



# Paryushan Festival

## Jain Manuscripts

During the Paryushan Festival, the fourth day is marked by the beginning of the reading of the Kalpasutra – probably the best-known Jain Manuscript. Jain manuscripts provide a window into the rich Jain heritage and culture. I think it is a missed opportunity that more is not mentioned or discussed about Jain manuscripts during the festival. It is estimated that there are over 10 million manuscripts in India alone, of which only 1.5 million or so have been listed and categorised.

The richness of the Jain literature has been captured in thousands of manuscripts, some over a thousand years old, that are scattered in museums, libraries, temples and private collections throughout the world.



Jain manuscripts contain the essence of Jain philosophy and culture and are works of Art which should be prominently displayed and celebrated by us to enable the younger generation to appreciate and understand all aspects of our Jain heritage.





# Paryushan Festival

## Jain Manuscripts

Sacred Jain manuscripts collections held at British Library, the V&A Museum, the Bodleian Library and Wellcome Trust Library represent some of the most important in the world and are vitally significant in terms of Jain heritage. The collection held at the British Library which numbers 1100 is special and impressive. The quality of the manuscripts are complete, not fragmentary bits and pieces. This is because under British colonial rule, scholars who knew what they were doing and what they wanted acquired these manuscripts in India which then were preserved and enriched by responsible institutions in UK.

Jain teachings dating some 2500 years ago, were primarily handed down from master to disciple through generations (Parampara) of medicants and laypeople. Exactly when Jain texts began to be illustrated is uncertain; the oldest surviving examples date from around the 10th-11th century. The earliest Jain illuminated manuscripts are inscribed and painted on prepared palm-leaves and bound with cords passing through holes in the folios. The folios are encased in wooden covers that are often decorated with religious or historical themes. Book covers continued to be made in later centuries.

After the introduction of paper into western India from Iran around the 12th century, Jain texts were increasingly written on this new and more versatile medium. The use of paper permitted larger compositions and a greater variety of decorative devices and borders, although the format of the palm-leaf manuscript was retained. By the end of the 14th century, deluxe manuscripts were produced on paper, brilliantly adorned with gold, silver, crimson and a rich ultramarine derived from imported lapis lazuli.

The major centres of Jain manuscript production were in Gujarat. The patrons were mainly Svetambara Jains, who considered the commissioning of illustrated books and their donation to Jain temple libraries (bhandars) to be an important meritorious activity.

The primary purpose of writing these manuscripts was solely to benefit the lay people with the teachings of learned saints and monks. The manuscripts cover areas like hymns and prayers, accounts of the lives of the founders of Jainism, didactic literature, lexicography, poetics, philosophy, astrology, karma literature, texts on pilgrimage places and on daily rituals.





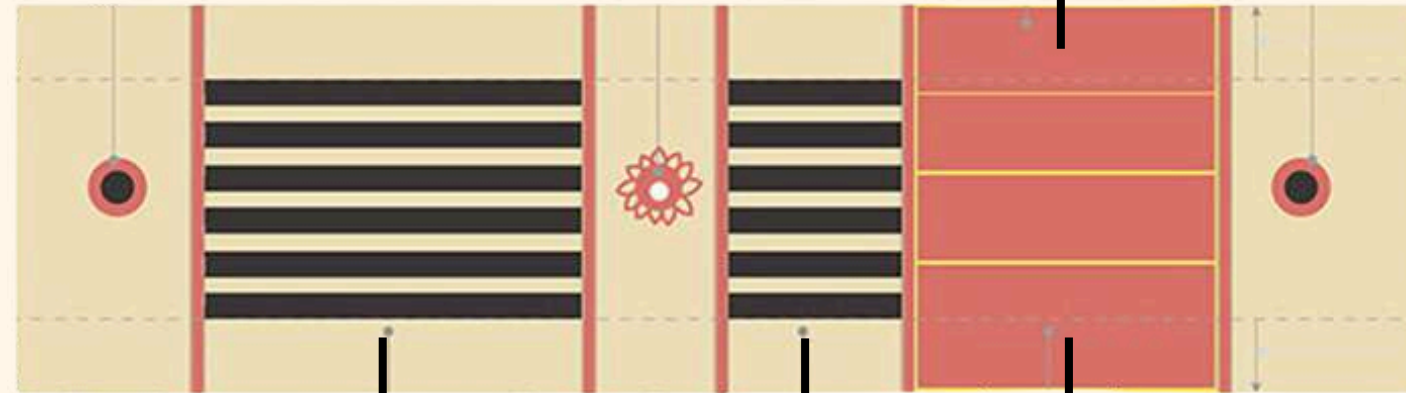
# Paryushan Festival Jain Manuscripts



PAGE NO IN WORDS

STRING HOLE

IMAGE AREA



COLUMN ONE

COLUMN TWO

COLUMN THREE

It is fascinating to learn that Jain Manuscripts made use of 'Grids' in the design process similar to the one used when designing the layout of magazines. Grids are defined as the design matrix for controlling the placement of typography and images, comprising of multiple columns, rows, baseline grids. By using the grids enabled to create perfect logic and harmony of design in the manuscript layout.

Thanks to digitisation many of these documents held in UK Institutions are now accessible to a wider public. Instrumental in this has been the Jainpedia project instigated by the Institute of Jainology in 2008 and the launch of the Jainpedia website in 2011.

I was fortunate to be part of the team that worked for nearly two years on Jainpedia V2.0, which was officially launched in April 2022. The website features 5000 high quality digitised folio images from 92 rare and sacred Jain manuscripts collections held in UK Institutions. One of our tasks was to look at these manuscripts which proved to be very interesting and made all of us aware of the treasure present amongst us.

The manuscripts shown in Jainpedia website are dated from the 14th to 17th centuries and include:

- Kalpasutra depicting the life of Mahavir and other Tirthankaras
- Uttaradhyayana-Sutra
- Laghu-Kṣetra-Samasa with Gujarati Commentary relating to Jain cosmology
- Saṃgrahaṇi And Karma-Granthas relating to Jain cosmology and Jain karma theory
- Salibhadra – Caupai depicting story of Salibhadra
- Jita-Kalpa Sutra – a technical treatise for monks dating back to the 6th century.

Anyone interested, should have a look at the Jainpedia website – [www.jainpedia.org](http://www.jainpedia.org) – I promise you will not be disappointed.



# Jain Manuscripts Kalpa Sutra

Images Source:  
Jainpedia.org  
Kalpa Sutra (Or 13700)  
The British Library  
Creative Commons  
Public Domain



Mahavir's initiation



Hariṇaigameṣin removes the embryo



14 Dreams of Trishala Mata

Mahavir as a infant

Mahavir omniscience



Mahavir as Siddha

