

Jain Story Book

Pre-christian Era

By Manu Doshi

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This book has been dedicated to the memory of
my grand mother Deewalima who was a symbol of sacrifice, simplicity and selfless service.

INDIRA MANSUKHLAL DOSHI MEMORIAL TRUST

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PREFACE

Jain spiritual leaders were aware that if some precept is to be explained to the laymen, that can be easily done through the medium of stories. Consequently Jain literature abounds in stories. In fact, one of the four main divisions of the Jain literature consists of stories and is known as Kathānuyoga.

When I was a kid, our elders used to tell stories. My father was a good story teller. I still remember how people remained spell bound while listening to him.

I had the occasion to write stories for the Children's Corner of Jain Darshan. Some of the well wishers suggested that if they are published in the book form, that would be useful specially to those who are involved in teaching. I had therefore compiled 40 stories belonging to the ancient period and had been thinking to publish them. I was however waiting for suitable pictures to be included therein so as to make them more interesting..

Since the required pictures were not forthcoming, I approached Mahavir Seva Trust of Malad, Bombay for permitting to make use of the pictures published in Diwakar Chitrakatha. Since the Managing Editor was kind enough to give the permission, I have inserted some of those pictures in this book and hence the book sees the light of the day.

Jain Society of Greater Boston had published 100 copies of this book under slightly different title on the occasion of Pathshala conference held at Boston in May 1998. As such, this happens to be a reprint. While doing that I have taken the opportunity to make some minor changes.

While writing these stories, I have tried to keep aside the role of divinity which usually plays important part in Jain stories. I hope that the approach would be in tune with the present trend and the readers would like to read them as they are presented. My primary interest is to make the reading more interesting. I would therefore appreciate if the readers convey to me their feeling about these stories.

As usual, my colleague, Dilip Shah has devoted his valuable time in presenting the material in the proper form.

Lake Forest IL 60045

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(1)

LORD RUSHABHDEV

Time has no beginning or end. It is not possible to measure the length of the past or the future. They are without beginning and end. The time is thus infinite and continues forever. The conditions that prevail from time to time do not however remain the same; nor do they continue to stay static. There are periods of ups and downs, of rise and fall, of progress and decline. After every rise there is a fall and a fall is again followed by a rise. According to the Jain tradition, a period of rise, known as Utsarpini or the ascending order, is marked with all round improvements like increase in age, size, prosperity etc. On the other hand, a period of fall, known as Avasarpini or the descending order, is marked with all round deterioration and decline like decrease in age, size, etc. These two periods together constitute one time cycle.

Each of the Utsarpini and the Avasarpini is divided into 6 eras called Ärä's meaning the spokes of a wheel. The present one is considered the period of Avasarpini and we happen to live in its fifth Ärä. It is also known as Kali-Yug.

Up to the end of the third Ärä of the current Avasarpini, the people were leading more or less problemless, natural, simple life. The population was low and the nature was bountiful. It provided all the necessities of human beings who had not to undertake much effort for obtaining the necessities of life. Trees were their shelters and provided enough leaves and barks for covering their bodies. With the help of the boughs, they could also erect huts for getting protection from rain and extreme weather. When they felt hungry, they could pick up their food from the trees, bushes etc. and there were ponds and enough flowing water for cleaning their bodies and quenching their thirst. As such, there was no struggle for existence or rivalry for survival and the people used to spend their lives in peace.

Jain tradition believes that till then women invariably gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl. As kids, they used to grow together and when they attained maturity, they behaved as husband and wife. The people lived in tribes and had a leader who was known as Kulkar. Näbhiräya was such a Kulkar at the end of the third Ärä. He could peacefully manage the more or less problemless community of that time. His wife Märudevi in due course gave birth to a twin who were named as Rushabh and Sumangalä, who is also known as Nandä by some people.

Conditions started changing after Rushabh was born. There was increase in population and nature no longer remained the bountiful that it used to be. This gave rise to a sort of struggle for acquisition and accumulation of the necessities of life. Sense of jealousy, envy, etc. also arose in its wake. Näbhiräya as the leader of the community tried to restrain the struggle to the utmost possible extent. In due course however, as Rushabh grew to be a bold, intelligent, enthusiastic, young man, Näbhiräya entrusted the management to him.

Rushabh was visionary, thinker and inventor. He visualized that the struggle for survival would not rest, unless some system of producing the necessities of life is resorted to. He realized that people could make effort for gaining their requirements from nature instead of relying exclusively on natural bounties. The genius that he was, he evolved the art of cultivation and taught the people how to grow food and fiber. Thus he ushered in what we call the age of material civilization.

He explained to the people how to make life comfortable. He taught how to cook the food, how to make wearables out of fiber, how to rear the useful animals like cows, horses etc. and also how to construct houses in place of the huts. Thus, came into existence the first city, Vinita which became his capital. That very city later on became known as Ayodhya. He also evolved and developed different arts and crafts whereby a variety of articles could be made out of wood, metal, stone etc. Thereby, people started leading variegated life.

The system of marriage was started by his father when Rushabh was married not only to Sumangalā but also to another girl named Sunandā who had lost her birth partner in an accident. Rushabh sanctified the system of marriage and institutionalized the family life. Thus a social order was evolved and Rushabh as the first acknowledged ruler of the human society came to be known as King Rushabhdev. He ruled for a very long time and laid down equitable rules and regulations for ensuring peace and safety within his realm. People were spontaneously affectionate to him, because he had provided to them the peace and happiness that their forefathers could not dream of.

Rushabhdev had a large family. He had 100 sons of whom the eldest two, Bharat and Bāhubali are well known and had two daughters named Brāhmi and Sundari. To all of them he imparted training in different arts and crafts. Bharat turned out to be a brave warrior and a capable ruler. India got its name 'Bhāratvarsha' from his name. Bāhubali, true to his name (Bāhu means the hand and Bali means mighty), was known for the exceptional strength of his hands. Brāhmi was a very learned girl. She evolved the art of writing and developed the Brāhmi script in which most of our scriptures are written. Her sister Sundari cultivated exceptional talent in mathematics.

There was still one more mission to be fulfilled by Rushabhdev. Once while he was watching a dance, the life of one dancer suddenly came to an end. Rushabhdev got much perturbed on witnessing it. He started pondering over the incident and realized that every phenomenon and every situation in the universe undergoes change and that no situation stays forever. He developed detachment for everything that is impermanent or ephemeral and he decided to devote his life in search of lasting happiness. For this purpose, he made Bharat the king of Vinita and entrusted Taxshila to Bahubali. To the remaining 98 sons he distributed other parts of his vast kingdom. Then he renounced every thing else and became a possessionless monk in search of ultimate truth. 4000 of his associates and followers also joined him in renunciation.

As a monk, Rushabhdev wanted to stay an anchorite and therefore moved from place to place. Moreover, he stayed in continuous meditation and did not even care to take food. His followers could not fast like him. They could also not get any guidance about the right behavior for the monks, because Rushabhdev remained deeply immersed in meditation all the time. They thus got confused and started behaving according to their instincts. After a few months Rushabhdev could see their miserable condition. He therefore thought to demonstrate them the way, a monk is supposed to live. As such, he started going for alms in search of food. The people however did not know what type of food to offer to the monks. Rushabhdev therefore could not get the food that he could accept and had to continue the fasting.

Months passed that way. After undergoing fasts for 13 months and 9 days, while Rushabhdev was in Hastinapur, he went to the sugar cane farm of his grandson Shreyāns. It was the day of Akshaya Tritiyā, the third day of the bright half of the month of Vaishākha, that usually occurs in the month of May. Shreyāns offered the sugar cane juice which was acceptable to the grand father. Thus he terminated the long fast with that juice. In commemoration of that ordeal of fast, people try to observe similar austerity. As it is not possible to fast that long, they fast on each alternate day during the period of that austerity and at the end of it, they terminate it with the sugar cane juice on the day of Akshaya Tritiyā.

After years of rigorous austerities and search for truth, while Rushabhdev was meditating under a banyan tree on the 11th day of the dark half of Fālgun (that usually occurs in the month of

March), he realized the way of gaining lasting happiness. This is known as the ultimate enlightenment and the attainment of omniscience or Kewaljnän. Then for guiding the people towards the right path, he set up the fourfold religious order comprising monks, nuns, householder males and householder females. Rushabhdev, the son of Bharat (Some people consider him as a son of Rushabhdev) became the head of the monks and Brähmi and Sundari headed the order of nuns. As establisher of that religious order which is known as Tirtha, he is considered the first Tirthankar of the current Avastarparini. Being thus the first Lord, He is also known as Adinath (Adi means the first or beginning and Nath means the Lord). He lived long enough thereafter to teach the truth about the everlasting happiness.

(2)

BHARAT AND BÄHUBALI

Lord Rushabhdev had two wives named Sumangalä and Sunandä. By Sumangalä he had 99 sons of whom Bharat was the eldest and the most well known and one daughter named Brähmi. By the second wife Sunandä he had one son named Bähubali and one daughter named Sundari. All of them were given proper training in different arts and crafts appropriate to them. Bharat turned out to be a great warrior and a politician. Bähubali was tall, well built and strong. He is known for his mighty arm. In Sanskrit language, arm is known as Bähü and mighty is known as Bali. Because he had very strong arm, he is known as Bähubali. Brähmi attained very high literary efficiency. She developed the writing script which came to be known as Brähmi script. Sundari got high proficiency in mathematics. After Lord Rushabhdev attained omniscience, both the girls renounced the worldly life and became his pupils.

As a king, Rushabhdev had his sway over a very large area. At the time of his renouncement, he handed over Vinitä, also known as Ayodhyä, to Bharat and Taxshilä to Bähubali. To the remaining 98 sons he gave different parts of his vast kingdom.

Bharat quickly established a firm hold over Vinita. He was an ambitious ruler and intended to become the emperor of the whole India. For this purpose he organized a strong army and started evolving different types of fighting equipments. His armoury turned out a miraculous wheel called Chakraratna (Chakra means wheel and Ratna means precious jewel) that would not miss its target. Then he embarked upon his journey of conquest. That time there was hardly any one who could stand against his well equipped army. He could therefore easily conquer the regions round about Vinitä. Then he turned attention towards his brothers and asked them to acknowledge his suzerainty. 98 brothers of his saw the futility of fighting with the elder brother. They therefore surrendered their territories to him and became disciples of Lord Rushabhdev.

Now only Bähubali remained. He was of different mettle. He was conscious of his right to rule over the kingdom handed over by his father. Moreover, he was too proud to surrender and had the will and capacity to fight the invader. When he therefore received the message of Bharat to accept a subordinate status, he refused to accept that type of serfdom and got ready to fight. Both the brothers were strong and the war between the two was sure to result in large scale bloodshed. The counsellors on both the sides therefore tried to dissuade their masters from resorting to war but neither of them would give up his ground. The war thus seemed inevitable and both the brothers brought their armies face to face with each other. Every one shuddered at the prospect of the heavy casualty that was going to result by the imminent war.

At last, the counsellors explained to their masters that the point at issue pertained to determination of the superiority between the two. Instead of undertaking the large scale war for that purpose, they may better resort to a duel, that would avert unnecessary bloodshed. Since

both the brothers were agreeable, they suggested that they may engage in a straight duel and whoever was found superior would be proclaimed as the victor. Bharat and Bāhubali both agreed. Accordingly, the duel took place in which Bharat tried to beat Bāhubali by using different types of equipment at his command. He however was not successful in beating his brother. Out as he was for conquering the whole India, how could he bear his defeat? He got desperate and ignoring the set rule of the duel, he hurled his miracle wheel at Bāhubali. But the wheel was not meant to hurt the persons of the same blood. It therefore came back without hurting Bāhubali.

Bāhubali got mad by this unjustifiable move of Bharat. He therefore thought of smashing the elder brother with his mighty fist. As he raised his hand for that purpose, the onlookers trembled with the idea of Bharat's imminent end.

But all of a sudden, the idea came to the mind of Bāhubali, 'What am I out to do? Am I going to kill my elder brother for the sake of worldly possessions that my revered father has willingly abdicated and which my other brothers have forsaken?' He shuddered at the prospect of the imminent death of Bharat. Within a moment he changed his mind. He saw the evil in killing his brother, whom he otherwise used to respect. The proud as he was, how could he however turn back his raised hand? He therefore used it for shaving himself as the symbol of giving up every thing and of renouncing the worldly life.

Bāhubali then thought that if he went to the assembly of his father at that time, he would be required to bow to his 98 younger brothers who had renounced earlier and would as such be considered senior to him. How would his ego let him do that?. He therefore decided to seek the enlightenment on his own and started penancing on the very spot. He stayed so much concentrated in the meditation that he did not even remember how long he continued it. He remained so much immersed that even creepers began to grow on the support of his feet. In memory of this event, a gigantic 57 foot statue of Bāhubali stands erected on the hill of Vindhyagiri at Shravanbelgola, near Bangalore. It has been made out of a single granite rock and was erected about 1000 years back. Pilgrims and visitors marvel that the statue under the open sky stands spotless even to day.

One year passed in that posture of meditation. Bāhubali however did not gain enlightenment. How could he gain it, as long as he did not get rid of the ego that was overpowering him? At last, Lord Rushabhdev, out of compassion, sent Brāhmi and Sundari to bring him to the right path. They came to the place where Bāhubali was meditating. Seeing the mighty brother standing like a rock, they calmly asked him to get off the elephant. As their familiar voice reached the ears of Bāhubali, he opened his eyes in all amazement and looked around. But where was the elephant? He then realized that he was all the time riding the elephant of ego. He immediately overcame it and decided to go to the Lord.

During his long penance he had overcome all other defiling instincts and only the ego had remained between him and the enlightenment. Now ego was gone and humbleness prevailed in its place. Therefore as he took the first step towards the Lord, he achieved full enlightenment and became omniscient.

His life span too happened to expire that time and therefore he soon attained the ultimate liberation. As such, he is the first person to gain liberation during the present Avasarpini or the descending half of the current time cycle.

Meanwhile, Bharat had become the undisputed emperor or Chakravarti of the whole India which from his name came to be known as Bhāratvarsha. He was the first Chakravarti of the current Avasarpini. He ruled equitably and in the interest of all. People were happy during his regime. He himself was happy in every respect. After ruling as such for a very long time, while he was once in his dressing room, a ring came out of his finger. He could notice that the finger looked rather

odd without the ring. By way of curiosity he took out all the rings and saw that all the fingers looked odd. Then he took off his crown and other ornaments that used to decorate his ears, neck, arms etc. and looked in the mirror. He noticed that he did not look as impressive as he used to look.

This set in motion a train of thoughts within himself. 'I consider myself as handsome and impressive, but all that impressiveness merely arises from the ornaments etc. that do not belong to the body. The body itself is made up of blood, bones etc. that happen to be despicable but look attractive only on account of the skin in which they are wrapped. Then, how come, I am so enamored of it? Moreover, the body does not stay forever and is going to be decomposed sooner or later. At that stage I will have to leave every thing.' He thus realized that nothing in the world inclusive of his body really belonged to him. 'In that case' he thought, 'Why not do away with my attachment for all the temporary aspects and go in for something lasting like my father?' Thus he developed acute detachment for the worldly life. This led to the rise of true enlightenment within and he attained omniscience in that very room.

(3)

EMPEROR SANATKUMAR

In very ancient times there was a king named Ashwasen in northern India. His capital city was Hastinapur. He had a beautiful queen named Sahadevi. When she got pregnant, she saw 14 dreams that occur to the mothers of Tirthankaras and sovereign emperors. In due course she gave birth to a very handsome lovable son who was named Sanatkumar. Every one liked the boy who turned out to be very bold, brave and intelligent. At school, he quickly mastered all the arts and sciences. He also became expert in use of all types of weapons. Ashwasen was very glad to learn about the accomplishments of his son and the people were pleased and felt happy that they had such a bold, handsome and lovable young prince to succeed the king.

Once in spring season, the prince was happily playing with other princes along with his bosom friend Mahendrasingh. They decided to have a horse ride. Sanat chose to ride a horse that was newly presented to him. As soon as he got on the back, the horse started running. He ran so fast that all other princes and companions were left behind and in no time the horse disappeared from the scene. The king got very much worried by the mysterious disappearance of the prince. Anxious to get him back, he went in search but after going a little distance he lost all the foot prints of the horse on account of gusty wind and terrible storm and lost the track. Thereupon he entrusted the search to Sanat's friend Mahendra and returned to Hastinapur.

Mahendra started the search with a band of selected followers. After going to various places they entered a dense forest that was infested by wild animals and poisonous snakes. Even pythons were moving here and there. On account of the risk involved, his companions left him one after another. Mahendra had however decided not to return without the prince. He therefore proceeded alone undaunted by the adversities. For one full year he travelled far and wide but did not get any trace of the prince. During the next spring he came across a lovely area full of water springs, fanciful localities and greeneries. There in a garden he saw some lovely maidens singing sweet music. And to his surprise he noticed that his dear friend was playing there with those heavenly girls.

Sanat also saw Mahendra. He immediately approached and embraced his friend. Then he asked one of the girls to take him to bath. Mahendra got refreshed and after taking the meal he came to Sanat who was talking to his favorite girl Bakula. Mahendra requested him to narrate what had happened after the elopement of the horse. Sanat said, "I tried hard to stop the horse, but with

every effort of mine, he was increasing his speed. At last I gave up and allowed him to take me wherever he liked. At last the horse stopped in this lovely land near that lake on your right. Since Bakula knows what happened after that, let her narrate the rest of it." Thereupon Bakula stated as under.

"One day I was playing in our favorite lake water along with my sisters and other friends. No male is supposed to come over there. All of a sudden I saw a horse with your friend on the back. The loveliness of your friend enamored all of us. As soon as he got down, some devil appeared there, no one knows from where, and attacked him. The devil used all possible means to kill him, but Sanat was a match for him and knocked down the devil who had to run away. Highly impressed by Sanat's strength, we wished to play with him. So we forcibly dragged him into water. After playing with him for a long time, we took him to the city and introduced him to our father Bhanuveg, the king of this heavenly place. He was very pleased to see your friend and decided to make him son in law. Thus we eight sisters got married to him.

Once Sanat alone had been far away. He happened to see a seven storied beautiful building. As he was marveling at the structure, he heard cries of a girl from the top floor. He went inside and saw that a beautiful girl was lying there crying for help. Sanat consoled her and inquired about her problem. The girl said that she was Sunanda, the princess of Vinita. She was engaged to the prince of Hastinapur. She was however abducted by a heavenly being named Vajraveg who wanted to marry her. Sanat gave his identification and assured that he would save her from the clutches of Vajraveg. While they were talking, Vajraveg came there and seeing Sanat he attacked him with all his might. Sanat however successfully faced him and killed Vajraveg. Then he married Sunanda.

Vajraveg's father Ashaniveg got mad at Sanat for killing his son. He came here with a large army. My father and his colleagues came to help Sanat. There was fierce battle in which Ashaniveg got killed and his entire fortune was gained by Sanat. Ashaniveg's daughter also married Sanat. That way he married many girls and gained lot of wealth. Since then he has been happily passing the time enjoying every pleasure of life."

After staying there and enjoying heavenly hospitality, Mahendra once said to Sanat that his parents were very much worrying on account of his sudden disappearance. He should therefore better go home. Sanat too felt it worthwhile and proceeded to Hastinapur along with his wives and large band of followers. After a few days he reached Hastinapur. Ashwasen was very pleased to see his son once again. As he heard everything about Sanat's accomplishments, he decided that it was the time for him to retire. Accordingly he coronated Sanat as the king of Hastinapur and renouncing the worldly affairs he became a monk.

Sanat ruled very well. All the people were pleased with his administration. He appointed Mahendra as the commander in chief and set upon an expedition. He gained victory everywhere. Very soon he conquered all the territories and became the undisputed emperor or Chakravarti of the entire land. He was particularly known every where for his unparalleled handsomeness. Even the heavenly beings were aware of his extraordinary attractiveness. Once Indra, the king of heaven praised the handsomeness of Sanatkumar in his assembly. Two members named Vijay and Vaijavant got skeptical of the praise. They therefore decided to verify it.

Disguised as Brahmins they came to Hastinapur and asked for permission to see the king. At that time Sanat was getting ready for taking his bath. He was however courteous enough to allow them inside. Coming in, they saw that Sanat was actually more handsome than it was mentioned in the heavenly assembly. They therefore moved their heads in approval of the praise. As the king asked the purpose of that gesture, they said that they had heard about his handsomeness. They had been there to verify it and found him more attractive than they had thought. Sanatkumar was proud of his attractiveness. He got highly flattered by those words. He said that he was still not properly dressed or adorned. With an air of vanity he suggested that if they really wanted to

see his magnificent attractiveness, they should better come to the court when he sits on the throne properly dressed and adorned.

After getting ready the king came to the court with all the pomp and decoration and sat on the majestic throne. There was precious diamond studded crown on his head. Splendid canopy was hanging over his head and lovely girls were waving fans. He invited those Brahmins to come inside and to look at him. He no doubt looked immensely attractive; but his inner self was poisoned on account of his vanity about his splendor and handsomeness. Those people could make out the difference and moved their heads in disapproval. The king asked about the reason for that gesture. Then they disclosed their identity and said that his attractiveness was highly poisoned that time. The king was not inclined to believe that. At their suggestion he therefore spat in a corner. A fly came over it and immediately died. This was an eye opener for him. He realized that all the wealth and splendors are short lived and unreliable. He therefore decided to give up every thing. Soon after he placed his son on the throne and became a possessionless monk.

As monk he observed severe austerities and did not take care of the body. Due to the unhygienic environments he got leprosy, but he did not care for that. He had gained miraculous accomplishments by his spiritual pursuit but did not use any of them for curing the disease. Even Indra praised his sense of total detachment for the body. Once again Vijay and Vaijavant got skeptical. They came to Sanat in the guise of doctors and suggested that they could cure him by their expertise. Sanat replied that diseases are of two kinds, internal and external. He did not care for the external or physical one but was concerned about the internal disease of Karma that afflicted him since time immemorial. His sole concern was to get rid of that. If they could cure that disease, he was willing to undergo their treatment. Since they showed their helplessness in the matter, Sanat applied saliva on his diseased finger by putting it in the mouth and showed it to them. To their surprise the finger was cured of the disease. Thereupon they disclosed their identity and heartily praised Sanat for his true detachment.

Sanatkumar spent many years practicing austerity and penance. When the end was close, he adopted Anashan (Staying steadfast in the same position without taking food or drink). In the end he attained heaven.

(4)

KING Meghrath and his justice

There is a place called Pundarikini in Mahavideh. Long back, king Ghanrath was ruling over there. He had two queens named Priyamati and Manorama. Both of them got pregnant and in due course each of them gave birth to a son. Priyamati's son was named Meghrath and Manorama's son was named Dridhrath. Both the boys started growing and turned out to be brave, bold and handsome. As they attained adult age, they attracted attention of every one. At some distance there was another place called Sumandirpur. Its king Nihatshatru had three daughters named Priyamitra, Manorama and Sumati. They were very attractive. As they grew up, Nihatshatru was concerned about finding suitable matches for them. He heard about the sons of Ghanrath and decided to offer his daughters in marriage. He sent his special emissary to Pundarikini with the proposal of first two daughters for Meghrath and of the third for Dridhrath. Ghanrath willingly accepted the proposals.

Thereupon the emissary requested Ghanrath to send his sons to Sumandirpur for the wedding ceremony. As Ghanrath was agreeable, both the princes set upon the journey to Sumandirpur along with selected band of warriors. They had to pass through the territory of another king named Surendradatta. He would not allow them to pass through his land. The wedding party had

no alternative route to reach Sumandirpur and therefore insisted upon their right to pass through. As Surendradatta did not give in, there was a war between the two. A fierce battle took place. Both the parties fought very valiently but in the end Surendradatta lost and surrendered. Meghrath thus got possession of that country. Thereafter the wedding party safely reached Sumandirpur. There, the king Nihatshatru organized a grand marriage ceremony and both the princes got married.

After some time, king Ghanrath decided to renounce the worldly life. Thereupon he gave his throne to Meghrath and Draihath was made the heir apparent. Meghrath ruled over the country very well. He was a just ruler and established complete justice in his kingdom. Every one lived happily and peacefully under his rule. He was also very truthful and never broke his promise. His brother Dridhrath had regard for Maghrath and helped him in every respect.

Meghrath was highly religious and observed all the restraints appropriate to a house holder. Once it so happened that while he was observing Paushadh, he saw a pigeon rapidly rushing towards him. It was very scared and took shelter in his lap. King could not make out the cause of its fear. As he was curious about it, the pigeon said that it was in dire need of safe shelter. The king guaranteed that and told it not to feel any way afraid. Soon after a hawk came there and demanded the pigeon. The king said that the pegin had sought his shelter and he could not hand it over to any one. The hawk said that he was very hungry and needed the pigeon for his food. The king suggested that there are many other eatables and the hawk should desist from taking the life of any being for the sake of hunger. The hawk said that he was non-vegetarian and could not eat anything but meat. He added that if the king did not hand over the pegin, he would die of hunger. The king would then be responsible for his death.

The king said that it was not possible for him to betray the promise of shelter given to the pegin. He however offered to the hawk meat from his own body equivalent to the weight of the pegin. The people got scared by that offer. The hawk however agreed to accept the offer. Thereupon the king called for a scale. He put pegin in one pan and in the other he started putting meat cut from his body. Amazingly, the pegin was too heavy and the king had to put more and more meat from his body to counterbalance its weight. As the meat so cut was not found enough, he ultimately put himself in the pan. Then the scale got exactly balanced.

This spread a shriek of terror in the hearts of all present. Everyone felt aghast. No one was willing to accept that so benevolent a king should sacrifice his life for the sake of a pegin. No one knew what was going to happen next. People wanted to save the life of their beloved king. Within their minds they were earnestly praying for the long life of the king. Then all of a sudden they noticed a heavenly being. He said that he had heard about the truthfulness and the justice of the king and wanted to test it. Pegin and hawk were part of his contrivance for the purpose. He was glad that the king lived true to his reputation and deserved all compliments.

Meghrath ruled long thereafter. At the later age he too renounced like his father and became a monk. His brother Dradhrath and many others also renounced with him. As a monk he observed all possible austerities and penance. At the end of life he observed Anashan and went to heaven. Later on he was born as the prince of Hastinapur. In that life he got known as Lord Shantinath, the 16th Tirthankar.

(5)

NAMI RAJARSHI

In ancient time, Mithiä was the capital city of Videh. Long back there ruled a king named Padmarath. He had a beautiful queen named Padmamala. She was issueless and earnestly longed for getting a son. Once the king had been to a forest. There he noticed a newly born child lying under the shade of a tree. As he drew near, he found that it was a lovely boy. His handsomeness attracted the attention of the king. He picked him up and bringing him to the palace he handed over the boy to the queen. She became very happy to get the boy. She decided to rear him as her own son and named him Nami. The authority of the king expanded on all sides after getting the boy. The king attributed that fortune to the lucky boy and brought him up in all the pleasures and luxuries. The boy slowly began to grow. At the age of six he was sent to school where he learnt all kinds of arts and crafts. In due course he grew up to be a strong, well educated and obedient youth. The king was pleased with him in every respect and got him married at the appropriate time.

Once there came to the city a learned Āchārya. The king went to his assembly for listening to his sermon. On hearing that sermon he developed detachment for the worldly life. He therefore crowned Nami as the king of Mithilä and he himself became a possessionless monk.

Nami turned out to be a strong and capable ruler. He built up a strong army that consisted of mighty elephants and strong horses. Equipped with that, he expanded his kingdom on all sides by subduing the neighboring states. He was also very benevolent and ruled with equity and justice. He took all possible steps to make his subjects prosperous and happy. His reign was very popular and he became a well known ruler.

In his army there was a well built, tall elephant which was found intelligent and successfully carried out even the tough commands. The king was very proud of owning him. Once the elephant got out of control and escaped from the yard. As he ran towards the forest, the keepers pursued him with all possible haste. The elephant therefore had to run ahead. He then turned towards Sudarshanpur which was the capital city of a neighboring state. King Chandrayash was ruling over there. He had come to know of the escape of the elephant which he also coveted to get. He therefore sent his experts to control the elephant. The animal was exhausted of wandering and hunger by the time he entered the territory of Sudarshanpur. The keepers of Sudarshanpur could therefore easily subdue him.

As Nami learnt about the capture of his elephant, he sent a message to Chandrayash to return the elephant to Mithila. Chandrayash was however proud of his own strength and refused to comply. Thereupon Nami took a large contingent of army and invaded Sudarshanpur. Chandrayash knew that his army was not a match for the invading force in an open combat. His capital had however strong built up defence mechanism. He therefore closed the gates of his fortified city and confined himself within. From there he successfully resisted the formidable invading army and prevented it from entering the city. Nami tried his best to force open the fortress but the defending party did not yield for a long time.

Once, while Nami was sitting in the camp planning his strategy, he noticed a venerable aged nun coming to his camp. He rose from his seat and welcomed her. Then he requested her to let him know if he could be of any service. The nun said that she had been there to prevent the fratricidal war in which he had engaged himself. Nami was amazed to hear those words, because he knew that Chandrayash was in no way related to him. The nun however insisted that Chandrayash was his brother and asked Nami to give up the war. Nami thought that she being a nun might be considering every one as brother to others. He said that he respected her wishes and appreciated the sense of her affection for every one. He however said that his giving up the war would be treated as retreat and he could not afford to stop the war. The nun said that Chandrayash was his blood brother and she did not want the two brothers to fight for the sake of an elephant. As Nami could not believe what she said, the nun described the following tale.

Years back, Manirath was the king of Sudarshanpur. He had no issues. His brother Yugbāhu was therefore nominated as the crown prince. Yugbāhu had a beautiful wife named Madanrekhā. They had a son who was named Chandrayash. After a few years Madanrekhā became pregnant once again. Manirath envied the good fortune of his brother and wished to get Madanrekhā as a wife. As he happened to see the graceful Madanrekhā in her pregnancy, he got too much enamored of her. Madanrekhā was however a faithful wife and did not respond to the gestures of the king.

But Manirath had become impatient to get her love. He thought that she would not yield as long as Yugbāhu was alive. In order to gain her, he once managed to fatally wound Yugbāhu. Madanrekhā had to fly towards a forest in order to save herself from lustful Manirath. There she developed the pain of delivery and gave birth to a lovely son. As she heard the sound of approaching horses, she got frightened that Manirath might be pursuing her. She could not make out what to do. She therefore left the child under a tree and concealed herself in the adjoining thicket. To her surprise she noticed that it was the king Padmarath of Mithilā. He carefully picked up the child and carried away with him. Madanrekhā sighed a sense of relief, because she knew that she was not in a position to rear up the child by herself. She then went to a neighboring city and renouncing the worldly life became a nun. The child that she had left was none other than Nami. Later on, she had learnt that after the death of her husband, Manirath had died of a snake bite and her son Chandrayash was crowned as the king of Sudarshanpur.

Nami knew very well the story of his being picked up by Padmarath. He thought that if what the nun said was right, Chandrayash was his elder brother. He also knew that a nun had no reason to fabricate a story. In order, however, to be sure he requested her for the proof of her statement. The nun replied that she herself was Madanrekhā and had been there only to prevent the brothers from indulging in highly sinful war. Now Nami had no reason to doubt. He obediently bowed to her and retreated to Mithilā conveying a message to Chandrayash that the latter was his elder brother. As such, he did not want to continue the fight and was therefore retreating. When Chandrayash heard the story, he realized the futility of the worldly life. He therefore handed over his territory to his brother Nami and renounced the worldly life. Thereafter Nami ruled happily for a long time.

Once, Nami happened to develop burning sensation all over the body. The sensation steadily grew and eventually it became so intense that Nami could no longer bear it. All the queens were perturbed to notice the pain that Nami was facing. The physicians were called for examining him and they prescribed application of sandalwood paste. For that purpose the queens themselves started making paste by grinding sandalwood on hard stone. Thereby, the bangles on their hands created jingling sound. But the sound arising out of the bangles of all the queens together made a sort of turmoil that Nami could not bear on account of the pain. He therefore asked them to work calmly. Thereupon the queens kept only one bangle on each hand and removed the rest. That stopped the sound altogether. Nami liked the prevailing silence but wondered whether the queens had discontinued preparing the paste. Feeling impatient, he asked whether the paste was getting ready. The queens replied that they were busy doing that but that no longer made any noise because they had retained only one bangle on each hand.

This made an unexpected impact on the mind of Nami. He felt that multiplicity gave rise to unnecessary hustle and bustle, while peace lay in solitariness. Pondering over the matter, he realized that ultimately every one has to leave the world alone. In that case, what is the real purpose of all the worldly connections? This sort of contemplation led him to the sense of detachment for everything. He made up his mind that on recovery from the pain, he would renounce the worldly life and become a solitary monk. And accordingly he did, as he recovered soon after. As a monk he undertook severe penance and meditated in complete loneliness. Even the heavenly beings were impressed by his penance and acute sense of detachment.

Once Indra, the heavenly king, decided to test his detachment. In the guise of a learned Brāhmin he came to the place where Nami was penancing. One after another he pointed out to Nami that

1) Mithilā was full of agony on account of cries of his kins and other people consequent upon his renunciation, 2) Mithilā was set ablaze, 3) Mithilā was totally defenceless, 4) Mithilā was afflicted by thieves, burglars and other criminals, 5) his erstwhile subordinates were defying the authority of Mithilā, and so on. Nami however remained totally unperturbed and replied that everything happens as destined and his interference could not make any difference. Indra then said that the purpose of penance is to gain pleasure and asked him to undertake building of palaces and other places of entertainment where he could enjoy all sorts of pleasures during that life itself. He also called Nami to undertake ritual sacrifices for earning Punya. Since Nami remained firm, Indra tried to dissuade him by pointing out to the need for begging alms and other rigors of the renounced life. This dialogue between Indra and Nami has been given in chapter 9 of the Uttaradhyayan Sutra.

None of the efforts of Indra had any impact on Nami who said that he would gladly continue the life of a lonely monk instead of resorting to the momentary pleasures of the worldly life. Indra then realized the futility of his efforts. He congratulated Nami for his sense of detachment and bowing him he went back to his place. Nami then continued his penance with all the vigor and ultimately gained omniscience. Persons, who thus gain omniscience without guidance from any one, are called Pratyekbuddha or Sahasambuddha. According to Jain tradition there have been four such Pratyekbuddhas and Nami is one of them. He is therefore known as Nami Rajarshi.

(6)

KAPIL MUNI

In ancient time, king Jitshatru was ruling over Kaushambi. There was a learned man named Kashyap Shastri in that city. Being well versed in all rituals, he was appointed as the Court Priest and was held in reverence as such. He had a wife named Shridevi who gave birth to a son. He was named Kapil. Being the only son, the boy was brought up in all fondliness. He therefore stayed more attached to luxuries of life and did not pay much attention to studies. Consequently when his father died, the king appointed other knowledgeable person as the Court Priest. Shridevi felt very bad about that. Once, while the new priest was going to the court with the pomp associated with that position, Shridevi happened to see him. Remembering the days when her husband too was going to the court with similar pomp, she got tears in her eyes. As Kapil saw the tears, he enquired about the cause of her grief. She replied that she felt sorry for the loss of his father's position and said that if Kapil had been as learned as his father, he too would have gained that position and that would have made her very happy.

Kapil had respect for his mother. He also realized his foolishness in not studying seriously. He said that he was willing to undertake the studies and be as learned as his father. She told him that his father's friend Indradatta lived in the city of Shravasti. He was very knowledgeable and would be willing to teach him. Thereupon, Kapil made necessary preparation for the travel and on one auspicious day he left Kaushambi. Arriving at Shravasti he went to Indradatta and conveying him the message of his mother, he requested for his help in studying. Indradatta was pleased to see his friend's son and agreed to accept him as his pupil.

According to the practice of that time Kapil had to get his food by going for alms. That took too much of the time and that affected his study. Indradatta had a friendly businessman named Shalibhadra. He requested the latter to arrange for Kapil's food. Shalibhadra arranged with a Brahmin widow named Manorama for the boarding of Kapil and accordingly he started sending groceries for two of them. That arrangement gave enough time to Kapil for studies and he could make good progress. Unfortunately, however something else was destined for Kapil.

Manorama was young and attractive. Kapil also was young and got attracted to her. Both of them fell in love with each other. Study was almost forsaken and Kapil spent most of the time in staying attached to her. They had not to worry about the food, because they could maintain themselves on the groceries that were sent by Shalibhadra. But after a while, Manorama got pregnant. Now they needed money for taking care of the pregnancy as well as for the would be child. Kapil was however too naive for earning. As they badly needed money, Manorama told him that the king of Shrivasti gave two grains of gold every morning to the person who blessed him first of all. She therefore advised him to go to the palace early in the morning and bless the king. Kapil agreed to do so.

The next day, Manorama waked up Kapil early and straight sent him to the palace. He could however gather that some one else had already blessed the king before him. The second day he asked her to wake him earlier. But he found again that he was late. That way he tried consecutively for eight days and every time he turned out to be late. He was much disappointed by his failure and made up his mind to get up very early on the succeeding day. For that purpose he spread his bed in the varanda. It was the dark half of the month and when Kapil got up after the midnight, the moon was coming out of the horizon. He mistakenly took it as the time for day break and ran towards the palace. A policeman on duty saw that and thought him to be a thief roaming at midnight. He therefore arrested him. Kapil tried to explain the correct position but the policemen would not listen. He simply said to Kapil to state whatever he liked in the court the next morning.

At the appropriate time Kapil was taken to the royal court. He had never been in a court and his whole body was trembling out of fear. The king marked the fright writ on his face and thought that he might not be a culprit. He therefore asked Kapil to explain how he had to come to the court. Kapil told everything that had happened. The king was amused to hear his story. He however got pity on dumb Kapil who could take moonrise as the sunrise. In order to get him out of his miserable condition, the king offered him to grant anything that he would ask for. Kapil was glad to listen that but he stayed dumbfound. As the king asked for the reason for remaining silent, Kapil replied that his mind was still perturbed and he requested the king to allow him some time to think about. The king asked him to sit in the adjoining garden and to think what he desired to get.

Kapil went to the garden and began to think what he should ask for so that he could live happily. Two grains of gold, that he had been out for, was very insignificant. He thought that he should ask for five gold coins. But again thought that they would not last long. He considered asking for 25 coins but then thought that they would hardly last for a couple of months. He therefore thought of asking for 100 coins, but again thought that the amount would last for a year or two and then he would face the same miserable condition. 'Why not ask for 1000 coins?' he asked himself. But he again thought that he may beget more children and raising them would need more money. So he thought of asking for 10000 coins so that he would not have to worry for the rest of his life. But then the idea came to him that he would come across different occasions when he would be required to spend and then nothing would be left to him. He therefore thought of asking for 100,000 coins so that he can live out of the interest from that. But that amount may not yield enough interest to live happily forever. He therefore thought of asking for a million gold coins.

He stopped there a while. He was pleased to think that by getting that much amount he could live like a respectable man. But then thought that there are many millionaires and being only one of them would not be worthwhile. He thought of having some outstanding position where he could exercise control over others. He therefore thought of asking for half of the kingdom. That would however make him at par with the king, while he would like to stand ahead of him. Ultimately, he therefore thought of asking for the entire kingdom.

Simple as he was, the last idea virtually shook him. He thought, "I had been here for getting two grains of gold and the kindness of the king has led me to the idea of turning him into a pauper. What nonsense! No, that's not fair; let me ask for million coins only. But how do I deserve that

much? Should I then ask for 100,000 coins? But why do I need that much?" His mind was now set in reverse gear. One after another, he thought of 10000, 1000, 100 and 25 coins and every time he thought that by asking for that amount he would simply be exploiting the good intention of the king. Ultimately, he thought that he should ask for only two grains of gold for which he had been originally out.

But his entire perspective had changed by then. He had a glimpse of the nature of attachment and the wildness of desire that could lead any one astray. He reflected, "I had been here in Shravasti for gaining knowledge but attachment for Manorama made me to forsake it. That attachment has led me to worry for the future and that, in turn, had led me to get two grains of gold. But that small desire got inflamed by the kindness of the king and that induced me to go to the extent of desiring the entire kingdom! How insatiable are the desires? The more a person gets, the more he desires to get. The sense of accumulation knows no limits!"

He remembered how much excitement he felt when he thought of getting million coins or the entire kingdom. He also thought of the tranquility that he experienced within, when he started calming down his desire. He could thus realize that desire does not lead any one to happiness. He also realized that insatiable as they are, desires can be overcome by a strong sense of detachment. He remembered the sages saying that the right way of gaining enduring happiness is to stay detached. As the concept of detachment took strong hold over him, the Karmas that were obscuring his perception, started dripping off. He thought that it was the time that he should get rid of all desires that tend to pollute the mind. And he decided not to ask for anything.

As he went back to the court, the king asked him what he had decided to get. Kapil replied that he did not want anything. The king was amazed. He asked, 'What?' Kapil narrated how his mind had gone to the extent of asking for the entire kingdom and how he could calm it down by getting rid of all desires. Then he said that he felt happy with the sense of detachment that he could develop. And Kapil left the court with sense of very high detachment that shortly afterwards led him to omniscience. He is therefore known as Kapil Kevali.

(7)

SHRIPÄL AND MAYANÄSUNDARI

King Singhrath was ruling over Champanagar. By his queen Kamalprabhā he had a son named Shripāl. The king died while Shripāl was five years old. Singhrath's brother Ajitsen was very ambitious. He took this opportunity and seized the throne. He was keen to get rid of Shripāl in order to make his position safe. As Kamalprabhā got aware of his vicious design, she fled away from Champanagar along with her son. Learning about her escape, Ajitsen sent his trusted soldiers to pursue her. How long could the poor lady go, as she had to run on foot with the young kid? As the pursuers got closer, she could not make out how to save her son. By that time she saw a band of leucodermic people. In desperation, she asked them to take her son in their custody. Those people warned her about the risk of her son contracting the disease. No alternative was however left to her for saving the life of Shripāl. She therefore entrusted her son to them.

Shripāl was very bold and handsome. Those people got very fond of him and took all possible care for the boy who grew in their company. Unfortunately, Shripāl also ultimately contracted leucoderma. As he attained youth, those people made him their leader and he was named Umar Rānā. Under his leadership, the group travelled from place to place and happened to arrive at Ujjayini, the capital of Mālwā.

King Prajapal was ruling there. By his queen Rupsundari, he had two daughters named Sursundari and Mayanäsundari. They were very beautiful, smart and intelligent. The king loved both of them and had made adequate arrangements for giving them training in all the arts and crafts. The girls mastered all of them in due course. Once the king decided to test their knowledge and called them in the assembly. He first asked number of questions to Sursundari who gave satisfactory replies to all of them. At the end, the king asked her by whose favor she got all her skill and also the comforts, amenities and luxuries that she could enjoy. The girl humbly replied that she gained all that by his favor. The king was pleased with her replies and decided to reward her appropriately.

Then came the turn of Mayanäsundari. She too gave satisfactory replies to all his questions. At the end, the king put the same question that he had put to Sursundari. He had expected that Mayana too would give the identical reply and thus please him. Mayana had full faith in religious philosophy that she had studied at length. She therefore replied that everything that she had got, must have been the result of her Karma. She must have earned wholesome Karmas in the past that resulted in the happy situations that she was undergoing. If she did not have that Karma to her credit, no one on the earth could bestow happiness on her. The king was exasperated to hear the unexpected reply. He repeatedly asked her to consider how she could have obtained anything but for him. Mayana replied that everything right from her being born as his daughter up to her present situation could occur solely as consequence of her operative Karmas and no one could have made any difference anywhere.

The king got wild by that unexpected persistence. He could not believe that the girl could have got anything but for his favor. He could not buy her theory that everything happens according to one's own Karma. He therefore decided to teach her the lesson, the hard way. He asked his men to find out the most wretched man in Ujjayini. The men spotted Umar Ränä for the purpose and brought him to the court. In utter disdain the king instantly got Mayana married to Umar. He gave them some badly needed things and a small house and asked Mayana to undergo the result of her Karma. Rupsundari got very unhappy at the sudden turn of events in her daughter's life, but she could not speak anything against her husband's will. On the other hand, the king looked out for a suitable match for Sursundari in appreciation of her replies and got her married to prince Aridaman of Shankhapuri.

Mayana was deeply religious. She accepted Shripäl in the guise of Umar as the husband destined by her Karma. She took all possible care for him. She used to go to temples and to listen to the sermons of Sadhus along with him. Once she happened to go to Acharya Munichandra who was a well known scholar of that time. He advised her that devotional worship of Navapada can cure all types of diseases and advised her to practice that. Accordingly, Mayana and Shripäl devoutly observed Navapada worship with all its rigors. The result was miraculous, Shripäl's skin disease started fading. In due course, he got totally cured of the leucoderma and regained the skin that he used to have prior to contracting the disease. Now he looked like a handsome prince that he had been. Mayana was very happy and blessed her Karma for that change too. Since the change was apparently brought out by devotion to Navapada, both of them continued to observe it even after that.

Once while they had been to a temple, Rupsundari happened to see them. She was shocked to see that her daughter had been with that handsome man instead of the leucodermic one with whom she was married. Mayana understood her anxiety and explained in details whatever had happened. Rupsundari was very much pleased to hear that. Now she could boldly tell the king that Mayana's persistence about the theory of Karma had proved right. The king could also see the truth. Deep in his heart, he used to curse himself for bringing misery in his lovely daughter's life. Now, he too got happy and invited the daughter and son in law to stay with him in the palace. Luckily Shripäl's mother too arrived at the place and happily stayed with them.

Once there was a royal procession in which Shripāl was seated on an elephant along with the king. During the procession someone pointing a finger at Shripāl, asked a relative who he was. The man replied that he was the son in law of the king. Shripāl heard it. He got sad that he was getting identified by his relationship with the father in law. It came to his mind that the most prestigious are those who are known by their own names; less prestigious are those who are known by their parents; those known by their brothers are so so and those who are known by their in laws are disgraceful. He thereupon decided to seek power and prestige on his own. He therefore secured permission from Mayana and the king and set off all alone on an auspicious day.

He travelled far and wide, visited many places and boldly faced the adversities that came across. During that period too he did not forsake his devotion to Navapada. Consequently, he successfully came out of all the ordeals. As was the custom that time, he could marry many girls and acquired much wealth and lot of followers. Equipped with that he came back and camped outside Ujjayini. His army was so large that it virtually surrounded the city. King Prajapal thought that some enemy had come with a large force to conquer Ujjayini. He came to the camp at the instance of Shripāl and was pleased to recognize his son in law. Then Shripāl entered the city where he was given a hero's welcome. His mother and Mayana were anxiously awaiting his arrival and were very happy to see him.

Shripāl happily spent some time with Mayana who was dearest to him. Then he decided to get back his original kingdom of Champanagar. He sent a message to his uncle Ajitsen to leave the throne that he had seized. Ajitsen was however too proud to give up. So Shripāl invaded Champanagar with his vast army. Ajitsen gave a tough fight. His army was however not a match for Shripāl's. In a tough fight Ajitsen was captured and Champanagar was taken over by Shripāl. He then gracefully released his uncle from the captivity. Ajitsen now felt that his days were over and he decided to renounce the worldly life. Thereafter Shripāl happily passed the rest of life as king of Champanagar.

(8)

Lord Nemināth and Rājimati

By the time of Mahabharat socio-political and religious conditions in India had deteriorated. Standards of restraints, monogamy etc. set up during Ramayana period had given way. Polygamy was almost the order of the day. Rulers and men of means used to marry as many wives as they could afford. Even the old people with grown up sons did not hesitate to marry young girls. There were also cases of polyandry. Rulers were getting powerful. They were maintaining large armies and used to wage wars for expanding their territories. Jarasangha, the king of Magadha was the most powerful. He was aspiring to become the lord of the entire India which was then known as Bharatkhand. Most of the other rulers vied with each other for his favor. There were also tyrant kings like Kansa who could show utmost cruelty to the persons suspected of being against his interests. Hunting was the favorite pastime of warrior class and gambling was considered respectable game. Animals were sacrificed on the altar of religious rites and non-vegetarianism had become popular. It was the right time for a great saint to come forth and teach religion afresh.

Yadava clan had mostly settled on the bank of Yamuna. Mathura and Shauripuri in the present western U.P. were their major centers of concentration. Yadav prince Samudravijay was ruling over Shauripuri. His wife's name was Shivadevi. Lord Nemināth was born to them sometime before Mahabharat and was named Nemikumar. When he was in the womb of his mother, she had dreamt of series of black jewels called Arishta. He is therefore also known as Arishtanemi.

He was a cousin and close associate of Shri Krishna. Under the leadership of Shri Krishna Yadavas were challenging the authority of Jarasangha who was therefore planning to invade Mathura. Not being able to withstand his pressure, Yadavas migrated to Dwarka in Saurashtra. Nemināth's family also migrated with them to Dwarka.

Like Krishna, Nemikumar too was dark complexioned, but handsome and charming. Many girls were attracted towards him. Nemikumar was however introvert and did not develop much attachment for the worldly life. He stayed more introspective as he was inclined towards spiritual life. At that time, Ugrasena was the king of Junagadh which is situated at the foot of Mt. Girnar in Saurashtra. By his wife Dharini he had a daughter who was named Rājimati. She is popularly known as Rajul. She grew to be a very beautiful and graceful young girl. Many princes and other promising youths were eager to marry her. When she came to know of Nemikumar, she got enamoured of him and desired to marry him. Ugrasena thereupon sent the offer of her marriage to Nemikumar. This was a welcome proposal for Yadava chiefs. With considerable efforts, friends and family members of Nemikumar therefore persuaded him to accept the offer. Every one was happy by his acceptance since Nem and Rajul could make an ideal couple. The two were then officially engaged and a mutually convenient auspicious day was fixed for their wedding ceremony.

On an appropriate day an elegantly decorated wedding party set off from Dwarka with the handsome Nem as the bridegroom. Large number of people had joined the party because wedding ceremony was going to be gorgeous. Many of them were also keen to climb Mt. Girnar. For King Ugrasena, wedding of his beloved daughter was a once in life time occasion. He had therefore made elaborate arrangements for making it as pleasurable as possible. On the way also, adequate arrangements were made for the fun and food of the bridegroom party. On the appointed day the party came in the vicinity of Mt. Girnar and camped on the outskirts of Junagadh. They were appropriately received by Ugrasena and leading men of the place. It was a fine day. Weather was pleasant and cool sweet wind was blowing from Girnar. Every one on either side was in rejoicing mood and was eager to watch the longed for wedding ceremony. Instructions were given for preparing tasty and delicious food for feasting of the bridegroom party.

Nemikumar too was in the pleasant mood. He got ready for the wedding ceremony and mounted the chariot specially decorated for the purpose. On the way to the wedding place he heard some grinning sound. On enquiring, he learnt that it was emanating from birds and animals that were to be slaughtered for feasting of his entourage. He could not bear the idea of so much violence being caused on account of his wedding. He got pensive and started thinking how to prevent the violence. 'Can there not be a way of life that would extend peace and security to every living being?' he asked himself. As he thought deep into the matter, it was clear to him that he should better explore the way for well being of all. He could visualize that after marriage he would get too much involved in worldly life. Then it would be hard for him to embark upon any exploration of that type. He could realize that it was the time for him to explore the truth that would lead to happiness of every being. He therefore decided to avoid getting married and asked the charioteer to turn back.

Every one on bridegroom's side was taken aback by his decision. How would they be in a position to explain his sudden decision to the bridal side? His friends and close relatives tried to dissuade him from his decision. He had however made up his mind. Their efforts therefore came to nothing. He calmly explained that it was his mission to explore bliss for all and they should not come in the way of fulfilling that mission. Thereupon he renounced everything and started for Girnar lonely and possessionless. Nemināth, as he came to be known thereafter, stayed on the mount intensely meditating about the cause of all unhappiness. He could realize that ignorance of the true nature of Self led to wrong perception and consequent wrong action that resulted in all sorts of miseries and pain. He therefore dwelt deep into the Self. On the 56th day of renunciation he got fully enlightened and attained omniscience. He then set up afresh the religious order called

Tirtha and became 22nd Tirthankar of the present Avasarpini. Thereafter He lived long enough to teach the path of liberation.

At the time Neminäth decided to renounce, Ugrasen and others were busy making preparations for the wedding. Rajul was being adorned by her girl friends. They were cracking jokes at her regarding her wedding and subsequent mating.. She too was eagerly waiting for the arrival of her Nem as the bridegroom. Then came the news that Nemikumar was not to come for the wedding. No one could understand his decision to renounce just before wedding. Rajul got in utter grief. A calamity had overtaken her all of a sudden! Her girl friends tried to console her in that hour of crisis. Some of them started cursing Nem for putting their beloved friend in the awkward position. Some others advised her to forget the unpredictable Nem and look for other suitable match. Rajul had however admitted Nem in her heart as the husband. She could not even think of any other person to take his place. She did not like any one to curse Nem. She too had some spiritual orientation. When she came to know of real cause of Nem's renouncement, she could overcome her grief. She realized that Nem had left for a commendable purpose. She could appreciate his mission. She thought that the best way for her was to follow in the footsteps of Nem. Therefore she also renounced and left for meditation on Girnar.

Once while she was going from one place to another on the mount, it started raining heavily. She took shelter under a tree but it was inadequate for the heavy downpour. By the time the rain stopped, she was totally drenched. While going ahead, she saw a cave. She went inside, took off her clothes and started twisting them for getting rid of water. At that time Rathanemi (younger brother of Neminäth), who had renounced earlier, was meditating in a corner of that cave. He had once aspired to marry Rajul. He opened his eyes at the sound of Rajul's waving of her clothes. He could not believe that the girl he had dreamt of was standing there nude. He could not resist the temptation of getting her. He therefore left the meditation and coming close expressed his love for her.

Rajul was put in a very embarrassing situation. But she immediately regained her composure. Covering her body with the Saree, she told him that his desire was unbecoming for an ascetic like him. She explained that he should overcome his passion and stick to his renounced life. His succumbing to his instinct amounted to eating the vomited stuff. Even his brother Nem, to whom she was engaged, had left her in search for truth. As such he should not deviate from the path that he had selected. In the end Rathanemi could get the truth of her words. He begged her pardon and went ahead with his search for self realization. In due course he attained omniscience. Rajul also spent the rest of her life as the head of nuns' order of Neminäth and in the end attained heavenly life.

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LORD PÄRSHWANÄTH

About 3000 years back King Ashwasen was ruling over Varanasi which is also known as Benares situated on the bank of holy river Ganga. He was a benevolent and popular ruler. He had a queen named Vamadevi. On 10th day of the dark half of the month of Margashirsh* (which usually occurs in December) she gave birth to a son . During her pregnancy she had once observed a snake passing by her side. In memory of that incident the boy was named as Parshwakumar, because 'Parshwa' in Sanskrit language, means 'beside'. Parshwa was dark complexioned but very handsome like Lord Neminäth. He started growing up in the midst of wealth and happiness. In due course he grew up to be a very attractive young man known for his courtesy, bravery and valor. His reputation spread all round and many rulers were eager to get their daughters married

to him. He however did not develop much attachment for the worldly life and showed no eagerness for getting married.

During that time there was another well known city named Kushasthala and Prasenjit was ruling there. He had a very beautiful and talented daughter named Prabhavati. As she became young, her parents were looking for a suitable match for her. Once while Prabhavati was playing in a garden with her girl-friends, she heard a song to the effect that prince of Varanasi is very handsome and brave and that the girl who marries him would be a very lucky girl. Prabhavati was impressed by that. She obtained all possible information about Parshwakumar and got enamoured of him. As her friends came to know of her attachment for Parshwakumar, they gave hints to her parents. Thereupon Prasenjit decided to convey her wishes to the king of Varanasi.

At that time another powerful ruler named Yavan was ruling over Kalinga. He knew about Prabhavati and wanted to marry her. When he heard about the plan of Prasenjit to offer Prabhavati to the prince of Varanasi, Yavan decided to get her by force. Accordingly he took a large army with him and surrounded Kushasthala. Prasenjit was no match for him. He therefore secretly sent a messenger to king Ashwasen with a request for help. When Ashwasen heard the messenger, he got ready with his army. Parshwakumar however did not like that his father should take that trouble. He therefore volunteered to go in his place and proceeded towards Kushasthal with a large force. For a while, Yavan tried to belittle the force of Varanasi. Ultimately however he heeded to saner advice and agreed to retreat from Kushasthal.

Prasenjit then welcomed Parshwakumar with valuable presents and due respect. He then put forth his proposal for marrying his daughter. Parshwakumar was however not inclined to get married and indicated his intention to go back to Varanasi. Prasenjit then decided to use the good offices of King Ashwasen for that purpose. Accordingly, he decided to go with Parshwakumar to Varanasi along with his daughter. King Ashwasen was very impressed by the beauty, grace and talents of Prabhavati. He and Vamadevi therefore prevailed upon their son to marry Prabhavati. The wedding ceremony was accordingly performed with all the pomps and splendour and Pārswakumār started passing happy days with Prabhavati.

At that time there was a penancing mendicant named Kamath. He had lost his parents in childhood and was raised as an orphan. Being disgusted of his miserable life, he had become a monk and was undergoing severe penance. He came to Varanasi for performing a Panchagni (five fires) penance. Many people were impressed by his penance and were going to that place for worship. When Parshwakumar came to know of that, he realized the violence of live beings involved in the fire. He came there and tried to dissuade Kamath from the sacrificial fire. Kamath did not agree that life of any being was at stake on account of his performance. By his extra sensory perception, Parshwakumar could observe that there was a snake in the wood that was put in the sacrificial fire. He asked his men to take out that wood and to shear it carefully. To the amazement of the onlookers a half burnt snake came out. It had too severe burns to survive. Parshwakumar recited the Navakarmantra for benefit of the snake, who died and was reborn as Dharanendra, the lord of Asurkumars. Kamath got too much annoyed by this interference but was unable to do anything at that time. He started observing more severe penance and at the end of his life was reborn as Meghamali, the lord of rain.

Observing the miseries that living beings had to experience, Parshwakumar developed a high degree of detachment. At the age of 30 he renounced everything and became a possessionless monk. Then he became known as Pārshwanāth. He spent most of his time meditating in search of ultimate bliss for all. Once while he was in meditation, Meghmali saw him. He recalled how Pārshwanāth had interfered in his penance in earlier life. He saw this opportunity to take revenge. By his supernatural power, he brought forth all kinds of fierce and harmful animals like elephants, lions, leopards, snakes etc. As Lord Pārshwanāth stayed in the meditation unperturbed, Meghamali brought forth heavy rains. It started raining like dogs and cats. The rain water touched

the feet of Pārshwanāth and started accumulating. It came up to his knees, then to waist and in no time it came up to his neck.

At that time Dharanendra noticed the plight of his benefactor. He immediately came there and raised a quick growing lotus below the feet of the Lord so that He could stay above water. Then he spread his fangs all around the head and sides of the Lord so as to protect Him from the rains. All efforts of Meghamali to harass the Lord thus came to nothing. He was disappointed and did not know what to do. Dharanendra then severely reproached him and asked him to understand that he was unnecessarily creating trouble to the graceful, merciful Lord. Meghamali realized the futility of his efforts. He withdrew all his supernatural power and fell at the feet of the Lord with a sense of heavy remorse. He sincerely begged the Lord to forgive him for his evil acts.

During the period of that distress, the Lord was deep in meditation. He had attained a high level of ecstasy and had developed perfect equanimity. As such, he did not have any special affection for Dharanendra for the protection that he had extended or disaffection for Meghamali for the distress caused. Developing higher and higher purity of consciousness, He ultimately attained omniscience on the 84th day of his renunciation. That was the 4th day of the dark half of the month of Falgun* that usually occurs in April. Then He started preaching the true religion. He set up the Tirth or religious order afresh and became 23rd Tirthankar. He got many followers. The principal disciples of Tirthankaras are known as Ganadharas. Lord Parshawanath had 10 such Ganadharas. His parents and Prabhavati too renounced and became His disciples. Thereafter he lived long enough spreading the true religion and left His mortal remains at the age of 100 years and attained Nirvana on Sametashikhar Hill. This is located in the state of Bihar and is the most famous place of pilgrimage for Jains.

* These months have been mentioned here according to our present calendar.

(10)

LIFE OF LORD MAHAVIR

About 2600 years ago religion in India had taken a very ugly shape. Original classification of the society in the form of four classes had deteriorated. Brahmins considered themselves to be very superior. They looked down upon people of other castes. Fate of Shudras, the 4th category was rendered terrible and they were forever condemned to serve the other castes. They were required to perform the most degraded tasks. They were not entitled to improve their lives in any way. The importance of sacrifices as a symbol of giving up and renouncing was lost sight of and it had taken very violent form. Animal sacrifices were regularly performed and people believed that by sacrifices they would gain the favor of gods.

Under such social and religious conditions Mahavir was born during 6th century B.C. His birth place was Kshatriyakund which was a part of famous Vaishali republic in the present Indian State of Bihar. His father's name was Siddhārth who was chief of Kshatriyakund. His uncle's name was Suparshwa. His mother's name was Trishalā. She was the sister of Chetak, the chief of Vaishali.

Mahavir had an elder brother named Nandivardhan and a sister named Sudarshanā. The prosperity of his father was seen increasing since Trishalā became pregnant. So his parents gave him the name of Vardhaman meaning "increasing". He is popularly known as Mahavir since he showed high degree of valor in every field that he dealt with. He is also known by his family name as Gnataputra.

From his childhood he was found unusually intelligent, fearless, affectionate and compassionate. At school he hardly needed any instructions. Once, when he was playing with his friends, a big snake was noticed. His friends got scared and fled away on seeing the snake but Mahavir was fearless. He caught the snake by the tail and threw it away. Another time some giant like being came to frighten him, but Mahavir faced him effectively with his fists.

At a mature age he got married to a girl named Yashodā and by that wedding they got a daughter named Priyadarshanā. By that time he had observed that worldly happiness and pleasure do not last and are based mostly on the inconvenience, miseries and unhappiness of others. He had therefore planned to renounce (give up) the worldly life in search of true happiness. But he knew that his parents would be very sad for his renouncing. He therefore decided not to renounce during their lifetime. His parents passed away when he was 28. He therefore was ready to renounce, but postponed it for two years more at the request of his brother.

Finally at the age of 30 he renounced the worldly life. For more than 12 years he observed severe austerities, fasting for most of the time, moving from place to place on foot, facing all types of hardships and distress. During that time he was continually meditating in search of liberation from unhappiness. At last he attained it at the age of 42 and became omniscient (one who knows everything). For 30 years thereafter he taught the people about the path of achieving real and lasting happiness. He set up afresh the religious order which is called Tirth and therefore he is known as the 24th Tirthankar of the current time cycle. In his teaching he laid emphasis on non-violence, restraint, equanimity and tolerance for others' views. He left his mortal body at the age of 72. This event is known as Nirvana, which occurred on the last day of our Indian calendar and is celebrated since then as Diwali or Deepawali (festival of lights). The path that he taught has remained live and is known as Jainism.

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LORD MAHĀVIR AND CHANDKAUSHIK

In ancient times there was a monk who used to observe severe austerities with a view to achieving spiritual upliftment. He had however not gained right perception. Consequently he did not pay attention to maintaining equanimity and he used to indulge in defiling instincts. He could not see his own faults and could get mad at the slightest excuse. Once, while he was going for alms a small frog was trampled under his foot. There was a trainee with him. He pointed out that the frog was crushed by the monk and suggested that he should atone for the resultant violence. But the monk did not heed to him. The trainee thought that the monk would atone for that later on. He pointed out the incident in the afternoon, but the monk did not seem to care for that. On the contrary he frowned at the trainee for reminding him of the incident. During evening Pratikraman too the monk did not atone for that violence. The trainee therefore again pointed out that the monk had forgotten to atone for the violence. Thereupon the monk got infuriated and rushed to hit the trainee. As the trainee saw him approaching with the clenched fist, he withdrew from his way. Since it was dark, the monk could not see properly. Rushing in high rage, he happened to hit a pole whereby he was severely hurt in the head and died shortly afterwards.

On account of the austerities not associated with right perception, the monk was born in the lower heaven. From there he was reborn as the son of a hermit belonging to Kaushik family. When his father died, the son became the head of that hermitage which was located not very far from the city of Shwetāmbi. On account of the fiery instinct inherited from his earlier birth, he used to get mad even for trivial matter. He zealously guarded the hermitage from encroachments and did not

allow any one to pluck flowers or fruits. If some kids came to the hermitage, he would run to hit them. Consequently he got known as Chandkaushik. Once while he was out, some youths from Shwetāmbi came there and began to pluck fruits and flowers from the hermitage. As Chandkaushik came back, he could notice the rampaging youths. He rushed to hit them with his newly sharpened hatchet. The youths fled on seeing him, but Chandkaushik ran to pursue them. Being blinded by the rage, he fell in a pit. Thereby the hatchet hit his neck and he died on the spot.

On account of the too much attachment for the hermitage, Chandkaushik was reborn at the same place as a poisonous cobra. It was so poisonous that it could poison any one even by its sight. People could easily make out that the hermit Chandkaushik was reborn as the cobra to guard the hermitage and called him by that very name. Every one was so scared of the cobra that no one dared to come close to the hermitage. In due course the road leading to the hermitage became forlorn.

That was the time when Lord Mahāvīr had renounced the worldly life and was moving about in pursuit of the lasting happiness. During the second year of His renouncement, the Lord happened to pass that side on His way to Shwetāmbi. As it was dangerous to pass by the hermitage on account of the presence of Chandkaushik, the people nearby requested the Lord to go by another route. But He preferred to go on that very path. As He came to the hermitage, He looked around and decided to stand there in meditation. The cobra saw the Lord from a distance. It was amazed that a human being had dared to come over there. It rushed forward casting the poisonous sight towards the Lord. To its utter disappointment, the cobra noticed that the man was still standing erect instead of succumbing to its poisonous glance. Thereupon it came near to bite Him. The cobra bit His foot and immediately withdrew lest its victim may fall upon it. The Lord however still stood unaffected. It was hard for Chandkaushik to believe that any one could stay alive after its venomous bite. But the Lord was standing there, as if nothing had happened.

Enraged by the ineffectiveness of its bite, Chandkaushik bit the Lord's foot again and again. That however did not have any impact. The cobra then stood glancing at the Lord with marvel. Then the Lord uttered with the most compassionate voice, "Chandkaushik, try to understand, consider what you had been and what you are at present. Can you make out where the rage can lead to?" These words had a miraculous effect on Chandkaushik. It started thinking and remembered that he had been a monk observing severe austerities and had been reduced to the present state simply because he could not control his temper. Dwelling deeper over that, Chandkaushik could make out the futility of the earlier austerities and evil consequence of indulging in anger. Observing the equanimity of the Lord, it could make out that no ritual or any other activity can be helpful, unless it is associated by equanimity. Realizing the immense obligation of the Lord for opening its eyes, Chandkaushik fell at His feet and decided to maintain equanimity thenceforth. It could also realize that whatever it had done so far, had turned out to be harmful to itself. So, from that very time it decided to pass the rest of the life in seriously contemplating about its true self.

The Lord stayed there for some time to make sure that Chandkaushik had really turned peaceful. Then, noting that His mission of calming it was over, the Lord proceeded on his way leaving the cobra in meditation. As He safely came out of the woods, the people stood in marvel. They could not make out how He could have remained alive after facing Chandkaushik. They were curious to know what would have happened to the cobra. They guardedly came near the hermitage and found that every thing was peaceful. As they did not encounter Chandkaushik, they became a little bolder and entered the hermitage. Still they did not notice the cobra anywhere. Then all of a sudden, someone noticed from a distance that Chandkaushik was lying peacefully. They thought that it must have been dead. But coming closer, they could see that it was alive and still was not moving. Some one tried to touch it with a stick. But Chandkaushik did not move. They thought that the great ascetic Lord Mahāvīr might have performed some miracle by which the cobra was turned so peaceful.

Now the people had no reason to be scared of Chandkaushik and began to move in the hermitage at will. Many of them were snake worshippers. They held it in reverence and worshipped it. As a mode of worship, some of them even applied ghee(refined butter) and honey on its body. The odor of such materials attracted ants that started biting the cobra for the sake of food. Their bites were very painful but Chandkaushik faced that peacefully and remained unperturbed in such adversities. Observing equanimity till the end, it died peacefully and attained the heavenly life.

(12)

LORD MAHAVIR AND CHANDANBÄLÄ

Chetak, the chief of Vaishali republic was the brother of Trishalä, the mother of Lord Mahavir. Chetak had 7 daughters. Of these, Jyeshtha was married to Nandivardhan, the Lord's brother, Mrugävatī was married to king Shatānik of Kaushāmbi, Dhārini also known as Padmāvati to the king Dadhivahan of Champāpuri. Dadhivahan and Padmāvati were very happy with each other and they had a daughter named Vasumati whom they loved very much. Vasumati was beautiful and obedient. Though she was brought up in royal comfort and luxuries, she was exposed to religious tenets as well.

Once it so happened that king Shatānik invaded Champāpuri. Dadhivahan fought bravely but he was killed in the battle and Champāpuri fell in the hands of Shatānik. Padmāvati did not want to surrender herself. She tried to escape with her young daughter. Unfortunately she fell in the hands of some soldiers of Shatānik. They were attracted by her beauty and wanted to molest her. But Padmāvati committed suicide in order to save herself from sexual assault. Those soldiers were scared by the horrible scene and were afraid that Vasumati too may try to follow her mother. So they treated her well and took her to Kaushāmbi where they intended to make money by selling her.

In Kaushāmbi there was a kind hearted merchant named Dhanāvah who was financially well off. He saw Vasumati in the market and decided to get her because he was childless. He liked the girl and thought that she would be able to help his wife Mūlādevī. So Vasumati went with him. She had to undergo varying phases of life within a short period. From Princess she had become a captive and now a maid servant. She had been raised with some spiritual thinking and therefore accepted all the changes in her life as consequences of her earlier Karma. She had decided not to disclose her original identity and adopted her new role without grumbling. She took all possible care for Dhanāvah who soon developed fatherly affection for her. He used to call her Chandanbälä meaning sandal wood girl, because like sandal wood she scattered fragrance in his life by her sweet, obedient and accommodating nature. For him Chandanbälä was a real daughter.

As Dhanāvah's affection for her grew, his wife Mūlādevī started harboring suspicion about their relations. She was aware that she could not give any child to him. She was now aged and not any way attractive. So she started worrying that her husband may marry Chandanbälä who grew to be a very attractive, lovely young lady. Mūlādevī jealously watched the affectionate behavior of her husband for Chandanbälä. Once it so happened that he had been out for a business trip. When he came back, Chandanbälä as usual, came out to wash his feet with warm water. While she had to bend for this purpose, her hairs, hanging downwards, almost touched the ground. He therefore picked them up and put on her back. Mūlādevī was watching that and she became certain that her husband was in love with the girl and would marry her. She shuddered at the fate that would be in store for her in that case and thought that something had to be done to get rid of the girl.

Shortly after that, Dhanāvah had to go out on a business trip for three days. Mulādevi decided to make use of his absence. She called a barber and a locksmith. Long black hairs of Chandanbālā were the immediate cause of her jealousy. Chandanbālā's head was therefore shaved. Then, she was put into chains and locked in a dark, remote room without any food or water. Mulādevi thought that the girl would die of thirst and hunger. There was a maid servant who was strictly asked not even to go near that room nor to report anything to Dhanāvah.

True to her religious orientation, Chandanbālā did not fight back. She did not blame Mulādevi for what she had done to her. She accepted that situation as the consequence of her earlier Karma. She did not harbor even bad feelings towards Mulādevi because she used to respect her as a mother. She decided to use the period of confinement for fasting and for spiritual meditation and spent most of the time thinking about the nature of soul and reciting Navakarmantra.

On the 4th day, when Dhanāvah returned, he expected Chandanbālā to receive him with warm water as usual for cleaning his feet. As she did not turn up, he thought that she might be sick. He, however, could not see her in the family room or anywhere else in the house. After finishing his bath, as he came to the dining room, food was served to him by his wife. He had to ask 'Where is Chandan?'. Mulādevi replied that he had spoilt her by too much fondling; she always roamed outside while he went out for work and that this time she had gone away, no body knows where, since the day he had been out.

It was hard for Dhanāvah to accept what his wife was stating. He knew Chandan very well. He could hardly eat. Rising from his seat he started looking all around for Chandanbālā who was so dear to him. He went round all the rooms and corners of his house. That solitary remote room however did not even occur to him, because that was treated as condemned and he hardly even went that side. Failing in his search he got too much upset, his heart was crying. He even tried to enquire the maid servant, but she couldn't say anything, because Mulādevi was all the time watching her.

The maid servant respected Dhanāvah; she even had soft corner for Chandanbālā. She could not face the miserable condition of her master. When Mulādevi got out of sight for a moment, she pointed out that remote room to her master. He immediately rushed there and broke open the tottered doors. It was however too dark inside for anything to be visible at first sight. After a while he could faintly see the starved body of Chandanbālā in chains. He could not believe that so tender a girl could have survived for three days without food and water. Luckily for him she was not dead. He picked her up in his arms and brought her to the living room area. To his astonishment he found that all the rooms there were locked.

As Mulādevi saw him rushing to that remote room, she caught fright that what she had done would no longer remain secret. She was sure that her husband would punish her for her wickedness. In order to escape his instant wrath, she hurriedly locked the rooms and sped to her parents' home. Her husband was eager to find some food and drinks for Chandanbālā but he was nonplussed to find every place locked. He lay Chandanbālā on the floor of verandah and looked around if there could be something that she could eat. At last he spotted a pot of black peas soaked in water. There was however no serving bowl. He therefore picked up a winnowing pan. Taking out black peas from water in that pan, he gave them to Chandanbālā and rushed out to call locksmith for breaking her chains.

Chandanbālā took the pan. For a moment she thought about the changes that had come in her life. From being a princess she was reduced to the position of a miserable starved girl who had nothing to eat but the soaked peas and that too in a winnowing pan. She laughed at her fate. Before, however, she put the peas in her mouth, she remembered that she was on fast for three days. 'Would it not be possible for me to offer food to a monk before I terminate my fasts?' she thought.

That time Lord Mahavir was in the renounced state. In his endeavor for seeking truth and ultimate happiness he was continually meditating and observing severe austerities. In that process he went without food for days together. That year he had imposed upon himself apparently improbable stipulations for accepting food. He had vowed that he would accept food only if soaked black peas were offered to him from a winnower by a princess in chains with shaved head, who had fasted for three days and who had tears flowing from her eyes. How all these conditions can be operative in one single case? For months he used to go from place to place and came back without food, because his stipulations could not be fulfilled. But how the fate could allow so great an ascetic to die for want of food? The fate had wrought apparent havoc on Chandanbälä as if to enable her to fulfill the divine mission of terminating six months' fasts of Lord Mahavir!

So the Lord happened to come for alms where Chandanbälä was thinking to offer food to some monk. He saw all his stipulations coming true. Here was a princess in chains with cleaned shaven head, having fasted for three days, offering black peas from winnowing pan. Chandanbälä was happy to see the great ascetic in front of her and cheerfully offered the peas. For Lord this was the right situation for accepting food. But nay, where were tears? He declined the offer and turned back. Chandanbälä felt intensely miserable that the sage did not accept her offer for food. She started crying terribly and tears began to roll down her eyes as she repeatedly entreated the great ascetic to accept her humble offer. The Lord looked back and saw the tears rolling down her cheeks. Now all his hard to believe stipulations were operative and he willingly accepted the food offered by her.

There was a thunderous cheer outside. For months people of Kaushāmbi were watching the great ascetic moving from place to place and going back without food. There were a number of his admirers who were concerned that he accepted food. They used to follow the Lord at some distance since he did not desire any company and wanted to stay alone. All those admirers were filled with joy as he ultimately accepted food from Chandanbälä. They rushed in, showered flowers and perfumes over her and offered good food and fancy clothes. There were some artisans too. They were quick in breaking her chains and there was joy and pleasure everywhere. When Dhanāvah came back, his pleasures knew no bounds as he learnt about the miraculous event. Almost the whole city turned out there. Mulādevi also dared to come back to see the unbelievable occasion. She requested her husband for forgiveness. But he was too mad at her wickedness to forgive. Chandanbälä however entreated him to forgive. She asked him to think that the fate had perhaps prompted Mulādevi to do what she did only to enable her to fulfill the vow of the Lord. He ultimately accepted her request and forgave his wife thus wiping out all ill feelings not befitting that auspicious occasion.

Chandanbälä was now happy in every respect. She had however not forgotten the role, Karmas had played in her life and was eager to eradicate them. Therefore after Lord Mahavir gained omniscience, she renounced the worldly life and became the nun. When the Lord set up the religious order, she became the head of all nuns.

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King Shrenik and Abhaykumar

2500 years back Magadha was a growing kingdom. Kushagrapur in the present state of Bihar was its capital. Sometime before the times of Lord Mahavir, King Prasenjit was ruling over there. He was a devotee of Lord Parshwanath's order. He had many sons. He wanted to know which

one of them was most suitable to be the heir to his kingdom. For this purpose he administered some tests. Once he invited all of them for a dinner. As they started eating, the king released royal hounds at them. All of them except prince Shrenik took to heels. Staying unscarred, Shrenik picked up the food from the plates left by his brothers and started giving that food to the hounds. That way he could keep the hounds at arm's length, while he ate his food. The king was pleased with his dexterity. He however felt that if he showed his favor for Shrenik, other princes would be jealous. He therefore outwardly remarked that it was not befitting a prince to eat by the side of the dogs.

On another occasion, the king presented to his sons sealed baskets of sweets and earthen pots of water and asked them to eat and drink without opening the baskets or pots. All others were non-plussed by these instructions and left without eating. Shrenik, however, broke the sweets into small pieces by knocking the baskets and started eating as the particles came out of the joints of the baskets. He also noticed that the water pots were new and water was oozing out of the pores. He therefore put a silver bowl below a pot. By the time, he finished eating, enough water had accumulated in the bowl out of the pores. He therefore used it for his purpose. The king was watching all this. He was pleased with the intellect and smartness of Shrenik. Once again however, he outwardly criticized Shrenik for eating particles of sweets like a beggar.

In Kushagrapur fire used to break out frequently. In order to prevent the reoccurrence of such incidents, the king proclaimed that if fire breaks out anywhere henceforth, the owner of the house would be held responsible for the negligence and would be turned out of the city. Once it so happened that a wild fire broke out in king's palace on account of the negligence of some cook. The king announced that the princes could take out anything that they liked from the palace and they would be allowed to keep the same. Other princes took out jewelry and other valuables, while Shrenik picked up only the royal bugle. When he was asked to explain his choice, he said that he selected the bugle, because it was the symbol of royal victory and proclamations from the bugle are binding to every one. The king was again pleased with his selection and decided that Shrenik would be his heir to the throne. In order to save him from the envy of his brothers, he however did not announce his decision.

True to his proclamation, the king decided to leave the city, because he was supposed to be responsible for the fire in his palace. He then set up his camp a couple of miles away. People concerned with administration had to go there. Later on, other people too started settling in that place. It came to be known as Rājgruhi because of the king's residence there. Gradually that place grew to be the capital city of Magadha. It turned out to be one of the most well known and thriving cities of that age. As the princes grew up, the king sent them away as governors in different parts of his kingdom. Since he wanted to groom Shrenik as his successor, he did not allot any governorship to him and intentionally asked him to stay in Rājgruhi. Shrenik however could not make out his father's design. He felt insulted and thought that he was out of favor with the king. Getting frustrated, one day he left Rājgruhi without informing any one about his departure.

He proceeded eastward and after travelling for a few days he reached the city of Benātat in Bengal. There was a trader named Bhadra whose business had for some time been shrinking without any conceivable reason. Shrenik came to his business place and sat for a while for taking rest. It was a day of some festival. Almost every one was out for shopping. Many of them flocked to Bhadra's store. Rush was so great that it was almost impossible for him to cope with the unimaginably good demand. Shrenik thereupon volunteered to help him. On account of the smartness of Shrenik in doing the job, Bhadra could do a lot of business that day. By the time he got ready for the lunch, he was done with most of the customers. He was overjoyed with the business that he could make. It was far beyond his expectation. He realized that he could not have made that much business, but for the help rendered by that unknown youth. He was highly appreciative of Shrenik and thought that the briskness of his business that day could be due to

the presence of that auspicious young man. He therefore decided to invite Shrenik to come to his home for lunch.

Shrenik was hungry. He therefore gladly accepted the invitation. At lunch, Bhadra, who was much impressed by the personality of Shrenik, enquired about his name and whereabouts. Shrenik did not want to declare that he was the son of king of Magadha. He therefore politely declined to disclose his identity; but he did indicate that he was looking for some responsible work. Bhadra was very pleased with Shrenik's politeness and good manners. He had no sons and he was getting old. As such, he was badly in need of a smart and reliable person to help him in his business. In Shrenik, he saw his hope for reviving his business and reputation. He therefore invited him to join his business and to stay with him. Shrenik accepted his offer and undertook the task of expanding the business. He had a special knack to please the customers. Very soon he took over all the aspects of business. After his taking over, the business grew by leaps and bounds and in no time Bhadra became a well known entity of Benätat.

Bhadra had only a daughter whose name was Nandä. She was very beautiful and graceful. She was impressed with Shrenik from the day she saw him. In due course she developed love for him. Bhadra too was anxiously looking for a match for her. He was very happy with Shrenik whose qualities, personality and good manners left no doubt in his mind that the young man must have been from a very noble family. He therefore considered Shrenik to be a suitable match for his beloved daughter. He consulted his wife who had also formed the same opinion for Shrenik. When Nandä therefore expressed her love for Shrenik, her parents were more than willing to satisfy her desire. When the offer of marriage was put before Shrenik, he said that they knew nothing about himself and asked how advisable would it be to give their only daughter to a stranger? Bhadra replied that his high qualities and good manners had convinced him that Shrenik must have been from a very noble family. He had therefore no hesitation in offering his daughter to him. Shrenik too was enamoured of Nandä's beauty and grace. As a result of Bhadra's persuasion, he therefore agreed to accept the offer. Shortly afterwards, Shrenik and Nandä got married with fanfare befitting the status of a wealthy businessman.

After a while Nandä got pregnant. During that time it so happened that the king Prasenjit got very ill and did not expect to survive. He sent his messengers all around to find Shrenik. One of them came to Benätat and found out Shrenik. The messenger informed him about the precarious condition of his father and said that the king was on the death bed and was anxiously waiting for his return to Räjgruhi. Shrenik had to face a dilemma. On one side his father was on the death bed and on the other side his beloved wife was pregnant. Shrenik ultimately decided that he should at least see his father before he died. He did not know at that time that his father had selected him to be the heir to his kingdom. He therefore told his in-laws that his father being on the death bed, he had to go urgently. To Nandä he gave a coded identity which stated that he was the herdsman of Räjgruhi. Then he left along with the messenger. As he reached Räjgruhi, he was given a warm welcome that he had never anticipated. Soon after that he was crowned and was proclaimed the king of Magadha. In history he is known as King Bimbisar. Prasenjit died shortly after the coronation leaving the entire burden of the kingdom on the new king. Shrenik remained so preoccupied in his new assignment that he almost forgot all about Nandä.

While she was pregnant, Nandä got an irresistible urge to ride an elephant and to extend safety and security for every being. Thereupon her father arranged for a procession wherein Nandä rode an elephant and gave generous donations to all the people who were in need. In due course she gave birth to a very handsome, bright son. True to her urge during pregnancy he was named Abhaya, meaning bestower of safety and security. From the childhood the boy showed signs of exceptional ability and intelligence. At the age of 8 he could master all the arts. At school there was no match for him. He could beat even grown up men in intelligence. Once while he was playing with his friends, some boy, who was jealous of his brightness, picked up quarrel with him and called him fatherless. Abhaya was annoyed to hear it. Coming home he asked his mother about his father. Nandä was hesitating to tell him about his father who had forsaken her so long

and whose identity was not even known to her. In desperation, she showed to him the token that Shrenik had left with her. Abhaya looked at it and immediately made out that his father was the king of Rājgruhi. He joyfully broke the news to his mother and grand parents..

That time, Abhaya was still a young boy. He however decided to lead his mother to Rājgruhi. While reaching the outskirts of the city, he asked his mother to take rest in a garden till he could arrange for a fitting reception for her. That time Shrenik was looking for a capable man to be his prime minister. He deliberately threw his ring in a dry well and announced that whoever could get the ring without getting into the well, would be appointed as his prime minister. Many people had gathered near the well, but no one could think of any trick to get the ring while standing on the platform of the well. While Abhaya was passing by, he enquired about the reason for their flocking together. When he knew about the king's announcement, he said that he could get the ring on king's terms, if he could be provided with what he needed for the purpose. King was amused when he was informed that a young boy had come forward to undertake the job. Still he agreed to let him try and instructed his men to provide whatever the boy needed. Thereupon Abhaya called for fresh cowdung and threw it at the ring. Then he dropped a bundle of burning grass over the dung so as to turn it into hard dry cake in which the ring had tightly set in. He then arranged for diverting a water canal to the well. As the well got full of water, the dungcake with the ring came floating on the surface of water. Abhaya picked it up and got the ring out of the cake.

The king was too pleased when he heard that the young boy from some unknown place had fulfilled his terms. He wanted to see him. As Abhaya was brought in his presence, the king spontaneously felt as if a current of affection was flowing from his heart. He joyfully embraced the boy and asked his name and place of his residence. Abhaya gave his name and said that he was coming from Benātat. Shrenik immediately remembered Nandā and asked Abhaya whether he knew the businessman Bhadra and his daughter Nandā. Abhaya replied that he was the grandson of Bhadra. As Shrenik learnt that Abhaya was his own son, his joy knew no bounds. He warmly embraced him once again and enquired about his mother. Shrenik was overjoyed to learn that his wife whom he had forsaken so long, was waiting just a little away. He arranged for her a reception befitting the queen and mother of the would be prime minister. Thus there was happy reunion of the parents. Abhaykumar, as he came to be known thereafter, was then duly proclaimed as the prime minister of Magadha.

Abhaykumar served in that capacity very long. His intelligence knew no bounds. Number of administrative and political problems arose during the realm of Shrenik. Abhaykumar solved all of them to the entire satisfaction of every one concerned. Even to day, the Jain traders write in their books that they may be endowed with the intelligence of Abhaykumar. Lot of stories are associated with his name.

(14)

Abhaykumar And Ārdrakumar

Away from the Indian main land there was an island. Its king Ardrak was a friend of Shrenik, the king of Magadha. Ardrak had a son named Ārdrakumar who was brave, youthful, handsome and well behaved. Once Shrenik sent an emissary to his friend Ardrak with valuable gifts. His prince Ārdrakumar had never seen anything from India. He was impressed by the various types of the gifts and was curious to learn about India. He asked Shrenik's emissary whether his king had any son with whom he could cultivate friendship. The emissary told him about Abhaykumar who was the eldest and most intelligent son of Shrenik and was also his prime minister. Ārdrakumar was interested to establish friendship with Abhaykumar. He therefore sent to him highly valuable pearls as token of his friendship.

Abhaykumar very much appreciated that gesture. He was aware that the people of that island knew nothing about the true religion. 'Attracting him to religion could therefore be the greatest gift for Ārdrakumar' he thought. With that view in mind, Abhaykumar sent to him a very impressive idol of Ādināth. Ārdrakumar had never seen such an idol. For him it was simply a statue. He however faintly felt that he had somewhere seen such shape. As he tried to think over it again and again, he got a spark of his earlier life. He remembered that he was an ordinary man of Vasantpur in Magadha and had a wife named Bandhumati. Both of them developed detachment on hearing the sermon of an Acharya named Susthitji and had renounced. Once as they were camping in the same town, he happened to see her and had got an urge to make love with her. Bandhumati of course did not comply. It was therefore merely a mental lapse on his part. Still as a consequence thereof he had been born in that solitary island, where true religion had been unknown.

Ārdrakumar now started devoutly worshipping the idol in secrecy. He felt very grateful to Abhaykumar for the gift of the idol and was craving to see him. His father however would not allow him to go abroad. In order to prevent him from undertaking any adventure, the king instructed a band of selected chiefs to keep close watch over him. Ārdrakumar therefore created confidence among them by his reliable behavior which caused them to relax their alertness. Meanwhile, he made secret arrangements for a ship and making sure that no one was watching him, one day he sailed to India.

Ārdrakumar was keen to undo his lapse of the earlier life. Therefore despite the foreboding indications, he renounced as soon as he arrived in India and started moving as a possessionless monk. Once he came to Vasantpur which was his dwelling place in the earlier life. He thought to meditate there in a temple. Now Bandhumati was reborn there as daughter of a wealthy trader and was named Shrimati. While Ārdrakumar was meditating in standing posture, she came there to play along with her girl friends. As a part of the game, each girl had to select one of the poles as symbol of husband. When Shrimati's turn came, she somehow caught the feet of Ārdrakumar and stated that he was her husband. Ārdrakumar was taken aback by this incident. As he did not want to get any way involved, he left the place as soon as the girls went home.

As Shrimati attained marriageable age, her father started looking for a suitable match for her. She had however not forgotten her play and wanted to marry that monk. Her father did not want to displease her, but he could not make out how it would be possible to locate and recognize the monk whom she had seen only for a moment. She however told her father that while holding the feet of the monk, she had noticed an indelible mark there and could therefore easily recognize him, if he came around. Thereupon her father arranged for her to give alms to every monk that passed that side. That arrangement continued for a long time. Shrimati however did not lose patience. Eventually Ārdrakumar happened to come there once again. As he came for alms, Shrimati immediately recognized him by that mark and held his feet. She said that she had selected him as her husband and had been waiting for him all that time; she could no longer live without him and would court death, if he tried to leave again. It was hard for Ārdrakumar to resist her love. He realized that his renouncement was untimely and it was destined for him to lead worldly life for some time. He also recalled that all the indications at the time of his renunciation were unpropitious. He therefore decided to accept Shrimati as his wife.

After spending a few years in mutual adoration and attraction, the couple got a son. When he was still a boy, Ārdrakumar thought once again to renounce. He asked his wife to let him go on his mission, since she could happily lead her life in bringing up the son. Shrimati did not like the idea of his leaving, but she had no ground to refuse. She sat at her spinning wheel with tears rolling over her cheeks. As the boy enquired about the cause, she said that his father was to leave and they would thenceforth be required to lead the lonely life. Innocent as he was, the boy said that he would bind his father so that he could not go. So saying he wound the spun yarn round his father's feet. Ārdrakumar was so overwhelmed with the innocent love of the boy that he decided to stay for as many years as the rounds of thread on his feet. When he counted them, there were

12 rounds. He therefore stayed with the family for 12 years more. Shrimati thereafter gracefully permitted him to renounce.

Ādrakumar who was now known as Ardrak Muni was very keen to be the pupil of Lord Mahavir who was that time camping at Rājgruhi. He was also eager to see his benefactor Abhaykumar. He therefore proceeded towards Rājgruhi. On the way he came across the men who were entrusted by his father to keep watch over him. They could not face his father because of their failure to keep proper watch. They had therefore followed him to India and were looking for him. As it was not possible for them to go back to their country, they were passing their time aimlessly and were surviving on burglary. Ardrak Muni had deep compassion for their fate and advised them to lead renounced life like himself. All of them considered him as their master and were willing to follow him; so the Muni accepted them as his pupils and went ahead along with them.

Later on, they passed by a hermitage where the Muni saw meat being sun-dried. On enquiring he learnt that its inmates had funny notions about nonviolence. They thought that they should subsist on meat of elephant, because by killing only one animal they could get enough food for all of them to survive for many days. The hermitage was therefore known as elephantine hermitage. One elephant was tied in its compound for being slaughtered. As Ardrak Muni realized the fate of the elephant, he got overcome with compassion for the animal. That induced the elephant to pay its homage to the Muni. It got untied and ran towards the Muni. All the people got scared and tried to hide in safe place to protect themselves from the wrath of the animal, but Muni stood there unscared. As the elephant was rushing straight towards him, the people thought that Muni would get killed. The elephant however calmly approached the Muni and gently stroked his feet with its trunk. Muni blessed it kind heartedly. Then feeling free and gratified, the elephant went away towards forest.

The hermits got very enraged at the Muni who had apparantly caused them the loss of food. The Muni explained to them that they had misunderstood the concept of religion. There is no nonviolence without compassion. In fact, they are two sides of the same coin. Distinction should therefore be made between gross violence and subtle violence. There is too much gross violence in killing an animal with highly sensitive nervous system. Animal life has far greater sensitivity than plant life. Observation of absolute nonviolence is not possible, as long as a person breathes. Therefore nonviolence, for practical purposes, should be taken as total avoidance of all gross violence and resorting to minimum possible subtle violence that may be necessitated for survival. Killing an elephant amounts to very gross violence that cannot be justified. The hermits realized the truth of his teaching and repented for the violence that they had indulged in. Since they were receptive, Muni explained to them the true religion in detail. In the end, they decided to be his followers. Muni however advised them to go to Lord Mahavir for becoming His pupils.

At last Ardrak Muni arrived in Rājgruhi. He first went to Lord's assmbly for most humbly offering obeisance to Him. Then he saw Abhaykumar and showed his utmost gratitude for drawing his attention towards true religion by sending the idol of Lord Ādināth. Abhaykumar humbly stated that the Muni was destined to be enlightened and he was simply instrumental in bringing it about. He showed his deep reverence for the Muni and paid homage to him. King Shrenik also came to the Muni and praised him for the miracles that he had performed with the elephant and the hermits. Then Muni stayed with Lord Mahavir as His pupil. For the rest of his life he scrupulously observed all the restraints of a monk and in the end attained salvation.

King Chandapradhyot of Malwa was one of the most powerful rulers during the times of Lord Mahavir. His queen Shivādevi was the elder sister of Chellanā, the most beloved queen of Shrenik, the king of Magadha. Being highly ambitious, once Pradyot invaded Magadha. As he was proceeding towards Rājgruhi with his large army, Shrenik could not make out how to effectively counter him. His son and the prime minister Abhaykumar however told the king not to worry, because he had his own plan to handle the situation. Abhaykumar arranged for burying valuable treasures on the southern outskirts of Rājgruhi, where the invading army was expected to camp. On reaching Rājgruhi, Pradyot camped on that site and sent a message to Shrenik to surrender. Abhaykumar, on the other end, sent an apparently secret message to Pradyot stating that his father had effectively bribed Pradyot's generals, who would not seriously fight against Magadha's army and Pradyot was therefore running a grave risk. The message contended that Pradyot being the husband of the beloved aunt Shivādevi whom Abhaykumar revered, he was concerned about the well being of Pradyot and therefore he had sent the secret message. The message added that if Pradyot had any doubt about the message, he could inspect under the ground where his generals were camping and he would notice there the treasures received by them from Shrenik. When Pradyot did accordingly, he came across the treasures that Abhaykumar had buried there earlier. Pradyot was therefore convinced about the truth of the secret message. He got scared and hurriedly withdrew from Rājgruhi.

On reaching his capital Ujjayini (Ujjain), he called for the explanation of the generals. They solemnly affirmed that they were loyal to him and Abhaykumar had effectively tricked him to withdraw. Pradyot also could see the game of Abhaykumar and decided to get hold of him anyhow. He made an offer of a fancy prize for any one who could bring Abhaykumar to Ujjayini. One city dancer accepted the bid. She arranged for acquiring enough knowledge of Jain rituals and formalities. Then along with two young girls she went to Rājgruhi in the guise of pilgrims. They started going to the temple where Abhaykumar used to go for worship.

Once Abhaykumar saw them praying very devotedly. He was much impressed by their devotion. At the end of the prayer, he inquired about their names, place of residence, etc. She replied that she was the widow of a wealthy man of Ujjayini and the two girls were her daughters in law who had also been unfortunately widowed. The girls wanted to renounce but she had persuaded them to undertake pilgrimage of important places of worship prior to renouncing. Abhaykumar felt very compassionate that misfortune had befallen on that deeply religious family. He invited them to his place for lunch. The woman contended that they had been on fast that day. Abhaykumar therefore invited them to come to his place the next morning for termination of the fast. Like a deeply religious lady, she replied, 'Who knows what is going to happen the next moment? It is therefore preposterous to make any plan beforehand.' Abhaykumar was too much impressed by her deep religious thinking and sent the invitation the next morning. After termination of the so called fast, he requested them to stay in Rājgruhi for a few days so that he could get the benefit of serving them. The woman agreed to do so after showing some hesitation.

Once the woman invited Abhaykumar to her place for dinner. That time she gave him drinks mixed with Chandrahas wine that brings forth drowsiness. He thus fell in deep slumber. She had made elaborate plans for such event. He was accordingly smuggled out of Rājgruhi during the sleep and was then carried to Ujjayini under escort. She then presented him to Pradyot who put him into captivity in his palace.

Of all his belongings, Pradyot valued queen Shivādevi, messenger Lohjangh, royal elephant Analgiri and chariot Agnibhiru as the most precious ones. At that time, Bhrugukutch (Bharuch in Gujarat) was the most important port on the western coast and was under control of Malwa. Lohjangh being a fast rider, he could travel from Ujjayini to Bhrugukutch within a day. He had to bring frequent messages from Ujjayini. The implications of the messages being adverse to the local people, they detested him. In order to get rid of him, once while he was returning, they placed poisoned sweets in his travel kit. Lohjangh somehow avoided food on his way and reaching Ujjayini he presented the sweets to the king. Before any of them could eat the sweets,

Abhaykumar, who was there in captivity, got forewarned of the poison from the odor of the sweets. He therefore warned them not to eat the poisonous sweets. Pradyot was pleased with him for saving the life and offered him to ask for any boon except release from the captivity. Abhaykumar requested that he may be allowed to ask for it at any time that he may select later on. His request was granted.

Pradyot had a beautiful daughter named Vasavadatta. She had been adept in all the arts except music. He was very keen to get a capable music teacher for her. Udayan, the young king of Kaushambi, who also happened to be her maternal cousin, was known as expert musician. He could even lure elephants by his music. Under advice of his ministers, Pradyot arranged for preparing a big fake elephant that exactly looked like a real one. There were mechanical devices within its body that could be operated for causing different types of movements like a real elephant. It was let loose in the forest near Kaushambi with armed operators within. As Udayan's guards saw the elephant, they informed him about it. Udayan came there and started playing music. People within the elephant managed to show that the elephant was charmed with the music. Simultaneously however they contrived it to make movements away from Kaushambi.. Udayan followed and got separated from his followers. After a while he could notice that the elephant was under full impact of his music, He therefore jumped over it. Operators from within soon came out, put him in bondage and hurriedly carried him to Ujjayini.

Pradyot did not want his daughter to see Udayan who was a very handsome and attractive youth. He therefore told Vasavadatta that he had found an expert music teacher who unfortunately happened to be leucodermic. He therefore advised her to learn music from him sitting behind a curtain. To Udayan he said that his daughter wanted to learn music, but being one eyed, she felt very shy. If he taught her staying behind a curtain, she could learn at ease. If Udayan agreed, Pradyot would spare his life and make his stay comfortable in Ujjayini. Udayan had no alternative at that time. He therefore agreed and started teaching Vasavadatta. She was found very smart in picking up and her voice was very sweet. He therefore pitied that so smart and sweet girl had only one eye. Vāsavadattā too was enamoured of his voice and cursed the nature for making him leucodermic. Once while she was thinking of him, she got inattentive to the lesson. Thereupon Udayan got wild and reproached her calling her one eyed. Vasavadatta was exasperated to hear that. She however guessed that her father might have deliberately lied to him about her. She also thought that her teacher being leucodermic could be a lie too. She therefore raised the curtain and saw that he was so handsome and strong. She got attracted to him. Udayan too was enamoured to see her beauty. Both of them fell in love and started meeting privately with the aid of a helpful maid of Vasavadatta.

Once the royal elephant Analgiri got out of control and started destroying every thing he came across. His keepers failed to bring him back to control. Pradyot was perplexed and sought advice of Abhaykumar who suggested that Udayan could control the elephant by his music. As Vasavadatta came to know about it, she urged Udayan to pick the opportunity to please her father. So Udayan brought Analgiri under control by his music. Pradyot was pleased with the performance of Udayan and started giving more latitude to him. He also got pleased with Abhaykumar for his right advice and again offered him to ask for any boon excepting the release from captivity. Like the previous one, Abhaykumar once again requested Pradyot to keep his promise in reserve. That way there were two other occasions when Pradyot promised him the boons. Then Abhaykumar asked for the following four boons: 1) The king and queen Shivādevi may sit over the elephant Analgiri along with Abhaykumar; 2) Lohjāngh would ride the elephant; 3) Chariot Agnibhiru be set on fire and 4) The elephant may enter that fire with the four of them over it. As it was not possible for Pradyot to comply with the demands, he set Abhaykumar free. While going back to Rājgruhi, Abhaykumar stated that he was brought into captivity, because the city dancer deceived him in the name of the religion; but he warned that he would take Pradyot in captivity in broad day light.

Once in the season of spring, Pradyot planned a grand festival in his favorite garden. There he invited musicians and also asked Vasavadatta and Udayan to participate. For Udayan that was an opportunity to escape. He asked Vasavadatta to get ready for that. She arranged for the speediest female elephant for the purpose. Udayan managed to tie to the elephant four pots of her urine. Then they rode over her and quickly marched towards Kaushambi. As Pradyot learnt about the escape, he sent his men on Analgiri to pursue Udayan. After 100 miles Analgiri got close to the escapees, so Udayan released one pot of urine and rode ahead while Analgiri stopped for the odor of the urine. That way Udayan released one pot every time Analgiri got close. So Analgiri could not reach them before they safely entered the border of Kaushambi. The pursuers had therefore to go back because the army of Kaushambi was ready to give them a fight. Pradyot got furious and started preparations for invading Kaushambi. His advisers however pacified him stating that any way he had to find a suitable match for Vasavadatta and there was hardly any one better than Udayan; he should therefore bless him as son in law. Pradyot saw the wisdom of the advice. He therefore accepted the fait accompli and sent jewelry and other valuables as gifts to the son in law.

Meanwhile Abhaykumar had not forgotten the challenge that he had given to Pradyot. He had located a man who closely resembled Pradyot. Then along with that man and two beautiful city girls, he came to Ujjayini in the guise of a trader. He rented a house on the main road and started carrying his man tied in a rope to the far off place of a physician, while the man kept shouting that he was Pradyot, the king of Malwa and that he was being abducted. To the people who inquired, Abhaykumar used to explain that the man was his brother, who out of insanity, thought that he was the King of Malwa. As that became a scene of daily occurrence, people got accustomed to it and stopped making any inquiry.

Meanwhile those two city girls were flirting and casting their charm around. Once Pradyot happened to see them. He was attracted by their beauty and sent his maid servant for inviting them to the palace. The girls however spurned the offer. Pradyot then sent an expert maid together with valuable gifts to persuade them. Then the girls took her in a corner and said with apparent secrecy that they were attracted by the king, but they were with their brother who was very strict and were therefore unable to oblige the king. They however pretended to confide that their brother was to go to other place on the 7th day. If the king could therefore secretly come to the place on that day, they would be happy to serve the king.

Pradyot was pleased to get the message. On the 7th day he secretly went to the place without any fanfare. As he entered, the girls invited him to the bedroom. Abhaykumar was waiting there. With the help of his man he tied Pradyot tight with a rope. At the regular time, he brought him out in bondage apparently for taking to the physician. Pradyot was shouting loudly that he was the king and this man was abducting him. All the people around were however accustomed to witness that scene. No one therefore came to his rescue and Abhaykumar carried him to Rājgruhi with the help of prearranged convoys. There he was presented to Shrenik who got ready to sever his head. Abhaykumar however pointed out that, as king of Malwa, the body of the captive was inviolable. He was brought to Rājgruhi simply for teaching him the lesson that anything can be done by intelligence. The performance being over, Magadha should better offer to him its friendship. Shrenik accepted the advice, released Pradyot from captivity and offered to him valuable gifts in token of friendship of Magadha.

In times of Lord Mahavir, Pratishthāpur was a city on sea coast. There lived a trader named Dhanasar. By his wife Shilavati he had 4 sons named Dhanadatta, Dhanadev, Dhanachand and Dhanyakumar. The first three were selfish and unintelligent, while Dhanyakumar who was fondly called Dhannā was smart, bright, intelligent and attractive. Dhanasar loved him very much. The other three were therefore feeling jealous of the younger brother. Dhannā was lucky too; whatever venture he undertook, turned out to be successful. Once a ship came to Pratishthāpur with lot of merchandise. The owner was in urgent need of selling the merchandise. He therefore sent a message to his regular customer. As it was however the time of that customer's lunch and afternoon nap, he deferred it for the next day to go to the port. Dhannā happened to go to the port and saw that the merchandise was available at low price. He therefore instantly contracted to buy it. When the regular trader went to the ship the next day, he was disappointed to learn that the merchandise was already sold. He needed it any way. He had therefore to buy the same from Dhannā who could make fancy profit from the transaction. Dhannā bought valuable jewelry from that profit and presented the same to his sisters in law, who were very much pleased with the young brother in law.

On another occasion Dhannā saw shining sand outside some premises. He could make out that it was Tejanturi and was very valuable for certain purposes. The original trader who had bought it, had died and his sons were not aware of the use of sand. They had therefore dumped it outside. Dhannā asked them whether they would like to sell it. They replied that it was of no use to them and he was at liberty to pick it up. Dhannā did accordingly and stored it in the warehouse. His brothers considered this act of Dhannā as foolish and were repeatedly telling Dhanasar to throw it away. Once however a trader came to Pratishthāpur in search of Tejanturi. As he could not find it anywhere, he requested the king to help him in getting it. Dhannā was a friend of the prince. When Dhannā heard from him that some trader was looking for Tejanturi, he offered to supply it. The trader willingly paid fancy price for the sand and Dhannā became a wealthy man of the place. He again bought fancy gifts for every one in the family. His father was so pleased and very much appreciated the insight of Dhannā. But that made his brothers all the more jealous.

Getting sick of his brothers' jealousy, Dhannā once decided to migrate to some other place to try his luck. He therefore left the place leaving everything for his brothers. He travelled on and on and reached Ujjayini which was being ruled by Chandapradhyot. By his intelligence and good luck he got lot of money and soon became the right hand man of the king. Meanwhile his brothers had lost everything that he had left. His parents therefore came to Ujjayini in search of work along with the three sons and their wives. Dhannā invited all of them to stay with him. His brothers however could not appreciate his magnanimity and again started envying him. In disgust, Dhannā once again left everything to them and proceeded towards Rājgruhi. On the way while he was meditating on the bank of a river, he gained Chintamani Ratna, which is a jewel that fulfills all desires. Equipped with that he came to Rājgruhi.

When Dhannā reached Rājgruhi, he felt very tired. He therefore decided to take rest on the outskirts of the city in a park. It was owned by Kusumpal but was deserted, because all its trees and plants had gone dry. 'How nice this park would have been, if it was green?' Dhannā thought and by virtue of his Chintamani jewel the entire plant life got revived. People passing by were surprised to see the park green. Kusumpal also came there and noticed that the miracle had happened on account of Dhannā's presence. He was pleased with that lucky young man. He had only one daughter named Kusum. He thought that Dhannā could be appropriate match for her. He therefore took Dhannā to his place and got him married to his daughter.

Shrenik, the king of Rājgruhi, had an elephant named Sechanak. It was known all over the country for its boldness and extraordinary performance. Shrenik was very fond of it. Once that elephant went mad. Its keepers were unable to bring it back to control. Abhayakumar was in captivity of Chandapradhyot during that time. The King therefore felt very much helpless. As Dhannā learnt about the problem, he volunteered and brought the elephant in control with the help of his Chintamani jewel. The king was very pleased with him. He was in need of a capable

advisor in place of Abhayakumar. He saw Dhannā as the right man for the purpose. He therefore appointed Dhannā as his advisor. He also gave him his daughter Shobha in marriage. That time, polygamy was the accepted way of life.

In Rājgruhi there was a wealthy man named GoBhadra. By his wife Bhadrā he had a son named ShāliBhadra and a daughter named SuBhadra. Attracted by his status and wealth, 32 people had given their daughters in marriage to ShāliBhadra who was leading the most luxurious life along with them. Meanwhile, GoBhadra was conducting his lucrative money lending business and Bhadrā was efficiently managing the family affairs. Once a rogue planned to gain money by playing a trick. He had only one eye. He complained that he had mortgaged the other eye to GoBhadra and now wanted it back. The king was exasperated to hear such bogus claim but the rogue produced his accomplices as witnesses to the mortgage. The king therefore entrusted that knotty problem to his new advisor. Dhannā called that rogue and said that GoBhadra had many eyes mortgaged to him. It was therefore hard to identify the complainant's eye. Dhannā therefore asked him to give his other eye so as to properly identify his mortgaged eye. The rogue had to withdraw his complaint and bore appropriate sentence for the fraud. GoBhadra got sick of the worldly life by this incident. He however wanted to get his daughter married before leaving the worldly life. He was very pleased with Dhannā for the way he had solved the problem. GoBhadra therefore gave SuBhadra in marriage to Dhannā and became a monk leaving a vast fortune for his son ShāliBhadra.

Dhannā's brothers again lost everything that Dhannā had left in Ujjayini. His parents therefore came to Rājgruhi along with the sons and their wives. Dhannā once again welcomed them to stay with him. The brothers however could not bear the high status and prosperity of Dhannā and started creating problems. Their wives advised them to live happily and peacefully with Dhannā, but they were picking up quarrels every now and then. In disgust, Dhannā left Rājgruhi with the permission of the king and went to Kaushambi. There too, Dhannā could soon please the king and became his favorite. During that trip he happened to marry three more girls and then came back to Rājgruhi.

Meanwhile GoBhadra had died as monk and was reborn in heaven. On account of his attachment for ShāliBhadra, he used to supply all his needs, heavenly jewelry, divine apparel etc. Bhadrā was taking every care to see that the luxuriously happy life of ShāliBhadra does not get any way affected. Most of the time ShāliBhadra used to stay along with his wives in palatial building where all his needs were taken care of by his mother.

Once some traders from Nepal came to Rājgruhi to sell diamond studded Shawls. They went to the king's palace, but Shrenik declined to buy any because they were too costly. They couldn't get any other buyer as well. In despair, they happened to pass by ShāliBhadra's place talking about their failure in selling the Shawls. Bhadrā heard it and called them inside. She offered to buy 32 Shawls for her daughters in law. They however had only 16 Shawls. Bhadrā bought all of them at the demanded price. She cut them into halves and gave one piece to each of her daughters in law. It was laid down by her that they would use anything for only one day and the next day even the most costly materials were to be discarded.

When queen Chellana heard about the Nepali Shawls, she asked king Shrenik to buy at least one for her. Shrenik accordingly called back those traders who told him that all their Shawls were sold to Bhadrā. Shrenik therefore sent a messenger to Bhadrā with a request to spare one Shawl for his queen. The messenger came back with the reply that they were halved and every half of the Shawls was in use by her daughters in law. The next day all the pieces of Shawls were discarded and picked up by the servants. One of them used to work for Chellana too. She went to the palace for work with a stitched Shawl on her shoulder. Chellana could not believe her eyes when she saw that the Shawl which the King could not buy, was adorning the maid servant. When she enquired, she came to know of all the details of Bhadrā's household. She told it to the king who was surprised by the affluence of ShāliBhadra. He was inquisitive to see him and invited him to

the court. Bhadrā however sent the reply that her son never got down from the upper floor of her palace and in turn invited the King to her place.

Shrenik accepted her invitation. As he came, she took him to the fifth floor, from where she called ShāliBhadrā to come down from the seventh floor to see the king. ShāliBhadrā had never heard anything about king. He thought that king was some thing that his mother wanted to buy. He therefore replied that she could decide about the king herself. Then Bhadrā went up and explained that king was the lord of the Magadha and was accordingly his lord too. ShāliBhadrā therefore came down and paid his respect respect to the king as advised by his mother.

He had always thought that he was the lord of everything that concerned him. The idea of having a lord over him therefore hurt him. Once along with a friend, he happened to go to Acharya Dharmaghosh. After listening his sermon, ShāliBhadrā asked the Acharya how he could gain a status where he would not have any overlord. Acharya replied that as long as he desired something, he had to depend upon others and dependency creates overlordship. The only way to become really independent was to give up everything and to lead renounced life like his father. ShāliBhadrā therefore got inclined to renounce but his mother told him that renunciation meant leading a very tough life. As he was brought up in heavenly luxury, it would be very hard for him to give up everything all of a sudden. It would be better for him to give up his attachment for everything one by one. ShāliBhadrā had maximum attachment for his wives. He therefore decided to leave them one after another and planned to renounce on the 33rd day.

The news of his intention soon reached his sister SuBhadrā. Her husband Dhannā once saw tears in her eyes. When asked about the cause of her grief, she told him about the intention of ShāliBhadrā to renounce. Dhannā told her that if her brother was really serious about renouncing, he should better leave all of them immediately. SuBhadrā was unable to say anything, but another wife replied that it was easy to say so and asked whether he could leave even one of his six wives. Dhannā had already developed a high sense of detachment and was really thinking to renounce. He saw this opportunity. He instantly decided to leave all of them. Then approaching ShāliBhadrā he asked the latter to join him in renouncement. ShāliBhadrā was very much encouraged by what Dhannā had done. He also left everything and went to Lord Mahavir along with Dhannā. They adopted monkhood and left Rajagrihi along with the Lord.

Both of them very soon got well versed in all the Agamas (Scriptures). They were keen to follow the path of salvation and were observing severe austerities. Once they came back to Rājgruhi along with the Lord. They were due for the termination of one month's fast. They therefore went to Bhadrā's place for alms. When the monks came to her house, Bhadrā was getting ready to go to the camp in order to see them. As the monks had become very slim on account of severe austerities, none of her servants could recognize them. Thus they did not get any alms. On their way back, they however got yogurt from a milkmaid who happened to be ShāliBhadrā's mother in the previous life and terminated their fast. After that with the permission of the Lord, they went up the nearby Vaibhargiri hill and resorted to Anashan (Fast unto death). At the end of Anashan, they attained the heaven of Sarwartha Siddhi.

(17)

Abhaykumar and Rohineya

In times of Lord Mahavir, there was a burglar named Lohkhur. He lived in a remote cave of Vaibhargiri near Rājgruhi. He was very smart in his activity and did not leave any trace of his burglary. His wife's name was Rohini and they had a son who was named Rohineya. As Rohineya grew up, he picked up the art of burglary from his father and eventually became expert

burglar. In smartness he even surpassed his father. It was almost impossible to recognize him, when he was in disguise. If some one pursued him, he could run so fast that no one could catch him. He could even jump over the walls when necessary. He committed burglary mostly from the houses of noblemen and rich people and hid the treasure of his burglaries in the most unexpected and more or less inaccessible places. To the poor, he extended help from the wealth that he had so accumulated. Many of them therefore felt grateful and were pleased with him and were not willing to help the Government officials in tracing him out.

Lohkhur was now very old and could see that his life was soon to come to the end. When he was on his deathbed, he called Rohineya by his side and said that he was very happy with the expertise that he had shown in committing burglary, which had been their ancestral profession. In order to stay successful, he however advised his son never to listen to the sermon of Lord Mahavir, because His teachings were not conducive to their profession. Rohineya promised his father to abide by his advice. So Lohkhur could breathe his last with the sense of satisfaction.

After he died, Rohineya extended his burglary on a large scale. So much so, that it became almost impossible for the well to do families to experience safety of their property, if they were required to go out. All the time, they had to stay afraid that Rohineya would reach their home during their absence and take away jewelry and other valuables from the house. Such people once came to king Shrenik and requested him to take some effective action to protect them from Rohineya's burglaries, since police officers had failed to do anything in the matter. The king therefore asked Abhaykumar to undertake suitable action for getting hold of Rohineya.

Once it so happened that while Rohineya was secretly on his way to Rājgruhi, he had to pass by the side of Lord's assembly. He remembered his father's advice. He therefore put his hands on his ears in order to prevent the voice of the Lord reaching him. Unfortunately however, a sharp thorn pricked deep into his foot that very time. He had therefore to take off his hands from the ears for taking out the thorn. That time words of the Lord reached his ears. He heard following words: 'Human life is the best of all lives. It is possible to attain liberation only during human life. Every human being can attain salvation irrespective of caste, creed or color. By virtuous deeds one would gain life in heaven where there are all sorts of material pleasures and happiness. The heavenly beings move above the ground and their feet do not touch it. Their bodies are shadowless; their eyes remain steady and their garlands do not wither. That life however does not lead to ultimate liberation that provides eternal bliss. Therefore heavenly beings too crave for obtaining human life.' By that time Rohineya removed the thorn from his foot and covering his ears with his hands once again, he proceeded towards the city..

Since being entrusted with the task of trapping Rohineya, Abhaykumar had secretly arranged for posting trained soldiers in disguise at the gates and all important corners of the city. He himself also remained watchful. Next time Rohineya came to the city, a watchman saw him. Rohineya was in the guise of a farmer. The watchman sent a message to Abhaykumar that some unidentified person had entered the city. Abhaykumar got alert. As Rohineya passed by, Abhaykumar glanced at him from a secret place. He did not fail to recognize the burglar even in disguise and instructed his men to surround him. Smart as Rohineya was, he quickly recognized the danger. He ran towards the city wall. Unfortunately for him, there too were soldiers to take care of him. He was thus easily apprehended and was put in bondage.

The next day, he was presented in the court. As Rohineya was in disguise, it was hard to identify him as the burglar. Abhaykumar was of course sure, but how could the accused be punished without proof of his being the wanted culprit? When the king asked him about his identity, Rohineya replied that he was a farmer named Durgachandra and belonged to Shaligram village; he had come to Rājgruhi for seeing the capital and was returning home when watchmen tried to apprehend him. Rohineya had made arrangements for that assumed identity with the residents of that village. When the enquiries were therefore made in that village, the people corroborated what Rohineya had stated in the court.

Abhaykumar had therefore to make a plan for getting confession of Rohineya regarding the burglaries. He came to know that Rohineya was fond of drinks. He therefore arranged for serving too much wine to the accused to the extent of making him unconscious. In that state, Rohineya was neatly cleaned, dressed in extravagantly perfumed royal garments and was adorned with valuable jewelry. He was then placed on a luxurious velvet bed on a sandalwood cot on the top floor of a palatial building. As Rohineya regained his senses, he saw himself in heavenly surroundings. There was breath taking view all around; walls, ceiling and floor were crystalline; beautiful maidens were waving scented air with diamond studded fans; slow sweet music was flowing from the background; fairylike damsels were dancing in tune with that music and apparently divine musicians were getting ready for a musical concert.

Rohineya could not make out where he was. He asked one of the girls where he was and why all of them were serving him so well. The girl replied that he was their Lord in the heaven that he had attained; all the divine comforts now belonged to him; he could live like Indra, the king of heaven and enjoy with the heavenly damsels the way he liked. 'Could this be true for a burglar like him?' he asked himself. But he then remembered that he was helpful to the poor and needy and he was sure that God must have been just. 'Or could this be the plan of Abhaykumar?' he thought again. It was real hard for him to decide what was truth. He therefore thought it fit to wait and see.

After a while, a luxuriously clad person entered with a golden staff and book in his hand. 'Is your new Lord awake?' he asked one of the damsels. The girl replied that their new lord had just been awake and they had been getting ready to celebrate his arrival in the heaven by presenting the divine concert. 'Let me make sure that all preliminaries pertaining to his arrival have been finished, before you start your concert; and let me also get from him some information that the heavenly realm needs to know.' So saying, he came to Rohineya. Opening his book, he asked Rohineya to narrate his deeds in the previous life, before he could start enjoying the amenities of heaven.

Meanwhile, Rohineya was watching all around. He remembered what he had happened to hear from Lord Mahavir about heavenly beings, at the time thorn had pricked his foot. He minutely observed the movements of the so called heavenly beings in front of him. He noticed that their feet were touching the ground and their bodies were not shadowless and their eyes were blinking like human beings. He immediately made out that the heaven was a fake and it was only a trick of Abhaykumar to gain evidence of his burglaries. He therefore replied that in the previous life he had given donations for all worthy causes; he had constructed temples; he had been for pilgrimage to holy places and had rendered service to the deserving entities. That person took note of his statement and asked him to narrate any wrong deeds that he might have indulged in. Rohineya said that he had scrupulously avoided misdeeds and therefore he was born in heaven. The plan of Abhaykumar thus came to nothing and Rohineya was set free as being the innocent farmer that he pretended to be.

Rohineya was released; but what had happened, set in a train of thoughts in his mind. He could see that what he had accidentally heard from Lord Mahavir, had saved his life. Then how his father could be right in the advice that he had given? That Lord must have been a real grateful entity. 'If those accidentally heard words were so helpful, how much helpful His whole teachings could be?' he asked himself. Did he not waste his years avoiding sermons of the Lord? After pondering at length, he decided to go to the Lord and to serve at His feet. He went to the assembly and humbly requested the Lord to accept him as His pupil. He also offered to become a monk, if the Lord considered him fit for renouncement. As the Lord thought him worthy to become His pupil, he sought His permission to make confession to the king before he renounced. He then disclosed his real identity to the king who was present in the assembly and offered to accept any punishment. He also requested Abhaykumar to depute some of his official to take back all the valuables that he had stored. That way the stolen materials were recovered and handed over to the respective owners.

Since Rohineya had voluntarily confessed and had willingly returned everything that he had picked up during burglaries, the king decided to pardon him and permitted him to be the Lord's monk. Rohineya was highly repentant for what he had done till then. He started observing severe austerities in order to erase the Karmas acquired by his misdeeds. When his body was unable to bear more, he adopted Anashan (Avoiding food and staying in meditation) with the permission of the Lord and attained real heaven at the end of that life.

(18)

ABHAYKUMAR AND MĀTANGPATI

King Shrenik loved his queen Chellana very much. Once he decided to construct a special palace for her. At his bidding Abhaykumar arranged for a magnificent palace erected on one single pillar. People marvelled to see such a palace. All sorts of comforts and luxuries were provided there. Around the palace, he also arranged for setting up a beautiful garden with specially bred plants and trees that gave different types of flowers and fruits all the year round. Chellana was very pleased with this garden. She used to pluck the flowers herself for adorning her hairs and also for preparing garland for her husband. Shrenik thus used to enjoy there every pleasure of life along with his beloved queen.

There was an aboriginal tribe known as Matang. They used to undertake the cleaning work of the city. Their chief known as Mātangpati was a highly accomplished man. Once his wife, while she was pregnant, begot a strong urge to eat mangoes. She therefore asked her husband to get mangoes. Mātangpati ridiculed her untimely desire because it was not the mango season. She however pointed out that the mango trees of queen Chellana's garden used to yield mangoes throughout the year and asked him to get mangoes from that garden. Mātangpati could stay invisible. He could therefore enter the garden unnoticed. High up on the trees he saw the mangoes. By his magic spell he charmed one branch of the mango tree to bend down. He then plucked the mangoes from that branch and took them home. His wife thanked him very much for bringing the delicious mangoes.

In the morning, as the queen came for plucking the flowers, she noticed the loss of mangoes. She therefore asked the gardener to keep better watch. The second night too, Mātangpati came there at the instance of his wife and plucked away the mangoes. The next morning the gardener was scared to notice the loss of the mangoes once again. He reported to the queen that he had been vigilant throughout and did not notice any one else coming within. Somehow however the mangoes had again disappeared from the same mango tree. It was hard for Chellana to believe that any burglar could dare to enter her garden. She however made arrangements for additional watchmen to protect the garden from any unauthorized entry. As Mātangpati's wife could not resist the temptation of eating the delicious mangoes, the disappearance of mangoes continued. Thereupon, Chellana brought this mysterious disappearance to the notice of the king.

Shrenik was wild to know that any one in his kingdom could dare to indulge in such burglary. He instructed Abhaykumar to get hold of the burglar anyhow. Abhaykumar kept vigilant watch during the night. He also could not notice any one even approaching the garden. Yet he noticed in the morning that some mangoes had disappeared. The next night he decided to keep closer watch. By his minute observation he could notice at midnight, the lowering of the branch of the mango tree and the mangoes being plucked without any one getting within the garden. He could make out that there was some invisible hand involved. Then, he arranged for the expert force of watchmen to stay concealed near the mango tree. Next night Mātangpati came to the garden and charmed the mango tree as usual. But as soon as the mango tree bent down, the watchmen came out of their hiding place and surrounded the tree as per instructions of Abhaykumar.

Matangpati was not visible but the mangoes that he plucked were visible. It was therefore hard for the burglar to escape piercing the live wall that watchmen had formed. He had ultimately to give way and made himself visible. He was then arrested and for the rest of the night he was placed in captivity.

As he was produced in the royal court the next day, Shrenik was impatient to sentence him to death, because he intended to set an example by beheading the culprit for his daring burglary. Abhaykumar was however impressed by his art and intended to put it to the state use. He had also found out that the accused was not a professional burglar and had resorted to plucking the mangoes simply to satisfy the desire of his pregnant wife. Abhaykumar knew very well how irresistible such desires could be. He had therefore developed a soft corner for the accused and had thought out a plan to save his life. Accordingly, he suggested that before punishing the accused, the king should learn from him the mysterious arts that he possessed. The king welcomed the idea and asked Matangpati to teach his art. The poor man had no alternative but to comply.

For this purpose he was brought to the palace. There the king was seated in the royal seat and standing in front of him, Matangpati began teaching the mysterious charms. He used all his diligence. Some how however Shrenik could not memorize them. He reproached the accused that he was not seriously teaching him. Abhaykumar thereupon pointed out that the king could not gain the learning, because he was not giving the respect due to a teacher. Shrenik too realized his mistake. He therefore asked Matangpati to occupy his seat and himself stood before him as a student. He could then quickly learn the secrets of that art.

Shrenik then consulted Abhaykumar about the appropriate punishment for the culprit. Abhaykumar pointed out that since Matangpati had become his teacher, the king should extend to him the appropriate reward as a preceptor. And what could be a better reward than sparing the life of the preceptor? The king was pleased with the idea and set the Matangpati free.

(19)

ANĀTHIMUNI

Once king Shrenik went on a horse ride and away from his capital he came to a park known as Mandikux. It was the best part of the spring season. All the trees and entire plant life was lovely green; there were fully blossomed flowers of different colors; birds of variegated hues were flying here and there and sweet music was emanating from the streams flowing with crystal clear water. Shrenik got fascinated and felt very happy to see the lavish splendour of nature. He enjoyed his ride in various parts of the park. Going ahead, he happened to glance a monk(Muni) meditating under a tree. He went closer and noticed that the Muni was very handsome, youthful and attractive. Shrenik could not make out why a person like him should have renounced. Bowing to him the king sat in front of him. When the Muni looked at him, the king asked the reason for renouncement in the prime of youth. The Muni briefly replied that it was because of his helplessness. Shrenik could not believe that a youth like the Muni could be really helpless. He however offered to extend all kinds of help and shelter to the Muni, if the Muni intended to go in for the worldly life once again.

The Muni smiled and said that Shrenik himself was shelterless; how could he then provide shelter to others? Shrenik could not believe his ears when he heard that. He thought that the Muni had not recognized him. He therefore said that he was the king of Magadha; he had a large army; he

commanded respect from all the people; he had beautiful wives and well behaved sons; he had obedient servants; he had enough wealth and other possessions inclusive of many elephants, horses etc. How could he be called helpless or shelterless? The Muni again smiled and said that Shrenik had not understood what he intended to convey by calling him helpless. He therefore asked the king to patiently hear why he had become a Muni.

The Muni said that he was the resident of Kaushambi. He was the son of a very wealthy father. He had affectionate brothers and sisters. He had a beautiful, lovely, good natured wife who loved him with all her heart. He had thus all the happiness and material comforts that the worldly life could provide. And he actually enjoyed the life in every respect. Once however, he got severe eye pain. It soon got very acute and unbearable. His whole body was severely afflicted by burning sensation. All his relatives and friends got together. They were very much agitated to witness the pain that he was undergoing. His father immediately called for the expert physicians. They tried hard to stop the pain by administering different medications, but failed to provide any relief. Muni felt very miserable when their expertise could not help even in reducing the pain. His father was willing to spend any amount for relieving him of the pain. Nothing however helped. His parents tried to console him with affectionate soothing words, but that did not any way help in reducing the pain. His brothers and sisters also could not do anything in the matter. His lovely wife was all the time sitting by his side and was delicately caressing his body. Simultaneously, she was sobbing and cursing herself that her efforts did not prove to be of any help to her husband. She and others applied sandalwood and other different types of perfumed soothing pastes; but none of them proved of any help.

So, he realized that no type of expertise and no amount of love of his beloved or the affection of his close relatives were of any avail to him. When all their efforts and all the wealth of his father failed to produce any relief, he felt most miserable. A sense of total helplessness overtook him. He could see that such types of afflictions that arise in life, are mostly beyond any body's control. Only the afflicted person had to bear the pain. He could thus realize from his own experience that worldly happiness is ephemeral and unreliable. It is fraught with many dangers. He could also conjecture that many types of afflictions, he must have faced on different occasions in the earlier lives. He could not however visualize ultimate end of such afflictions. He therefore decided that if he got cured of the pain, he would renounce the worldly life and seek lasting happiness. This decision gave him badly needed internal strength. He could close his eyes and fell asleep.

When he woke up, his pain had almost gone. All his relatives felt much relieved to notice that he was no longer experiencing the pain. After a while, he explained to them what he had decided while undergoing the pain. Eventually, he secured permission from all of them to renounce the worldly life and to become the Muni. Since he had undergone real helplessness while bearing the pain, he had decided to call himself Anathi which means helpless. His sole endeavor was now to seek lasting happiness. He then asked the king whether he could protect himself or any one else from the physical afflictions and other miseries that come across from time to time. The king had to admit that he was helpless in the matter. Muni then pointed out that on that very account he had addressed the king as helpless.

The Muni then explained that people in general try to gain material comforts and other worldly happiness that unfortunately happen to be short lived. They therefore feel miserable when that so called happiness comes to an end. It should always be kept in mind that seeking material comforts cannot be our ultimate objective. We should look beyond the horizon and try to gain spiritual well being that lasts and stays beyond the life. Seeking worldly happiness, in a way, amounts to pursuing the mirage. People however willingly undergo all types of hardships for gaining the ephemeral happiness; while they blissfully stay forgetful of the soul that lasts forever and is the source of enduring happiness. The king could see the truth of what Muni said. He felt ashamed that he had invited the Muni to enjoy worldly happiness. He therefore begged pardon for his foolish gesture. Then bowing the Muni with all humbleness, Shrenik went back to Rājgruhi.

PRASANNACHANDRA RAJARSHI

During the time of Lord Mahavir there was a king named Prasannachandra, also known as Prasenjit, who was ruling over Potanpur. He was brave, bold and benevolent. He was also highly religious and virtuous. He had a lovely wife and a charming young son. He was thus happy in every respect. He ruled with complete justice and the people felt happy, safe and secure under his benevolent rule.

Once he had an occasion to go to Lord Mahāvīr's assembly and to listen to His sermon. On hearing that he was convinced that the well being of the soul is of utmost importance and that can be done only during the human life. He could also realize that the life span is unpredictable and the death may overtake any one at any time. He therefore considered it appropriate to undertake the life of spiritual pursuit without loss of time. As he developed intense detachment for the worldly life, he came to the conclusion of renouncing the same as soon as possible. He had however a problem. His son was too young and could not be left alone for taking care of the administration. It was therefore incumbent upon him to wait till the maturity of his son.

But as time went on, Prasannachandra however found it increasingly hard to continue with the worldly activities. Fortunately, he had a trustworthy friend as his minister whose advice was always found helpful. By acting under his advice, the king had overcome many problems. He therefore considered that friend-counselor as capable and reliable to run the administration on his behalf. As such, the idea occurred to him that he could afford to renounce the worldly life by entrusting the well being of his son as well as of the people to that counselor.

Accordingly, the king called that counselor and told him about his intention to quit the throne immediately. The counselor said that it was not proper for the king to quit so soon and strongly recommended that he should at least wait till the prince attained maturity. Being however very eager to renounce, the king asked the counselor to take care of the prince during his absence. The counselor was not willing to see that a benevolent king like Prasannachandra should quit so early. As the king however pressed him too much, the counselor ultimately agreed to abide by his desire. Thereupon, Prasannachandra instantly crowned his boy son and entrusting his well being and interest to that counselor, he renounced the worldly life and became a pupil of Lord Mahāvīr.

As a monk Prasannachandra used to move from place to place along with the Lord. That way, he once happened to come to Rājgruhi. He used to undertake severe penance and excluding the rainy season, he regularly used to meditate under the open sky, irrespective of the weather. Once, while he was so penancing on a very hot day, Shrenik, the king of Rājgruhi happened to pass by on his way to the Lord's assembly. He looked at the sage king Prasannachandra penancing in the scorching heat and was much impressed by his tolerance and concentration. Shrenik was followed by some of his generals. While passing by that place, one of them, who apparently appreciated the penance of Prasannachandra, spoke very highly about the sage king to his colleague. The latter however replied that Prasannachandra was a fool to entrust the interest of his boy son to his counselor. That so called trusted friend has actually turned out to be treacherous and has been conspiring with the king of Champāpuri to get rid of that boy so as to usurp the throne of Potanpur.

Somehow Prasannachandra heard those words. Confident, though he had been about the trustworthiness of his friend, the talk of the general had impact on his mind. He got concerned about the well being of his son and contemplation about the matter led to the rise of agitation in his mind. He felt deeply hurt by the so called disloyalty of his friend. It occurred in his mind that

treachery should not be ignored and that the treacherous persons should be severely dealt with. While staying in meditation, his mind lost sight of his state of monkhood and began to wander astray. It soon became deeply involved in thinking about ways and means of rescuing his son. With that end in view, he mentally got engrossed in countering the supposed enemies of his son with all his might. As a man of valor, he was confident that he could fight single handed against the conspirators.

Meanwhile, Shrenik came to the Lord's assembly with high regards for Prasannachandra. Since he was much impressed with the penance, he asked the Lord about the fate of the sage king, if he died that moment. Prasannachandra was, that time, highly in rage at the supposed conspirators. So the Lord replied that he would go to the first hell. Shrenik could not believe what he had heard. So he asked the same question again. By that time the sage king's mind was actively engaged in fighting against the conspirators. The Lord therefore replied that he would go to the second hell. Shrenik had now no doubt about his ears but he was much astonished to hear that. Out of the curiosity he asked the same question again and again, while Prasannachandra was mentally indulging in increasing degree of violence. The Lord therefore replied, one after another, that he would go to the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and eventually to the 7th hell.

Meanwhile, Prasannachandra was mentally engaged in using all possible arms in fighting against the supposed enemies. Then he felt that he had used up all the arms that were available to him. As a last resort, he therefore thought to hit them with his heavy crown. As he tried to reach the crown for the purpose, he touched his shaved head and recalled that he had actually renounced the worldly life. He immediately regained his sense and started repenting for his vile indulgence. With the sense of high remorse, he quickly got rid of the defilements that had momentarily overcome him. Vanquishing all sorts of delusion he gained total detachment. Thereby he destroyed all his Karmas and attained Kevaljnan or the omniscience. That attainment was soon heralded with the proclamation of 'Prasannachandra Rājārshi Sarvadā Jayatu' meaning that the sage king Prasannachandra stay victorious forever.

Shrenik was much perplexed when he heard the proclamation. It was hard for him to understand how the person, who was supposed to go to the most wretched hell only a moment before, had attained omniscience. The Lord could make out his confusion. He explained that the next birth depends upon the mental state obtaining at the time of death. Since Prasannachandra's mind was engrossed in an increasing degree of violence for the time being, he rendered himself liable to go to the lower and lower level, if he had died at that time. But then he realized his foul indulgence for which he sincerely repented and had started contemplating about the true nature of soul. Thereby he overcame all sorts of defilements as well as delusion and attained omniscience. Thus the mental state from time to time makes all the difference.

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SULASĀ

During the time of Lord Mahavir when Shrenik was the king of Magadha, there was a charioteer named Nagarath in Rājgruhi. He was an expert charioteer and Shrenik used to rely upon him whenever he had to go for any adventure. Pleased with his expertise Shrenik had appointed Nagarath as his principal charioteer. He was married to a girl named Sulasā who was a staunch devotee of Lord Mahavir. She gave birth to many sons who turned out to be very bold. Shrenik had therefore appointed them as his personal bodyguards and they were performing the job very faithfully.

Once Shrenik happened to see the picture of Sujeshtha who was one of the princesses of Vaishali. He was struck by her beauty and wanted to marry her. Through Abhayakumar the king managed to secure the attention of Sujeshtha towards him. She also got enamored of Shrenik and wanted to marry him. Both of them were thus longing for each other.

Sujeshtha's father was however not inclined to accept Shrenik as his son in law. It was therefore planned that Shrenik would secretly take Sujeshtha out of Vaishali so that they would get married in Rājgruhi. Accordingly he came to Vaishali through a secret tunnel along with his bodyguards. Instead of Sujeshtha he came across her younger sister Chellana who very much resembled Sujeshtha. Shrenik took her in the chariot and started towards Rājgruhi. His movement was however noticed and the forces of Vaishali encountered him on his way back. His bodyguards fought bravely for him and effectively prevented the Vaishali forces from interfering with the king's escape. All the sons of Sulasā however lost their lives in that brief encounter.

This was a terrible shock for Nagarath and Sulasā who were rendered childless. Sulasā had however well comprehended Lord Mahavir's precept of every worldly situation being ephemeral. She could therefore face that shock with reasonable degree of equanimity and helped her husband in maintaining the balance of mind. From then onwards they devoted their time following the precepts of the Lord and cultivating ever increasing sense of detachment. In due course people of Rājgruhi came to know of Sulasā as the staunch devotee of Lord Mahavir.

There was an ascetic named Ambad. He undertook austere penance and had thereby gained miraculous capabilities. He had high regard for the teaching of Lord Mahavir and aspired to be his follower. While the Lord was camping in Champapuri, Ambad once came to His assembly and prayed Him for the true precepts. When he rose for the purpose of going to Rājgruhi, he asked the lord whether He had any message to be conveyed in Rājgruhi. The Lord asked him to convey His blessing to Sulasā. Ambad had expected that the Lord would give some message for the king Shrenik or for other dignitary like Abhayakumar. He was therefore amazed to hear the Lord's message for Sulasā. He was curious to find out what type of devotee Sulasā could be so that the Lord had personally conveyed His blessing for her. He decided to test her faith.

First He came to Sulasā's place as an ascetic and begged for alms. Sulasā had decided that she personally would give alms only to the monks of the Lord. So she asked her maid servant to give the alms. The next day Ambad took the form of Brahma with four faces, four hands etc. together with the pomp associated with that form. He took the position at the eastern gate of the city where people of the city flocked to bow. But Sulasā did not. The second day Ambad assumed the form of Vishnu together with all the splendor and pomp associated with that form. He sat near the southern gate of the city. More people flocked there to worship him, but Sulasā considered it a fake and did not turn out. The third day He assumed the form of Shiva and sat near the western gate. Still more people turned out to worship him, but Sulasā did not. On the fourth day Ambad produced a grand Samavasaran at the northern gate of the city. He assumed the form of an omniscient Jin with all types of human, heavenly and other beings listening to his sermon. Almost the entire city turned out to listen the sermon. People were talking among themselves that the 25th Tirthankar had come to the city. Sulasā however knew that there cannot be more than 24 Tirthankaras. She therefore refused to believe that there could be any Tirthankara other than Lord Mahavir.

Thus all sorts of lustrous and seductive situations failed to attract Sulasā towards any other cult and she remained totally unaffected by any of them. Ambad was much impressed by her steadfast devotion to the Lord's teaching. Then he presented himself as the follower of Lord Mahavir, praised her for her total devotion and conveyed her the Lord's blessing. Sulasā was very much pleased to learn that the Lord had personally conveyed His blessing for her. She then received Ambad with enthusiasm. This incident helped Ambad in firmly laying his faith in Lord Mahavir.

Sulasā spent the rest of her life strictly following the precepts of the Lord and gained heavenly life after her death. She would get reborn as the 15th Tirthankar of the next time cycle.

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KÄMDEV

After attaining omniscience at the age of 42, Lord Mahāvīr embarked upon his mission of showing the right path for the lasting happiness. Many people were convinced about the truth of his teaching and hundreds of thousands became the Lord's followers during his life time. Many of them renounced the worldly life and became the monks, but many more adopted his faith and continued as householders. Among them there were ten persons who were outstanding in their sense of devotion to the Lord and who scrupulously followed his precepts. Their lives are described in the Upāsakdashāṅg Sutra which is the 7th of the 12 original Āgams that are collectively known as Dwādashāṅgi.

Kāmdev was one of those ten. He was a wealthy businessman of Champānagari which was located in the eastern part of the present State of Bihar. He had a lovely wife named Bhadra who had given him several smart children. He was a multi- millionaire. His liquid assets were worth 180 million gold coins and he was considered one of the happiest men of the time. According to the prevailing custom of that time he was maintaining 60 million gold coins in deposit, 60 millions on hand and 60 millions in trade. He also owned lot of land and had thousands of cows in his yards.

Once Lord Mahāvīr came to Champānagari and camped in a place known as Purnabhadra temple. Elaborate arrangements were made there for seating thousands of people who would come to the assembly for hearing him. As Kāmdev came to know about the arrival of the Lord, he too decided to go to the Lord's assembly. During his sermon the Lord stated that following four things should be considered as invaluable, viz 1) human life, 2) listening to the truth, 3) conviction of the true faith and 4) putting the same in practice. These four are very rare and of paramount importance. In elaboration of that statement the Lord said as under.

'This soul has been undergoing the cycle of birth and death since the time immemorial. It is not possible to visualize any time when it was not undergoing the misery and pain peculiar to the species where it was born. To be born as human is very rare. That life is the most valuable, because only in that life one can strive to end the cycle of birth and death. For that purpose he needs to listen about the true nature of the soul from those who have realized it. After listening to that he has to be convinced about that truth. Thereafter if he puts into practice the precepts of those enlightened, he can be said to be on the right path for gaining lasting happiness. The life that we have gained is very fickle. No one knows when the death would overtake us. It is therefore in the interest of every one to strive for the well being of the soul without any delay.'

Kāmdev was much impressed by the Lord's sermon about the fickleness of the worldly life and decided to follow his advice. Since he was not yet ready to renounce the worldly life, he was asked to observe the restraints laid down for the householders. In token of his decision to follow the Lord, he formally undertook to observe the twelve restraints of the householders. His wife Bhadrā also became the Lord's follower and adopted the restraints applicable to a female householder.

As his sons grew, Kāmdev began to entrust to them the routine activities of the trade so as to get himself increasingly involved in religious aspects. He used to observe Paushadh whenever possible and during that time he remained concentrated about the true nature of the soul. In due course he became known as a staunch devotee of the Lord. His fame for the purpose became so wide spread that even the heavenly king Indra once praised in his assembly the sense of Kāmdev's devotion to the Lord. He said that the faith of Kāmdev is so strong that no one can disturb him when he starts concentrating about the soul.

In that assembly there was one member named Amarsen. He thought that Indra was exaggerating in showering that much praise for Kāmdev. He was of the opinion that human beings have limited capacity to bear and no human can stand the ordeal that can be perpetrated by the heavenly beings. He therefore decided to test the tenacity of Kāmdev.

In due course the sons of Kāmdev took over the entire burden of trade. He was therefore feeling free to resort to the spiritual pursuit to an ever increasing extent and started devoting his attention to cultivate higher and higher level of concentration. Depending upon the length and intensity of the concentration, Jainism lays down eleven different levels of such concentration. Those levels are known as Pratimās. Kāmdev successfully tried ten Pratimās one after another and then decided to undertake the eleventh Pratimā which is considered the toughest. Securing the permission of his family members for the purpose, he undertook the Paushadh and adopted the concentration required for that Pratimā.

Amarsen noticed that and decided to use that opportunity for testing Kāmdev's mettle. He assumed the form of a ferocious demon and coming to the place where Kāmdev was meditating, he told the latter that he was the presiding deity of the place and wanted every one to obey his command. As such, he told Kāmdev that he was totally wrong in resorting to the pain resulting from the meditation and concentration. It is far better to enjoy the pleasures of household life than to unnecessarily undergo such pain. He therefore asked Kāmdev to give up the meditation and to go home for enjoying the family life.

As Kāmdev remained silent, the demon threatened to kill him if he disregarded his advice. Since Kāmdev did not respond, Amarsen asked him to face the consequences of disobeying him. He assumed the form of a huge elephant and started hitting Kāmdev with the tusks. That caused much pain to Kāmdev, but he did not pay any heed to that. Thereupon, the elephant picked him up by his trunk and began to wave him wildly. Since that too failed in dissuading Kāmdev from meditation, Amarsen took the form of a large cobra and began to bite Kāmdev. Noticing that even the severe bites did not disturb the concentration of Kāmdev, the cobra wound itself round the neck of Kāmdev and tried to smother him. Kāmdev however remained unaffected and continued his meditation.

When all his efforts failed to have any impact on the concentration of Kāmdev. Amarsen realized that what Indra had said in the assembly was right. He therefore presented himself in his true form and said to Kāmdev that he had doubts about his firmness while listening to the praising words of Indra. He had therefore been there to test the truth. He added that he was happy to note that Kāmdev rightly deserved the admiration of Indra. Then requesting Kāmdev to forgive him for the pain caused, Amarsen went back to his place.

After the end of that Paushadh when Kāmdev happened to go to the Lord's assembly, the Lord also praised the devotion and bearing capacity of Kāmdev and asked others to emulate the same. Thereafter Kāmdev continued his spiritual activities and observing the life of a true follower of the Lord for twenty three years, he attained heavenly life at the end.

Meghakumar

King Shrenik of Magadha had a beautiful queen named Dhārini. Once while she was sleeping, she dreamt that a white elephant was entering her mouth. She immediately woke up and told about the dream to the king. Shrenik knew that it was an auspicious dream. He called the fortune tellers who stated that the queen would get a handsome and lovable son who would have marvellous achievements to his credit. The king and queen were very much pleased to listen that.

During the third month of her pregnancy, Dhārini got an irresistible pregnancy urge to ride in state with the king during rain, while the sky is full of clouds of different hues and there are frequent flashes of lightening. In most of India, it rains only during the monsoon that occurs from June to October. Dhārini however got the urge during off-season. How to satisfy her urge was therefore a problem. In order to see that she is not affected by the unsatisfied urge, king asked his eldest son and the prime minister Abhayakumar to devise some way to satisfy that urge. Abhayakumar had a friend who could make miracles. He exhorted that friend to cause untimely rain etc. for the sake of his step mother. That friend arranged exactly according to Dhārini's urge. She therefore could ride in state on an elephant with the king and satisfied her urge.

In due course she gave birth to a very handsome, attractive boy. Rain in Indian language is called Megha. In memory of the pregnancy urge of Dhārini, the boy was named Meghakumar. At the age of 8 he was sent to school where he learnt all the 72 arts and crafts and got known as accomplished youth. He was then married to 8 beautiful girls with whom he enjoyed all the pleasures of the worldly life. Once Lord Mahavir came to Rajgrihi and camped in Gunashil monastery. Almost every resident of Rajgrihi used to go to His sermon. Meghakumar too went there and was much impressed. Realizing the transitory nature of the worldly situations, as explained by the Lord, he decided to renounce. But his parents were pained to hear about his intention. They tried every means to stop him from renouncing. He however remained very firm. But in order to satisfy his parents' wish, he agreed to become the king for one day and was coronated with all the royal pomp. Immediately after that, he left everything and became a possessionless monk of Lord Mahavir.

At night he was allotted a place near the door for spreading his bed. During the night, monks going for pass water etc. had to move by his side. Since no lamps are allowed in the monks' residence, they happened to trample his bed and at times his body as well. Poor Meghakumar could not sleep for the whole night. He was raised in all the luxuries and even monks used to treat him with regards. It was therefore awful for him to face the feet of the monks and the dirt that was brought all over his bed and body. He had to stay sleepless for the entire night. He felt that he could not bear that sort of miserable life and decided to give up renouncement.

In the morning he went to the Lord for seeking permission to get back home. The Lord was aware of the discomforts that he had faced. He however asked him, 'Megha, do you remember the discomforts that you had faced during the previous life?' Since Meghakumar did not, the Lord described it as under.

"During the previous life you were the king of elephants and were known as Meruprabha. Once there was a fire which you escaped narrowly. That reminded you of the terrible fire you had faced in still earlier life. For a shelter from fire, you therefore opened up a vast stretch of land by removing all plants, bushes and trees so that all animals could get refuge in case of a fire. You also weeded out grass that grew there.

Once again, there was a wild fire in your forest. All the animals came running and took refuge on that stretch. You also were there. During that time, you raised your foot to scratch your body on account of itching. That very time a rabbit was pushed in that space by the pressure of other animals. As you tried to put the foot back, you felt the presence of the rabbit and decided to hold the foot up in order to save it. The fire raged for two and a half day during which you continued to hold your foot up out of the compassion for the rabbit.

At the end of fire as the animals retreated, you tried to lower your foot. It was however too much stiffened during that time. You could not maintain your balance and fell down. You felt agonizing pain and could not get up. That way you spent three days and night facing much affliction and acute pain. Ultimately you left that body and were born here as the prince of Shrenik, as a result of your compassion for the rabbit. If you could face that much distress for the sake of rabbit and gained the valuable human life in return, how come you cannot face the foot dirt of your fellow monks in the interest of gaining lasting happiness?"

Meghakumar was impressed by the Lord's words and realized that he should stay on in his own interest. He requested the Lord to initiate him afresh since he had virtually broken his vow of the monkhood by strongly desiring the worldly life. The Lord did accordingly and Meghamuni, as he was called after that, started leading rigorous, austere life. Fasting for days together, he stayed, most of time, in meditation in order to eradicate his Karmas. The Lord and Gautamswami too praised him for that. When his body became very weak and could no longer observe the rigors of monkhood, he decided to observe fast unto death. That he did for a month on mount Vaibhargiri near Rajgrihi and got born in heaven. The Lord has stated to Gautamswami that at the end of the heavenly life, he would be reborn in Mahavideha and would attain salvation.

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SHRENIK AND HIS DESTINY

In times of Lord Mahavir Shrenik was the king of Rājgruhi. Chellana was her beloved queen. At her instance, Shrenik too became the follower of Lord Mahavir. As he realized the truth of His teachings, he became a devotee of the Lord and used to go to His assembly whenever the Lord happened to be in Rājgruhi. Once while he was in the assembly as such, he saw a highly diseased disgusting person approaching the Lord. Blood and pus were flowing from his body. The king was highly annoyed to notice that the guy was applying the blood and pus on the body of the Lord. That time the Lord sneezed and the guy responded by wishing death for Him. That enraged the king. Then Abhayakumar, the eldest son of the king sneezed and the guy responded by saying 'Live or die whichever you like.' The king could not make out what the guy meant thereby. Then the butcher Kalsaurik sneezed and the guy wished him neither life nor death. Then the king sneezed and the guy responded by wishing him long life. The king thought that the guy was at least afraid of him.

Shrenik was puzzled to listen to the confusing utterances of the guy. Being infuriated at the audacity of the guy in applying blood etc. to the Lord, he had instructed his men to arrest the guy as soon as he turns out of the assembly. His guards were therefore waiting outside and rushed at the guy as he came out. The guy however had some miraculous power and he disappeared before those men could get hold of him. The guard then reported to the king what had happened. Shrenik could not make out the mysterious emergence and disappearance of the guy or his equally mysterious utterances. He therefore decided to ask the Lord about that.

The next day, as the king came to the assembly, he requested the Lord about the same. The Lord replied that the guy had been a heavenly being and had come to worship Him. He had really

applied red and white sandalwood, but to the king that seemed to be blood and pus due to illusion. The king then inquired about the mysterious utterances. The Lord said that the guy wished Him death, because he desired Him to gain liberation as early as possible. He wished Abhayakumar either of the life or death because Abhayakumar was happily observing strict religious life and was to gain heaven in the succeeding life. Kalsauric's life here was undesirable because he was leading heinous life by undertaking much violence. His next life too was undesirable because he was destined to go to hell. The guy therefore wished him neither life nor death. The king then asked why the guy wished him long life. The Lord replied that the king was destined to go to hell in the next life. Therefore the guy wished him long life here.

The king was very perturbed to listen that. He asked how he, being the devotee of the Lord, could be destined for the life in hell. The Lord pointed out the following incident by which he had acquired that type of Karma.

During his youth Shrenik had once been for hunting. He spotted a fleeing deer. The king spurred his horse and pursued it. Ultimately he located it under the shelter of a tree. He wielded his arrow with all his might and what happened was a pleasant surprise for him. The arrow had not only pierced the body of the deer but it had also pierced the trunk of the tree and had come out on its other side. The deer of course died. Instead of getting pained for the violence, the king got proud and felt highly elated at his prowess. That feeling of too much arrogance for the gross violence had acquired for him the Karma of leading the infernal life.

The king remembered the incident. He felt very sorry for what had happened at that time. He was anxious to wipe out that Karma and asked the Lord what he could do in the matter. The Lord pointed out that his Karma was indelible and was bound to get operative at the right time. Such Karmas cannot be erased without bearing the consequences. Rule of Karma is supreme and no one has any authority over its operation. Shrenik could not reconcile to the fate. He repeatedly asked the Lord for some way to avert the hell. The lord said that there are ways to avert, but the king could not successfully exercise any of them because of the indelible nature of his Karma. As the king insisted to know about the ways, the Lord suggested to him the following alternatives.

There was a highly religious house holder in Rājgruhi. He had given up all the expectations and was leading purely spiritual life. For his livelihood too he depended upon the innocent occupation of making slivers out of cotton. The Indian word for sliver is Puni. He was therefore known as Punia Shravak. He earned very little out of that but felt contented with whatever he could get. He used to spend most of the time in Samayika. The Lord suggested the king to obtain the merit of one Samayika from Punia. The king thought that it was very simple. He approached the man and requested for the merit of only one Samayika. Punia said that he had no objection, but how could he do that since the merits as well as demerits happen to be non-transferable? The king had to go back.

The king had a maid servant named Kapila. She never gave alms to anyone. The Lord suggested to the king to manage her to give alms. The king therefore asked her to do accordingly. She however replied that she would not hold anything in her hand for giving alms. The king therefore arranged to tie a scoop to her hand and made her to give alms. While doing so, the maid servant murmured that the king's scoop is giving the alms, not me. That plan thus failed.

The Lord then suggested the king to prevent the butcher Kalsauric from slaughtering on at least one day. This seemed very easy to the king. He called Kalsauric and ordered him to avoid killing the next day. The butcher replied that he was so conditioned to kill that he could not stay without killing. The king therefore ordered his men to hang him upside down in a well so that he could not undertake any slaughter. Kalsauric was however so conditioned that he fancied the animals on the wall of the well and slaughtered them. That effort too thus failed.

The Lord then asked the king to observe with all seriousness the restraint of one Navkarshi in which the person is not supposed to eat or drink anything till 48 minutes after sunrise. The king agreed to do so the next day. In the morning however he went to his favorite garden and saw the ripe berries. He wished to eat the same but for the restraint that he had observed that day. Thereby he broke the seriousness of the restraint.

He then realized that his Karma was really indelible and nothing was going to succeed against that. He therefore got reconciled to his fate.

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MUNI KULWALUK

During the time of Lord Mahavir, there was a young man who was physically and mentally strong enough to face adversities. Once, he happened to listen to a religious sermon of a learned Acharya and was much impressed. He thereupon decided to renounce the worldly life and became a monk. The Acharya named him as Muni Kulwaluk. As a monk, he rigorously observed all the restraints and also undertook severe austerities. His preceptor however was not pleased with such observance, because he failed to notice any insight in the pupil, who was obviously observing the austerities to show his capability, while harboring a sense of ridicule for those who could not do so. This clearly indicated that he was under the influence of the sense of arrogance.

The absence of appreciation on the part of the preceptor created a sense of animosity in the mind of the pupil. Moreover, he knew that people would not respect him as long as the preceptor was alive. He, therefore, wished to get rid of the Acharya. Once, while the Acharya was getting down a hill, the pupil rolled from the top a large stone towards him. The Acharya could luckily avoid getting hurt by the stone. But, the audacity of the pupil made him much enraged and he cursed the pupil that his life would be ruined by the lust for a woman. Kulwaluk did not want his renouncement to be so tainted. Since he could successfully observe all the restraints, he was sure that he could resist any temptation for the sensuous pleasure and the preceptor would turn out wrong. But in order to be on the safe side, he decided to stay in a lonely, desolate place almost inaccessible to others. In due course, however, people came to know of his severe penance and austerities and his name became well known as a great ascetic.

During those days, the kingdom of Magadh and the republic of Vaishāli, lying close to each other, were most powerful states. Konik was the son of Shrenik, the king of Magadh. He was very impatient to become the king himself. With the help of his accomplices, he once managed to imprison his father and ascended the throne assuming the name of Ajātshatru. Chetak the father of Ajātshatru's mother was the chief of Vaishāli. He had given shelter to Halla and Vihalla, the brothers of Ajātshatru. They had fled from Magadh because Ajātshatru had unjustifiably asked them to hand over Sechanak, the highly accomplished elephant that was gifted to them by Shrenik. They were also unhappy with Ajātshatru's act of usurpation. Ajātshatru was demanding from his grandfather the return of Halla and Vihalla. Since Chetak refused to comply, Ajātshatru invaded Vaishāli with a large force. People of Vaishāli however fought bravely under the aegis of Chetak and withstood the terrible onslaught of the Magadhan forces. In spite of the well equipped force at his command, Ajātshatru could not take Vaishāli for a long time.

Ajātshatru, therefore, asked his trusted counselors to figure out the secret of the strong defence of Vaishāli. In disguise, one of them secretly entered Vaishāli and made the necessary enquiries. He learned that an ancient religious Stoop in Vaishāli was considered the tower of strength and unity among the people of Vaishāli and it was not possible to defeat Vaishāli as long as the Stoop

stood there intact. He could also make out from the astrologers that the Stoop could be uprooted only under the blessing of an accomplished sage like Kulwaluk whose name was now reputed as a great ascetic with miraculous capabilities.

On learning these details, Ajātshatru announced a great prize for any one who would undertake the task of excavating the Stoop. However, no one would come forward for the work. Ultimately, a city girl named Māgadhikā accepted the challenge. She adopted the garb of a religious Jain lady and moved from place to place in search of Kulwaluk. She happened to come across a sage who knew the whereabouts of Kulwaluk and pleased him by serving him well. When she got an opportunity, she said to the sage that she had heard about the great ascetic Kulwaluk Muni and yearned to have his Darshan. In all innocence, the sage told her about the lonely distant place where Kulwaluk was observing the acute penance but told her that it was very tough to go there.

Bravely overcoming the obstructions that she came across on her way, Māgadhikā one day arrived at the place where Kulwaluk was observing austerities. His body was reduced to a skeleton on account of his observing long fasts. As soon as she arrived, she fell at the feet of the Muni uttering the words of pleasure that she had gained by seeing the great Muni. Remembering the curse of his preceptor, Kulwaluk became scared by her arrival and asked her to leave the place at once. Māgadhikā, however, expressed her sense of deep devotion for the great ascetic and said that she had come only to receive the merit of offering him the food once and would return as soon as he would bless her by acceding to her request. So saying, she entreated him to terminate the fasts and accept her food. Heeding to her entreaties, he agreed to terminate the fast the next day on the undertaking that she would leave immediately after that.

Māgadhikā thus got the opportunity that she was looking for. She mixed the food with strong purgative and offered it to Kulwaluk. The intake of the food caused him severe diarrhea. The girl feigned to be extremely pained to witness the evil consequences of the food that she had offered with a sense of pure devotion. Cursing her evil fate for causing so much distress to the saint, she lamented very much and begged the sage to permit her to serve him during the ordeal that he had to face by her unfortunate endeavor. Kulwaluk realized his sad condition and permitted her to stay there in order to nurse him during the disease. She was pleased to hear that and began to nurse him with all the possible care. She took utmost care to keep his body clean and did not even mind cleaning him of the excreta.

This continued for a few days. Kulwaluk realized what would have been his fate if Māgadhikā had not nursed him so carefully. He was pleased with her devotion and felt grateful for the service without which he would not have survived. As he got a little better, Māgadhikā requested him to go with her for getting proper treatment. Kulwaluk agreed and went to Magadh along with her. In due course he was totally cured, but by that time Māgadhikā had cast enough charm over him and had succeeded in seducing him. He had never experienced that sort of pleasure and felt deeply enamored of her. With the passage of time his attachment for her grew and he felt that he had unnecessarily wasted his years in resorting to austerities. His lust for her was so intense that he could not stay without her even for a moment. Under the impact of that lust he was now willing to do whatever she asked him to do.

Māgadhikā now directed him towards the destruction of Vaishāli. At her instance, he went to Vaishāli where he found that the people had been sick of the long drawn war. Some of them turned to him to know when the war and miseries arising from that would be over. As a great ascetic, he pointed out that the principal cause of their miseries was the existence of that Stoop which happened to have been constructed under inauspicious circumstances. Thereupon, a few frustrated men came forward to do away with that cause of their evil. Kulwaluk had arranged with Ajātshatru to retreat a little on hearing his message. Accordingly the Magadhan forces retreated a little, when some of the people in Vaishāli began to damage the Stoop. Thereby many people were convinced about the evil nature of the Stoop and decided to excavate it completely. Others, including the chief of Vaishāli, strongly resisted the move. This disunity broke the morale of

Vaishāli and eventually landed victory to the invading forces. Vaishāli was thus taken over by Ajātshatru who destroyed it totally in order to avenge for its stiff resistance. A glorious chapter of the Indian history thus came to an unhappy ending by the abominable act of an indiscriminate ascetic.

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EQUANIMITY IN DISTRESS

When Lord Mahavir left the home at the age of 30, He knew that before gaining omniscience, He had to shake off lot of previously acquired Karmas. He therefore embarked upon the solitary journey of spiritual pursuit that was going to last more than 12 years. During that period he had to face many distresses that we know as Upasarga. Four of them were major ones that any one else could have hardly been able to bear. The first major Upasarga was faced during the very first year, when He decided to meditate overnight in the temple of Yaksha Shulpani at the village of Asthik. That Yaksha could not tolerate any one in the temple after the dark. In order to scare Him to death, the Yaksha first made very horrible, deafening, thunderous noise that could have caused death of any ordinary person. That however failed to intimidate the Lord. Then the Yaksha assumed, one after another, the forms of ghost, fierce elephant, cobra etc. and terribly hurt the Lord. Then he inflicted horrible pain to the sensitive parts of His body. That way, he distressed the Lord for the whole night, but failed to disturb the concentration of His mind.

The second major Upasarga, the Lord came across during the second year from the highly poisonous snake Chandakaushik. That story is known to every one and does not need to be narrated here. The third one He had to face during the 11th year of His spiritual pursuit at a place called Pedhal. There He decided to concentrate and meditate for the whole night. Now it so happened that the heavenly king, Indra visualized what the Lord had undertaken. He was aware of His tenacity to remain undisturbed even against heavy odds. He adored and praised in his assembly the unimaginable capacity of the Lord to withstand any type of distress. One of the heavenly beings named Sangam could not believe that. He was very proud of the heavenly might and was sure that a human being cannot stand against that. He therefore came to Pedhal with the intention to disturb the Lord from His meditation. The efforts, that he made, are graphically described by the great sage Hemchandracharya as under.

Sangam first rained obnoxious particles of dust and covered the entire body of the Lord, to the extent that it was difficult for Him even to breathe. This however failed to disturb Him. Then, one after another, Sangam produced wild ants, fleas, scorpions, weasels, snakes and rats to bite and cause intolerable pain on the various parts of the Lord's body. In spite of the terrible distress caused by them, particularly on the sensitive parts of the body, the Lord stayed undisturbed. Thereupon, Sangam produced a huge elephant that tossed the Lord up and down with the trunk and hurt Him with his large tusks. As the Lord still remained undisturbed, Sangam produced a mighty female elephant who tossed her big head with the Lord's body and terribly hurt Him. As that too failed to disturb the Lord, Sangam assumed the form of a horrible ghost. With his sharp teeth in the wide open flaming mouth and long arms, he terribly hurt the Lord who however remained unmoved. Then Sangam assumed the form of a fierce tiger and inflicted too much pain with the sharp teeth, claws etc.

Since all these efforts to inflict pain were of no avail, Sangam decided to change his tactic. One after another he assumed the form of Lord's father and mother and said in the crying tone that the Lord's brother Nandivardhan had deserted them and they had become helpless. They therefore entreated Him to give up the renouncement and take care of them in their old age. The Lord knew very well that it was all fake and did not get disturbed even by those entreaties.

Sangam therefore resumed his previous tactics. He produced a camping party. They were intending to have rice for their food. The cook concerned used the feet of the Lord as the fireplace for cooking the rice. Thereafter Sangam produced a bird catcher who hung the cages of the wild birds in the neck and over various other parts of the Lord's body. Those wild birds bit the different parts of His body by extending their long beaks out of the cage. As that too failed to affect Him, Sangam raised one after other terrible whirl-wind and a strong hurricane that could sweep everything in its wake. Thereby, the Lord got mercilessly tossed here and there, up and down: but He did not give up the meditation. Sangam then resorted to his ultimate weapon, the fatal wheel. He hurled it at the Lord with all his might, causing the Lord to sink in the ground up to the knees. Still He stayed unaffected in the meditation.

Now Sangam did not have any more means to inflict pain. As the fatal wheel too did not succeed, he realized that the Lord was immune to all the physical pain. Sangam therefore decided to try enticing means. He came there in his plane and said to the Lord that he was pleased with His penance and steadfastness and told Him to ask for any boon. If the Lord desired, he was willing to take Him bodily to the heaven or to salvation or to make Him the king of the whole world. The Lord however did not give any response.

Sangam then thought to try seductive measures. He produced the most comfortable weather with the lovable greenery, blossomed flowers of different hues and fragrance. Then he brought forth attractive, heavenly nymphs to make all sorts of love gestures in order to entice the Lord. Some of them started playing exciting music and performing erotic dance; some of them, uncovering the various parts of their bodies, invited Him to make love. Since there was no response, they said "Lord, we have been deeply attracted by your handsome and strong body. Therefore enjoy with our beautiful bodies any way you like." Not getting any response, they added, "If you do not have any attachment for your body, why not hand over to us so that we can use it to our satisfaction? If you cannot be kind to us, at least be merciful to us by showing your love, because we cannot survive without gaining your love. Kamdev, the god of love has overcome us by his arrows of flowers; why not protect us from his aggression? Lord, if you do not oblige us by offering your love, we are surely going to die; therefore please give up your aloofness and give satisfaction to our bodies that we are surrendering to you." Thus they tried their best to seduce the Lord in different ways, but He stayed unaffected.

Sangam thus perpetrated on the Lord 20 major Upasargas during one night, but failed in his objective of disrupting His concentration. In the early morning, when Sangam was exhausted of inflicting pain, he saw tears in the eyes of the lord. He was glad that at last he had succeeded in breaking the bearing capacity of the Lord. Realizing what was in his mind, the Lord said that he was misinterpreting His tears. They did not result from the pain that he had inflicted. Tears came forth out of His compassion for the horrible fate that Sangam had acquired by hurling distresses upon the entity that was destined to purify every one. Thus, the Lord could not only forgive Sangam for what he had done; He also had sympathy and compassion for the miserable fate that the latter had acquired by his evil action.

This was however not the end of Sangam's story. He thought that he could not go back with the failure written on his face. He therefore pursued the Lord for six months in order to harass Him. The Lord wanted to terminate the fast that He had undertaken. But wherever the Lord went for food, Sangam would pollute it to render the same uneatable. The Lord then decided not to go for alms so long as Sangam did not give way. At the end of six months Sangam realized that whatever he might do, it was impossible to bend down the Lord. Falling at His feet, he therefore begged the Lord's pardon and requested Him to go for alms at ease.

The Lord came across the 4th major Upasarga during the last year of His spiritual pursuit. In an earlier life as Tripurusha Vasudev, he had poured lead in the ears of an attendant for failing to abide by his instructions. That attendant was now reborn as a cowboy. While the Lord was meditating at a place called Shadgamani, the cowboy was grazing his oxen. As it was his time to

milk the cows, he went home entrusting his oxen to the care of Lord. When he came back, the animals had gone far away grazing the grass. He therefore asked the Lord about their whereabouts. The Lord was meditating and did not reply. The cowboy repeatedly asked Him about the animals, but did not get any reply. Thereupon he got mad and asked the Lord whether He had ears or only holes. As he did not get any response, the cowboy decided to teach Him a lesson for not listening. He brought forth two sharp thorns and pierced them deep into the ears of the Lord.

The cowboy also took care that no one could notice the thorns in the ears. He therefore broke off the exterior parts of the thorns. The thorns gave continuing pain to the Lord but He faced it with equanimity. In that condition, He reached Apapapuri and went for alms from a house-holder named Siddhartha. That time, Kharak a physician-friend of Siddhartha was sitting there. Smart as he was, he could make out the Lord's pain. They examined Him at length and located the thorns which were then skillfully extracted by them.

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MONK KURGADU OR KULGURU

In ancient times there was a businessman named Dhandatta. He was highly religious. He had a son who also got imbibed with religious perspective. Once, Dharmaghoshisuri, the highly enlightened Acharya of that time, came to the town, where Dhandatta lived. Thereupon Dhandatta went to listen to his sermon along with his young son. The boy was much impressed by the talk of the Acharya and decided to become his pupil. Accordingly he renounced the worldly life and became a monk at the very young age. The Acharya could foresee that the boy was destined to be a great entity. He therefore named him as Kulguru. In the native language of that area he came to be known as Kurgadu.

Kurgadu seriously undertook the study of the holy books and correctly grasped their essence. He realized the role of Karma in the life of every being and thereby he learnt to maintain a high level of equanimity. He also rigorously observed the code of conduct for the monks. He had however a problem. He could not stay hungry and as such could not fast. He had to eat at least once a day. Even during Paryusana Parva, he could not fast for a single day. When he had to eat on such days of Parva, he felt bad and regretted that he had acquired incapability to fast on account of his previous Karma. When other monks observed long or short fasts, he praised them and rendered every type of service to them. He wished, in heart of hearts, that he too could observe fasts.

Jain monks do not move from place to place during monsoon that normally sets in June and ends in October. The Paryusana Parva occurs roughly in the middle of that period. While the Acharya was once camping in the monsoon season, Paryusana Parva came. On that occasion, many of the monks undertook long fasts extending to more than a month. The senior monk under whom Kurgadu was working, had undertaken one month's fast. Kurgadu felt sad that he could not undertake such austerities. Seven days passed that way and the day of Samvatsari dawned. He

wished that he could observe fast at least on that day. Before noon, however he felt very hungry and could not stay without food. He wondered what sort of body he had acquired that he could not fast even for one day! As it was impossible for him to stay without food, he went to the senior monk and begged his permission to go for alms. The latter scornfully asked him why he could not survive without food at least for one day. He should be inspired to observe fast at least for that day, specially when all his colleagues were on long fast. Kurgadu humbly replied that he did wish to observe fast but very much regretted his inability to fast. The senior monk pitied his miserable fate and resentfully allowed him to go for alms.

Kurgadu went for alms and most regretfully accepted the food that was offered to him. Coming back, he presented the same to the senior monk, as a part of the code of monks' conduct and begged his permission to eat. He had done that in all modesty. That monk however got much annoyed by that request. He could not believe that it was beyond the capacity of Kurgadu to fast for one day. He therefore took the humble gesture of Kurgadu as an audacity and disparagingly said that the miserable wretch did not deserve to be a monk. So saying he spitefully pushed the food bowl towards him. Kurgadu accepted that scornful gesture as the graceful permission and going to his place he most reluctantly started to eat.

All the other monks were watching with disgust the taking of food by Kurgadu on that auspicious day and were pitying that he was acquiring unwholesome Karma by eating on the day of Samvatsari. While eating Kurgadu himself dwelt deep into the inability of his body to remain without food even for a day. Well read as he was, he could see that it must have been the outcome of his previous Karma. He knew that every Karma drips off after extending the appropriate consequence and this Karma too was going to drop off. He therefore made up his mind to dispassionately bear what had been ordained by his Karma. As a result of his study of the scriptures he had gained enough insight about the true nature of soul. His despising himself for not observing fast was functioning as a handicap for the full realization of that true nature. Now, his willingness to accept what was destined, endowed him the insight of distinguishing the nature of soul from the varying states of the body and mind. That gave rise to the manifestation of the true nature of the soul. His realization was strong enough to destroy all the defiling Karmas on the spot and he gained omniscience, while eating the food.

When one attains omniscience, even the heavenly beings come to the place for offering their obeisance. When other monks saw the heavenly beings approaching the place for the purpose, every one thought that they must have been pleased by the acute austerities of some of them and were coming to bow to those monks. Instead, the heavenly beings turned to Kurgadu and offered their obeisance to him. No one could make out how those observing acute austerity were left out, while the one who could not observe it at all, had gained full enlightenment.

In all amazement they went to Dharmaghoshsuri and asked the reason for what had happened. The Acharya said that all of them were feeling too much proud of their austerities and were unnecessarily disparaging Kurgadu for not observing fast. Thereby they got smeared of perception obscuring Karma that obscured right perception. He urged them to bear in mind that the primary purpose of undertaking austerities or any other religious practice was to gain modesty which leads to right perception and in turn helps in attaining equanimity. They had misjudged Kurgadu who had realized the essence of religion. Earlier, he had acquired austerity obstructing Karma that did not allow him to observe the austerity. He did feel sad and sincerely repented for that Karma which had become operative in his current life. By properly comprehending the role of Karma, he had been imbibed with right perception. He did regret for that but was bearing the consequence of the Karma with equanimity. This could help in wiping out the previously acquired Karmas without incurring new bondage.

All the monks realized that they were indulging in unnecessary vanity that obstructed the dawn of right perception. The Acharya also explained that the soul had really nothing to do with the state and activities of the body. The body is procured as a consequence of the operative Karma and

should be used simply as an instrument for realizing the true nature of soul. It can be an effective instrument only if it was used purposefully. Understanding the true nature of soul was the essence of religion and that is the main thing worth pursuing in this life.

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HARIBAL'S VOW

In time of Lord Mahavir, there was a town named Vanijya. True to its name it was a well known center of trade and commerce. Its King Jitashatru was a just ruler and trade and commerce had flourished under his rule. Anand was one of such well known traders. He had a beautiful wife named Shivananda and Anand was very happy with her. Most of his other relatives were staying in a close neighborhood known as Kollak where the Lord had earlier spent some time during the first year of His spiritual pursuit. By judiciously trading, Anand had accumulated lot of wealth and was considered a billionaire.

Once Lord Mahavir came to the town and camped in a park known as Dyutipalash where adequate arrangements were made for His stay and special structure was erected for His sermon. Every one was eager to hear the Lord and assembled at the place in time. The king Jitashatru also came there along with his attendants. Anand was engrossed in his trade and was not aware of the Lord's arrival. When he observed lot of people going towards the Lord's camp, he enquired and came to know of the occasion. He also decided to go to the Lord's assembly.

During the sermon the Lord said that it is very hard to get human birth. Only those who have earned wholesome Karmas are born as humans. It is harder still to get exposed to the true religion. People get the opportunity to listen to the religious sermons by operation of very wholesome Karmas. It is still harder to acquire faith in the true tenets and it is the hardest to put the tenets into practice. He therefore exhorted the people who had assembled there to observe the right code of conduct as laid down by the tenets.

So saying the Lord elaborated the 12 types of restraint that every house-holder should observe. The first of the restraints is to refrain from gross violence. While explaining its importance, the Lord said that those who cannot fully observe that restraint, should try to observe it at least to the possible extent. He added that even partial observance of the restraint gets highly fruitful as it happened in the case of Haribal. Anand requested the Lord to state what had happened in the case of Haribal. So the Lord narrated the following story.

There was a fisherman named Haribal. He was handsome, simple and straightforward. Once while he was fishing in a river, he saw a monk on its bank. He went to the monk, bowed to him and requested to give some religious advice. The monk said that the first tenet of the religion is not to hurt any living being. Haribal said that fishing was his livelihood, so how can he survive without hurting fish? The monk said that if it was not possible to avert fishing, he should at least take a simple vow to release his first catch. Haribal agreed and took that vow which he scrupulously observed.

Once while he went for fishing, he got a large fish in the net. According to his practice, he made a mark on the fish and released it in water. He cast his net again and caught the same fish. So he had to release it. He tried again and again and caught the same fish every time. Then he thought that the destiny wanted to test his observance of the vow and decided to go without the fish that day. Then a heavenly being appeared and said that he was testing Haribal and was pleased for

his strict observance of the vow. He then told Haribal to remember him whenever the latter had any problem.

It was late evening by that time. Haribal therefore decided to pass that night in a nearby temple. Now it so happened that the king of that place had a beautiful daughter named Vasanti. She was in love with a young man whose name was also Haribal. Both of them had planned to escape in disguise and had decided to meet at that temple for the purpose. Accordingly Vasanti came there after dark on a horse along with the costly garments, precious jewelry etc. Her lover however found out the plan too risky and did not turn up. Vasanti could not see anything in the dark and was trying to get her lover calling by his name. But there was no response. As she called again and again, Haribal, the fisherman responded. She came close by and grasped his hand with love. Then she asked him to sit behind her on the horse back and eloped with him in darkness.

In the morning when she saw Haribal, she realized what mistake she had committed. It was however not possible for her to go back because her father was sure to punish her for her adventure. This Haribal was also handsome. She therefore decided to accept what destiny had planned and accepted him as her husband. Haribal realized how the observance of a simple restraint had rewarded him and decided to observe all possible restraints. They went to a city named Vilāspur. By selling some of the jewelry that Vasanti had brought with her, they bought a nice house and started living happily.

Haribal was pleased with the results of the wholesome deeds. He thereupon decided to earn more wholesome Karmas by being useful to the people in need and used the wealth on his hand for charitable purposes. Soon he got known as a charitable person and his reputation spread all around. Once he was invited to the court by Madanveg, the king of Vilāspur. He was pleased by the manners of Haribal and accepted him as a permanent invitee to the court. Soon they became good friends and used to visit each other's place.

Once the king happened to see Vasanti and was immensely struck by her beauty. He thought that she was worth being his queen and decided to get her somehow. In order to get rid of Haribal, the king once said to him that he wanted to celebrate the wedding of his daughter and asked Haribal to go to Lanka for extending invitation to the king Vibhishan. Lanka was too far away across the sea and the way was infested by all types of risks. Madanveg thought that Haribal could never return and he could therefore easily seduce Vasanti in his absence. Straightforward as Haribal was, he did not doubt the king and accepted the mission.

When he got home, he told Vasanti what had happened. She could see through the game of the king and tried to dissuade Haribal from going so far away. Haribal however wanted to keep his promise to the king. He therefore consoled Vasanti and said that everything should be okay on account of their wholesome deeds. Then he made the necessary arrangements for the long journey and one day proceeded towards Lanka. Crossing a number of rivers, mountains and forests, he came to the southern coast across Lanka. While he was thinking how to cross the sea, the heavenly being who had promised to help in difficulty, appeared. He flew with Haribal on his back and got him down in a lovely garden in Lanka.

Moving around the garden, Haribal came across a lonely palace. With curiosity he went inside but did not see any one. When he reached the top floor, he saw there a very beautiful girl lying unconscious in captive state. Nearby he saw a vessel full of nectar-like liquid. He sprinkled it on her and to his surprise, the girl gained consciousness. Then he released her from the bondage. So she got up and said that her name was Kusum and was the daughter of a king's favorite. Her father had acquired miraculous capabilities. He wanted to marry her because the astrologers had told him that whoever married her, was destined to be the king. Since she refused to oblige her father, he was keeping her in the lonely place in captive state.

She was very thankful to Haribal for rescuing her. She requested him to accept her as his wife and escape from the place along with her before her father arrived there. Haribal agreed to marry and left the place. He however told her that he could not leave Lanka without gaining some royal token of Lanka. By virtue of her father's connections, Kusum managed to get a sword of the king. With that sword they left Lanka and with the help of the heavenly being they flew back to Vilāspur.

During the absence of Haribal, Madanveg tried to secure the love of Vasanti. He used to send her the precious gifts that she accepted for not openly displeasing the king in absence of Haribal. She however did not respond to his love gesture and kept him waiting on one or other excuse. Madanveg was sure that Haribal could never come back. He was therefore willing to wait till she accepted him. As such he was sorely disappointed when he learnt about the safe return of Haribal.

Outwardly he received Haribal courteously and behaved as if nothing had happened. He felt now all the more jealous because Haribal had two most attractive wives. He once tried to put Haribal to fire by deceit. But Haribal remained safe with the help of the heavenly being. The king ultimately realized that every time the destiny was in favor of Haribal. He therefore gave up all his designs. He was getting old and had no sons. He was looking for a match for his only daughter who was heir apparent to the throne. Haribal was handsome and bold enough to undertake even the hard tasks at his command. He decided to give his daughter to Haribal and later on he renounced the worldly life in favor of Haribal. Thus Haribal gained all sorts of happiness by observing religious tenets.

The entire assembly was impressed by learning about the benefits accruing from the observance of restraints. Anand also realized the importance of observing life of restraints. He became first Shravak of the Lord and initially adopted the vow of abstaining from all sorts of gross violence.

(29)

Sushamā and Chilātiputra

In Rājgruhi there was a very prosperous businessman named Dhanadatta. He had five sons. Later on he got a daughter who was named Sushamā. She was very beautiful and every one loved her. Among his employees there was an orphan boy who was the son of a maid servant Chilāti and was therefore known as Chilātiputra. He used to take care of Sushamā. The boy was mischievous and vicious. He used to pick up unnecessary quarrels with the neighbors. Dhanadatta used to rebuke him for such incidents but that had no effect on Chilātiputra. Dhanadatta however retained him as an employee out of compassion for the orphan boy.

Once Dhanadatta noticed Chilātiputra sexually abusing Sushamā. This was too much for him and he instantly fired the naughty boy. Chilātiputra was homeless and did not know where to go. Moving here and there, he came across the notorious burglar Vijay who used to live in the dense forest area in the neighborhood of Rājgruhi. He had a band of 500 burglars working for him. He took Chilātiputra under his shelter. Chilātiputra learnt the art of burglary from Vijaya and in due course became expert burglar. Vijay was very happy with his performance and made him the deputy chief.

When Vijay died, Chilātiputra was unanimously accepted as the chief. He was bold enough to undertake daring burglaries. He did not hesitate to kill those who dared to oppose him. Thereby he struck the hearts of the people with terror. Indulging in the burglaries, he amassed lot of wealth. He could now afford to live luxurious life. Every one of his colleagues also had enough

wealth to live comfortably without undertaking any more burglary. For some time Rājgruhi remained free from the terror of Chilātiputra.

Once while moving in disguise, Chilātiputra happened to see Sushamā who was now highly attractive grown up girl. He revived his affection for her and got an intense desire to get her. He knew that Dhanadatta's house was well protected and it was not easy to abduct Sushamā. From the heart of his heart he however craved for her and realized that it was no longer possible for him to live without Sushamā. He then called his colleagues and said that he wanted to raid the home of Dhanadatta. The colleagues were amazed to hear that. They could not make out why he was thinking to undertake such risky project. Did he still covet additional wealth?. Chilātiputra explained that he did not need any more wealth. He merely wanted Sushamā and during the raid his colleagues were at liberty to grab anything that they liked from Dhanadatta's home. He would then disband them forever and with the wealth that they could grab, they could easily live happily and comfortably ever after. Every one knew about the immense wealth of Dhanadatta. The proposal was therefore attractive enough and all the colleagues agreed to be by his side.

One midnight when every one was asleep, the burglars raided the home of Dhanadatta. The guards of the house were however taken unaware and the burglars could easily overpower them. Chilātiputra went straight in search of Sushamā's room. Other raiders proceeded towards the treasury room grabbing gold, jewelry and other valuables. Chilātiputra easily located where Sushamā was sleeping. As he lifted her with both the hands, Sushamā got awake and being scared gave a shrill cry. Chilātiputra however tied a cloth round her mouth and taking her on his shoulder he left the home. Observing that the chief had succeeded in gaining his target, other raiders too started eloping with whatever precious material that they could lay hands upon.

Meanwhile Dhanadatta and his sons were awake by the clamor of the guards. As they heard the cry of Sushamā, they could make out that she was in danger. They rushed to her room and noticed Chilātiputra running away with Sushamā. They could also see other burglars getting away with valuables. Ignoring the others, Dhanadatta and his sons pursued Chilātiputra. The city guards, who had arrived by that time, also pursued the raiders. Chilātiputra was running fast but he had to run with the weight of Sushamā on his shoulder. He could easily cross the city limit and proceeded towards his forest abode. Dhanadatta and others were however pursuing him relentlessly. After a little, Chilātiputra came within the pursuers' range. He could see that it was not possible for him to escape along with Sushamā. He very well knew that if he could leave Sushamā there, his pursuers would not hunt after him. But how could he leave Sushamā to the others? In desperation he cut the throat of Sushamā and leaving the dead body behind, he quickly eloped from the scene.

Dhanadatta and his sons arrived at the place where Sushamā was lying dead. They realized the futility of pursuing Chilātiputra. Here was lying the body of their darling Sushamā with the blood still flowing from her body. It was a ghastly scene. With all their efforts they could not prevent the miserable end of the girl. But what else could they do apart from crying and mourning with a heavy heart?

Chilātiputra could escape from the clutches of pursuers. His heart was however torn. He had almost successfully fled away with the girl whom he had so passionately longed for. And in the very hour of his success he had to mercilessly cut her throat! Can there be anything more terrible? He looked at his body and clothes stained with the blood of his darling!. What had nature destined for him? he asked himself. He could not visualize any purpose of his life. Intense remorse had overtaken him. He could not make out what to do. All of a sudden he chanced to see a saint who was meditating in a lonely place. He narrated the entire story to the saint and prayed for the atonement of his sin. Uttering merely the three words of Upashama, Vivek and Samvar, the saint disappeared.

Chilātiputra could not make out what the saint meant by those three words. Being however struck with intense remorse he pondered over them again and again. He ultimately realized that the words stood for pacification of defilements, discernment and restraint. He recalled all types of defilements that he had indulged in since boyhood. He also remembered the repeated rebukes from the fatherly Dhanadatta and his own total disregard for the same. The result was the tragic end of Sushamā! How terrible was that? It happened because he had never cared to distinguish good and bad. Lure of beauty and wealth had blinded him throughout. That showed the total absence of discernment on his part. Now the only way open to him was to adopt restraints. The significance of the three terms thus dawned upon him. He realized the futility of the life that he had lived. He decided to give up everything and adopt the life full of restraint.

That very place he stood steadfast contemplating about his misdeeds and the real purpose of life. People passing by were scared of his blood stained outfit. Some recognized him and told others about the cruel burglar. A few of them got scared. Others hurled stones at him from a distance. As he did not make any movement, they dared to come closer assaulting, scorning and spitting at him. But he remained completely unaffected. Ants and other insects attracted by the odor of the blood, started biting him. He however took everything as the fruits of his past misdeeds and did not lose evenness of mind. His body got totally sprained by the injuries of the people and bites of the insects. On the third day he died maintaining the perfect equanimity and attained heaven.

(30)

ILÄCHIKUMAR

In ancient times there was a town named Ilavardhan in which there lived a businessman named Dhandatta. He had a wife named Ilächi who gave birth to a very lovable and handsome boy. That being the only son, the parents deliberately kept him nameless. As son of Ilächi he therefore came to be known as Ilächiputra. He was reared with all the loving care and attention in the midst of luxuries. In due course he grew to be a handsome youth and as such started being called as Ilächikumar. His parents were now eager to get him married. Being the only son of a well to do family, many people offered their daughters in marriage. His parents prepared a select list out of them and asked Ilächikumar to choose any one that he liked the most. But somehow Ilächikumar could not make any selection.

Once a party of acrobats came to the town. During those days there were no stadiums where acrobats could play. They had to show their skill in open air. Beating the drums in token of their arrival, those acrobats fixed the poles in an open ground off the main street and connected them with a rope high in the air. Many people assembled there to watch the show. The acrobats ascended the pole one after another and started demonstrating their skill of playing on the rope. They were walking and jumping over the high rope. People were highly fascinated by the performance. Ilächikumar also had come there to watch the show. While watching the performance of the acrobats, his attention was drawn to the young girl of the chief of acrobats. She looked very smart and was dancing very gracefully to the tune of the drums with ringing jingle bells on her feet. Ilächikumar got too much enamored of her and could not move his glance from her.

At the end of the show, the acrobats came down the rope and started collecting money from the people who had assembled for the show. People were very pleased with the performance and paid handsomely. Thus collecting good amount, the acrobats left the place and every one went home. Ilächikumar also had to go home. He was however so much fascinated by the girl that he remained absorbed in thoughts about her and could not fix his mind anywhere else. At the appropriate time his parents called him for the lunch. There too, he remained silent and finished

the lunch without uttering a single word. His parents had never seen him so serious and wondered about his absent-mindedness. His father asked him about the reason for his seriousness, but he kept mum. After the father left, the mother lovingly asked him to speak out whatever was in his mind. Ilächikumar said that it was no use telling her about that. As she repeatedly asked him, he replied that his mind was attracted towards the girl of the acrobats and he wanted to marry her.

His mother was taken aback to hear that. She said that she could get for him very beautiful and lovable girls of the well to do families and asked him to forget that wretched acrobat girl. He replied that no other girl would attract his mind and he wanted to marry that girl only. Realizing the firmness of his mind, the mother told her husband about the intention of the son. Dhandatta was shocked to listen that. He tried to dissuade the son from his intention but Ilächikumar remained firm. Dhandatta was a sensible man. He could see that Ilächikumar would not stay peaceful without that girl. He did not want to lose his son for the sake of prestige. He therefore called the chief of acrobats and requested him to give his daughter in marriage to Ilächikumar.

The acrobat however said that he could not do that because he was bound by the convention of his tribe. Dhandatta thought that he might be looking for getting money for the girl. He therefore offered to give as much wealth as the acrobat liked for agreeing to marry his daughter to his son. The acrobat however declined his offer and replied that he could not break the convention. Dhandatta then asked him about his tribal convention. The acrobat said that he could give his daughter only to the person who could win award from a royal court by pleasing the king with his acrobatic skill and would give dinner to his community out of the prize money. Dhandatta was disappointed to hear that because it was apparently impossible for his son to fulfill that condition. He explained to his wife what had happened. She called her son and said that the girl would marry only to an expert acrobat and asked him to forget her.

Ilächikumar did not give any reply. He however could not change his mind. He felt that he could not survive without that girl and was willing to make any sacrifice for her. He was even prepared to learn the acrobatic skill for that purpose. His parents were baffled by his silence but thought that he would come to senses in due course. They felt confident that Ilächikumar could never become an expert acrobat. As Ilächikumar continued to remain absent minded, they tried to divert his mind. All their efforts however failed and Ilächikumar stayed bent upon getting that girl anyhow. When the acrobat party therefore decided to leave Ilavardhan, Ilächikumar secretly slipped from his home and left the town along with them.

He discarded his fancy clothes and donning the coarse clothes of the acrobats, he started learning their skill. He was smart by nature and used all his diligence to learn the acrobatics. The girl too got enamored of him and helped him in all possible ways to learn the skill. With her help, he could easily master the skill and soon became an expert acrobat. In due course, when the party reached the city of Benatat, he requested the father of the girl to organize a show at the royal court there. Thereupon, the chief went to the king and requested him to watch the performance of the young acrobat and to award a suitable prize, if it was thought fit.

The king agreed and accordingly the acrobats fixed the poles in the compound of the royal palace, where the officers of the state and elite of the city were invited to watch the performance. At the right time, the king occupied his seat in the balcony of the palace. Bowing to him, Ilächikumar went over the pole and then jumping over the rope he started displaying his acrobatic skill. He was tightly walking over the high rope intercepted with risky jumps and summersaults. It was a superb performance. No one had ever watched such acrobatic feats. Every one was highly fascinated by his skill. Ilächikumar was feeling gratified by the appreciation of the people. He thought that it should have been enough for pleasing the king too. He therefore came down and bowing to him once again, he requested for an appropriate award.

The king was however more fascinated by the young girl than by the performance. He thought that he could easily gain her, if he somehow got rid of the acrobat. He therefore pretended that his mind was too much occupied with the problems of the state and could not give attention to the performance. He therefore requested Ilächikumar to show his skill again. Accordingly, Ilächikumar got over the rope again and displayed his skill. At the end of that show when he came down, the king feigned to be drowsy and asked him to show the performance once again. Ilächikumar could not believe that. He suspected that there was something wrong somewhere. Since he was however keen to gain his long cherished goal of getting married to the girl, he decided to try once again.

He again started the rope walk which to him was as easy as walking on the plain surface. He triumphantly looked around. From that height he noticed, at a little distance, that a beautiful woman was offering sweet food to a monk. She was in the prime of her youth and was very attractive and highly graceful. Ilächikumar was however surprised to observe that the monk was not even looking at her. He was amazed to see that while he himself was hankering for the acrobat girl, the monk remained totally unaffected in the presence of that lovely woman. He was struck by the detachment of the monk. He compared the girl of his choice with that woman. The acrobat girl was no doubt attractive but the woman there, was far more attractive. What could have been the force that kept the monk aloof in presence of that woman? And while remaining aloof, happiness was evident on his face! This detachment of the monk raised a quick train of thoughts in the mind of Ilächikumar.

"How come, I do not get detached, even though I have been repeatedly asked by the king to show the performance!" He recalled the excuses of the king for making him to play on the rope again and again. He could suspect that the king was in all probability attracted by the girl and was waiting for his fall from the rope. "In that case I would never secure the girl for whom I have abandoned my home and the parents." The happiness that he was looking for, was thus illusory. At home, he had been a little exposed to the religious aspects. He had learnt about the soul within the body and its immense capabilities. He realized that his achievements as an acrobat must have been due to that inner capability. That monk could remain unaffected, because he remained tuned to his soul and stayed vigilant about the pitfalls. "As an acrobat, I also have to remain constantly vigilant, because the slightest unawareness on my part can result in fall from the height and consequent death. Why then, should I not use the same vigilance for the sake of the spiritual uplift?"

He had treaded a long path of spiritual pursuit in earlier life. The impact of that achievement was lying subdued within, waiting for an opportunity to get manifest. The sight of the monk provided the needed opportunity. He got fully awakened realizing that he was the soul and all the other situations were simply illusory. While being on the rope, he dwelt deep into his Self and attained omniscience. Then he quietly got down and bidding farewell to every one, he left the place.

(31)

PUSHPACHOOL alias VANKCHOOOL

In ancient times there was a king named Vimalyash ruling in Virat city. He had a son named Pushpachool and a daughter named Pushpachoolā. Those brother and sister were highly affectionate to each other. As Pushpachool grew, he got the company of bad fellows and got involved in gambling and such other vices. As he could not get the money needed for the purpose of his vices, he started indulging in burglary. Being the only prince, people connived at his vices for some time; but his viciousness continued to increase with his age. The people had therefore to complain to the king about that. The king tried to bring him to senses, but Pushpachool did not

change his habits. The king ultimately banished him from the kingdom together with his friends. His wife and his sister also insisted on accompanying him and went along with him with the permission of the king. From that time Pushpachool got known as Vankchool.

Vankchool now got free scope for doing whatever he liked. He joined the company of a well known burglar and in due course became the chief. He formed a strong band of followers and started indulging in large scale burglaries. He set up a small settlement in a forest and lived like a dacoit king. Once a group of monks under the leadership of a learned Āchārya got lost in that forest. Searching for the way out, they came to Vankchool's settlement. Since the monsoon was about to set in and there was no town nearby, the Āchārya asked Vankchool to permit them to stay in the settlement during monsoon. Vankchool agreed on condition that the monks should not preach anything to his followers. The Āchārya accepted that condition.

After the monsoon was over, Āchārya got ready to leave the place. Vankchool was impressed by the promise that the monks had kept. He went along with them for a while and before leaving them, he showed his willingness to listen something from them. The Āchārya said that he would like Vankchool to take some vows in token of their stay in his settlement. Vankchool said that he could take vows only if they did not come in the way of his life. The Āchārya could foresee what Vankchool was to come across. He therefore asked Vankchool to take four simple vows. They were 1) Not to eat unknown fruit, 2) To step back a few feet before striking a blow, 3) Not to indulge in sex with any queen and 4) Not to eat flesh of a crow. As the vows were very simple and were not to interfere with his routine life, Vankchool showed his willingness to adopt them. The Āchārya was glad to learn that, but he pointed out that once he took the vows, he must observe them without any lapse. Since taking of those vows could not in any way affect his mode of life, Vankchool took the vows with an undertaking to observe them at any cost.

Shortly afterwards, Vankchool embarked upon a daring dacoity on a caravan very far away from his place. Collecting many valuables, Vankchool came to a nearby forest along with three of his principal colleagues. Since they had been very hungry, one of the colleagues looked around and chanced to see some ripe fruits on a tree. He plucked them and brought to Vankchool. They did not know what type of fruits they were, but the fruits were very pleasing and were full of juice. Remembering his vow, Vankchool refused to eat before he could know the name of the fruit. In fact, they were the fruits of Kimpak tree that could cause instant death. His colleagues could not resist the temptation of eating those fruits and died on the spot. Vankchool now realized how the simple vow that he had taken, had saved his life. He felt a sense of gratitude for the Āchārya.

On another occasion, Vankchool had been out and came home after midnight. As he opened the door of his bedroom, he got shocked to see that his wife was asleep with a young man by her side. He could not face that sight and decided to kill both of them with his sword. As he raised his sword, he remembered his vow to step back. While doing so his sword touched the wall behind and created shrill sound. On hearing the sound, the youth got up and Vankchool could see that it was his sister in the male dress. Pushpachoolā had been to witness a fun show in the disguise of a male. On way back she was too tired; so instead of making her bed she had fallen on the bed along with her sister in law. Vankchool once again realized how the seemingly innocent vow had saved him from killing his own sister. He felt very grateful to the Āchārya and repented that he did not listen to him for four months during which the monks stayed in his settlement. He thought that if he came across the Āchārya once again, he would follow his advice in every respect.

He felt that for following the Āchārya he should change his life. For that purpose he thought to undertake a daring burglary so as to gain enough wealth for the rest of his life. Ujjayini was a very prosperous city of that time. He therefore decided to burglarize the royal palace there. Accordingly he once came upon Ujjayini at midnight. Secretly approaching the palace, he climbed over a wall and happened to enter the royal bedroom. The king had been busy with some state affairs and his queen was waiting in the bedroom since long. As she saw Vankchool entering the bedroom, she was first taken aback. But looking at his handsome and youthful body, she got

enamored of him. Instead of shouting for help, she therefore asked for his love. Vankchool however remembered his vow of not mating a queen and refused to accept her offer.

The queen was very beautiful and did not believe that any one could resist her gesture. She told Vankchool that if he declined her offer, she would make him to face severe punishment for entering her bedroom. But Vankchool was now very firm in observing his vow and resolutely declined to abide by her desire. Thereby she got very enraged. In order to teach him a lesson, she deliberately undressed her hair and tearing her clothes, she shouted that some wicked man had entered the bedroom to rape her and called for help. The watchmen immediately rushed there and arrested Vankchool.

The next day he was brought to the royal court on the accusation of trying to rape the queen. Vankchool had decided that it was the test for observation of the vow and had made up his mind to tell the truth. He stated that he had entered the palace only for committing burglary and had no evil design towards the queen. Every one thought that his defence was unacceptable and he would be sentenced to death. It had however so happened that when Vankchool entered the royal bedroom, the king had finished his work and was approaching there. As he heard some voice coming from the bedroom, he had concealed himself behind the door and had overheard what had happened. He therefore not only released Vankchool but offered to accept him as a friend. Vankchool wanted something of that sort. He gladly accepted the offer. Giving up his settlement forever, he started living in an elegant palace in Ujjayini leading highly religious life. His friendship with the king grew with the passage of time and he gained the role of a close advisor to the king.

Once Vankchool got seriously ill. All the physicians tried their best to cure him but were unsuccessful. At last one person with specialized knowledge said that the disease was normally incurable but it could be cured by giving him the flesh of a crow. The king was very pleased to hear that and called for the flesh. But Vankchool was bound by his vow of not taking the flesh of crow. He therefore refused to take it. Every one pressed him because he had to take it only as medication. But Vankchool would not budge. He had gained a friend named Jindas who was always associated with his religious activities. The king called Jindas to persuade Vankchool to take the flesh for the sake of the maintenance of the body. Jindas however advised him to stick to his vow. Seeing that his end was near, Jindas asked Vankchool to adopt all possible vows and only remember that he was the soul. Vankchool gladly did that and remained all the time conscious of the soul. That way, he got to the end of life with utmost equanimity and attained heaven.

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SUDARSHAN AND QUEEN ABHAYĀ

Very long back, a king named Jitshatru was ruling over Champāpuri. He had a beautiful young queen named Abhayā. She was very proud of her beauty and used her glamour to get from the king whatever she liked. In that city there was a businessman named Sudarshan. He was handsome, youthful and attractive. He was very religious too and observed all possible austerities and restraints. Monogamy is one of the major restraints for house holders and it is as significant as is celibacy for the monks. It was however the age of polygamy and having multiple wives was considered a symbol of social status. Wealthy and handsome, as he was, Sudarshan could have afforded to marry many girls. He however knew that monogamy is highly virtuous and wanted to observe it to the utmost extent. He had therefore taken only one wife whose name was

Manoramä. She was very lovely and faithful to Sudarshan. By that marriage, the couple had got six sons who were very smart and were handsome and attractive like Sudarshan. Both the parents were happy with the boys and raised them with loving care and attention.

Sudarshan was also very straightforward, honest in dealings and scrupulously observed the moral code of conduct. Every one praised him for his virtues and for strictly observing the restraints. Even the king respected him for his honesty and straightforwardness. By all counts, Sudarshan was thus a happy man. He always remained contented with what he had obtained and never thought of gaining anything inordinately or by foul means.

Sudarshan had a close friend named Kapil who was always associated with him in the religious activities. Both of them once remained occupied in some religious performance longer than ever and reached home very late. Kapilä, the wife of Kapil asked her husband for the reason of coming home so late. While explaining to her the ritual that they were performing, Kapil showered all praises for the religious fervor of Sudarshan. He also narrated his wealth, youthfulness etc. and spoke highly about his handsomeness. On hearing that Kapilä got enamored of Sudarshan. Once, while Kapil was away, she called Sudarshan to her home on the pretext of her husband's illness. She was pleased to see that Sudarshan was far more handsome and attractive than she had thought. Smart and easy going as she was, she invited him to make love to her. Sudarshan however declined to accept it and reproached her for calling him on a false excuse. Kapilä felt insulted by his turning down of her offer. She thought that Sudarshan was too proud of his wealth and status. She took it as his arrogance and decided to teach him a lesson.

She was a favorite maid of queen Abhayä and knew that the latter was discontented with the king. She was also aware that the queen did not care much for the character and looked elsewhere with lustful eyes. Once, while the queen was talking about her dissatisfaction, Kapilä told her about the handsome, youthful and highly attractive Sudarshan. Abhayä therefore developed a longing for getting him. Once she was sitting in the balcony of the royal palace along with Kapilä. That very time, Sudarshan happened to pass by. Kapilä noticed him and drew the attention of the queen towards him. Abhayä was struck by his handsome and youthful appearance. She could see that he was far more attractive than she had thought. His attractiveness caught her fancy and she decided to seek his love. She asked Kapilä to manage to bring him to the palace immediately. Kapilä ran after him and said that Her Majesty, the queen, had called him for some work.

Sudarshan turned back and followed Kapilä towards the palace. As he approached the queen, he gently bowed to her and humbly asked what he could do for her. Abhayä said that she had a secret assignment that she could entrust only to an honest man like Sudarshan. He replied that it would be a privilege for him to be of service to Her Majesty. Abhayä then asked him to follow her for talking in privacy. Sudarshan had no reason to doubt her intention and followed in all innocence. Abhayä led him to her highly decorated bed room. Sudarshan felt a little embarrassed to enter the bed room. But as Abhayä called him inside, the unsuspecting Sudarshan went in and stood in her presence.

In order to create some confidence, Abhayä first talked to him about the problems that the king had with her parents and sought his advice. While talking, she deliberately slipped her Saree from the shoulder so as to display her beautiful and attractive figure. This however did not have any impact on Sudarshan. Then she allowed her ring to slip from her finger and as if for picking it up, she bent down in a way that could exhibit the delicate parts of her body. Since that too failed to attract the attention of Sudarshan, she cast aside all feminine limitations and said that she was not satisfied with her husband and was looking for a man like Sudarshan. She then shamelessly invited him to make love with her.

Sudarshan could now make out the awkward position that he had been in. He humbly said that being a subject of His Majesty's kingdom, he was like a son of Her Majesty and highly respected

the queen as such. It was therefore unbecoming on her part to display such feelings. Abhayā however replied that she was too much enamored of his youthfulness and could not stay without gaining his love. She also assured him that she had made adequate arrangements for keeping their affair a close secret and had taken necessary precautions for his safety too. No harm would therefore come forth by his responding to her gesture. So saying, she tried to grab his hand.

Meanwhile Sudarshan had grasped the gravity of the situation and had made up his mind. He stepped back and said “Your Majesty, I am thankful for all the feelings that you have shown. I am however sorry to state that I am impotent and cannot satisfy your urge. I hope, you will excuse me for my incapability.” As she heard it, she was overcome with utter despair. She felt stupid for inviting an impotent man and hated herself for the same. She could no longer bear his presence. She kicked him in disdain and virtually drove him out. Sudarshan breathed a sigh of relief. He was happy that he had been out of her clutches at last. He felt sorry that he had to tell a lie. It was however his duty in distress and hoped that God would forgive him for that lie. Since then he decided to stay away from the queen at all costs. He however did not know that it was not the end of the drama in which he was destined to play further role.

After a few months, there came a great festival and all the people had been out for picnicking in the state garden. The queen also had been there along with her entourage. There, she happened to see the sons of Sudarshan. She was struck by the handsome boys and inquired about them. One of her maids told her that they were the sons of Sudarshan. Abhayā was taken aback to hear that. Her heart experienced a jolt to learn that Sudarshan had befooled her by talking about his impotency. She however managed to absorb the shock. Hiding her inner feelings, she simply said that she was pleased to see such smart and handsome boys. Thenceforth, she became all the more intent to gain the love of Sudarshan.

How to bring Sudarshan to the palace was a problem for her. It was noticed by her maids that Sudarshan used to meditate in a nearby place during Paushadh which he used to observe every fortnight. Thereupon Abhayā asked Kapilā to arrange for tying him during his meditation and bring him tight to the palace. Accordingly one day he was tied while he was meditating and was brought to the queen in that state. Abhayā was pleased that she had ultimately got hold of him. She gently released his bondage and said that he had earlier escaped under a wrong excuse. Now she would not let him go without gaining his love. No alternative was then left to Sudarshan except saying plain ‘No’. Abhayā repeatedly asked him to abide by her wish and otherwise threatened to complain to the king that Sudarshan had entered her room with illicit motive.

Sudarshan could realize the fate that overlooked him, if he did not act as demanded by the queen. For him however, the observance of restraint was more important than saving his life. He therefore remained unperturbed and firmly declined to accept her offer. Thereupon, Abhayā tore her own clothes and started shouting that some miscreant had entered her room in order to rape her and called for succor. The watchmen on duty immediately ran towards her room and arrested Sudarshan. The next day he was brought to the court. It was easy to make out that Sudarshan had entered the palace in order to rape the queen who had to resist his attack. Her tattered clothes were the proof of the encounter between the two. He was sentenced to death for that heinous act.

During those days the people sentenced to such inglorious death were laid on the very sharp edge of a long conical pole that was called Shuli. The term literally means thorn like. The pole is flat at the bottom and continually tapers off upwards till it becomes needle like sharp at the upper edge. As the culprit is laid upon it, the sharp edge would pierce the body of the unfortunate man and by sheer weight he would come down with a burst body. It was decided to lay Sudarshan on Shuli for his abominable crime. Every one was shocked to learn that so called virtuous Sudarshan had indulged in such offense and had come out to watch him laid on Shuli. At the appointed time, he was taken up a ladder and was laid on the top of Shuli.

Some miracle usually happens to prevent such gross perpetration of injustice and a miracle did happen on that occasion. By a heavenly grace, the upper part of the Shuli split into two parts. One part of it bent down at right angle so as to make a sort of seat and to the surprise of every one, Sudarshan was seen sitting on that seat with his back at the unbent part of Shuli. There was a message in the air stating that Sudarshan was completely innocent and it was the queen Abhayā who had laid false allegation against him because he did not abide by her illicit wish. All the people were overjoyed to witness that miracle. Sudarshan was then honorably brought down and the queen was appropriately punished for laying the false allegation against him.

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VASAVADATTA AND UPAGUPTA

In ancient times Mathura, located in the present state of U.P., was one of the most well known and prosperous cities of India. 2000 years back there lived a very beautiful and highly attractive dancer named Vasavadatta. She was young, glamorous and graceful. Scores of well to do people used to go for watching her dance. They felt highly pleased and elated with her performance and showered on her valuable gifts in token of their appreciation. Her performance used to continue till late at night. Costly drinks virtually used to flow there. She was the dream girl for those who could afford and was therefore also called Swapnavasavadatta. People of Mathura used to consider her a jewel of the city.

Vasavadatta literally led a heavenly life. She lived in a palatial building where scores of maids stayed in attendance upon her. She had not to experience any shortage and led very luxurious life. There were many youths who longed for her and were willing to sacrifice their entire wealth for gaining her love. They were ever willing to serve her and considered themselves fortunate, if they got an opportunity to do something for her. Every desire of hers was looked upon by them as her grace. Whenever she wished, she used to pick up one of them as her bed partner. She was like a goddess of beauty for the youths of Mathura.

In the city there was also a young monk named Upagupta. He was handsome, intelligent, educated and well built. Had he wished it, he could have easily attained the top of the worldly life. But he had gained the opportunity to undertake in depth study of scriptures from his enlightened preceptor. That had convinced him of the utter futility and transitory nature of the worldly comforts and amenities. He had gained realization that the apparently happy worldly life is beset with unhappiness, miseries and afflictions. This had led him to the search for true happiness. He had therefore renounced the worldly life at the very young age and had become a possessionless monk. As such, he had adopted all the five major restraints inclusive of celibacy and scrupulously observed the same. As a monk, he needed only food, shelter and a pair of clothes. He lived in a cottage of grass at one end of the city, got food by going for alms and his minimal need of clothes was taken care of by devotees. This had helped him in overcoming all desires and in avoiding all sorts of craving or aversion. Under the state of detachment he could get the glimpse of true happiness emanating from within. The only purpose of his life was to gain liberation and in the meanwhile to render service wherever necessary..

Once Upagupta happened to go to Vasavadatta's place for alms of food. As he entered, he came upon the pathway paved with costly marbles of different shades and designs, fragrant flower plants of various hues and colors on both sides and water fountains at intervals spraying cool, perfumed water. He witnessed all this with a completely detached mind and proceeded towards the dining area. Seeing him approaching, an old maid came out to serve him. On the other side of the building, Vasavadatta was getting ready in her dressing room. She saw his reflection in one of the wall mirrors and was struck by his youthful and attractive appearance.

She got an urge to see him closely. She hurriedly finished her make up and came out with the glamorous look. She had put on fine clothes that neatly displayed the artistic shape of her figure. It looked, as if, beauty was flowing from all parts of her body. As she stood in front of Upagupta, he blessed her and waited for food unaffected by her glamour. She then said that she did not need blessings, because she had everything that a person could imagine. What she needed was his love and requested his company. Upagupta replied that he would do so at the appropriate time. So saying, he left the place.

After a few months Upagupta happened to go to her place for alms once again. As Vasavadatta saw him, she thought that he had come to give her the company. She therefore came out to receive him and thanked him for keeping his words. Upagupta however said that it was still not the right time and he had been there only for alms. Vasavadatta got disappointed and asked him when the appropriate time would come. Upagupta calmly asked her to wait and left with the alms. After that he did not come that side. Thinking that he might not be interested, Vasavadatta decided to forget him.

Years rolled on. Vasavadatta was happily spending her life in the midst of her adorers. but the time was leaving its marks upon her. She started losing her glamor and her beauty appeared fading. She tried to make good their impacts by resorting to additional make up; but how long was that going to be helpful? Moreover long hours of wakeful nights had spoilt her health. By mid thirties, her face began to wither and that worked as a brake for her admirers. They stopped going to her. Money could no longer flow in her lap and for the first time in her life, she had to experience shortage. Since she used to spend lavishly during her hay days, she had not saved too much for the rainy day. She could see that in absence of fresh income, she could no longer afford the palatial residence and the host of maids. She thereupon moved to a small house along with one single maid.

But the lustful life that she had lived demanded its toll. She had contracted venereal disease that made her look unattractive. She needed regular medication and nursing care which she could not afford. Fearing infection, the lone maid too left her. Now there was no one to care for her. All over her body she had boils and ulcers that gave agonizing pain and from which pus was flowing out. She had to take lot of trouble for keeping clean. But with the passage of time, her condition continued to deteriorate and she realized that her energy was steadily going down.

Gradually she got too weak to take care of herself. She vainly recalled the days when people used to hover around her like butterflies near a lamp. She bitterly lamented that she never cared for her future that time. She kept on losing her energy and her pain continued to grow. Eventually a time came when she could hardly get up even for urination and toilet. Her bed and the entire residence started stinking and the people around raised their nostrils, as offending smell started coming out. When they could no longer bear the foul smell, they came in to figure out the cause of the smell and to their utter disgust, they noticed her lying unconscious smeared with filthy materials. Thinking that she was dead, they wrapped her body in a piece of cloth and cast her out of the city.

After a while when Vasavadatta regained consciousness, she experienced agonizing pain all over the body and began to sob. Upagupta's cottage was nearby. As he heard the sobs, he went towards her. He could recognize her and was amazed to see her in that pitiable condition. Gently lifting her in his arms, he brought her to his cottage. There he carefully cleaned her body and applied medicine on her wounds. Then wrapping her in a clean cloth, he put her in his bed. As she experienced some solace, she opened her eyes. She could not believe her eyes, when she noticed that someone was nursing her very carefully. She asked in a low tone who he was and he replied with a gentle smile that he was Upagupta whose company she was longing for.

On hearing those words, she vainly tried to pull back from him. That slight jerk too brought upon pus from her wounds. As he got up to apply medicine once again, she respectfully murmured that

she was not fit to be nursed by him. She was too low laid woman and did not deserve the care of a saintly person like him. Upagupta replied that as a monk, it was his sacred duty to serve the afflicted. She spoke "My Lord, I am a sinner all my life. By your touching me, you would get polluted and will be breaking your restraint of celibacy. I am going to die any way and would not like to be all the more sinner by polluting a saint. For heaven's sake please leave me to my fate." Applying the medicine, Upagupta replied "You are no longer a sinner, because all the sins of those who sincerely repent are washed away. Nursing you does not any way affect my vow of celibacy. I am glad that I am in a position to keep my word of giving you company at this crucial hour. Now stop thinking anything else. Think only that 'I am not body. I am the pure soul that never gets polluted.' That will give you peace and you will face the end of your life with tranquility" She uttered those words in a feeble voice and tried to repeat the same. Slowly uttering the words three times, she breathed her last.

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GUNDHAR THE CARAVANEER

In ancient times, there was a wealthy and virtuous gentleman named Gundhar who lived in a city called Laxmipur. He used to organize large caravans, loaded with various commodities, that visited far off lands. They exchanged their contents at major centers of trade and carried out lucrative business. Gundhar was thus known all over as a great businessman. He was highly religious too and used his wealth for charitable purposes. Once, while he was on a business tour, he noticed that a saint was addressing an assembly in a nearby park. Gundhar took a seat there and attentively listened to what the saint was telling. During the sermon, the saint pointed out the importance and significance of the third restraint for the spiritual aspirants. He said that the restraint is popularly known as Adattadan, which means staying away from accepting or picking up anything unless it is offered by its legitimate owner. The observer of that restraint remains contented with whatever he gets naturally. By observance of that restraint, one gains all sorts of happiness in this world and heavenly life thereafter. Gundhar was much impressed by the sermon and took vow in the presence of the saint to observe that restraint for the rest of his life.

In the assembly there was one heavenly being named Sur. He was amazed to see that Gundhar had taken that vow. He knew that Gundhar was a caravaneer and had to go from place to place. It was hard to predict what one would need during the travels, specially when one has to travel to unknown lands. Gundhar's caravan would thus need anything at any time. It was therefore difficult for Sur to make out how Gundhar could maintain the vow of not taking anything unless it is specifically offered. He decided to put the sincerity of Gundhar to test during his ensuing business tour.

Next time, Gundhar loaded his 500 carts with valuable commodities and with that he embarked upon a journey to a distant land. He was riding his favorite horse that could run very fast and understood his slightest hint. On the way, the caravan entered a forest. Since it was shady and cool, Gundhar got down from the horse and started walking. He could not walk fast enough to keep pace with the others and was left behind the rest of the caravan. While he was thus walking alone, he noticed something very sparkling a little away. He went closer and saw that it was a diamond studded ring. He had an insight about the worth of diamonds and he could make out that the diamonds, studded in the ring, were very costly. In fact, he had nowhere seen such valuable diamonds. It was hard for him to make out how such precious ring might have been dropped there. He however very well remembered his vow of Adattadan and proceeded ahead, leaving the ring there.

Having noticed that the caravan had, meanwhile, been far ahead of him, he rode on his horse and sped it fast to get with his colleagues. Before however, he could reach the caravan, the front right leg of the horse got entangled in a hole. Gundhar experienced such a rude jerk that he could hardly maintain his balance. Gundhar got down to release the leg of his horse from the hole. As he dug the area surrounding the hole, he could notice that the soil beneath was shining like gold. By way of curiosity, he dug there a little deeper and to his surprise, he noticed very valuable treasure inside. Remembering his vow again, he did not even touch the treasure and proceeded ahead on the horse back.

The diamond ring and the valuable treasure were produced there by Sur's miraculous power. His intention was to create the sense of temptation in the mind of Gundhar so as to swerve him from his vow. As these tempting devices, however, failed to dissuade Gundhar, Sur decided to bring forth adversities so as to test the capacity and willingness of Gundhar to face that for the sake of his vow.

The forest area was now over and Gundhar could see a vast stretch of open land in front of him. By that time the caravan had reached out of his sight. thereupon, he sped his horse too fast in order to reach the caravan. After a while however, the horse got too much exhausted and tumbled down. Gundhar immediately got down to figure out what had gone wrong with the horse. He was shocked to notice that the poor animal was too much tired and was getting breathless. He could see that his dear horse was on the point of dying on account of over-exertion. Gundhar became very sorry for that. He very much regretted that he, himself, would be responsible for killing his horse by subjecting it to too much fatigue. He heartily repented for that mistake and earnestly wished that some sort of miracle would save his horse. He sincerely wanted to atone for the sin that he had committed by speeding his horse too much. In that mood, he decided within his heart that he would give all his wealth, if any one could save his horse from the impending death.

No miracle however occurred and Gundhar had to leave his horse dead. By that time the caravan had gone too far away and he could not see any way to reach it on foot. It was an arid tract and sun was shining right over his head. He got very thirsty and clamored for water. But how to get water in that arid area? He felt as if his throat was getting choked on account of dryness and thought that he would not survive without getting water. In desperation, he proceeded in search of water, but it was very hard for him to walk. With considerable difficulty he went ahead not knowing where he was going. After a while he noticed a lonely tree at a little distance. He felt much relieved and hopefully went towards the tree. To his pleasant surprise, he saw there a water bag hanging on a branch of that tree. He felt that God had come to his help at last and joyfully stretched his hand towards the bag.

But then he remembered his vow. How could he take water without the permission of the owner of the bag? He called aloud for its owner so as to seek his permission. There was however no reply. As he called again and again, a parrot that was sitting on a branch of the tree, spoke out in human voice and said that the bag belonged to a wood cutter who had been to collect the wood. The parrot also said that the woodcutter would not come back soon and Gundhar could safely quench his thirst during his absence. True to his vow, Gundhar however declined to drink the water without obtaining permission of the owner. For a moment, he closed his eyes in silent prayer to keep him firm in maintaining his vow even at the cost of his life.

When he reopened his eyes, he saw that there was neither the tree nor the parrot. Instead, he saw the heavenly being Sur with gleaming face. Sur said that he had doubts about the capacity of Gundhar to observe the restraint of Adattadan and had tried to test the same. It was he who had produced the diamond ring and the valuable treasure on his way. His intention was to tempt him. He was very glad to notice that Gundhar did not try to grab either of them. He had then created adversities in the form of the death of the horse, disappearance of the caravan, arid waterless

tract, the tree and the parrot to advise him to drink water. He was very pleased to note that Gundhar remained true to his vow even in adversities.

Then, Sur produced in front of Gundhar, the caravan along with his horse. Gundhar was pleased to see his horse alive. Sur also brought forth the diamond ring, that treasure as well as other valuables and asked Gundhar to accept the same as his gift for sincerely observing the restraint. Gundhar however refused to accept it and said that he had decided to give all his wealth to any one who could bring his horse back to life. Since Sur had brought his horse back, Gundhar offered all his wealth to Sur. How could however Sur accept it? He repeatedly urged Gundhar to accept what he was offering out of his pleasure and Gundhar repeatedly requested Sur to accept what he was offering as per his earlier resolve.

There was thus a sweet dispute between the two. Neither of them was willing to accept what was offered by the other. Ultimately, Gundhar's lieutenant suggested that since neither of them was willing to accept that wealth, let it be used for charitable and religious purposes. Both of them liked the idea. Sur heartily blessed Gundhar for his noble virtues and handed over the entire wealth to him for using it for the purposes that he thought fit. Then he went back to his place.

Gundhar spent the rest of his life in making the best use of the wealth. He built magnificent temples, constructed water works, set up educational institutions, provided relief for the poor and set up medical facilities, wherever necessary. Every one praised him for his benevolence and he lived happily ever after.

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JAMBUSWÄMI

In Rājgruhi there was a wealthy merchant named Rushabhadatta who was also known as Arhadas. His wife Dharini alias Jinmati gave birth to a very handsome son in 542 B.C. The boy was named Jambu. He turned out to be very bright and intelligent. Every one liked him. As he grew up, many families were eager to get him married to their daughters. Since it was the age of polygamy, his parents selected 8 girls of reputed families and Jambu was duly engaged with them. Prior to the marriage Jambu once went to the assembly of Sudharmāswāmi and was very much impressed by the sermon. He developed a very high sense of detachment and decided to renounce. His parents were of course not willing for his renouncing at that young age. Parents of the girls engaged to him were also much perturbed. They were worried about their daughters, since no one else would accept them on account of their being already engaged to him.

All of them pressed Jambu to give up his intention. They pointed out the rigors of ascetic life that he would not be able to face. They also told him that it is very hard to lead the life of a monk and advised him to go in for the comfortable family life. He however remained firm. The parents thought that he would change his mind, if he gets married. They therefore insisted upon his getting married before renouncing. Jambu agreed on condition that he should be allowed to renounce the day after his marriage. Since the girls to whom he was engaged were very beautiful and attractive, every one thought that he would surely gain attachment for them, once he is married. The elders therefore accepted that condition.

The wedding took place on a grand scale. Jambu's parents and those of the girls vied with one another in show of their prosperity. No effort was left out to make the wedding a memorable ceremony. Highly distinguished guests graced the occasion. Jewelry and other precious gifts that were heaped on the newly weds, were the envy for the whole city. Rājgruhi had rarely witnessed such pomp and splendor. Every one congratulated Jambu for getting such beautiful and

glamorous wives and wished him perfect happiness. At night Jambu was closeted in elegantly decorated bedroom along with his wives and the elders heaved a sigh of relief.

Jambu was however not at all affected by the glamor nor was he overcome by the beauty of those lovely girls. He had made up his mind to renounce the next day and wanted to make use of the night for orienting those girls for the purpose. He sat in front of them and started explaining the purely temporary and transitory character of life and everything pertaining to that.

At that time in the vicinity of Rājgruhi, there was a burglar named Prabhav. He had been a prince of Vindhya but had fallen out with his parents on the issue of some property. He therefore left the place and had embarked upon burglary. He had gathered with him 500 colleagues who were willing to undertake any sort of adventure at his command. He had acquired a device to put any one to sleep and he could break any type of lock. He came to know of the fabulous treasure accumulated on the occasion of Jambu's wedding and had decided to grab it.

At dead of the night he came to the place along with his followers and saw that every one had gone to sleep on account of the exhaustion of the ceremony. He asked his colleagues to pick up the valuables and himself proceeded towards Jambu's bedroom for the jewelry on the bodies of newly weds. From a little distance he heard Jambu talking to his wives. He could not believe that the newly weds were still awake. He came close to the door and tried to listen expecting exciting love gossip. To his utter astonishment Jambu was talking about the true nature of life. His words were so forceful that Prabhav could not stop listening.

Jambu's talk was appealing not only to his wives but also to Prabhav. He started thinking that he had fallen out with his parents and others for the sake of some possessions and was leading the nasty life of a burglar, while here was a young boy planning to give up everything that he had effortlessly gained. Jambu's talk was still going on. The more Prabhav listened, the more he hated himself. His men came to him with bundles of valuables, pointing out that it was getting dawn and they should leave. But Prabhav was not listening to them. He had developed disdain for his current life and was keen to change it. Ultimately he told his followers to leave him alone, because he had decided to give up burglary. They could therefore go on their own. All of them were exasperated at that. They said that they were not to go anywhere without him. If he was giving up the occupation, they were also willing to give it up.

By that time Jambu had finished. His wives were convinced of the futility of the worldly life and had decided to renounce with him. Then Prabhav came inside and said that he had come up for the burglary but had decided to renounce after listening his talk to his wives. He and his 500 followers made up their mind to be Jambu's pupils. In the morning news spread everywhere that Jambu was going to renounce that day along with his wives. His parents were disappointed that their intention did not materialize. They did not have any incentive to continue the household life and decided to renounce. And so was the decision of the girls' parents. A spectacular procession was organized leading all those 500+ people to the assembly of Sudharmāswāmi. Jambu became his pupil and Prabhav and his colleagues became Jambu's pupils.

Jambuswāmi as he became known thenceforth studied the entire teaching of Lord Mahavir. Most of Jain scriptures are composed in the form of dialogue from Sudharmāswāmi to Jambuswāmi. He became the head of the religious order when Sudharmāswāmi attained omniscience. He himself attained it at the age of 36. He was the last omniscient of the current time cycle. He attained Nirvan at the age of 80.

FOUR DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW

In times of Lord Mahavir there was a well known trader named Dhanyadev in Rajgrihi. He used to import and export variety of articles and his caravans used to go to distant places. Indian term for caravan is Sārthavāh. The trader was therefore known as Dhanya Sarthvah. His wife Bhadra used to take care of his manifold household affairs. He had four sons who used to attend to the different aspects of his vast business. All of them were married in well reputed families.

After some time his wife died. Dhanya therefore thought to distribute the work among his daughters in law. For that he wanted to know their inclinations, knowledge and wisdom. He was particularly keen to find the most intelligent and capable of them who could be the care taker of his entire household. For that purpose he once called them one after another and gave to each of them five grains of paddy. He told them to take best care of the grains and to give them back when he asked for the same.

The eldest of them was Ujjikā. She had noticed the large storage of paddy in the house. She was not much concerned for five simple grains handed over by her father in law. She thought that the old man must be getting crazy to ask her to take care of five grains. She threw them away thinking that she could give him the five grains from the storage whenever he called for it.

The second eldest was Bhogāvati. She too did not have any significance for the five tiny grains. She had however some regard for the old man. Therefore instead of throwing away the grains given by him, she ate them as Prasad from the father in law. Like Ujjikā, she also thought that she could give him the five grains from the storage when he asked for it.

The third was Rakshikā. She had regard for the old man and thought that whatever he did must be significant. She was used to obeying his instructions. She decided to keep the grains in perfect safety so that she could give the same back to him whenever he called for. She therefore carefully placed the five grains in a silk cloth, made a neat knot of the cloth, put the knot in her jewelry box and kept the box in a safe custody.

The youngest was Rohini. She had a high regard for her father in law and knew that he would not do anything without purpose. She wanted to find out the purpose of his instructions. She remembered that he had asked her to take best care of the grains. What can be better care of the paddy apart from sowing? she thought. She therefore sent the grains to her father and requested him to sow them in a carefully prepared bed. At the end of the season there came out five neatly grown ears each bearing about 100 grains. Rohini sent the message to grow all of them in a properly hedged section of a field. At the end of another season there came about 500 ears bearing too many paddy seeds. During the next season all of them were sown in a vast field resulting in tons of grains. Rohini instructed her parents to store them properly.

By that time Dhanya once again called his daughters in law and asked them to return the five grains that he had given. Ujjikā went into the store, selected five neat grains and handed over to him. Upon enquiring by Dhanya whether they were the same five grains that he had handed over, she confessed that she had thrown them away and she had brought the grains from the store. Dhanya said, 'Is that so?' Then he called Bhogāvati who too brought the grains from the store. Upon enquiring by Dhanya she confessed that she had eaten away the original grains and the grains that she was giving were from the store. Dhanya said O.K. to her.

Then he called Rakshikā and asked for the five grains. Rakshikā went to her treasure chest, opened the jewelry box, took out the knot and untying it she took the carefully preserved grains and handed over to the father in law. On enquiring by Dhanya she said that they were the same five grains that she had carefully preserved in her jewelry box. Dhanya complimented her for preserving the grains in safe custody.

Then came the turn of Rohini. When Dhanya asked for those five grains, she replied that she had sent them to her father and needed cart loads for bringing the same back. Dhanya feigned amazement and asked her why she needed that much transportation for bringing back those five grains. Thereupon Rohini told him how they were grown season after season. Dhanya was very pleased. He was sure that the girl would not only maintain the prosperity and reputation of the family but would also extend the same. He said that she had taken true care of the grains. He congratulated her for rightly understanding the purpose of his handing over those grains.

The next day he called all the family members for distributing the work. The entire management and planning was entrusted to Rohini; custody of the treasury and other valuables was entrusted to Rakshikā who had properly preserved the grains; kitchen work and cooking were entrusted to Bhogāvati who had eaten away the grains and the work of cleanliness and garbage was handed over to Ujjikā who had thrown them away.

This story tells us how the discretion and wisdom can lead to growth and prosperity. There is however a special religious significance of this story. Five grains stand for the five Anuvratas and the father in law stands for the preceptor who asks every one to carefully and meaningfully observe those Vratas. Some people are like Ujjikā who do not attach any importance to the Vratas and cast the teaching of preceptors to the wind. Some are like Bhogāvati who listen to the preceptors but do not realize the usefulness of the Vratas. Most of the people, who go for the sermons, belong to this category. They carefully listen and like the sermon but do not take home anything. Some are like Rakshikā. They understand the importance of the Vratas and carefully observe the same. But they do not realize that Vratas are meant for the realization of true Self.

Very few people are like Rohini who realize the importance of Vratas. For them external observance of Vratas is only a means to the true realization of Self. They observe them to an ever increasing extent and try to figure out to what extent they are helpful in getting rid of the inner enemies of craving and aversion. As the grains sown in the ground lose their identity and develop into a plant, so the observance of Vratas too is meant for the growth of the spiritual values.

This story was told by Sudharmāswāmi to Jambuswāmi. He told at the end that only the souls belonging to the last category proceed on the path of liberation.

(37)

SUBHADRĀ

In ancient times a king named Jitashatru was ruling over the city of Vasantpur. He had a wise and capable minister named Jindās. As per his name Jindās was a devotee of Jainism and was helpful in running the administration in accordance with the Jain tenets. By his wife Tattvamālini he had a daughter who was named Subhadrā. She was bright, attractive and lovable. She had the opportunity to study Jainism in depth and was convinced about the truth of that religion.

By the time she became young, Subhadrā was well versed in all the aspects of Jainism and enthusiastically performed different religious practices. She was very particular about Sāmayika which she regularly performed in true spirit. That not only enabled her to get the glimpse of the true self, but also gave her the peace and tranquillity of the mind. The charm and beauty, that she had been endowed with from the beginning, continued to increase with the passage of time. Many young people therefore longed to marry her. In order to avert any conflict of faith, her father had decided to get her married to the person who had faith in Jainism.

There was another city named Champāpuri where there was a well to do Buddhist family. They had a son named Buddhādās. He was smart, handsome and intelligent. He had heard about Subhadrā and was aspiring to marry her. When he came to know that Subhadrā would marry only a Jain bridegroom, he decided to feign as a Jain. For this purpose, he learnt all the details of Jainism as well as its code of conduct and started professing Jainism. Since Vasantpur was not very far away from Champāpuri, he frequently went there with the professed intention of visiting the Jain temples of that place. In due course he came to be known as a devoted Jain.

While he was once praying in the temple of Vasantpur, Jindās happened to come there. Seeing him, Buddhādās decided to display his devotion for Jainism. He professed to be totally absorbed in the prayer. Jindās noticed that and was highly impressed by the sense of his devotion. When the prayer was over, Jindās asked him who he was and from where he was coming. Buddhādās replied that he lived in Champāpuri and had been to Vasantpur by way of pilgrimage. As he mentioned about his family, Jindās was taken aback; because he knew it to be a Buddhist family. Buddhādās however told him with apparent humbleness that having learnt about Jainism, he had lost faith in Buddhism and had adopted Jainism.

Jindās was impressed by that reply and knowing him to be a co-religionist, he invited him for dinner at his place. Buddhādās accepted the same with an apparent sense of hesitation. During the dinner, he remained careful to let Jindās know that he knew all the intricacies of Jainism. His courteous behavior also pleased every one. Jindās and Tattvamālini therefore considered him a suitable candidate for Subhadrā and asked him to be their guest whenever he came to Vasantpur. Buddhādās was actually waiting for such an opportunity and gladly accepted the offer. Thereby he could come in close contact with Subhadrā. In due course Jindās could notice that Subhadrā had developed affection for Buddhādās. It was therefore decided to offer her hand in marriage to him and accordingly the wedding took place on an auspicious day with great fanfare.

Subhadrā came to Champāpuri with the fondest expectations. She was however disappointed when she came to know that her in laws were staunch Buddhists and despised Jainism. Her disappointment grew when she could figure out that her husband too was Buddhist at heart and had deceived her by professing Jainism. As a true Jain girl she however accepted what was destined for her and continued to practice her religion with the expectation that one day she would be in a position to convince Buddhādās and his family about the truth underlying the Jainism.

Her mother in law was particularly against her performing of Jain practices. She tried to disturb her in all possible ways while Subhadrā would be performing Sāmayika. She also raised obstacles to Subhadrā's going to Jain temple and to the sermons of Jain monks. Buddhādās loved Subhadrā and did not want to come in her way. But he was helpless against the insistence of his mother who resorted to harassing and abusing Subhadrā every now and then. But that did not perturb the faith of Subhadrā and she continued to have her practices with a sense of equanimity.

Once it so happened that while the mother in law had been out, a Jain monk happened to come for alms. Subhadrā had the opportunity to see a Jain monk after a very long time. She was very pleased to see him and devotedly offered the food that would be acceptable to him. While offering the food, Subhadrā could notice that the monk was afflicted by some particle in his eye. Subhadrā thought that she could easily take out the particle with a piece of cloth. She therefore folded one end of her handkerchief so as to make it pointed, slightly moistened it and with that she carefully took out the particle without physically touching the monk.

At that very time her mother in law arrived. Seeing both of them standing close to each other, her rage knew no bounds. She shouted at the monk calling him lustful and beggar and drove him away. Then she turned to Subhadrā and started abusing her with the accusation of adultery.

Then she began to wail, loudly uttering that her family was polluted by such a characterless girl. When Buddhadās came home, she told him with all possible exaggeration how she had noticed Subhadrā in the company of the monk. Subhadrā tried to explain what had happened but Buddhadās refused to listen to her. He was much enraged to hear what his mother had said and thought that Subhadrā could not have been a faithful wife. Thereupon he decided to send her back to her father's place and in the meantime asked her to stay confined in her room.

For Subhadrā it was the time of an ordeal. She was perfectly chaste but could not see any way to vindicate her chastity. She had however unflinching faith in her religion and in the efficacy of Sāmāyika. She therefore decided to observe the fast and stay tuned to Sāmāyika all the time. Shāsandevī, the goddess who looks to the well being of Jain order, was pleased by her sense of devotion and appeared in her dream. She told Subhadra not to worry because she was by her side and was instituting a miraculous device that could enable the latter to vindicate her chastity. So saying, the Shāsandevī disappeared.

In the morning it was noticed that all the gates of Champāpuri were firmly locked. The gate keepers tried to open them but could not do so in spite of all possible efforts. Many people came around to witness what had gone wrong with the gates. There were lot of people within the city intending to go out and many more outside who wanted to come in. All of them were feeling helpless and could not make out what to do. The entire traffic of Champapuri with the outside world came to a stand still.

When the king came to know of that, he was much perturbed. He could imagine that it could have resulted from the wrath of some heavenly being. He therefore prayed his family goddess to come to the help. The goddess was pleased by his sincere prayer and said that the gates have been locked as a result of ill treatment to a pious girl of his city and they could be opened only if a truly chaste girl draws water from the well in a strainer tied to the cotton yarn and sprinkles that water at the gates. Thereupon the king announced that whoever could draw the water in a strainer as required, would be recognized as the chaste girl of the city and would be given appropriate award in token of her purity.

For that purpose the queen and other royal girls came out first of all, because they considered themselves very chaste. Here however was not the test of mere physical chastity but of mental one too. Very cautiously, they laid the strainer in the well but failed to draw the water. Other girls of the city then tried their luck. In many cases, the cotton yarn gave way while laying down the strainer and even those, whose strainers could reach the water, were not successful in drawing the water. As none of them succeeded, Subhadrā asked the permission of her mother in law to let her try. The mother in law however curtly turned her down saying that her character was now known and she had no intention to lay the prestige of her family at stake.

Since no one could draw the water in the strainer as required, the king was much perturbed. He therefore issued orders for every woman of the city to come out and try. Thus Subhadrā also got a chance. She came to the well. Tying the strainer with the cotton yarn, she confidently let it down in the well and immersed it in the water. Then, she offered her silent prayer to the Shāsandevī and reciting the Navkāṛmantra she started to draw out the strainer. To the surprise of every one the water had stayed in the strainer. Subhadra could realize that Shāsandevī was invisibly holding the water. She took that water in her hand and sprayed it at the gates. Every one was astonished to notice that the doors of the gates instantly opened.

The city breathed a sigh of relief when the gates were thus opened. Every one praised Subhadrā for her performance. It was decided by the king to honor her as the perfectly chaste girl of the city. Subhadrā was accordingly given a rousing reception in the royal court and the people of Champāpuri thronged to witness the occasion. People of all sorts felt much elated and congratulated Subhadrā as the most chaste girl of the city. Buddhadās and his mother also realized that they had unjustly accused Subhadrā of the adultery and they asked for her

forgiveness. They also realized the efficacy of Jainism. The main difference between Jainism and Buddhism lies in respect of existence or inexistence of the soul. The way Subhadrā had exercised her spirituality, they got convinced of the existence of the soul and therefore adopted the Jain faith. Subhadrā felt happy that she had at last gained what she was looking for and spent many years thereafter in the midst of happiness.

Later on, Subhadrā thought it was the time for her to devote the rest of the life entirely to the spiritual pursuit. She already had the in-depth study of Jainism and had been faithfully practicing the same as laid down for the house holders. What was now required was to practice the same exhaustively. For that purpose, she renounced the family life and became a nun. In that capacity, she scrupulously observed the code of conduct for the renounced. Thus combining the trinity of knowledge(Jñān), faith(Darshan) and conduct(Chāritra) in her life, she gained omniscience or Kewaljnān and ultimately attained the liberation.

(38)

KALĀVATI

Long back in Mālwa (One part of the present State of Madhya Pradesh) there was a king named Vijaysen. He had a son named Jaysen and a daughter named Kalāvati. Both of them were very smart and lovable. At the appropriate age they were sent to school. Bright and intelligent as they were, both of them quickly mastered the different arts and crafts that were taught at that time. Jaysen was also given necessary training in the State crafts. Kalāvati studied all the fine arts and got known as a highly accomplished girl. She was very pretty from the childhood and as she became young, she turned out to be one of the most beautiful and graceful girls of that time.

The king was now eager to find out a suitable match for her. It was customary during those days to hold a Swayamvar for the girls of royal family. Swayamvar means the selection of the match by the girl herself. For that purpose all the well known kings and princes, who were considered suitable candidates for marrying the girl, were invited to attend the function. At the appointed time the bride used to come forth with a garland. She would pass by the candidates one after another and listen to their biodata and other particulars so as to enable her to make the decision. If she liked any one of them, she would lay the garland around the neck of that candidate. On some occasions the bride or her father also used to stipulate some test that the candidates had to undergo for being eligible to get the girl and the candidate who succeeded in the test could marry the girl.

Vijaysen decided to hold such Swayamvar for getting a match for Kalāvati. For that purpose he sent invitation to many kings and princes to attend the function. On that occasion Kalāvati had stipulated that whoever wants to marry her, should give satisfactory replies to four questions of hers. Since she was known everywhere as the prize girl of that time, every one was eager to get her hand and arrived for the function with all possible pomp and splendor. Among the candidates was also the king Shankh of Shankhpuri who was one of the bravest and the most handsome kings of that time.

On the appointed day Kalāvati came to the Mandap with the garland. As she saw King Shankh, she was very much impressed and wished that he would be able to give correct replies to her questions. The questions were as under.

- 1) Which is the true god to be worshipped?
- 2) Who is the true Guru?

3) What is of essence?

4) Which is the most substantial element?

Different candidates gave different replies that were not acceptable to Kalāvati. When it was the turn of Shankh, he replied as under;

1) The entities who have overcome all the defilements are the gods to be worshipped.

2) The preceptor who knows scriptures, who exercises self control and is free from attachment is the true Guru.

3) Seeking the well being of soul is of essence

4) The soul is the only substantial element.

Kalāvati was pleased with the replies of Shankh. So she laid her garland around his neck. Her father and all other relatives liked her choice and praised her for making the right selection. An auspicious day was then fixed for performance of the wedding ceremony. On that occasion the city was adorned with all sorts of costly decorations. Every where there were banners wishing all sorts of happiness to the would be couple. The wedding ceremony took place with all possible pomp in the presence of the well known people. On that occasion the king Vijaysen gave many costly gifts to the newly weds. Then Kalāvati left Mälwā and went to Shankhpuri with her husband.

Shankh and Kalāvati felt very happy and pleased for getting together. They very much loved each other. It seemed as if they were made for each other. Much time passed away in the midst of utmost joy and happiness. Then one night, Kalāvati dreamt of swallowing a pot of nectar. She was pleased to have such a nice and pleasing dream. She woke up and talked to her husband about the dream. In the morning, the King Shankh called for the well known astrologers. They were unanimous in stating that the dream was very auspicious and was symbolic of getting a sweet son. The king and the queen were very pleased to hear that. From that time on, Shankh took all possible care to see that none of Kalāvati's desires remained unfulfilled. He considered the pregnancy of his beloved as a heavenly boon. He also took every precaution to see that Kalāvati does not come across any type of problem. For Kalāvati, a few months thus passed in the midst of divine happiness.

Then came the occasion of the shower party. The king Vijaysen was very glad to learn that he was going to get a grand child. He sent highly valuable gifts for his daughter as well as for the would be baby. The prince Jaysen wanted to send something special for his loving sister. He got prepared two diamond studded bracelets with artistic designs and sent the same to his sister along with the gifts from his father. Kalāvati was excited to see all those gifts but when she noticed the gift from her brother, her joy knew no bounds. She instantly put the bracelets on her hands. She had been highly glamorous from the beginning, but her glamour increased a lot with those bracelets on. Her friends too appreciated the gift and were envying her for having so lovable brother. Kalāvati replied that she heartily loved him and was very much pleased to get from him those wonderful bracelets.

That very time the king Shankh happened to come that side. He overheard the reply that Kalāvati gave to her friend. He got a rude shock to hear those words. Most of the kings used to be very suspicious. They did not hesitate to take even the most drastic step, if they somehow happened to get the slightest excuse for doubting the chastity of their wives. They could not tolerate even the so called unchastity of their partners. On hearing those words Shankh thought that Kalāvati was talking about some lover who had sent the bracelets to her. He got mad to think that his

beloved was unchaste. Without waiting for verifying the fact, he decided to punish her for the supposed infidelity. He instantly turned back and calling his trusted attendants, he gave them orders to take Kalāvati out of the boundaries of his state, to sever her hands and to bring the same back along with the bracelets.

The attendants trembled within their hearts to listen to the king. They were however required to carry out the orders of the king without raising any question. Therefore they went to the palace and requested Kalāvati to get on the chariot. She thought that the king might have thought to take her on a pleasure trip, so she gladly got on the chariot. As she occupied her seat, the attendants rode the chariot towards the forest. When the chariot came to the bank of a river outside the domain of Shankh, they requested Kalāvati to get down. Then they told her that the king was displeased with her and had ordered them to bring her hands. In token of her love for the king, she stretched her hands that were severed with a sharp knife that they had brought. That caused lot of bleeding. One of the attendants however knew about the healing property of some herbs that were available there in plenty. He applied to her arms the liquor of those herbs. When the bleeding stopped, the attendants rode back to the city with the hands of Kalāvati leaving her alone in the forest.

The fate of Kalāvati had thus taken a big plunge. From the crest of the heavenly happiness she had come down to a very miserable position where there was no one to help her and being handless, she could not help herself. On the top of that she was pregnant and the delivery was not far off. She could not make out what to do and patiently bore the pain while reciting Navkār Mantra. But the pain of the severance of hands suddenly led to the delivery pain and soon after she gave birth to a lovely son. But how was she to handle the baby without the hands? She lamented the fate of the baby who could not even be cleared of the umbilical cord. Luckily a forest girl happened to pass by that time. She saw the plight of Kalāvati. Without thinking for a moment she rushed towards her and helped in the natal work. Then cleaning the baby with water from the river, the girl put the boy in the lap of Kalāvati.

But how was Kalāvati to hold the boy to her breast without having hands? The only way for her was to reconcile to her fate. From her childhood she had been deeply religious as would have been seen from the type of questions that she had put at the time of her Swayamvar. As such she believed that the misery that she was undergoing could have been only the consequence of her evil Karma. She therefore decided to bear it patiently while reciting Navkār Mantra all the time.

There are some heavenly beings known as Shāsandev and Shāsan devi who usually come to the help of true devotees in times of distress and adversities. One such Shasandevi came to know about the plight of Kalāvati. She immediately presented herself and said to Kalāvati not to worry. So saying, she gave her new hands. Kalāvati felt highly gratified to get that timely help. She heartily thanked the Shāsandevi and picking up her son, she held him to her breasts. Thereafter the Shāsandevi took Kalāvati to her abode along with the baby boy.

Now Kalāvati was happy once again. But she could not forget the misery that she had faced for a short while. During that time she had realized that happiness as well as unhappiness are very fickle and transitory and no sensible person can rely on that. What she had actually experienced was a sort of warning. Therefore instead of calling her husband to that place, she decided to stay away from the attachment as far as possible. She made up her mind to renounce the worldly life as soon as her son grew up and in the meanwhile to pass the time in religious activities.

Now let us see what happened in Shankhpuri. Leaving Kalāvati handless in the forest, those attendants came back and presented to the king the severed hands with the bracelets. As he looked at the bracelets, he could read the name of Jaysen carved thereon. He could thus make out that it was Kalāvati's own brother who had sent the bracelets and he had committed a blunder in doubting her chastity. He could also realize how sinful it was to punish his innocent wife so severely. He shuddered to think about the miserable fate of the pregnant Kalāvati in the most

helpless condition and decided to mend the situation before it got too late. Knowing from the attendants where they had left her, he immediately sprang over his horse and rode towards the river with all possible speed. By the time he however arrived at the river, Kalāvati had already left. He virtually broke down to see that the vultures were grazing upon her umbilical cord and he came back thinking that she had been a prey to some wild animal.

His heart was broken with the realization that he had foolhardily lost her beloved forever. He remembered the happy days that he had passed with her. He felt immensely sad that those days were never to come back. Slowly and steadily he developed detachment for the worldly life and yearned for renouncing the same. But he was worrying that he had no heir to his throne.

Years passed that way. Once he decided to take a ride for diverting his mind. As he came to the river where he had lost his beloved, he stopped there for a couple of minutes. That very time his son, who had now grown up to be a smart youth, happened to come there. Shankh was pleased to see him and enquired who he was and who were his parents. The boy replied about his mother but said that he did not know anything about his father. This made the king curious to know about his mother. The boy said that she was meditating a little away.

The king went there and saw that she was his Kalāvati. He was amazed to see that she was endowed with the hands too. He was pleased to think that he would get the happy days once again. While talking with her, however, he realized that it was too late for thinking about the worldly life, since she had set off for the renouncement. Shankh thought that he should also go the same way, because he had now gained his son. So after crowning his son, he too renounced and became a monk. Then observing the renounced life till the end, they were reborn as heavenly beings.

The name of Kalāvati occurs in the “Bharahesar Sajjhaya” which is daily recited by the Jains during the morning Pratikraman.

(39)

Sumitra

Once upon a time there was a king named Tārāpid. He was a brave, just and popular ruler. By the dint of his valor he had established his sovereignty over the adjacent states. His capital city was known as Chandrā which was a well laid out, clean and nice city. He had a capable and intelligent minister named Sumitra. True to his name he was a friend to the king as well as to the people of Chandrā. With his diplomacy the king could exercise effective control over the territories conquered by him. The neighboring rulers were not happy with the overlordship of Chandrā but felt helpless to do anything as long as Sumitra was the minister.

Sumitra was a devoted Jain and to the extent possible, he used to perform different rituals laid down for Jain house holders. He also sincerely practiced austerities and other religious restraints. The king did not have faith in such practices and could not appreciate the religious activities of his minister. He thought that religion arose from the superstitious beliefs of the weak minded people and did not have much significance. He repeatedly asked Sumitra to show the purpose of the religion in daily life. Sumitra tried to explain the usefulness of the religion for the well being of the soul. The king however remained unconvinced about the existence of such abstract element and used to ridicule Sumitra for holding such notions. Sumitra was therefore waiting for an opportunity for displaying the efficacy of the religion so that he could convince the king about the necessity of resorting to religious life.

Once it was the 14th day of the lunar month. On that day it was customary for Sumitra to take an off for observing the ritual of Paushadh. It is a ritual that enables the aspirant to practice the life of a monk. He was however called by the king in the early morning for consultation on several issues and remained busy for the entire day. Thus he could not go home till evening. He very much regretted for his failure to observe Paushadh during the day. On entering the home he therefore decided to observe Deshāvakāshik which is considered a substitute for Paushadh.

Now it so happened that the king learnt from his spies that one of his tributaries named Sursen was actively planning to revolt against the authority of Chandrā. The matter urgently called for the appropriate action so that Sursen could be checked in time. He therefore sent his trusted messenger to summon Sumitra to the palace for consultation. Sumitra was however bound by his restraint of Deshāvakāshik that did not allow him to come out of his home. He therefore told the messenger that he was tied up with the ritual and could not go to the king before the day break.

The king was however much perturbed by the news about the reported plans of Sursen and badly needed the presence of Sumitra. He was therefore very much annoyed, when he heard that Sumitra would not come before the next morning. He could not agree that religious practices should come in the way of such grave issues. In all possible rage, he sent the messenger again to Sumitra with the instructions to bring the minister to the palace immediately. He also asked the messenger to tell Sumitra that if he failed to come right then, he should be ready to quit the job.

Sumitra was amazed to hear the message. He was in the midst of a dilemma. Either he had to break his ritual or give up the ministership. He had however firm faith in the efficacy of the religion and was convinced that no harm would come forth by performing the religious activities in true spirit. He therefore decided to go in for the second alternative even at the cost of courting the displeasure of the king. Accordingly he handed over to the messenger the royal insignia and the official robe of the minister without the slightest hesitation and quietly continued with the ritual.

The messenger was a man of vanity. He had a long standing craving to wear the robe and the royal insignia. He was overjoyed to have in his hand those coveted symbols and could not resist the temptation of putting on the same. By that time it was dark. Thinking that no one would notice his putting on the same on account of the darkness, he put the ministerial robe and the royal insignia on his body and proceeded to the palace in all the pomp of a minister.

On the other side, Sursen had come to the conclusion that he could not throw away the yoke of Chandrā as long as Sumitra was the minister. He very much resented the tribute that he was required to pay to Chandrā and was looking for an opportunity to regain his independence. He perceived Sumitra as the most formidable obstacle in his way. He had therefore been planning to get rid of him somehow. He knew that Sumitra frequently used to move without adequate protection. He had therefore sent to Chandrā a selected band of his body guards in disguise with the instructions that whenever they came across Sumitra unprotected, they should kill him.

That evening, those body guards were looking for Sumitra, when the messenger passed by them in the ministerial garb. As it was very dark, they could not correctly identify the messenger. They thought that it was the best opportunity to carry out their plan. Thereupon, they overtook the messenger and killed him thinking him to be Sumitra. Then leaving the messenger dead, they immediately rushed to get out of the city, But watchmen of the city happened to pass by that very time. They heard the cries of the dying messenger and saw the assailants running away. They vigorously pursued the murderers and apprehended them.

Meanwhile, the king was getting furious to note that the messenger had not come back. Out of impatience, he sent the chief of his body guards to figure out where the messenger was delayed. On his way, the chief came across a big crowd that had gathered near the dead body of the messenger. They were talking about the murder of the minister. As he pierced the crowd out of

curiosity, he could notice the dead body and the arrested murderers. At first he too felt that the minister was lying dead there. But as he drew closer, he could see that it was the dead body of the messenger.

For a while, the chief wondered why those culprits might have killed the innocent messenger. But the robe and the royal insignia on the dead body made it evident that the messenger must have been taken as the minister. The matter became plain, when the assailants were identified as the men of Sursen. It was clear that the messenger was killed as apart of the plan of Sursen to kill the minister. Realizing the gravity of the situation, the chief took over the custody of the assailants and putting them in chains, he immediately brought them in the presence of the king.

The king was mad to see the men of Sursen in front of him. It was clear from his face that he would administer severe punishment to the assailants for what they intended to do. The fear was writ large on the face of culprits. The only way to save themselves from the wrath of the king was to confess the entire design of Sursen. They fell on their knees and beseeched the pardon of the king, assuring him that they would leave Sursen forever and would thenceforth remain faithful to the king. Because they also agreed to disclose the secrets of Sursen, the king decided to spare their lives. He entrusted them to the custody of the police chief with the instructions that the entire plan of Sursen should be reported to him in the morning.

The next morning the police chief could brief the king about the entire plan of Sursen inclusive of the size of his army and the locations where he had stored his weapons and other equipment. The problem, that was perplexing his mind and for which he had to summon his minister the previous evening, was thus automatically solved. He therefore sent for Sumitra and honorably handed back to him the ministerial robe and the royal insignia. He appreciated the way Sumitra stood firm in the religious practice even at the cost of losing his position. He could also realize that resorting to the religion helps in the routine life as well. Some unseen forces seem to be at work to solve the problems of the true devotees. From that time the king therefore decided to lead the religious life.

(40)

Ächärya Sthulibhadra

King Shrenik belonged to Shishunag dynasty which came to an end with the death of his great grandson Udayi. Nand dynasty then took over the Magadha. There were nine Nands one after another and Dhananand was the last king of that dynasty. He was very greedy and eager to accumulate wealth. He was keen to know about a hidden treasure belonging to his predecessors. His old prime minister Shaktäl who was holding the office since the time of Dhananand's father, was supposed to know about it. Dhananand tried his utmost to get the information, but Shaktäl did not provide any indication of the treasure. He was therefore forced to retire and the administration was entrusted to other trusted ministers. Shaktäl was learned and knowledgeable. Many scholars and highly placed officials liked to consult him. Hardly any one however dared to go to him because every one was feeling afraid of the displeasure of the king. The capability of Shaktäl thus remained mostly unutilized.

Shaktäl had two sons named Sthulibhadra and Shriyak and seven daughters. Sthulibhadra was smart, brilliant and handsome, but he was easy going. In Patliputra, the capital city, there was a beautiful young city dancer named Kosha. From the very young age, Sthulibhadra used to go to watch her concert. He developed liking for her and she too liked him. Slowly they developed strong attachment for each other. Sthulibhadra therefore left home at the young age of 18 and started living with her. The king had an intention to appoint him in the court, but Sthulibhadra was

too much engrossed in love of Kosha. He had lost all political ambition and therefore declined the offer. He was so much enamored of Kosha that he did not even feel much concern for his aged father or other family members. The king had therefore appointed Shriyak in his court.

Later part of Dhananad's regime witnessed major political upheavals. In Patliputra situation was in turmoil. Lot of people were feeling dissatisfied with the administration. Many of them were looking for the end of Nand dynasty. Dhananand was therefore feeling unsafe and was suspicious of every one. He was suspicious of Shriyak too. Shaktäl knew this and was much worried about the political future of his son. In order to provide proof of Shriyak's loyalty to the king, Shaktäl himself courted death at the hands of his own son.

When Sthulibhadra learnt about that tragic event, he was taken aback. By that time he had spent 12 years with Kosha and had never cared for any one else. His father's death was an eye opener. He started reflecting on his past life. 'Twelve long years of my youthful life! What did I get during this long period?' He realized that he had not gained anything that would endure. The tragic end of his father brought home to him the reality that the life does come to an end. 'Is there no way to escape death? he asked himself, 'What is the nature of life after all? Who am I and what is the mission of my life?'

Dwelling deep into these questions, he realized that the body and all worldly aspects are transitory and physical pleasures do not lead to lasting happiness. He looked at his image in the mirror and noticed the unmistakable marks of lustful life. He realized that he was wasting his youth and it was the time to retract. He made up his mind to go in search of lasting happiness. He rose and leaving the home of Kosha, he proceeded straight to Āchārya Sambhutivijay who was the fifth successor to Lord Mahavir. Surrendering himself to Āchārya, he said that he was sick of the lustful life and wanted to do something worthwhile in the life. Āchārya looked at him. Here was a young man of 30 who seemed to have lost the youthful vigor. The lustful life had virtually knocked him down; but brightness inherited from the illustrious father was still apparent on his face. In his sense of desperation, the learned Āchārya saw hope for the Lord's religious order and accepted him as his pupil.

Sthulibhadra did not take much time in adjusting to the new pattern of life. He was now keen to make good for the lost years. He decided to devote his energy for spiritual upliftment. He started working diligently and in no time gained the confidence of his preceptor. Sambhutivijay died shortly after that and his colleague Bhadrabahuśwami took over as the head of the religious order. Under his stewardship, Sthulibhadra thoroughly studied all the available scriptures excepting Purvas. His life as a monk was also exemplary. He had successfully overcome the sense of attachment and gained control over all sorts of defilements.

Once, plans were being laid down for the ensuing monsoon. Sthulibhadra and three of his colleagues who had attained high level of equanimity wanted to test it by spending the monsoon under the most trying conditions. Those three colleagues had planned to spend it in utmost hazardous situations. One of them said that he would stay at the entrance of a lion's den; another wanted to spend it near a snake's hole; the third wanted to spend it on the top of an open well. The preceptor knew about their capabilities to withstand the hardships and permitted them. He then asked Sthulibhadra about his plans and the latter said that he would like to spend it in the picture gallery of Kosha. Āchārya knew very well how tough it was to stay unattached under those highly comfortable and seductive circumstances, The way Sthulibhadra had however adapted to the new life and the severity with which he was observing the code of conduct, the Āchārya felt confident about his capacity to face that ordeal and permitted him to go to Kosha.

Accordingly Sthulibhadra went to Kosha's palace and asked her to allot him the picture gallery. She was badly missing him and was glad that he had come back. She asked him to stay in the room he was occupying earlier. Sthulibhadra however insisted on staying in the gallery. She thought that he was unduly attracted to the lustful picturesque gallery, but that was a welcome

sign for her. Thus feeling sure of regaining his love, she gladly permitted him to stay in the picture gallery. Now just visualize the situation. Here was youthful Sthulibhadra living in playfully decorated gallery in the presence of glamorous Kosha whom he had loved so long and there was no one else to interfere. It was too tempting. Even the great sage Vishwamitra had succumbed under such conditions. To resist that temptation was the mightiest task that Sthulibhadra had undertaken. Kosha used all her skills to win back his love; she employed every trick to seduce him from renouncement, but he remained steady like a rock. Ultimately Kosha had to give up and Sthulibhadra passed the monsoon without any way being swayed by attachment. History has not recorded any other case of staying totally detached in the midst of such highly seductive circumstances.

At the end of monsoon, pupils came back to report their experience to the preceptor. First came the monk who had successfully stayed at the entrance of lion's den. The preceptor was glad with his performance and congratulated him for undertaking the hard task. Then came the monk who had stayed near the snake's hole. He was also congratulated for the difficult task. Then came the one who had spent his days on the top of the well. The preceptor congratulated him too. When Sthulibhadra reported his tale, the preceptor was thrilled to listen that. He rose from his seat in all praise and hailed Sthulibhadra for performing a herculean task. Other pupils could not make out why the preceptor was so much impressed by performance of Sthulibhadra who had stayed at ease in most comfortable situation. Āchārya explained that it was a feat that no one else could do. The first monk said that he could easily do it the next monsoon. The Āchārya tried to dissuade him from his intent, because it was beyond his capability. The monk however persisted and decided to show his ability to face that situation.

The next monsoon that monk went to Kosha's place. The lustful pictures of the gallery were enough to make him excited. When he saw glamorous Kosha, his remaining resistance melted away and he begged for her love. Kosha could do anything for Sthulibhadra, but she had no regard for this monk. She could easily make out his caliber. In order to teach him a lesson she however agreed to make love, if he could bring for her the diamond studded garment for which Nepal was known. The monk was so overcome with the lust that he immediately proceeded to Nepal forgetting that monks are not supposed to travel in monsoon. With considerable difficulty he procured a garment and coming back to Patliputra he gleefully handed it to Kosha. He was now thrilled with the expectation of getting her. She however used it for wiping her feet and threw it away in garbage. The monk could not make out what was wrong with her. 'Are you crazy, Kosha? Why are you throwing away the precious gift that I have brought with so much difficulty?' he asked. 'Then why are you out to throw away the precious life of monkhood that you have obtained at heavy cost?' was the reply of Kosha. The monk realized his foolishness and went back to the preceptor to report his miserable failure. From then onwards Sthulibhadra became the acknowledged leader of all the pupils.

Sthulibhadra had now to learn the 14 Purvas. Bhadrabahuśwami thought that he deserved that and started teaching him. By the time, Sthulibhadra had finished 10 Purvas, they happened to come to Patliputra. Sthulibhadra's sisters who also had renounced, came to see him. Sthulibhadra knew it and thought to show them his miraculous capability. Thereupon he assumed the form of a lion. As the sisters came to his room, they were scared to see the lion. They felt afraid that the lion might have eaten him away. They reported it to Bhadrabahuśwami. He could make out what had happened and asked the girls to go back to the room. Sthulibhadra had resumed his original form and the sisters were gratified that their great brother was alive and safe. Bhadrabahuśwami was however annoyed that Sthulibhadra had used his capability for such trivial purpose. He therefore refused to teach him further.

Later on, there was a long lasting famine in north India. In that condition of acute shortage it was not easy for the monks to properly observe the code of conduct. Many of the monks therefore migrated to south under the leadership of Bhadrabahuśwami. For those who remained behind, it was hard to exactly remember the texts of scriptures composed by Lord's Ganadharas. There

came about varying versions of the scriptures. A convention was therefore held at the end of famine at Patliputra. The convention prepared a generally acceptable version of the scriptures. Since this was done under the stewardship of Sthulibhadra, his name stands very high in the annals of Jainism. Even at present his name is recited next to Lord Mahavir and Gautamswami.

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