

THE ĀYĀGAPAṬAS OF MATHURA*

The Mathura school is known for its beautiful sculpture but the *āyāgapaṭas*, which were an integral part of this school, have not received the attention they deserve. The *āyāgapaṭas* are stone slabs carved in low relief generally depicting either an image of Jina or *dharmacakra*¹⁾ in the centre. Some of them also show *stūpas*. Those which are carved with an object of worship in the centre are also surrounded by *aṣṭamaṅgalas*²⁾. Thus, they were not merely slabs of stone masonry; rather they were unique artefacts signifying the worship of symbols and images combined in one beautifully carved stone slab. The religious connotation of *āyāgapaṭas* is known from the inscriptions engraved on them which mention that they were set up for the worship of arhats (*tīrthaṅkaras*). From these epigraphs, we get to know

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¹⁾ The *dharmacakra* or wheel of law of was an important object of worship worshipped by Jains. According to the Jain mythology, the first *dharmacakra* was installed by Bāhubalī, the son of Ṛṣabhanātha (first *tīrthaṅkara*). See Jain and Fischer (1978: 7) and Shah (1987: 20).

²⁾ The *aṣṭamaṅgalas* or eight auspicious objects were elements of Jain worship. The *aṣṭamaṅgalas* included 'nandyāvarta (a three-pronged symbol), vardhamānaka (powder-flask), kalaśa (full vase), darpaṇa (mirror), matsya (or matsya-yugma, a pair of fish) ratna-pātra (pot of jewels), triratna (a three-pronged symbol), svastika (four-armed symbol), śrīvatsa (perhaps, a symbol of Śrī), lotus garlands (*pushpa-dāma*) and the full vase (*pūrṇa-kumbha*).' See Agrawala (1965: 179–80) and Shah (1955: 109).

that the Jains started donating these carved slabs in first century BCE and continued this practice till the third century CE at Mathura.

This paper aims to understand the *āyāgapaṭa* inscriptions in the context of the religious imagery carved on them. I will begin by probing the issue of religious merit connected with donating these slabs. The relief carving on these slabs represents various forms of worship, specifically the image of Jina and *stūpa* being worshipped by Jains at Mathura. The Jina image on the *āyāgapaṭas* as early as the first century BCE indicates that the origins of image worship were fairly early in Jainism. This paper will also discuss the earliest iconography and iconographic practices involved in the carving of the *tīrthānkara* images known from these slabs. I will also examine the iconographic changes noticeable in the Jina images on the *āyāgapaṭas* compared with the images in the round. This demonstrates that the religious imagery on these stone slabs continued to be found on the pedestals of Jina images. The inscriptions and *tīrthānkara* images on these slabs illustrate the greater popularity of the worship of Mahāvīra in comparison to that of Pārśvanātha in the Mathura area during this period.

My analysis of the *āyāgapaṭa* inscriptions highlights a variety of donors and the preponderance of women donors. Lastly, the paper analyses the possible reasons for the discontinuation of *āyāgapaṭas* after the third century CE at Mathura. It also discusses the *āyāgapaṭas* which were reused at a later time and inscribed on the reverse to record new donations or carved into the images. Finally, it clearly establishes that *āyāgapaṭas* as objects of worship were installed in temples or monasteries and constituted a significant part of Jain religious life.

DONATING ĀYĀGAPAṬAS

The donation of *āyāgapaṭas* entails in itself the donation of objects of worship. So, this makes it imperative for us to understand the connotations attached with the donation of these slabs in Jainism. The term *dāna* is engraved in inscriptions recording the donation of *āyāgapaṭas* and means a religious gift. The underlying belief in the Jain religious tradition explains that *dāna* is to be undertaken to gain merit. The reason why the Jains donated these slabs in large numbers at Mathura is related with the desire to attain religious merit. The Jain texts mention that *dāna* should be made to the seven *puṇya-kṣetras* (spiritual fields of merit) namely Jina images, temples, the *āgamas* (i. e. Jain scripture), monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. Further, the laity had to

constantly engage in *dāna* in order to become a *mahā śrāvaka* (superior lay person). The Jain texts consider it the obligation of the laity to engage in it and aspire towards spiritual merit.³⁾ But these aspirations were not specified in inscriptions recording donation of *āyāgapaṭas*. But it was this ritual that led to the continuously increasing donations of these slabs by the laity at Mathura.

The inscription engraved on them mentions that they were set up for the worship of *arhats* (*arhata-pūjāye*) and some of them also record invocations to *tīrthaṅkaras*. But in some of the inscriptions, the donations were made along with the parents and some retinue of relatives. This indicates that perhaps they all had a share in the merit.

THE MEANING OF ĀYĀGAPAṬAS

The word *āyāga* means an object of homage and *paṭṭa* means a slab or tablet; the term *āyāgapaṭṭa/āyāgapaṭa* is hence understood as a Jain tablet of worship⁴⁾. These slabs have been referred as ‘tablets of homage’⁵⁾ by Georg Bühler, who was one of the earliest scholars to describe them. The *āyāgapaṭas* were square slabs, usually in red, grey or buff sandstone, measuring around 90 x 80 cm in size. We also need to note that they were peculiar to the Jain tradition and known from Mathura alone. Except for a single example found at Kauśāmbī, the *āyāgapaṭas* are found only at Mathura⁶⁾. This clearly indicates that perhaps both the word and usage were almost entirely localised in the Mathura area.

We need to note that the *āyāgapaṭas* have not been mentioned in Jain texts⁷⁾. In this regard, then we can only rely on the inscriptions which refer to this term in order to understand the usage of these slabs better. The language of the inscriptions is a mixture of Sanskrit and Prakrit and the script

³⁾ Jaini (1979: 220) and Heim (2005: 34, 76–77).

⁴⁾ Sircar (1966: 41).

⁵⁾ Bühler (1894: 311–14).

⁶⁾ An *āyāgapaṭa* with a full blown lotus in the centre and surrounded by triratna symbol was found from Kosam (Kauśāmbī). The donative inscription engraved on one edge of the slab is paleographically dated to early Kuṣāṇa period. It refers to this slab as *āyapaṭo* (*āyapaṭa*) and states that it was set up for the worship of *arhats*. For details, see ASI AR (1913–14: 262–64).

⁷⁾ Cort (2010: 620).

is Brāhmī. This paper entails a discussion of eighteen inscribed *āyāgapaṭas*. A majority of these slabs have been unearthed from the site of Kankali Tila, while a few have been discovered at other spots in the Mathura area. Presently most of them are located in the Mathura museum, State Museum, Lucknow and National Museum, Delhi.

DEPICTIONS ON *ĀYĀGAPAṬAS*

Some scholars have considered *āyāgapaṭas* significant to understand developments in the Mathura school of art. More so, as they fill in the period for which a lack of sculptural production is noticeable⁸⁾. However, because of their relief carvings alone, which depict various foci of worship, they deserve to be studied as exquisite pieces of art independently. In addition, some of them are inscribed, which helps us to understand an object of worship used by the Jains, not known in texts.

Scholarly opinion held the view that each *āyāgapaṭa* represented one particular object worshiped by the Jains, namely the *stūpa*, *dharmacakra*, *aṣṭamaṅgalas* and the image of the Jina himself⁹⁾. The Jina image has always been the prime focus of any study on *āyāgapaṭas*. In fact, the evidence of the *tīrthankara* figures on the *āyāgapaṭas* even before the first century CE is very striking¹⁰⁾.

In this study, I have divided the *āyāgapaṭas* into symbol, Jina image, *stūpa* and figural types on the basis of the carvings on them. This four-fold classification is adopted as my intention is to understand these slabs as depicting different forms of worship in Jainism. The ones that have symbols in the centre are symbol *āyāgapaṭas* (Fig. 1); those with an image of a Jina in the centre are the Jina image *āyāgapaṭas* (Fig. 2); those that have the depiction of *stūpas* are the *stūpa* type *āyāgapaṭas* (Fig. 3); those with prominent figures other than the Jina image (i.e. a Jain goddess) on them are figural *āyāgapaṭas* (Fig. 4). The *āyāgapaṭas* were generally carved and engraved on one side, but inscriptions on their reverse side indicate they were reused. This will be discussed further on.

⁸⁾ Quintanilla (2007: 97).

⁹⁾ Shah (1955: 82–83).

¹⁰⁾ Vogel (1910: 41).

FORMS OF WORSHIP

From our analysis, it seems clear that the earliest Jina image and symbol *āyāgapāṭas* belonged to the first century BCE. This not only shows that these two types of *āyāgapāṭas* coexisted in the same period, but it also indicates that the worship of images and symbols existed simultaneously in Jainism. It is interesting to note that both the Jina image *āyāgapāṭas* and the *stūpa* *āyāgapāṭas* are noticeable as early as the first century BCE. The *stūpa* as an object of worship was more associated with the Buddhists, but various depictions on the *āyāgapāṭas* indicate that the Jains also considered the *stūpa* as an important element of worship. Significantly, to this period belongs an *āyāgapāṭa* which depicts a Jina image in the centre, and records its donation by the daughter of Dhanamitra¹¹. But even more interestingly, in the outermost circle of this *āyāgapāṭa*, a *stūpa* is carved on the top and another Jina image at the bottom (Fig. 2). This clearly indicates that Jains worshipped the Jina image and *stūpa* in the same period and even on the same slab.

Further, the evidence of a figural type slab donated by Amohinī indicates the worship of Jain goddesses from first century CE¹². Although, we do not know the name of the goddess represented on this slab, the fact that her figure predominates among the whole group suggests that she held a place of prominence. The Ardhaphālaka¹³ monks also held a place of significance on the *āyāgapāṭas*. One of the *āyāgapāṭas* dated to the first century BCE/ first century CE (Fig. 5), shows in its centre two Ardhaphālaka monks flanking the image of Pārśvanātha. The monks hold their hands in *añjalimudrā* and can be identified as Ardhaphālaka by a *colapaṭṭa* over their left arms. This is

¹¹ The inscription on this *āyāgapāṭa* is much defaced and has been considered by scholars to be dateable to either the first century BCE or the first century CE. From the inscription and style of relief carvings, the first century BCE seems the probable period of this *āyāgapāṭa*. The letters of the inscription seems to be pre-Kuṣāṇa and the carvings of this *āyāgapāṭa* are not as neat as noticeable on the *āyāgapāṭas* dated to first century CE. See Bühler (1894: 311–313), R. D. Banerji (1909–10: No.18), Lüders (1961: No. §17:L.107b), Shah (1955: 81–82) and Quintanilla (2007: 114–18 and No.11).

¹² Lüders (1909–10: No.59), Bühler (1894: No.2) and Quintanilla (2007: No.15).

¹³ The Ardhaphālakas were a 'sect of Jain monks who were associated with Mathura between the second century BCE and third century CE. They were naked except for a cloth known as *colapaṭṭa*, worn over the left forearm. It is important to note that the Ardhaphālakas were peculiar to Mathura and there is no evidence of them from any other region in this or any other period' (See Quintanilla 1997: 115).

a Jina image *āyāgapāṭa*, and usually it only is carved with an image of Jina, but it needs to be emphasised that this space exclusively meant for

Jina image, was also extended to the two monks. This example establishes that the Ardhaphālakas held a place of eminence on them. Thus, Jainism alone provides us with exquisitely carved slabs which depict the simultaneous worship of symbols, *stūpas*, images and female goddesses at Mathura from the first century BCE to the third century CE.

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE JINA

The *āyāgapāṭas* not only depict Jina images but also record invocations to some *tīrthaṅkaras*. It is to be noted that the *āyāgapāṭa* inscriptions which are dateable to the first century BCE state that they were set up for the worship of arhats, and the figures and flower offerings carved on them point towards the worship of the Jina image. The iconography involved in carving Jina images depict them in seated position and invariably in *padmāsana* in the *dhyānamudrā* absorbed in meditation with the hands placed on the lap. This iconography is noticeable in the Jina image carved in the centre of the Jina image *āyāgapāṭa* (Fig. 2) donated by daughter of Dhanamitra¹⁴.

The artists at Mathura not only carved Jina images, but also show the development in the iconography of *tīrthaṅkara* images from the first century BCE to the first century CE on *āyāgapāṭas*. This is noticeable in an *āyāgapāṭa* belonging to the first century CE donated by Sihanādika. The centre of this *āyāgapāṭa* (Fig. 6) shows an umbrella carved over the head of the *tīrthaṅkara* image, not visible in earlier *āyāgapāṭas*.

The earliest iconographic practice involved in carving *tīrthaṅkara* images is also illustrated on these slabs. This helps to identify the various *tīrthaṅkaras* especially in cases where the inscriptions do not provide us with their names. One such iconographic practice is carving snake-hoods along with the twenty-third *tīrthaṅkara* Pārśvanātha. This association of snake-hoods with Pārśvanātha is noticeable on an *āyāgapāṭa* donated by the wife of Śivaghoṣaka dateable to first century BCE/ first century CE. On this *āyāgapāṭa*, the Jina image carved in the centre is that of twenty-third *tīrthaṅkara* (Fig. 5), who is known by the snake canopy hoods carved with his image. However, the inscription on this particular *āyāgapāṭa* does not

¹⁴ Bühler (1894: 311–313), Banerji (1909–10: No.18), Lüders (1961: No.17: L.107b) and Quintanilla (2007: No.11).

mention the name of Pārśvanātha. This is the earliest Pārśvanātha image from Mathura, first carved on the *āyāgapaṭas*.

My analysis of the inscriptions reveals that four *āyāgapaṭas* invoked Mahāvīra. While the name of Mahāvīra is mentioned only in an *āyāgapaṭa* (Fig. 1) donated by Mātharaka, three others record invocations in the name of Vardhamāna and only one *āyāgapaṭa* shows Pārśvanātha. This illustrates the popular worship of Vardhamāna on the *āyāgapaṭas* in comparison to other *tīrthankaras*. In fact, the earliest *tīrthankara* to be worshipped on *āyāgapaṭas* is also Mahāvīra, whose name is known from the *āyāgapaṭa* donated by Mātharaka, which is dateable to the first century BCE and records invocations to Mahāvīra. Apart from these, four *āyāgapaṭas* record invocation in adoration of arhats. Lastly, out of the eighteen slabs under discussion, nine of them specify that they were set up for the worship of arhats.

INSCRIPTIONS ON ĀYĀGAPAṬAS

The analysis of epigraphs reveals that donors (both men and women) of the *āyāgapaṭas* introduced themselves on the basis of family and occupation. A majority of donors were females as is clear from ten donations being made by women in comparison to three by men out of the total eighteen donations¹⁵. It is also probable that women hoped to receive a share of the religious merit that was to be gained by donating the *āyāgapaṭas*. The women referred to themselves as daughters, wives and daughter-in-laws and usually stated the occupation of the male members of their family. Thus, a male predominance is clear from the fact that most of the women derive their identities from men. A few female donors derived their identity from the monastic order. For instance, Amohinī introduces herself as a *samaṇa sāvīkā* (female disciple of the ascetics) while donating an *āyāgapaṭa* along with her sons¹⁶. This suggests that female donors also sometimes referred to themselves as disciples of ascetics, and this indicates that their identity was derived from the Jain *saṅgha* (monastic order).

The three male donors referred to themselves as sons and recorded the name of their fathers in the epigraphs. Two male donors namely Nāṁdigoṣa and Sihanādika referred to themselves as sons while donating *āyāgapaṭas*

¹⁵ The total here refers to the donations where the details of the donors are legible.

¹⁶ Lüders (1909–10: No.59), Bühler (1894: No.2) and Quintanilla (2007: No.15).

in the first century CE¹⁷). Amongst all the donations, we also have a single example of a donation by a male and female together in an *āyāgapaṭa* in the first century BCE. The inscription records its donation by Mātharaka, a *kālavāḍa* and his wife Śivarakhitā¹⁸). This donation was made by husband and wife together as perhaps the intension was to share the merit jointly.

Another means of identity adopted by the donors was to mention their occupations. Three male donors stated their occupations. Thus, we have an inscription recording the donation of several *āyāgapaṭas* by the *sovaṇika* (goldsmith) Nāmdighoṣa¹⁹) suggesting that this donor was considerable rich. While another inscription refers to the *vaṇika* (merchant) Siḥanādika recording the donation of an *āyāgapaṭa* dated to the first century CE²⁰). Also, in the joint donation discussed above by a husband and wife, Mātharaka refers to himself as a *kālavāḍa*. This term *kālavāḷa* is also visible in the donation of an *āyāgapaṭa* by Śimitrā. The title *kālavāḷa* or *kālavāḍa*, occurring in two *āyāgapaṭa* inscriptions, has been variously interpreted by scholars²¹). It seems most plausible to agree with Lüders who suggested that it was a title and indicated an official of a very high rank²²). If we agree with Lüders, then it suggests that the donation of *āyāgapaṭas* must have been associated with an element of prestige.

A few of the female donors mention the occupation of their male associates, usually their husbands, from whom they derived their identity. We have two such surviving examples. For instance, in a first century BCE *āyāgapaṭa* (Fig. 3) the donor Śivayaśā introduces herself as the wife of the *naṭaka* (actor/dancer) Phaguyusa²³). This is also noticeable in the *āyāgapaṭa* donated by Śimitrā, who introduces herself as the wife (*bhayā*) of *kālavāḷa* Poṭhayaśaka, the Gotiputra²⁴). Thus, the various occupations mentioned in the *āyāgapaṭa*

¹⁷) Lüders (1909–10: No. 95), Bühler (1892: No. 35) and Quintanilla (2007: No. 17) and Lüders (1909–10: No. 105), Bühler (1894: No.30) and Quintanilla (2007: No. 19).

¹⁸) Lüders (1909–10: No. 103); Bühler (1894: No. 8), Lüders (1937–38: No. 4) and Quintanilla (2007: No. 12).

¹⁹) Lüders (1909–10: No. 95), Bühler (1892: No. 35) and Quintanilla (2007: No. 17).

²⁰) Lüders (1909–10: No. 105) Bühler (1894: No. 30) and Quintanilla (2007: No. 19).

²¹) For detailed discussion of this term, see Bajpai (1981: 26–30).

²²) Lüders (1937–38: 205).

²³) Lüders (1909–10: No. 100), Bühler (1894: No. 5) and Quintanilla (2007: No. 24).

²⁴) Lüders (1909–10: No. 94), Bühler (1892: No. 33), Lüders 1937–38: No. 3) and Quintanilla (2007: No.1).

were those of the *sovaṇika* (goldsmith), *vaṇika* (merchant), *naṭaka* (actor/dancer) and *kālavāḷa / kālavāḍa*. However, we should note that the patronage extended to the donation of *āyāgapāṭas* by donors of varied backgrounds such as actors/dancers, goldsmiths and merchants. The reason behind stating the occupation seems that apart from acquiring merit for themselves while donating, the donors also desired to increase their status in the society.

The monastic order is also visible on the *āyāgapāṭas*. Firstly, they induced the laity to the concept of donation. Secondly, the *āyāgapāṭas* depicting Ardhapālaka monks indicate their veneration on these slabs as has been previously discussed. In addition, the references to *gaṇas*, *kulas* and *śākhās* in the inscriptions reveal a well instituted Jain *saṅgha* at Mathura. We also need to note that the names of several *gaṇas*, *kulas* and *śākhās* in the Mathura inscriptions are also mentioned in the Śvetāmbara text known as the *Kalpasūtra* (first century BCE /first century CE), with some orthographical differences.

One may also notice a change in expression and language while recording donations of *āyāgapāṭas* from the second century CE onwards. This is noticeable in the similarity of content while recording a donation of *āyāgapāṭas* with those inscriptions recording a donation of images in the second century CE. This suggests an interface between the donors of the *āyāgapāṭas*, images and the *saṅgha*.

The monastic order was also connected with the usage of the *āyāgapāṭas*. This is known from an inscription dateable to the third century CE which records the donation of an *āyāgapāṭa* in the *vihāra* of the Kōḷiya *gaṇa*. This suggests the installation of these slabs in monasteries and the role of the *saṅgha* in their setting up and donation. We also need to note that nearly all these slabs were donated by the laity and their installation in *vihāras* suggests contact between the *saṅgha* and the laity in acts of donation.

USAGE OF ĀYĀGAPĀṬAS

Several inscriptions mention the places where the *āyāgapāṭas* were installed. Two inscriptions refer to the installation of these slabs in the *vihāras* and *bhamḍira*. The *āyāgapāṭas* were sometimes installed in *vihāras* as discussed previously, as is known from an inscription on an *āyāgapāṭa* which records its donation in the *vihāra* of the Kōḷiya *gaṇa* and Ṭhānikiya *kula*²⁵. We also

²⁵ Agrawala (1950: No.*1603) and Quintanilla (2007: No. 28).

know of a donation of a Jina image *āyāgapaṭa* in *bhaṁdira*²⁶). The meaning of *bhaṁdira* is unclear and has been read variously as *mandire* (temple) by Bühler and by Lüders as Sanskrit *bhāṇḍāra*, meaning treasury or storehouse. It was also understood as a garden, as Jain literature mentions a park by the name of Bhaṁḍiravaḍeṁsia (Bhaṁḍiravatāṁsaka) visited by Pārśvanātha²⁷. Here, we also need to mention that this inscription records the installation of several *āyāgapaṭas* in a *bhaṁdira*. This indicates that it seems many of them must have been installed together, of which only one example survives and perhaps also worshipped together in gardens.

The epigraphs on the *āyāgapaṭas* do not always state the places where they were set up. In that case, the representations on them or the places from where they have been discovered usually help us to understand their functions. At Mathura, some of the *āyāgapaṭas* were discovered in and around the area of the Jain temples unearthed at Kankali Tila. For example, the *āyāgapaṭas* donated by Śimitrā and Nāṁdighoṣa were found from one of the two Jain temples and this suggests the worship of these slabs in temples.

It is certain from the analysis that the *āyāgapaṭas* were set up for worship. In addition, a majority of inscriptions record invocations to arhats and to twenty-fourth *tīrthaṅkara*, Vardhamāna. The twenty-third *tīrthaṅkara*, Pārśvanātha is also known on the *āyāgapaṭas* from his snake canopy hoods (Fig. 5). Thus, from the carvings and epigraphs, it seems clear that some *āyāgapaṭas* were meant for the worship of particular *tīrthaṅkaras*.

It is clear that the *āyāgapaṭas* were objects of worship, so we also need to analyse whether any offerings were placed on them or not. Here, we should note that these slabs do not show any wear and tear. Some 'corrosion would have occurred, had offerings been placed on them.'²⁸ It seems that these slabs were installed vertically in shrines or monasteries, as some of them also show two holes or grooves on the reverse.

We also need to consider the size of the *āyāgapaṭas*, which would have made it impossible to be carried, so these slabs had to be permanently installed in shrines, monasteries or parks. From all these perspectives, these stone slabs were objects of worship.

²⁶ Lüders (1909–10: No. 95), Bühler, (1892: No. 35) and Quintanilla (2007: No. 17).

²⁷ Shah and Bender (1989: 211).

²⁸ Joshi (1989: 333–35).

REUSED ĀYĀGAPAṬAS

The obverse of the *āyāgapāṭas* was carved and engraved with inscriptions, while the reverse was devoid of any carvings and epigraphs. But this plain reverse was later to engrave new epigraphs and record new donations²⁹⁾. This is visible on an *āyāgapāṭa* from Kankali Tila which is dateable to the late first century CE on the basis of the carvings on its obverse. The reverse side is dateable to the second/third centuries CE and records the donation of a temple or palace (*pāsāda*) by Pūsā, wife of Puphaka, the son of Mogali³⁰⁾. In addition, some of the *āyāgapāṭas* have also been reused to make images at a later date.

After the third century CE, we do not come across any new *āyāgapāṭas*. It has been suggested that the carving of independent stone Jina images which commenced in the first century CE, marked the closure of the era of the *āyāgapāṭas*. However, this is not entirely true, as three or four *āyāgapāṭas* were donated in the first century CE. But with the increasing donation of images, the *āyāgapāṭas* did reduce in number.

CONTINUATION OF ĀYĀGAPAṬA IMAGERY

The seated Jina images depicted on the *āyāgapāṭas* were converted into independent images in the round from the second century CE onwards at Mathura. Thus, perhaps the Jina images on the *āyāgapāṭas* provided a model for the Mathura artists. In fact, the seated Jina images, which were carved first on *āyāgapāṭas*, continued to be the most popular form even in independent Jina images in the round. The other symbols on the *āyāgapāṭas* discussed above, found their way to the pedestals. The pedestals of Jina images from the first to third century CE often show a *dharmacakra* in the centre flanked by monks, nuns, *śrāvakas* and *śrāvikās*³¹⁾. Thus, the symbols on the *āyāgapāṭas* did not disappear; rather they were integrated into the iconography of Jina images in the round. The *aṣṭamaṅgalas* depicted on these slabs was represented in later miniature paintings of Jain manuscripts and in *pāṭas* which formed important parts of the rituals of Jain worship. Thus, it is important to note that even the imagery on these slabs continued to be represented on objects of worship used in the Jain religious tradition.

²⁹⁾ Quintanilla (2007: 138, 280).

³⁰⁾ Lüders (1909–10: No. 97) and Quintanilla (2007: No. 23).

³¹⁾ Shah (1972: 5–6).

CONCLUSION

This analysis of the *āyāgapāṭas* at Mathura between the first century BCE and the third century CE illustrate them as important components of Jain life at Mathura. On these slabs alone, one observes the concurrent worship of symbols (*dharmacakra*), the Jina image, *stūpas* and goddesses. The presence of Jina image as early as the first century BCE reveals two interesting aspects. Firstly, it pushes the origin of image worship in Jainism to a fairly early date. Secondly, it reveals the evolution of earliest iconography and iconographic practices noticeable on the *āyāgapāṭas* alone.

The depictions of *stūpas* on the *āyāgapāṭas* also help us to understand the active worship of *stūpas* by the Jains, without locating its parallels in Buddhism. Furthermore, the association of Ardhaphālaka monks with the *āyāgapāṭas* is striking. It is also important to note that they held a place of prominence on these slabs. The epigraphs reveal a preponderance of women donors, indicating that the donation of these slabs was more popular with women and that they also expected a share of the accruing merit. People from varied occupational backgrounds were associated with the donation of *āyāgapāṭas*. The inscriptions also reveal that the monastic order was acquainted both with the usage of these slabs and also with inducing of the laity to the concept of donating these slabs.

The donation of Jina images in the round was one of the reasons behind the discontinuation of the *āyāgapāṭas*. This is related to the enormous Jina image production in the late first to second century CE. But even if we consider the number of *āyāgapāṭas* during the peak period of their production, they could never outnumber the Jina images noticeable from second century CE onwards. In this context, it seems they never became very popular with the masses as donative objects.

Thus, to conclude, for nearly four centuries the *āyāgapāṭas* held together the religious belief, practice, and art of the Jains on one beautifully carved slab. The practice of donating these slabs started in the first century BCE, and continued till the third century CE at Mathura. This paper establishes that the *āyāgapāṭas* were installed in temples and monasteries and associated both with the monastic order and laity as objects of worship and donation. Reflecting the simultaneous existence of symbol and image worship in Jainism, they remained an important element of Jain religious life at Mathura.

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Fig. 1. A Symbol *āyāgapāṭa* donated by Mātharaka depicting a *dharmacakra* in the centre; Kankali Tila, 1st Century BCE, State Museum, Lucknow



Fig. 2. Jina image *āyāgaṇa* donated by a daughter of Dhanamitra depicting a Jina image in the centre; Kankali Tila, 1st Century BCE, State Museum, Lucknow



Fig. 3. Stūpa *āyāgaṇa* donated by Śivayaśā showing a broken Jain stūpa; From Kankali Tila, 1st century BCE, State Museum, Lucknow



Fig. 4. Figural *āyagaṇa* donated by Amohinī depicting a Jain goddess; Kankali Tila, 1st century CE, State Museum, Lucknow

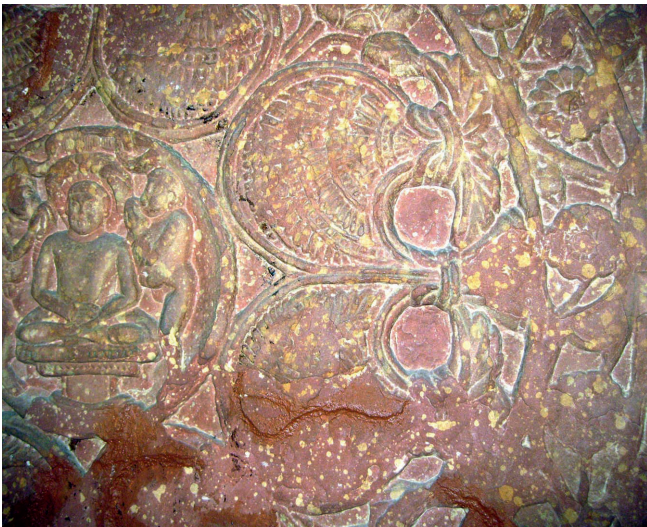


Fig. 5. Two Ardhaphālaka monks flanking the Pārśvanātha image in the centre of the *āyagaṇa* donated by the wife of Śivaghoṣaka; Kankali Tila, 1st century BCE / 1st century CE, State Museum, Lucknow



Fig. 6. An umbrella carved over the head of a Jina image in the centre on an *āyāgapāṭa* donated by Sihanādika; From Kankali Tila, 1st century CE, National Museum, New Delhi