first preached, and where he attained liberation.

Like Coomaraswamy's *saṃvega*, the experience of viewing a painted depiction of the cosmic man, one that is at once visually pleasing and intellectually stimulating, operates on many levels. There is the aesthetic level of sensory pleasure; as a person views the painting, he or she is delighted by the detail, inventiveness, and skill it demonstrates. The scroll in Jinaratnasūri's *Līlāvatīsāra* had exactly this effect. The hero of the story "examined the scroll, and exclaimed, 'Oh, the colors! Oh, the accuracy in drawing! Oh, the skill in representation!'"[28] He then asked the *mañkha* to explain the scroll, so he could understand the import of the paintings that he had found so stunning.

In a similar manner, after reading about the meaning of the cosmic man within Jain cosmology, the viewer of these images might be awestruck by the majestic and even infinite vision of existence encapsulated in the painting. In the Jain tradition, there should be a further and more final response. The informed and sensitive viewer should receive a profound existential shock from viewing and contemplating the painting; one should come away from this experience with a firm commitment to change his or her life. Perhaps he or she will take the extreme step of becoming a Jain monk or nun. At the very least, the viewer will leave with a conviction to strive to make the very best of this thing that is so difficult to attain: a human life.

Bhūdhardās, "The Twelve Reflections"

(*all things are impermanent*)

King, prince or emperor,
an elephant's mahout:
everyone dies someday
each at his own time. (1)

(*there is no shelter*)

Powerful friends,
a goddess or a god,
mother, father, family:
they can do nothing
to stop the soul
going at the moment of death. (2)

(*cycle of rebirth*)

So poor
you cannot meet the cost,
you suffer.
You are entranced
by the desire
for wealth.
Nowhere in *saṃsāra*
will you find happiness
no matter where you look
in the world. (3)

(*the soul is solitary*)

You came here alone
you will die alone.
This soul
has neither friend
nor relative. (4)

(*soul and body are separate*)

Your body is not your own—
how can you call it yours?
You think you see
home and wealth
but they really belong
to another. (5)

(*the body is foul*)

A shawl of flesh
covers the body
of a scavenger
of a beggar.
Everyone in the world
is the same inside
yet we feel no revulsion. (6)

(the influx of karma)

Residents of the world
wander forever
under the sway
of a delusional dream.
On all sides
the thieves of karma
loot everyone
but we pay
no attention. (7)

(blocking the influx of karma)

The true guru
wakes us up
when we are under the influence
of the delusional dream.
We can take his aid
and stop
the karma thieves. (8)

The lamp of knowledge
is full of the oil of asceticism.
Study your home
and put aside wandering.
Thieves have already broken in,
you can't expel them
without the rituals. (9)

(eliminating karma)

Follow the five great vows
as well as the five mindfulnesses.
Conquer the five powerful sense-organs
and establish yourself
firmly in elimination. (10)

(the world)

The Cosmic Man
stands fourteen *rājus* tall.
Within him
countless souls
wander without knowledge. (11)

(wisdom is difficult to obtain)

Wealth, prosperity, gold,
the pleasures of power—
all these are easy to find.
What is difficult to get
in *saṃsāra*
is the single knowledge
that is appropriate. (12)

(dharma)

The wishing tree
gives whatever joys you want,
but these bring only worry.
Dharma gives every joy
without seeking
and without worry. (13)

NOTES

1. Bhūdhardās, "Bārah Bhāvnā" ("rājā rāṇā chatrapati"), from: Bhūdhardās, *Bhūdhar Bhajan Saurabh*, ed. Kamal Cand Sogāṇī, Hindi trans. Tārā Cand Jain (Śrī Mahāvīrjī: Jain Vidyā Sansthān, 1999), 117–18.
2. For example, the entire hymn is found on the walls of the main room of the Digambara temple to the ninth Jina Śreyāṃsanātha, located at his birthplace in Sarnath, just north of Banaras (Varanasi). This temple was built in 1824, but the interior paintings are likely from a later date. I thank Michael Rabe for photographs of this temple.
3. Walther Schubring, *The Doctrine of the Jainas*, trans. Wolfgang Beurlen (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), 307–08.
4. Umāsvāti, *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 9.7, trans. Nathmal Tatia as *That Which Is: Tattvārtha Sūtra* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 223–25. The dates of Umāsvāti, whose writings are accepted as authoritative by both Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras, have been the subject of extensive scholarly and sectarian disagreement.
5. For discussions of this literature, see the following: Bansidhar Bhatt, "Twelve Aṇuvekkhās in Early Jainism," in *Festschrift Klaus Bruhn zur Vollendung des 65. Lebensjahres dargebracht von Schülern, Freunden und Kollegen*, ed. Nalini Balbir and Joachim K. Bautze (Reinbek: Dr. Inge Wezler, Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen, 1994), 171–93; K.K. Handiqui, *Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture*, 2nd ed. (Sholapur: Jaina Saṃskṛti Saṃrakshaka Sangha, 1968), 291–307; A.N. Upadhye, ed., *Svāmi-Kumāra's Kārttikeyānuprekṣā (Kattigeyāṇupekkhā), an Early Treatise on Jaina Doctrines, especially Anuprekṣās* (Agas: Shrimad Rajachandra Ashram, 1960); and most recently Eva DeClercq, "Svayambhūdeva on the Anuprekṣās (*Paümacariu* 54.5–16), in *Sumati-Jñāna: Perspectives of Jainism: A Commemoration Volume in Honour of Ācārya 108 Śrī Sumatisāgarajī Mahārāja*, ed. Nagarajaiah Hampa (Muzaffarnagar: Acharya Shanti Sagar Chhani Smriti Granthamala, 2007), 81–98.
6. This discussion of the Jain understanding of the cosmos is based on

John E. Cort, *Jains in the World: Religious Values and Ideology in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 19–23.

7. Colette Caillat and Ravi Kumar, *The Jain Cosmology*, trans. R. Norman (Basel: Ravi Kumar Publishers; New York: Harmony Books, 1981), 20.
8. Hideo Okudaira, *Emaki: Japanese Picture Scrolls* (Rutland, V.T.: Tuttle, 1962), 92. There are two of these twelfth-century Kamakura period scrolls; both have been designated National Treasures. One is now in the Tokyo National Museum, and the other is in the Nara National Museum. Some of the illustrations can be seen on the museums' websites: www.tnm.go.jp and www.narahaku.go.jp. These scrolls have been published frequently and displayed at least twice in the United States. In addition to Okudaira, see Miyeko Murase, *Emaki: Narrative Scrolls from Japan* (New York: The Asia Society, 1983), 52–56; Hideo Okudaira, *Narrative Picture Scrolls*, trans. Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis (New York: Weatherhill; Tokyo: Shibundo, 1973), 113 and 121; Kiyama Terukazu, *Japanese Painting* (New York: Rizzoli, 1977), 86–89; and Fernando G. Gutiérrez, "Emakimono Depicting the Pains of the Damned," *Monumenta Nipponica* 22 (1967): 278–89.
9. See, for example, Shridhar Andhare, "Loka Purusha: The Jaina Paintings of the Three Worlds," in *The Ananda-Vana of Indian Art: Dr. Anand Krishna Felicitation Volume*, ed. Naval Krishna and Manu Krishna (Varanasi: Indica Books, 2004), Pls. 2–4, for detailed depictions of sinners in the hells, taken from a large Loka Puruṣa painting dated 1801 and now in the collection of the L.D. Museum, Ahmedabad. A slightly older Loka Puruṣa painting (dated about 1775) from Bikaner, and now in a private collection, pays scant attention to the heavenly realms but magnifies the hells such that they are out of proportion to the cosmic man; see Pratapaditya Pal, ed., *The Peaceful Liberators: Jain Art from India* (New York: Thames and Hudson; Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1994), Cat. No. 103A.
10. John E. Cort, "Śvetāmbara Mūrtipūjaka Scripture in a Performative Context," in *Texts in Context: Traditional Hermeneutics in South Asia*, ed. Jeffrey R. Timm (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 171–94.
11. Subhashini Aryan, *Unknown Masterpieces of Indian Folk and Tribal Art* (Gurgaon: K.C. Aryan's Home of Folk Art, 2005), Figs. 205–22.
12. The *Nārakī Citrāvalī* was first published in Gujarati in 1961, in Hindi in 1963, and in English in 1986. All three editions have been reprinted multiple times. The illustrations are by Pritamlal Harilal Trivedi, a professional artist who worked with the author. While Jinendrasūri lists a number of Śvetāmbara (and Hindu) texts from which he has taken his examples, his only reference to an illustrated predecessor is an undated manuscript of the *Bṛhatsangrahaṇī* with twenty-one illustrations, from a private collection in Bombay.
13. This has been a subject of debate among Jain intellectuals, with some insisting that there are souls so thoroughly enmeshed in karmic bondage, and therefore so ignorant, that there is no possibility of their ever achieving perfection and liberation. See Padmanabh S. Jaini, *Collected Papers on Jaina Studies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000), 95–110.
14. Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 9.
15. Frank van den Bossche cites and translates Willibald Kirfel's definition of a *palya*: "the time that passes when a container of one *yojana* in diameter and height, densely filled with fine hairs that grow within seven days, is completely empty, when every hundred years one hair is removed." See Frank Van den Bossche, trans. and ed., *Elements of Jaina Geography: The Jambūdvīpasaṃgrahaṇī of Haribhadrasūri* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007), 153n4; Willibald Kirfel, *Die Kosmographie der Inder* (Bonn: Kurt Schroeder, 1920), 339. Hence, the *palya* is uncountable (*asaṅkhya*) but not infinite (*ananta*). The length of a *yojana* varies according to different sources but is usually calculated to equal between four and five miles (Van den Bossche, *Elements of Jaina Geography*, 3n1).
16. Schubring, *The Doctrine of the Jainas*, 225–26.
17. Jina-ratna, *The Epitome of Queen Līlāvatī*, Vol. 2, trans. R.C.C. Fynes (New York: New York University Press and JJC Foundation, 2006), 497.
18. Jina-ratna, *The Epitome of Queen Līlāvatī*, 499.
19. Jina-ratna, *The Epitome of Queen Līlāvatī*, 511.
20. Jina-ratna, *The Epitome of Queen Līlāvatī*, 515.
21. Bhūdhardās: "prabhu gun gāy rai." Bhūdhardās, *Bhūdhar Bhajan Saurabh*, 47.
22. Bhūdhardās: "ajñānī pāp dhatūrā na boy." Bhūdhardās, *Bhūdhar Bhajan Saurabh*, 81.
23. Bhūdhardās: "gāfil huvā kahāṃ tū ḍole." Bhūdhardās, *Bhūdhar Bhajan Saurabh*, 102.
24. Daulatrām: "manavacatan kari śuddh bhajo jin." Daulatrām, *Daulat Bhajan Saurabh*, ed. Kamal Cand Sogāṇī, Hindi trans. Tārā Cand Jain (Śrī Mahāvīrjī: Jain Vidyā Sansthān, 2001), 178.
25. Kṣullak Jinendra Varṇī, *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa*, 4th ed. (Delhi: Bhāratīya Jñānpīṭh, 1993), 4:144.
26. Muni Ratnachandra, *An Illustrated Ardha-Magadhi Dictionary* (repr. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), 4:568.
27. Reprinted in A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Selected Papers 1: Traditional Art and Symbolism*, ed. Roger Lipsey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 179–85.
28. Jina-ratna, *The Epitome of Queen Līlāvatī*, 497.