

LORD MAHAVIR

About 2600 years ago religion in India took a very ugly shape. The original classification of society in the form of four classes had deteriorated. Brahmins considered themselves to be very superior. They looked down upon people of other castes. The fate of Shudras or untouchables was rendered terrible and they were forever condemned to serve other castes. They were required to perform the most degrading of tasks. They were not allowed to engage in other professions. The importance of sacrifices as a symbol of giving up and renouncing was lost sight of and had taken a very violent form. Animal sacrifices were regularly performed and people believed that sacrifices would gain them the favor of the gods.

Under such social and religious conditions, Lord Mahāvīr was born in 599 B.C. His birthplace was Kshatriyakund (also known as Kundalpur), which was a part of the famous Vaishālī republic in the present Indian State of Bihar. His father's name was Siddhārtha who was the king of Kshatriyakund. His mother's name was Trishalā. She was the sister of Chetak, the king of Vaishālī.

Lord Mahāvīr had an elder brother named Nandivardhan and a sister named Sudarshana. King Siddhārtha began to prosper when Queen Trishalā became pregnant. Therefore, his parents gave him the name of Vardhamān, meaning, "increasing". He is popularly known as Mahāvīr since he showed a high degree of courage. He was also known by his family name as Jnātaputra.

From early childhood, he was found to be unusually intelligent, fearless, affectionate, and compassionate. At school, he hardly needed any instructions. Once, when he was playing with his friends, a big snake appeared in the field. His friends were scared and ran away when they saw the snake but Mahāvīr was fearless. He caught the snake by the tail and threw it away. Another time a giant monster came to frighten him, but Lord Mahāvīr was unmoved.

At a mature age, his parents wanted him to marry. Though he was not interested in worldly affairs, he agreed. He married a princess named Yashodā and eventually had a daughter named Priyadarshana. (According to Digambar tradition he did not marry). By that time, he firmly realized that worldly happiness and pleasures do not last and are based mostly on the inconvenience, miseries, and unhappiness of others. He therefore planned to renounce the worldly life in search of true happiness. However, he knew that his parents would be very sad if he renounces. 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 more years 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, and facing all types of hardships and distress. During that time, he was continually meditating in search of liberation from unhappiness. At last, he attained omniscience (Kevaljñān) at the age of 42 and became omniscient (one who knows everything). For the next 30 years, he taught the people about the path of achieving real and lasting happiness. He set up afresh the religious order called Tirth and therefore 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 the views of others. He left his mortal body at the age of 72. This event is known as Nirvana, which occurred on the last day of the Indian calendar and is celebrated since then as Diwālī or Deepāvālī (festival of lights). The path that he taught has remained alive and is known as Jainism.

Significant points of Teachings of Lord Mahāvīr:

Mahāvīr Swami made religion simple and natural, free from elaborate ritual complexities. His teachings reflected the internal beauty and harmony of the soul.

Mahāvīr Swami taught the idea of supremacy of human life and stressed the importance of the positive attitude of life.

Bhagawān Mahāvīr's message of nonviolence (Ahinsā), truth (Satya), non-stealing (Achaurya), celibacy (Brahma-Charya), and non-possession (Aparigraha) is full of universal compassion.

Bhagawān Mahāvīr said that, "A living body is not merely an integration of limbs and flesh but it is the abode of the soul, which potentially has perfect perception (Anant-Darshan), perfect knowledge (Anant-Jnān), perfect power (Anant-Vīrya), and perfect bliss (Anant-Sukha). Mahāvīr's message reflects the freedom and spiritual joy of the living being.

Mahāvīr Swami emphasized that all living beings, irrespective of their size, shape, and form how spiritually developed or undeveloped, are equal and we should love and respect them. This way he preached the gospel of universal love.

Mahāvīr rejected the concept of God as a creator, a protector, and a destroyer of the universe. He also denounced the worshiping of gods and goddesses as a means of material gains and personal benefits.

Key message:

Jainism believes that God is not the creator or the destroyer of the universe. Jains consider Tirthankars as Gods. Any human being is capable of becoming a Tirthankar if he/she performs the required austerities to acquire the Tirthankar Nām Karma. Lord Mahāvīr is the last and 24th Tirthankar of this half time cycle. Lord Mahāvīr re-affirmed the four great vows of Jainism, namely, non-violence, truth, non-stealing and non-possessiveness. He also added the fifth vow of celibacy. Lord Mahāvīr propagated the concept of multiplicity of viewpoints known as Anekāntvāda. As all Tirthankars do, Lord Mahāvīr established the Jain religious order (Jain Sangh), which flourishes to date. Lord Mahāvīr's preachings are compiled in several texts, collectively known as Āgam.

Lord Adināth

Time has no beginning or end. It is not possible to measure the length of the past or the future. 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, rise and fall, and progress and decline. After every rise, there is a fall and a fall is again followed by a rise. According to Jain tradition, a period of progress, known as Utsarpini or the ascending order is marked with all around improvements, like a longer life span, height, prosperity, happiness etc. On the other hand, a period of regress known as Avasarpini or the descending order is marked with all around deterioration and decline, like a shorter life span, height, etc. These two periods together make one time cycle.

Each of the Utsarpini and the Avasarpini is divided into six eras called Ārās meaning the spokes of a wheel. The present one is the Avasarpini and we live in its fifth Ārā. It is also known as Dusham ārā (or Kali-Yug in the Hindu tradition).

Up to the end of the third Ārā of the current Avasarpini, the people were leading a more or less natural, and simple life. The population was low and the nature was bountiful. Nature provided all the necessities of human beings who did not have to undertake much effort for obtaining the necessities of life. Trees were their shelter 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 their food from the trees, and bushes etc. 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 spent their lives in peace.

Jain tradition believes that till then women invariably gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl. As kids, they grew 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. Towards the end of third Ārā, there lived a King whose name was Nābhi-Rāyā. His beautiful queen's name was Maru Devi. He could peacefully manage the community of that time. Queen Maru-devi in due course gave birth to a set of twins who were named Rushabha and Sumangalā, who is also known as Nanda by some people.

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

Rushabha was a visionary, thinker and inventor. He visualized that the struggle for survival would become worse unless some system of producing the necessities of life was resorted to. He realized that people could make an effort for gaining their requirements from nature instead of relying exclusively on natural bounties. Being 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 taught the people how to make life comfortable. He taught how to cook food, how to make clothes from fiber, how to raise animals like cows, horses, etc. and also how to build houses. Thus the first city came into existence, Vinita, that became his capital. This city was later known as Ayodhyā. He also evolved and developed different arts and crafts whereby a variety of articles could be made from wood, metal, stone, etc.

His father started the marriage system when Rushabha was married not only to Sumangalā but also to another girl named Sunandā who had lost her birth partner in an accident. Rushabha sanctified the system of marriage and institutionalized family life. Thus, a social order was evolved and Rushabha as the first acknowledged ruler of 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 of the kingdom loved Rushabhdev for providing them peace and happiness.

Rushabhdev had 100 sons of whom the eldest two, Bharat and Bāhubali are well known and 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 the scriptures are written. Her sister Sundari cultivated an exceptional talent in mathematics.

There was still one more mission to be fulfilled by Rushabhdev. Once, while he was watching a dance, the dancer suddenly died. Rushabhdev became very disturbed by this incident. He started pondering over the incident and realized that every phenomenon and every situation in the universe undergoes changes and that no situation stays forever. He developed a detachment for everything that is impermanent and ephemeral and he decided to devote his life to the search of lasting happiness. For this purpose, he made his son Bharat the king of Vinita and entrusted Taxshilā to Bāhubali. To the remaining 98 sons he distributed other parts of his vast kingdom. Then he renounced every thing else and became a monk without possession in the search of the ultimate truth. 4000 of his associates and followers also joined him in renunciation.

As a monk, Rushabhdev moved from place to place. Moreover, he stayed in a state of 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 decided to demonstrate to them the way a monk is supposed to live. Therefore, he started going for alms for food. The people however did

not know what type of food to offer the monks. Rushabhdev therefore could not get the food he could accept and had to continue fasting.

Months passed that way. After undergoing fasts for thirteen months and nine days, while he was in Hastinapur, he went to the sugarcane farm of his grandson Shreyans. It was the day of Akshaya Tritiya, the third day of the bright half of the month of Vaisakha, which usually falls in the month of May. Shreyans offered sugarcane juice that was acceptable to the Grandfather. Thus, he ended the long fast with sugar cane juice. In commemoration of this event, people try to observe a similar austerity. As it is not possible to fast that long, they fast on alternate days during the period of that austerity and at the end of thirteen months they terminate it with sugarcane juice on the Akshaya Tritiya day.

After years of rigorous austerities and search for truth, Rushabhdev was meditating under a banyan tree on the 11th day of the dark half of Falgun (that usually falls in March), when he attained Kevaljnän. This is known as the ultimate enlightenment and the attainment of Omniscience. Then for guiding the people towards the right path, he established the fourfold religious order comprising monks, nuns, householder males and householder females. Rushabhdev, the son of Bharat (Some people considered him a son of Rushabhdev) became the head of the monks and Brähmi and Sundari headed the order of nuns. As a founder of that religious order which is known as Tirth, he is considered as the first Tirthankar of the current Avasarpini. Being thus the first Lord, he is also known as Ädi Näth (Ädi means the first or the beginning and Näth means the Lord). He lived long enough thereafter to teach the truth about everlasting happiness.

Lord Pärshvanäth

About 3000 years ago, King Ashwasen was ruling over the Kingdom of Väränasi, which is also known as Banaras, situated on the bank of Holy River Ganga. He was a benevolent and popular ruler. He had a queen named Vämädevi. On the 10th day of the dark half of the month of Margashirsh* (which usually falls 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 Pärshvakumär, because 'Pärshva' in the Sanskrit language, means 'beside'. He grew up in the midst of wealth and happiness. In due course, he grew to be a very attractive young man known for his courtesy, bravery, and valor. His reputation was well known in all the kingdoms and many kings were eager to have their daughters married to him. He however did not develop much attachment to worldly life and showed no eagerness for getting married.

King Ashwasen and Vämädevi ultimately convinced Prince Pärshvakumär to marry Prabhävati, a princess from the neighboring kingdom. The wedding ceremony was performed with all the pomp and splendor and Pärshvakumär started enjoying happy days with Prabhävati.

At that time there was a 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 Väränasi to perform a Panchägni (five fires) penance. Many people were impressed by his penance and therefore worshipped Kamath. When Pärshvakumär came to know this, he realized the violence of living beings involved in a 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 because of his ritual. By his extra sensory perception, Pärshvakumär could see 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 surprise of the onlookers, a half-burnt snake came out of the burning piece of wood. The snake was burnt so badly that he died. Pärshvakumär recited the Navakärmantra for the benefit of the dying snake, who was reborn as Dharanendra, the lord of Asurkumars. Kamath became very annoyed by this interference but was unable to do anything at that time. He started observing a more severe penance and at the end of his life, he was reborn as Meghmali, the lord of rain.

Observing the miseries that living beings had to experience, Pärshvakumär developed a high degree of detachment. At the age of 30, he renounced all his possessions and family and became a monk. Later on, he was known as Pärshvanäth. 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 Pārshvanāth had interfered in his penance in an earlier life. He decided 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 Pārshvanāth stayed in meditation unperturbed, Meghmali brought forth heavy rains. The rainwater touched the feet of Pārshvanāth and started accumulating. It came up to his knees and then to his waist and in no time, it came up to his neck.

Dharanendra noticed that Pārshvanāth, his benefactor, was going to drown in rising floodwater. He immediately came there and placed a quick growing lotus below the feet of the Lord so that He could stay above water. Then he spread his fangs all across the head and the sides of the Lord in order to protect Him from pouring rain. Dharanendra then severely reproached Meghmali for his wretched act and asked him to stop the rain. All efforts of Meghmali to harass the Lord were thus in vain. He was disappointed and realized that he was unnecessarily creating trouble for the graceful, merciful Lord. He withdrew all his supernatural power and fell at the feet of the Lord with a sense of deep remorse. He sincerely begged the Lord to forgive him for his evil acts.

During the period of that distress, the Lord was in deep meditation. He had developed perfect equanimity. As a result, he did not have any special affection for Dharanendra for the protection he had extended or hatred for Meghmali for the distress he had 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 falls in April. Then he began preaching the true religion. He reinstated the Tirth or religious four-fold order and became the 23rd Tirthankar. He attracted many followers. The principal disciples of Tirthankars are known as Ganadhars. Lord Pārshvanāth had 10 such Ganadhars. His parents and Prabhāvatī renounced and became his disciples as well. Thereafter he lived long enough to spread true religion and attain nirvana at the age of 100 years on the Sametshikhar Hill. This is located in the state of Bihar and is the most famous place of pilgrimage for Jains.

Key Message:

Pārshvakumār demonstrated a very keen sense of non-violence and detachment from all things and people. These are the qualities, which are essential for attaining self-realization. He showed us that one should be detached and impartial regardless of whether a person is our well-wisher or ill-wisher. We may not always know the reason why a person behaves in a strange way towards us. It may very well be because of karma from a past life.

King Megharath

Once there was a discussion going on in Indra's (king of heavenly gods) court. One of the demi-gods said that there are brave and merciful kings on Earth who would not hesitate laying down their own lives to protect those who come to them for shelter. Another demi-god doubted his statement. The two began to argue and so Indra intervened by asking them to go to Earth and see for themselves. The two demi-gods made a plan of action. One of them decided to take the form of a pigeon, and the other took the form of a hawk.

On the Earth, King Megharath was sitting in his court surrounded by his courtiers. At that time, a pigeon flew in through an open window and started circling inside the hall. To the king's surprise, it landed on his lap. The king realized that the pigeon had come there out of fear.

At that very instant, a hawk flew into the king's court too. He said to the king, "This pigeon is my prey." The king was struck with wonder to hear a bird speak. However, he replied, "It is true that this pigeon is your prey, but now it is under my shelter. I will not give you this pigeon, but I can give you some other food."

He ordered his servants to bring a basket of sweets. However, the hawk said, "I am not a human being, and I am not vegetarian. I need flesh for my food."

The king said, "Let me give you my own flesh instead of this pigeon's flesh." Upon hearing this, one of the courtiers said, "Your Majesty, why should you give your own flesh? Let's get the flesh from a butcher's shop."

The king replied, "No, because just as a confectioner's business thrives when we consume sweets, a butcher's trade flourishes when we use meat. The butcher will have to kill another animal in order to supply us the meat. This pigeon has sought refuge and it is my duty to protect it. At the same time, it is my duty to see that no one else is harmed in this process. Therefore, I will give my own flesh to the hawk."

With these words, he took out his dagger, and cut off a piece of flesh from his thigh and offered that to the hawk. The whole court was stunned. However, the hawk said to the king, "Oh, king I want the same amount of flesh as the pigeon."

Therefore, a weighing scale was brought to the court. The king put the pigeon on one side and a piece of his own flesh on the other. The king kept putting more and more of his flesh on the scale, but it was still not enough. Finally, the king got ready to put his whole body on the scale. The court was stunned that the king was giving his own life for an insignificant bird. But the king considered it his duty to protect the bird to be above everything else. He sat in the scale on the side opposite to the pigeon, closed his eyes, and began meditating.

As soon as the king started meditation, the pigeon and the hawk assumed their original divine forms. Both demi-gods bowed to the king and said, "Oh great king! You are blessed. We are convinced that you are a brave and merciful man."

With these words, they praised and saluted the king again and left. The whole court resounded with cheers of joy, "Long live King Megharath."

Later on, the soul of King Megharath became the sixteenth Tirthankar, Lord Shānti-Nāth.

Key message:

This story teaches us that it is the utmost duty of everyone to protect and help those who are less fortunate than us. A merciful person is someone who is not only influenced by seeing the misery and suffering of others, but goes a step further and attempts to alleviate the pain. He gives financial aid to those who are poor, and gives food to those who are hungry and needy. A merciful person would not harm others to promote himself but on the contrary, would sacrifice his own life to save the lives of the others.

Tirthankar Mallināth

In ancient times there was a city named Veetshok in the Mahā-Videha area. Mahabal was the king of this city. He had six very close friends since childhood. All seven friends were so close that they did everything together. None of them will do anything on one's own without consulting the others.

Once, Dharmaghosh-suri, a well-known Āchārya of that time, came to Veetshok city. King Mahabal went to listen his sermon and was very impressed. He realized the soul's true nature and renounced worldly life. His six friends also decided to renounce along with him. King Mahabal and his six friends became disciples of Dharmaghosh-suri.

As monks, these seven friends observed austerities and restraints together. Mahabal, however, wanted to gain more Punya than his friends and therefore secretly observed longer austerities. For instance, if it were agreed by all of them to observe one fast, Mahabal would fast for the second day, under the disguise of a

stomach disorder, or any other excuse. If it were agreed upon to fast for two days, Mahabal would fast for three days on similar grounds, and so on. Moreover, he also worshiped 20 Beej Sthänaks or root causes of enlightenment that lead to the Tirthankar Näm karma and was thus destined to become the 19th Tirthankar of the current time cycle. All of them thus continued to observe ever-increasing austerities during that life and eventually attained the heavenly abode.

After completing the heavenly life span, the six friends of Mahabal were born as princes and became kings in due course. All of them came to be known for their valor and boldness. One of them had his seat in Ayodhyä, the second in Champä, the third in Hastinäpur, the fourth in Kämpilypur, the fifth in Shrävasti and the sixth in Käshi. All these places were located in the present states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

At that time, King Kumbha was ruling over the city of Mithilä. When his queen Prabhävati became pregnant, she saw 14 dreams. (Mothers of all Tirthankars see 14 dreams when they are pregnant). Since Mahabal had earned the Tirthankar Näm karma, his soul descended into the womb of Prabhävati. As he had indulged in deception by secretly observing longer austerities, he was destined to be born as a female. (Digambar sect believes that Lord Mallinäth was a male). Accordingly, Prabhävati gave birth to a daughter, who was named Malli. Later, Prabhävati also had a son, who was named Malladin.

Their parents fondly raised Malli and Malladin. Malli was exceedingly charming and beautiful and grew to be a very attractive girl. Malladin respected her as the elder sister. Kumbha wanted to give them the best education and therefore entrusted their training to highly respected teachers who taught them all the required arts and crafts. Malladin learned all the martial arts and became a bold and brave youth. Malli mastered all the fine arts and became a very talented and accomplished princess.

Once it was decided to set up an art gallery in Mithilä. A marvelous building was constructed for this purpose and all the well-known artists were invited to draw pictures for the gallery. One of them, who had come from Hastinäpur, had the exceptional ability to prepare an accurate portrait of anyone by merely seeing one limb of that person. He once happened to see the toe of Malli and just from that, he drew an accurate portrait of Malli on a wall. That portrait vividly displayed every detail of the princess. It was so lifelike that when prince Malladin came to see the gallery and happened to look at the portrait, he felt as if his sister was standing there and actually folded his hands as a token of his respect for her.

When it was brought to his notice that it was merely a portrait, he was curious to figure out how the artist could obtain every minute detail of her body. Thereupon he was informed that the artist had achieved a skill whereby he could draw the full portrait of any one merely by looking at any one limb. It was no doubt a very rare accomplishment. The prince could, however, make out that knowing the secrets of one's body could be misused for blackmailing, and the art thus posed a serious threat to privacy of the people. He therefore wanted to prevent the use of that art. Accordingly, the artist was asked to give up his art in return for a prize. The artist however didn't agree. He insisted upon his right to draw. In order to prevent the misuse, the prince ordered that the thumb of the artist be cut off and then he will be allowed to go anywhere he liked.

The artist was very angry and displeased and decided to take revenge. He went to Hastinäpur, and there, he got hold of an artist who could draw the portraits as per his instructions. By doing this, he arranged to prepare a yet more attractive portrait of Malli and presented the same to the king of Hastinäpur, who had a rivalry towards the city of Mithilä. The king was very much impressed by this portrait. He fell in love with Malli and decided to marry princess Malli. He therefore sent a messenger to Mithilä with a marriage proposal.

In due course, the above mentioned kings of Ayodhyä, Champä, Käshi, Kämpilypur and Shrävasti also came to know about the exceptional beauty of Malli and all of them sent their proposals to marry Malli. Malli's father Kumbha was put in an embarrassing position upon receiving the six proposals. After considering these proposals, he did not find any of them suitable for Malli and rejected all of them. Thereupon all the six princes decided to attack Mithilä in order to get Malli. Kumbha boldly faced them with all his might, but he could not stand against the combined strength of the invading forces. He therefore retreated to his capital and closed the city gates to defend the city from within. The invading forces then laid

siege to Mithilā. The city could not withstand the siege from all those kingdoms. This was indeed a problem.

When Malli came to know of the problem, she dwelt deep into the matter. She had an enlightened mind and realized that the root of the problem lay in her earlier life. She remembered that she was Mahabal and those six princes were her close friends. She also remembered how all of them had become the disciples of Dharmaghosh-suri and how she had secretly observed longer austerities. She realized that due to their deep affection for her in the previous life, they were keen on marrying her.

Malli therefore decided to tackle the issue to bring the truth home to those friends. She told her father not to worry about the problem and leave everything to her. She remembered that her palace had a hall with six doors leading to the center of the hall. She arranged to set up well-furnished rooms across from each door. The access to each room was arranged in such a way that a person coming towards any one of them could not see another person proceeding towards another room. The doors of the hall were fitted with a fine screen through which people sitting in the rooms could glance at the center of the hall.

Princess Malli, on the other hand arranged for a lifelike statue of herself so that anyone looking at the statue would believe that it was Malli herself. The statue was hollow with a hole at the top, which could be covered tightly. That statue was placed in the middle of the hall and a maid was asked to put a morsel of food twice a day within its cavity and to close its top immediately.

Then she requested her father to send invitations to all six princes to come to the hall to meet her. The invitations were so planned that all of them would come to the hall in the evening and wait in the room assigned to them. At the appropriate time, all the princes came and occupied their respective room. As they glanced through the screen, they immediately noticed the beautiful statue of Malli. Each of them took it as Malli herself and anxiously waited to be called inside. They also noticed that Malli was far more beautiful than they had expected and immediately fell in love with her.

As they were waiting, Malli entered the hall through a secret tunnel and standing at the back of the statue, she opened the top. The food that had been put inside had become rotten and gave off a foul odor. It was so obnoxious that every prince had to cover his nose. Thereupon Malli presented herself and asked why they could not face the smell of the person whom they loved so much. They admitted that they could not bear that foul odor.

Malli then explained that the very food she used to eat was put within the statue. The food in her body did not stink merely because there was a soul inside which prevented the rotting. When her soul leaves the body, her body too would start to smell. It is the nature of the body to degenerate, decay, and disintegrate. As such, what is the purpose of getting attached to a body, which is going to face that fate sooner or later? Is it not worthwhile to pursue something that is going to be ever-lasting?

As the princess stood there in amazement, she asked them to remember who they were in their previous lives. Then she said that all of them were close friends and did everything together. Upon hearing this, they vividly saw their previous lives. That raised an acute sense of detachment for the ephemeral worldly state and all of them decided to renounce in order to further the spiritual pursuit that was left undone in the earlier life.

Very elaborate arrangements were then made for the renunciation ceremony. Malli ascended in a special palanquin made for the purpose and went to Sahasrāmraavan. Then, descending from the palanquin, she gave up everything and adopted self-initiation. She had very little Karma left on her soul. All those Karmas were destroyed in very little time and she attained omniscience on that very same day. Thereafter she moved around the country for a long time to show the path of liberation to others. Ultimately she attained liberation on Mt. Sametshikhar.

Key Message:

The body is merely a temporary vehicle to carry the soul. The soul is eternal while the body eventually dies. When you die, your soul simply goes to the next body, unless of course you have attained liberation. Physical beauty is very superficial and is independent of the soul or person inside the body. Malli made this point through the statue and the spoiled food.

Guru Gautam-Swämi

In 607 B.C., in the village of Gobar of India, a Brahmin couple called Vasubhuti and Prithvi Gautam (family name) had a son named Indrabhuti. He was tall and handsome. He had two younger brothers named Agnibhuti and Väyubhuti. All three were well versed in the Hindu literature (Vedas) and other rituals at an early age. They were very popular and great scholars in the state of Magadh, India. Each one of them had 500 disciples.

Once in the city of Apäpä, a Brahmin named Somil was conducting a Yajna (sacrificial ceremony) at his home. There were over forty-four hundred Brahmins present for the occasion, and eleven popular scholars were among them.

Indrabhuti stood out as a bright star. Somil was a staunch supporter of the Brahmin sacrificial rite and was very happy during the ceremony. The whole town was excited by this event in which they were going to sacrifice sheep and goats. Suddenly, Somil noticed many celestial beings from heaven descending towards his sacrificial site. He thought that this would make his offering ceremony the most popular in history. He told the people, "Look at the sky. Even the angels are coming to bless us." The whole town eagerly looked at the sky.

To their surprise the celestial beings did not stop at their site, instead they went further down. Somil's ego melted away as he learned that the celestial beings paid homage to Lord Mahävir, who had come to nearby Mahäsen Forest to give a sermon. Indrabhuti was outraged by this incident and his ego was bruised. He started thinking to himself, "Who is this Mahävir who does not even use affluent Sanskrit, but speaks the common public language of Ardha Mägadhi." Everyone in the ceremony was overpowered by the mere presence of Lord Mahävir. Indrabhuti once again thought, "Mahävir opposes animal sacrifices, and if he succeeds then we Brahmins will lose our livelihood. I will debate with him." He left the Yajna site to challenge Lord Mahävir.

Mahävir welcomed Indrabhuti by calling him by his name even though they had never met. Indrabhuti was surprised, but then he said to himself, "Who does not know me? I am not surprised he knows my name. I wonder if he knows what I am thinking." Omniscient Mahävir knew what was going through Indrabhuti's mind. Indrabhuti, even though a great scholar, had doubt about the existence of Ätmä (soul) and was thinking to himself "Can Mahävir tell that I doubt the existence of the soul?" The next moment Mahävir said, "Indrabhuti, Ätmä (soul - consciousness) is there and you should not question it." Indrabhuti was shocked and began to think very highly of Mahävir. Then they had a philosophical discussion and Indrabhuti changed his beliefs and became Mahävir's first and chief disciple. Indrabhuti was fifty years old at the time, and from then on, he was called Gautam-swämi, because he came from the Gautam family.

Meanwhile in the town, Somil and other scholars were waiting to greet the expected winner of the debate, Indrabhuti. They were shocked to learn that Indrabhuti had become a disciple of Mahävir. The other ten Brahmin scholars also went to debate Mahävir, but instead became his disciples in the same way as Indrabhuti. The people present at Somil's place began to leave and Somil canceled the ceremony and turned all the animals loose.

Once, Gautam-swämi was returning after the Gochari (getting food or alms) and he noticed many people going in another direction. He asked them what was going on. They said, "We are going to see Anand Shrävak. He has been performing austerities and has attained a special power (Avadhijnän)." Anand Shrävak was Mahävir's follower so Gautam-swämi decided to go and visit him. When Anand saw Gautam-

swāmi coming to his house, he was very happy that his guru (spiritual teacher) visited him. Though he was very weak due to his austerities, he got up and welcomed Gautam-swāmi. Gautam-swāmi inquired about his condition. Anand replied, "With your blessings, I am fine." After some time Anand told Gautam-swāmi with respect, "Reverend teacher, I have attained a special power (Avadhijnān) and because of which I can see as high as the fourteenth heaven and as low as the seventh hell." Gautam-swāmi thought, "A Shrāvaka can attain Avadhijnān, but not to this extent." Aloud he told Anand, "You should do Prāyashchitta (atonement) for your wrong imagination." Anand was puzzled. He knew that he was correct but his teacher told him to atone for it. Therefore, he politely asked Gautam-swāmi, "Does one have to atone for telling the truth?" Gautam-swāmi replied, "No," and then left the place thinking, "I will reconfirm this with Lord Mahāvīr."

Gautam-swāmi returned to Lord Mahāvīr and asked about Anand's special power. Mahāvīr said, "Gautam, Anand was telling the truth. How could a person like you with so much knowledge make such a mistake? You should atone for your mistake." Mahāvīr believed in the truth and he would never cover up the mistake of his disciple just to make their group look good. Gautam-swāmi put his alms aside and immediately went to Anand's house to ask for forgiveness for his doubt about his special power. Anand was proud of his humble teacher who did not mind admitting his fault to his followers.

On another occasion, Gautam-swāmi went to town for the alms. He was returning with the kheer (a sweet made from rice and milk) in a Pātra (bowl) when he saw fifteen hundred hermits. Gautam-swāmi felt that they were hungry and offered them the kheer.

They began to wonder how Gautam-swāmi would feed all of them. Gautam-swāmi requested all of the hermits to sit down. Since he possessed a special power called Akshinmahānāsi Labdhi (non-diminishing power), he then served everyone the kheer from his bowl. While serving the kheer, he kept his thumb in it to invoke the power. To everyone's surprise, they were all well served from the small Pātra (bowl). The hermits were all so impressed by Gautam-swāmi that all fifteen hundred decided to become Jain monks under Lord Mahāvīr.

Many Sādhus, including those hermits, attained Kevaljnān, the ultimate knowledge but Gautam-swāmi was still unable to attain it. He was worried that he would never attain Kevaljnān. One day Gautam-swāmi asked Lord Mahāvīr, "There were eleven of us (main disciples - Ganadhars) who accepted Dikshā and most of them have attained Kevaljnān. Why am I so unlucky that I am not able to attain Kevaljnān?" Lord Mahāvīr replied, "Gautam, you have too much affection for me. In order to attain Kevaljnān you must overcome the attachment. So, until you give up your attachment towards me, it will not be possible for you to attain Kevaljnān."

On the day when Lord Mahāvīr was going to attain Nirvān (liberation), he sent Gautam-swāmi to a nearby village to preach to a man named Devsharma. On his way back, Gautam-swāmi learned that Lord Mahāvīr had attained Nirvān (died). Gautam-swāmi went into a state of shock and sorrow, lamenting, "Lord Mahāvīr knew this was going to happen. Why did he send me away?" Gautam-swāmi could not stop his tears and started weeping. Within a few minutes he came back to his senses and began thinking, "No one can live forever; no relationship is permanent. Why was I so attached to Mahāvīr?" He contemplated that he was wrong and gave up attachment for Mahāvīr. During this deep thinking, he destroyed his Ghāti Karmas and attained the ultimate knowledge, (Kevaljnān) at the age of eighty.

He attained Nirvān, at the age of ninety-two in 515 B.C.

Key Message

Gautam Swami was Brahmin by birth and a very well learned Pundit. When he met Lord Mahāvīr and found that the Lord was far more learned than him, he let go of his ego and became His disciple. Thus, his life teaches us that one should always respect those who are spiritually and religiously more advanced than us. Gautam Swami was the first and the main disciple of Lord Mahāvīr. However, he could not attain omniscience even though many other disciples had attained omniscience. This was due to his deep love for the Lord. Love is a passion. To attain omniscience, one must get rid of all passions. When Gautam Swami, realized this and got rid of all his passions, he attained omniscience. He is credited for the first compilation of all of Lord Mahāvīr's preachings, collectively known as Āgam.

Ganadhar Sudharmäswämi

Sudharmä Swämi was the fifth Ganadhar of Lord Mahävir. Ganadhar means a group leader. Lord Mahävir had many disciples. They were divided into 11 groups and each of them was placed under one Ganadhar. As such, there were 11 Ganadhars in all. The first and foremost was Gautam-swämi. Actually, Gautam is his last name, because he belonged to the Gautam clan. His first name was Indrabhuti, but he is popularly known as Gautam-swämi. Even Lord Mahävir used to call him Goyam, which is the Ardhamägadhi version of Gautam.

Sudharmä Swämi was the son of a learned Brahmin named Dhammil, who lived in a village called Kollag situated in the present state of Bihar. The place is now known as Kollua and according to the archaeologists; it is the place where great Pundits like Vyakta and Sudharma had their schools in ancient times. Dhammil was childless. His wife Bhaddilä was therefore craving for a child and worshipped the goddess Saraswati for that purpose. It is said that the goddess was pleased by her devotion and blessed her by saying she would have a highly accomplished son. Soon after that, Bhaddilä became pregnant, and in due course, she gave birth to a son, who was named Sudharma. That happened in 607 BC, which means Sudharmä Swämi was 8 years older than Lord Mahävir.

The boy grew up under the loving care of his parents. At the proper age, he was sent to a well-known Äshram school, where he studied the Vedas, Upanishads and all other Brahmanical literature. By the time he came back from the school, he was known as a learned Pundit and his fame had spread all around. He then started his own school, which became a great center of learning. Pupils used to come there from all over the country. There were more than 500 students studying under him.

At that time in Päväpuri, a city in Bihar, there was a prosperous Brahmin named Somil. Once, he decided to organize a great sacrifice. He wanted all the well-known learned men to come to the event. Indrabhuti Gautam, who was the most learned Brahmin of that time, was going to be the presiding priest. His equally learned brothers, Agnibhuti and Väyubhuti, were going to sit by his side. Vyakta and other well-known Pundits were also scheduled to be present on that occasion. Somil had come to know about Sudharma and had sent the invitation to him. Sudharma did not wish to miss the opportunity to attend the great sacrifice. Moreover, he was eager to meet the Gautam brothers. He therefore, willingly accepted Somil's invitation.

At the appointed time, the sacrifice started in earnest. Oblations began to be offered together with the recitation of the appropriate verses. As the sacrificial smoke rose towards the sky, they noticed the celestial chariots coming down. Indrabhuti and other priests were satisfied that they could induce the celestial beings to come down to accept the oblations. They were, however, disappointed to see that the chariots had diverted their direction and were descending at the other end of the city. They could not make out why the chariots were going towards a different destination forsaking their great performance.

The real reason was, that after attaining omniscience, Lord Mahävir had arrived at Päväpuri at that very time. The heavenly beings were therefore coming down to pay homage to the Lord and to listen to his sermon. Indrabhuti was surprised to know that. He had never come across anyone more knowledgeable than himself. He therefore guessed that Mahävir might be an impostor who could have somehow impressed the heavenly beings. It was therefore necessary to counter his tactics immediately.

With that intention, Indrabhuti went to the place where Lord Mahävir was giving his sermon. As he approached, the Lord welcomed him, "Welcome Indrabhuti Gautam" Indrabhuti was astonished that the impostor even knew his name. But as he looked at the Lord, he was impressed by his personality. His pride began to melt. The Lord soon asked him, 'Gautam, a doubt still lurks in your mind about the independent existence of the soul. Isn't that true?' Indrabhuti was dumbfounded to hear those words, because he did not have such a doubt. The Lord then quoted the relevant Sutra from Veda itself and explained that there was no reason to hold such a doubt. With that clarification, the doubts of Indrabhuti were resolved. Thereupon,

he decided to accept the Lord as his Guru. So falling at the feet of the Lord, he requested to be accepted as a disciple. The Lord was pleased to accede to the request and initiated him as the first disciple.

As Indrabhuti did not come back, his brothers Agnibhuti, Väyubhuti and other Pundits like Vyakta went to the Lord one after another. The Lord welcomed them, and pointing out their doubts pertaining to the soul, he gave them convincing replies. All of them were satisfied with the Lord's elucidation and became his disciples along with their own disciples.

Now, it was Sudharmä's turn. He had the concept that every living being would reincarnate in its own species. In other words, human beings would reborn as human only. His belief was based on the analogy of plant life. An apple tree, for instance, would produce the seeds from which only apple trees can come out. The Lord welcomed him too, and pointing out his doubt he explained that as different types of plants could be produced by cross breeding, so human beings could be reincarnated as human or heavenly beings or even as animals depending upon their tendencies and longings. Sudharma was convinced with that explanation and became the Lord's disciple along with his 500 followers. As a Ganadhar of the Lord, he came to be known as Sudharmä Swämi.

This happened when Lord Mahävir was 42 year old and had just attained omniscience. The eleven Pundits who had come from Somil's sacrifice became his first disciples and later came to be known as Ganadhars. Thereafter, the Lord lived for 30 years. During that period, he continued to move in different parts of the country in order to lay down the path of liberation. During his discourses, Sudharma Swämi always sat in front of him and carefully listened to what the Lord had to say. That enabled him to compose the Lord's teaching in the form of Ägams.

By the time of the Lord's Nirvän in 527 BC, nine of the eleven Ganadhars had passed away and only Gautam Swämi and Sudharmä Swämi were living. Since Gautam Swämi had attained omniscience on the very night of Lord's Nirvän, the administration of the order was left to Sudharmä Swämi. During the next 12 years that he remained at the helm, he efficiently managed the order set up by the Lord and spread his message far and wide. He gained omniscience in 515 BC and attained Nirvän in 507 BC at the age of 100. After gaining omniscience, the religious order was entrusted to his principal pupil Jambuswämi.

During the period of his stewardship, Sudharmä Swämi composed the Lord's teachings into 12 parts, which are known as 12 Anga Ägams. They are known as our original Ägams and are collectively known as Dwädashängi. Dwädash means 12, and Anga means limb. As there are various limbs of the body, so there are 12 limbs of the spiritual science. Many of the Ägams are composed in the form of questions asked by his disciple Jambu Swämi and the replies given by Ganadhar Shri Sudharmä Swämi. A brief description of those 12 Ägams is given below.

01	Ächäräng Sutra	It is the first and foremost Ägam. It deals with the code of conduct for spiritual aspirants and particularly for monks and nuns. It also covers Lord Mahävir's life during the period of renouncement.
02	Sutrakrutäng	It deals with different ideologies, Karma, salvation and various other aspects of special importance to the spiritual aspirants.
03	Sthänäng Sutra	It deals with various aspects of Jainism by classifying them in 1 of 10 categories.
04	Samaväyäng Sutra	Its pattern is similar to Sthänäng, but the classification extends to more than 10 categories. This and Sthänäng together form a sort of Jain encyclopedia.
05	Vyäkhyäprajnapti	This is also known as Bhagavati Sutra. It deals with thousands of questions pertaining to spiritual as well as worldly aspects, raised by Gautam-swämi and others and replies given by Lord Mahävir.
06	Jnäta-dharma-kathäng	It conveys various aspects of Jainism in the form of stories. The story of Draupadi and the well-known story of four daughters-in-law are from this book.

07	Upäsakdashäng	It describes the lives of Anand, Kämdev, and eight other laymen who adopted and rigorously practiced the code for householders or Shrāvaks as laid down by the Lord.
08	Antakritdashänga	It describes the lives of 10 aspirants who ended the life cycle and attained liberation.
09	Anuttaraupapätika	It describes the lives of the aspirants who are reborn in Anuttara heaven. Only the souls, who are destined to attain liberation in the next life, are born in that heaven.
10	Prashna Vyākaran	It describes violence and other defilements as sources of Āsrava and narrates how the major five restraints result in Samvar or prevention of Karma.
11	Vipāk Sutra	It describes stories depicting the consequences of Karma that the soul has to bear when Karma matures.
12	Drishtivāda	This Anga has been lost more than 2000 years ago. It had 5 parts. One of them was known as Purvas. There were 14 Purvas in all. Four of them were lost before 300 BC The other Purvas were lost later .

Many other Sutras were compiled thereafter. Aside from the above-mentioned Anga Āgam sutras, the following Sutras are prominent.

01	Āvashyaka Sutra	It deals with the six daily essentials of Sāmāyika, Devvandan, Guruvandan, Pratikraman, Kāusagga, and Pachchakhān.
02	Dashā-Shrut-skandha	It mainly deals with different Jain rituals. Its 9th chapter is the well-known Kalpasutra.
03	Dash-vaikālik Sutra	It presents the code of conduct for monks as prepared by Shayambhav Swāmi, the fourth descendent of Lord Mahāvīr, for his son Manak by extracting the gist of Purvas.
04	Uttarādhyayan Sutra	It is the compilation of Lord Mahāvīr's last sermon that he gave during his two days' fast. It is widely studied by scholars. It deals with many aspects of Jainism and contains illustrative stories.

Key Message:

Jainism has deep roots and we practice it based on the scriptures that have been passed down for many generations. These scriptures called Āgams, have been authored by well-qualified monks and very respected people. We don't have the benefit of such great monks as Gautam-swāmi in this era, but we do have the benefit of learning those principles from the scriptures.

Kevali Jambuswāmi

In the city of Rājgruhi, there lived a wealthy merchant named Rushabhadatt who was also known as Arhadas. His wife Dhārini, also known as Jinmati, gave birth to a very handsome son in 542 BC. 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 have him married to their daughters. Since it was a normal practice in those days to have more than one wife, his parents selected 8 girls from reputed families and Jambu was duly engaged to 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 worldly life. His parents were of course not happy about his renouncing at such a young age. Parents of the girls to which he was engaged were also very disturbed. They were worried about their daughters, since no one else would now marry them because they were already engaged to Jambu.

All of them tried to convince 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 practice the life of a monk and advised him to live a comfortable family life. However, he remained firm. Jambu's parents thought that he would change his mind once he got married. They therefore insisted upon his getting married before renouncing. Jambu agreed on the 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 surely would fall in love with his wives once married and would give up the idea of renouncing. 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 showing their prosperity. No effort was spared to make the wedding a memorable ceremony. Highly distinguished guests graced the occasion. The jewelry and other precious gifts that were showered upon the newly weds were the envy of the 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. That night Jambu was in an elegantly decorated bedroom along with his wives.

Jambu was not at all affected by the glamour nor did the beauty of those lovely girls overcome him. He had made up his mind to renounce the next day and wanted to make use of the night for orienting his wives for spiritual pursuit. He sat in front of them and started explaining the temporary and transitory nature of life and everything pertaining to that.

At that time in the vicinity of Rājgruhi, there was a burglar named Prabhav. He was a prince of Vindhya city but had a major disagreement with his parents on the issue of some property. He therefore left the place and became a burglar. He had managed to have 500 followers who were willing to do anything and take any risk at his command. He had somehow learned the art of putting any one to sleep and breaking any type of lock. He came to know of the fabulous treasure accumulated on the occasion of Jambu's wedding and decided to grab it.

In the dead of night, he came to the place along with his followers and saw that every one had gone to sleep because of the exhaustion of the ceremony. He asked his colleagues to pick up the valuables as he proceeded towards Jambu's bedroom for the jewelry on the bodies of the newlyweds. From a little distance, he heard Jambu talking to his wives. He came close to the door in an effort to listen closely. To his utter astonishment, Jambu was talking about the true nature of life. His words were so powerful 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 near dawn and they should leave. However, Prabhav was not listening to them. He had developed a disdain for the kind of life he was living 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 frustrated at that. They said that they would not go anywhere without him. If he was giving up burglary, they were also willing to give it up.

By that time, Jambu had stopped talking to his wives. His wives were convinced of the futility of the worldly life and had decided to renounce the world. Then Prabhav came inside and said that he had come there for burglary but had decided to renounce after listening to Jambu's talk with his wives. He and his 500 followers made up their mind to be Jambu's disciples. 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 interest to continue the worldly life and decided to renounce also. 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 disciple and Prabhav and his colleagues became Jambu's disciples.

Jambuswāmi as he became known henceforth studied the entire teaching of Lord Mahāvīr. Most Jain scriptures are composed in the form of dialogue between Sudharmāswāmi to Jambuswāmi. He became the head of the religious order when Sudharmāswāmi attained omniscience. He himself attained omniscience (Kevaljñā) at the age of 36. He was the last omniscient (Kevali) of the current time cycle. He attained Nirvana at the age of 80.

Key Message:

Jambuswāmi firmly believed in renouncing the worldly life from the moment he listened to Sudharmāswāmi's sermon. In fact, even his words/sermons were so powerful that it ultimately led hundreds of others to follow him in the pursuit of omniscience through the disciplined life of an ascetic. He realized that material happiness and enjoyment of physical beauty (of his 8 wives) is all superficial and temporary. The key is to focus on purifying the soul and helping others to do the same.

Āchārya Haribhadra-suri

During the sixth century AD, there lived a learned Brahmin named Haribhadra. He was highly intelligent and proficient in philosophy of all religions. He was so intelligent that he right away understand what other people meant to convey. It was easy for him to effectively counter the argument of other people. As was the practice in those days, he used to go to various places to debate with scholars and other learned men at royal courts. Thanks to his expertise, he invariably turned out to be a winner of arguments everywhere. The scholars were, therefore, scared of entering into a debate with him.

When no one came forward to counter him, he concluded that there was no rival in the entire country. He felt sure he had no problem in comprehending anything that any one would like to discuss. He therefore issued a public challenge that if any one could present some thing that he could not understand, he would readily become his pupil. In doing that, he overlooked the fact that there were Jain Āchāryas who were highly proficient in all the philosophies and who could effectively challenge him. They did not like to boast of their knowledge and therefore did not challenge his superiority.

One day, while he was passing through a street, he came across the royal elephant. The elephant was very angry and was completely out of control. The keeper was trying his best to bring him into control, but the elephant was not responding to any of his efforts. The elephant was running towards Haribhadra and he was in a grave danger of being crumpled. Haribhadra had to find a quick shelter somewhere. As he looked around, he saw a prominent Jain temple of the city. He ran towards it and entered the temple in order to save himself from the wrath of the elephant.

Haribhadra had scant regard for Jainism and did not care to know about Jainism. He was also ignorant of what Jainism had to offer in the way of its philosophy. Brahmins were usually staunch Shaivāites and looked down upon going to Jain temples. There was a proverb among them that one should not enter a Jain temple even if one happens to be hit by an elephant. True to that tradition, Haribhadra had never entered a Jain temple. He knew about the deities whose idols are worshipped in Hindu temples. However, he did not have a clear concept about Jain Tirthankars. As he entered the temple, he saw the white marble idol of Lord Mahāvīr facing him. Instead of looking at the graceful compassion flowing from the eyes of Tirthankar's idol, Haribhadra could only notice that the stomach of the idol did not represent the skinny body of an austere saint. The only conclusion that he could draw by looking at the idol was that the Jain Tirthankars must have enjoyed substantial food. He therefore made the following remarks:

“Vapurevatavāchashte Spashtam Mishtānn-Bhojitāmit”

Which means: "Your stomach itself clearly indicates that you must be eating sweet foods."

Once, while Haribhadra was passing by a Sādhvis' Upāshray, he heard a Sādhvi named Yākini Mahattarā, reciting the following verse indicating the order in which the Chakravarti (sovereign emperors) and Vāsudevs were born in the current Avasarpini.

**Chakkidugam Haripanagam Panagam Chakki Ya Kesavo Chakki
Kesav Chakki Kesav Du Chakki Kesi Ya Chakki Ya**

Jain tradition believes in time cycles of very long duration occurring one after another. One half of a cycle is called Utsarpini or the ascending order during which there is all-round improvements; the other half is called Avasarpini or the descending order during which every thing goes on deteriorating. That tradition also holds that 24 Tirthankars, 12 Chakravarti (sovereign emperors), 9 Vāsudevs or Nārāyans, 9 Prati-Vāsudevs or Prati-Nārāyans (Counter-Vāsudevs) and 9 Balrāms are born in every Utsarpini as well as every Avasarpini.

As a student, Haribhadra had studied Jain philosophy. However, he obviously had no background regarding the above-mentioned tradition. Haribhadra could not make out what Mahattarā was reciting. Asking the nun about the meaning was also a problem because he had declared that he would become a pupil of any one who would present anything that he could not understand. True to his decision, however, he brushed aside his hesitation and went inside. He said that he had decided to be the pupil of any one who would present anything that he couldn't understand. Since he could not understand what Mahattarā had recited, he requested her to accept him as a pupil and to explain what she was reciting.

The Mahattarā replied that nuns are not supposed to teach males and cannot have males as pupils. She, therefore, advised Haribhadra to go to her Guru Jinabhattsuri who was capable of explaining the meaning of the verse. She added that if he thought fit thereafter, he could become the pupil of that Guru. Accordingly, Haribhadra went to Āchārya Jinabhattsuri who explained the verse in the proper perspective. He however did not ask Haribhadra to be his pupil.

The way the Āchārya explained the verse induced Haribhadra to learn more about Jainism. He therefore requested the Āchārya to accept him as a pupil. Thereupon, Jinabhattsuri asked him to get the consent of his family and other close relatives. Haribhadra had to face heavy odds when he went to seek such permission. He did not give up and patiently continued to persuade the members of his family and other relatives. He explained to them that his knowledge would remain incomplete without gaining the knowledge of Jainism in detail. For that purpose as well as for adhering to his decision, it was incumbent upon him to be a Jain monk. He ultimately succeeded in gaining the consent of all the family members. Thereupon, he renounced the worldly life and became a disciple of Jinabhattsuri.

He diligently started studying the Jain scriptures and other sacred books. He was so smart and intelligent that he soon achieved a mastery of the Jain scriptures. The study of the Āgams showed him the depth of Jain philosophy in seeking the truth. When he gained the mastery of all relevant Jain literature and when his master was thoroughly convinced about his true faith, it was decided to bestow upon him the title of Āchārya. Now Haribhadra became Āchārya Haribhadra-suri. In that capacity, he managed the Jain order very capably and efficiently. By virtue of his knowledge and intelligence, he could attract many people to Jainism. Many of them also renounced and became his disciples. Jainism gained a newfound popularity during his stewardship.

Amongst his many pupils were two named Hans and Paramhans who were sons of his sister. They were very intelligent and Haribhadra-suri had high expectations of them. Once Hans and Paramhans requested him to allow them to go to a well-known Buddhist monastery, in order to study the weak points of Buddhism. Haribhadra-suri could foresee that the idea would not be beneficial and, therefore, did not approve. Hans and Paramhans, however, persisted and ultimately secured his permission. They went disguised as Buddhist monks, but unfortunately their secret was quickly revealed. The head of the monastery took them as spies and gave them a harsh punishment, which ultimately resulted in the loss of their lives.

When Haribhadra-suri learned about the tragic fate of those pupils he was furious and vowed to punish the Buddhists for this cruelty. He challenged them to enter into a debate in a royal court with the stipulation that whoever loses would be put to death. In view of the violence involved in the challenge, Guru Jinabhattsuri

ultimately persuaded him to leave the debate. Haribhadra-suri also realized that his undue attachment for Hans and Paramhans had led him to indulge in a violent attitude. He, therefore, begged for atonement. Guru Jinabhattsuri advised him to compose verses that can enlighten the people to the right faith.

Accordingly, Haribhadra-suri started writing. He was a prolific writer. He wrote many books of which only a few are presently available. The commentaries on Dashvaikālik-sutra, Tattvārthasutra, Panchasutra, and Āvashyak-sutra are among his well-known compositions. Moreover, he wrote Lalitvistarā, Dharmasangrahani, Upadeshapad, Shodashtaks, Dharmabindu, and Anekānta Jaypatākā. He was probably the first Jain scholar to write on Yoga. Yogabindu, Yogavinshikā, Yogashatak and Yogadrashti Samuchchaya are his compositions on Yoga. He will always be remembered for the valuable contribution made to Jain literature.

Key Message:

The entire life of Haribhadra-suri depicts his keen desire for learning. Even though he was an established scholar, he was ready to learn from a simple Jain Sādhi. This is a great lesson in humility. One should not let pride come in the way of acquiring knowledge. Jain Āgams describe the essence of Jainism in a logical and convincing way. No doubt a deep understanding will lead one to practice the principles of Jainism with more discipline and faith. Various compositions of Haribhadra-suri are very precious and help us gain a better understanding of this very complex but, well-defined and logical religion

Bharat and Bāhubali

Lord Rushabhdev had two wives named Sumangalā and Sunandā. By Sumangalā, he had 99 sons of whom Bharat was the eldest and the best known and one daughter named Brāhmi. By the second wife, Sunandā he had one son named Bāhubali and one daughter named Sundari. All of them were given proper training in different arts and crafts. Bharat became a great warrior and a politician. Bāhubali was tall, well built, and strong. He was known for his mighty arms. In Sanskrit language, Bāhu means arm and Bali means mighty. Because he had very strong arms, he was known as Bāhubali. Brāhmi attained a very high level of literary proficiency. She developed the first known script, which came to be known as Brāhmi script. Sundari became very proficient in mathematics. After Lord Rushabhdev attained omniscience, both girls renounced the worldly life and became his disciples.

As a king, Rushabhdev had responsibility for a large geographical area in his kingdom. At the time of his renouncement, he handed over the city of Vinitā, also known as Ayodhyā, to Bharat and the city of Taxshilā to Bāhubali. 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 emperor of all India. For this purpose, he organized a strong army and started developing different types of fighting equipment. His army developed 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. In those days, there was hardly anyone who could withstand his well-equipped army. He easily conquered the regions around Vinitā. Then he turned his attention towards his brothers and asked them to acknowledge his superiority. They all went to Lord Rushabhdev to ask for advice. Bhagawān explained about conquering inner enemies (passions) and not the external enemies. He also advised on attaining liberation, a "True Kingdom". They all realized the futility of fighting with the elder brother so they surrendered their territories to him, renounced the worldly life, and became disciples of Lord Rushabhdev.

Now only Bāhubali remained. He had a different vision. 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 any invader. Therefore, when he received Bharat's request to accept a subordinate status, he refused to accept that type of status and began preparations to fight. Both brothers were strong and the war between the two was sure to result in large-scale bloodshed. The counselors on both sides therefore tried to dissuade their masters from resorting to war but neither of them would give up his ground. The war

seemed inevitable and both the brothers brought their armies face to face with each other. Everyone shuddered at the prospect of the heavy casualties that would result due to the imminent war.

At last, the counselors explained to their masters that the point at issue pertained to determination of the superiority between the two. Instead of going to a large-scale war for that purpose, a fight between the two brothers was better and would avert unnecessary bloodshed. Since both the brothers were agreeable, they suggested they engage in a straight duel and whoever was found superior would be declared 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. How could he bear his defeat, knowing that he intended to conquer all of India? He became desperate and ignored the rules that were agreed upon for the duel, and hurled his miracle wheel, the Chakraratna, at Bāhubali. However, the wheel was not meant to hurt a person of the same blood. It therefore came back without hurting Bāhubali.

Bāhubali became enraged by Bharat's violation of the rules of the duel. He 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 death.

However, all of a sudden, Bāhubali thought, 'what am I doing? Am I going to kill my elder brother for the sake of worldly possessions that my revered father has willingly abandoned and which my other brothers have given up?' 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 used to respect. As proud as he was, how could he ever turn back his raised hand? He therefore used it for pulling out his hair (as the monks do during Dikshā) as a symbol of giving up everything 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 decided to seek enlightenment on his own and started meditating on the very spot where he stood. He stayed so focused on his meditation that he did not even remember how long he continued. He remained so immersed that creepers began to grow on his feet. (In memory of this event, a gigantic 57-foot upright statue of Bāhubali stands on the hill of Vindhyagiri at Shravanbelgola, near Bangalore. It is made out of a single granite rock and was erected about 1000 years ago. Pilgrims and visitors marvel that the statue under the open sky stands spotless even today).

One year passed with Bahubali in that posture of meditation. Bāhubali however did not gain enlightenment. How could he gain it, since 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 amazement and looked around. However, where was the elephant? He then realized that he was all the time riding the elephant of ego. He immediately let go his ego and decided to go to the Lord.

During his long penance, he had overcome all other defiling passions and only 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.

Meanwhile, Bharat had become the undisputed emperor or Chakravarti of all 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 for a very long time, one day a ring came off of his finger while he was in his dressing room. He noticed that the finger looked rather odd without the ring. By way of curiosity, he took all rings off 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 handsome and impressive, but all that impressiveness is merely due to the ornaments etc. that do not belong to the body. The body itself is made up of blood, bones etc. Then, how come I am so much attached to my body? 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. The only ever-lasting entity is soul.' 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 of all the temporary things and instead focus on something that lasts forever like my father did?' Thus, he developed acute detachment for the worldly life. This led to the rise of true enlightenment from within and as a result, he attained omniscience in that very room.

Key Message:

The focus of this great story is on ego and self-realization. Ego and pride build negative karma and lead one to destructive behavior as symbolized in the story. Ego also causes anger and leads one to irrational behavior. Ego and superficial pride must be overcome on the path to enlightenment and omniscience. A learned person or a Sādhu should be respected regardless of his age. We should all strive for cultivating humility, the fundamental principles of Jainism.

andanbälā

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful princess named Vasumati. She was the daughter of king Dadhivāhan and queen Dhārini of the city of Champapuri.

One day a war broke out between King Dadhivāhan and the king of nearby Kaushambi. King Dadhivāhan was defeated in the war and so he had to run away in despair. When princess Vasumati and queen Dhārini learned that they had lost the war, they also decided to escape. While they were running away from town a soldier from the enemy's army spotted and captured them. Princess Vasumati and her mother were scared. They didn't know what the soldier would do to them. He told the queen that he would marry her, and that he would sell Vasumati. Upon hearing this, the queen went into shock and died. The soldier immediately felt sorry for his remarks and decided not to make any more comments. He took Vasumati to Kaushambi to sell her.

When it was Vasumati's turn to be sold in the slave market, a merchant named Dhanavah happened to be passing by. He saw Vasumati being sold and felt that she wasn't an ordinary girl. He thought she might have been separated from her parents and if she were sold as a slave, what would be her fate? Therefore, out of compassion Dhanavah bought Vasumati, and took her to his home. On the way home he asked her, "Who are you? What happened to your parents? Please don't be afraid of me. I will treat you as my daughter." Vasumati didn't reply.

When they reached home, the merchant told his wife, Moola, about Vasumati. "My dear," he said, "I have brought this girl home. She has not said anything about her past. Please treat her like our daughter." Vasumati was relieved. She thanked the merchant and his wife with respect. The merchant's family was very happy with her. They named her Chandanbälā, since she would not tell anyone her real name.

While staying at the merchant's house, Chandanbälā's attitude was like that of a daughter. This made the merchant very happy. Moola, on the other hand, was wondering what her husband would do with Chandanbälā. She thought that he would marry her because of her beauty. Therefore, Moola was never comfortable with the idea of having Chandanbälā around.

One day, when the merchant came home from his shop, the servant who usually washed his feet was not there. Chandanbälā noticed this and was delighted to have a chance to wash his feet for all the fatherly love he had given her. While she was busy washing the merchant's feet, her hair slipped out of the hairpin. The merchant saw this and felt that her hair might get dirty. So he lifted her hair and clipped it on the back of her

head. Moola saw all this and was outraged. She felt that her doubts about Chandanbälä were true. Moola decided to get rid of Chandanbälä as soon as possible.

When Dhanavah went on a three-day business trip his wife used this opportunity to get rid of Chandanbälä. Right away she called a barber to shave all of Chandanbälä's beautiful hair. Then she tied Chandanbälä's legs with heavy shackles and locked her in a room away from the main area of the house. She told all the servants not to tell Dhanavah where Chandanbälä was or she would do the same to them. Then Moola left to go to her parent's house.

When Dhanavah returned from his tript he did not see either Moola or Chandanbälä. He asked the servants about them. The servants told him that Moola was at her parent's house, but they did not tell him where Chandanbälä was because they were scared of Moola. He asked the servants in a worried tone, "Where is my daughter Chandanbälä? You better speak up and tell the truth. I will fire you all if you don't tell me the truth." Still nobody said a word. He was very upset and didn't know what to do. After a few minutes an older servant thought, "I am an old woman and will soon die anyway. What is the worst thing Moola can do to me?" So out of compassion for Chandanbälä and sympathy for the merchant she told him all about what Moola did to Chandanbälä.

She took the merchant to the room where Chandanbälä was locked up. Dhanavah unlocked the door and saw Chandanbälä. He was shocked when he saw her. He told Chandanbälä, "My dear daughter, I will get you out of here. You must be hungry. Let me find some food for you." He went to the kitchen to find food for her. He found that there was no food left except for some boiled lentils in a pan. The merchant decided to feed her that for the time being. So, he took them to Chandanbälä. He told her that he was going to get a blacksmith to cut off the heavy shackles and so he left.

Chandanbälä was thinking about how her life had changed. She started wondering how fate can change the life from rich to almost helpless. Chandanbälä then thought of offering some lentils to a pious person before eating. She got up, walked to the door, and stood there with one foot outside and one inside.

To her surprise, she saw Lord Mahävira walking towards her. She said, "Oh revered Lord, please accept this food which is suitable for you." However, Lord Mahävira had taken a vow to fast until a person who met certain conditions offered him food. Some of his conditions were:

- 1) The person offering food should be a princess
- 2) She should be baldheaded
- 3) She should be in shackles
- 4) She should offer boiled lentils, with one foot inside the house and other outside
- 5) She should be in tears

Therefore, Lord Mahävira looked at her and noticed that one of his pre-decided conditions was still missing. She met all conditions except the tears in her eyes and therefore, Lord Mahävira walked away. Chandanbälä was very sad that Lord Mahävira did not accept alms from her and started crying. Tears started running down her face. Crying, she again requested Lord Mahävira to accept the alms. Lord Mahävira saw the tears in her eyes and came back to accept the food knowing that all his conditions were met. Chandanbälä now offered the lentils in Lord Mahävira's hand and was very happy.

As Lord Mahävira had fasted for five months and twenty-five days, heavenly Gods celebrated the end of Lord Mahävira's fast. By their magical power, Chandanbälä's shackles were broken, her hair grew back, and she was again dressed as a princess. The loud music and a celebration drew the attention of king Shatanik. He came to this place with his family, ministers, and other people. Sampul, a servant from the original kingdom, recognized Chandanbälä. He walked towards her, bowed and, broke out in tears. King Shatanik asked, "Why are you crying?" Sampul replied, "My Lord, this is Vasumati, the princess of Champapuri, daughter of king Dadhivāhan and queen Dhārini." The king and queen now recognized her and invited her to live with them.

Later, when Lord Mahāvīr attained Kevaljñān, the perfect knowledge, he reestablished the four-fold order of Jain Sangh (community). At that time, Chandanbālā took Dikshā and became the first nun (Sādhi). She became the head nun of the Jain order. Later on she attained Kevaljñān and liberation from the misery of the birth, life and death cycle.

Key Message:

We can learn from a number of behaviors that are cited in this story. Moola's heart was blinded by jealousy and therefore did not understand Chandanbālā's plight or the role of a mother and the compassion of a father. This led her to do terrible things resulting in bad karma. This depicts the destructive power of jealousy and why we should avoid it. Next, the self-less old servant who told Dhanavah about what had occurred, did this out of compassion and risked her own demise with Moola. This good karma will bind to her soul as Punya and demonstrates the principles of Jainism. Similarly, Dhanavah's compassion and treatment of Chandanbālā supports the proper role of a father and the willingness to help an orphan. Lastly, Chandanbālā's offering of food to Lord Mahāvīr despite her own pitiful situation is very self-less and comes from the heart. Following the principles of Jainism ultimately led Chandanbālā to the path of liberation.

Chandkaushik

This is a story about Bhagawān Mahāvīr when he was a monk. He used to fast, meditate, and perform penance. He was traveling barefoot from place to place and village to village. Bhagawān Mahāvīr once decided to go to the village of Vachala. On his way there he would have to go through a forest where there was a poisonous snake named Chandkaushik. It was said that Chandkaushik could kill a person or animal just by casting its evil and angry glance at them. All the people of the villages near that forest lived in absolute fear.

When the villagers learned about Mahāvīr's intention to pass through the forest, they begged him to take another route. However, Mahāvīr had no fear. He practiced supreme non-violence. He had no hatred towards anyone and considered fear and hatred as violence to the self. He was at peace with himself and all other living beings. There was a glow of serenity and compassion on Bhagawān's face. He convinced the people that everything would be all right and he proceeded to the forest where Chandkaushik lived. After a while, he noticed the beautiful green land fading. The forest looked like a desert. Trees and plants were dead, so he thought this must be the land that the villagers were talking about where Chandkaushik lived. Therefore, Mahāvīr stopped there to meditate. Peace, tranquility and compassion for the well being of each and every living being flowed from Mahāvīr's heart.

Chandkaushik sensed that someone had come near his land so he came out of his furrow. To his surprise, he saw a man standing there. He became furious, thinking, "How dare he come this close to my land?" Chandkaushik started hissing to threaten Lord Mahāvīr. He did not understand Lord Mahāvīr's tranquility. He became angrier, came closer to the Lord, and swayed his head, ready to strike. He saw no sign that this man would be threatened or run away. This made Chandkaushik even angrier and he blew poisonous venom towards Lord Mahāvīr three times. The venom neither affected Lord Mahāvīr nor disturbed his meditation. Chandkaushik was not ready for this. Now he became more irritated and bit Lord Mahāvīr's toe. When he looked at the man again, he was surprised to see that not only had nothing happened to him, but also instead of blood, milk came out from his toe.

Bhagawān Mahāvīr opened his eyes. He was calm and there was no fear or anger on his face. He looked Chandkaushik in the eye and said, "Calm down! Calm down Chandkaushik! Realize what you are doing!" There was love and affection in those words. Chandkaushik calmed down and felt as if he had seen this kind of a person before. He suddenly remembered his two previous lives. Chandkaushik then realized the truth of life and what the anger and ego of his last two lives had done to him. He bowed his head respectfully to the Lord.

Chandkaushik peacefully retreated to his furrow with his head inside while most of his body was outside. After a while when the people came to know that Chandkaushik was no longer harmful to anyone, they came to see him out of curiosity. They saw him lying quietly. Some started worshipping, pouring milk on him and offered food while some were still mad because their loved ones had died due to him. They threw stones at him and hit him with wooden sticks. Blood, milk, and food attracted ants. Chandkaushik willingly suffered the biting and beating and remained at peace without any anger. This self-restraint and control of his feelings destroyed many of his bad karmas. Therefore, at the end of his life, he was born in heaven.

Key Message:

Fear, hatred and ego are really violence to one's self and not to anyone else. Chandkaushik depicts this from the anger and ego he committed during his past lives. Self-realization through the help of Bhagawān Mahāvīr made him realize his mistake and led him to repent his deeds. This ultimately washed away his bad karmas and led him to heaven. Learning from this story, we should remain calm and avoid anger, ego, and all forms of violence. We also should be fearless of evils.

Lord Mahāvīr and The Cow Herder

One day as Lord Mahāvīr was going from one place to another, he stopped near a big tree to meditate. While he was meditating, a cow herder came there with his cows. He needed someone to look after the cows so he could run some errands. He asked Mahāvīr Swami if he would look after the cows for a few hours. Lord Mahāvīr was in deep meditation and did not respond to the cow herder. However, the cow herder went away thinking that Lord Mahāvīr had heard him and would look after the cows.

In the meantime, the cows started wandering away looking for and grazing grass. A few hours later the cow herder returned and found all his cows were missing. He asked Mahāvīr Swami, "Where are my cows? What did you do with them?" Lord Mahāvīr was still in meditation and did not reply. The cow herder started wondering. "Where could they be?" Since Lord Mahāvīr did not reply, the cow herder searched for them everywhere but could not find them. While he was looking for the cows, the cows returned to the place where Mahāvīr Swami was meditating.

When the cow herder came back, to his amazement, all his cows were standing near Lord Mahāvīr. Mahāvīr Swami was still meditating. The cow herder became very angry with Lord Mahāvīr because he thought that Lord Mahāvīr had been hiding his cows. So he took out his rope and was about to whip Mahāvīr Swami with it. Just then, an angel from heaven came down and held the rope.

"Can't you see that Lord Mahāvīr is in deep meditation?" The angel asked.

"But he tricked me!" said the cow herder. The angel replied, "He is a God. He does not care for your cows or anything else in this world. He was in meditation and did not hear you. He did not do anything to your cows. You would have gotten bad karmas for hurting him."

The cow herder realized that he had made a mistake. He apologized to Lord Mahāvīr and went away silently

Then, the angel bowed down to Lord Mahāvīr and requested, "Oh! Lord, I would like to be at your service, as you will have to undergo many hardships during your spiritual journey."

Lord Mahāvīr answered, "Arihantas do not expect others to help them and they do not attain Keval-Jñān with the help of others. Arihantas have to undertake their own efforts on the journey towards omniscience and liberation.

The angel went back to heaven feeling happy that he could stop Lord Mahāvīr's suffering.

Mahāvīr didn't have any bad feelings towards the cow herder, because he held no anger towards anyone.

Key Message:

We should not make hasty decisions, because we can be wrong. One should think from all perspectives before acting. Secondly, we should also not hurt anyone for any reason and should forgive instead of displaying anger. This is the way we can stop new karmas from coming to our soul.

Ilāchikumar

In ancient times, there lived a businessman named Dhandatta in a town named Ilavardhan. His wife Ilāchi gave birth to a very lovable and handsome boy. Being the only son, the parents deliberately kept him nameless as was a custom in those days. As a son of Ilāchi, he came to be known as Ilāchiputra. He was reared with 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 Ilāchikumar. His parents were now eager to have him get married. Being the only son in a well-to-do family, many people were interested in having their daughters marry Ilāchikumar. His parents prepared a list of selected names and asked Ilāchikumar to choose the one that he liked the most. However, Ilāchikumar could not make a selection.

One day a party of acrobats came to the town. In those days there were no stadiums where acrobats could play. They had to show their skills on the open streets. Beating drums in a token of their arrival, acrobats planted poles in an open area off the main street and connected them with ropes. Many people assembled there to watch the show. The acrobats ascended the pole one after another and started demonstrating their skill by playing on the rope. They were walking and jumping over the high rope. People were very fascinated by the performance. Ilāchikumar 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 acrobat chief. She looked very beautiful and was dancing very gracefully to the tune of the drums with ringing jingle bells on her feet. Ilāchikumar was so mesmerized by her beauty and charm that he could not move his eyes 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 a goodly amount of money, the acrobats left the place and everyone went home. Ilāchikumar also had to go home. He was however so fascinated by the girl that he remained absorbed with thoughts about her and could not think of anything else. At lunchtime, his parents called him to join them. There too, he remained silent and finished 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 quiet. After the father left, the mother lovingly asked him to speak about whatever was on his mind. Ilāchikumar said that it was no use telling her about it. As she repeatedly asked him, he finally replied that his heart was attracted to the acrobat girl and he wanted to marry her.

His mother was taken aback to hear that. She said that she could get him very beautiful and lovable girls from well-to-do families and asked him to forget the wretched acrobat girl. He replied that no other girl would attract him and he wanted to marry only that girl. Realizing the firmness of his mind, the mother told her husband about their son's intentions. Dhandatta was shocked to hear this. He tried to dissuade the son from his intention but Ilāchikumar remained firm. Dhandatta was a sensible man. He could see that Ilāchikumar would not be at peace 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 Ilāchikumar.

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 money for the girl. He therefore offered to give as much

wealth as the acrobat wanted 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 an award from a royal court by pleasing the king with his acrobatic skill and would give dinner to his community from 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 would not be able to survive without the girl and was willing to make any sacrifice for her. He was even prepared to learn acrobatic skills for that purpose. His parents were baffled by his silence but thought that he would come to his 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 failed and Ilächikumar stayed bent upon getting that girl somehow. When the acrobat group decided to leave Ilavardhan, Ilächikumar secretly slipped out of his home and left town along with them.

He discarded his fancy clothes and donned the coarse clothes of the acrobats. He started learning their skill. He was smart and used all his diligence to learn acrobatics. The girl fell in love with him and helped him in all possible ways to learn the skill. With her help, he easily mastered the skill and soon became an expert acrobat. When the group reached the city of Benätat, he requested the father of the girl to organize a show at the royal court there. Thereafter, 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. The king occupied his seat in the balcony of the palace. Bowing to him, Ilächikumar went over the pole and then jumping onto the rope, he started displaying his acrobatic skill. He walked on the rope with ease and grace. He also performed risky jumps and somersaults. It was a superb performance. No one had ever watched such acrobatic feats. Every one was highly fascinated by his skill. Ilächikumar felt gratified by the appreciation of the people. He thought that it was enough to please the king as well. He came down and bowed to the king again and requested an appropriate award.

However, the king was more fascinated with the young girl than 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 occupied with the problems of the state and he could not give attention to the performance. He requested Ilächikumar to show his skill again. Accordingly, Ilächikumar got on the rope again and displayed his skill. At the end of that show the king pretended to be drowsy and asked him to do the performance again. Ilächikumar could not believe it. He suspected that there was something wrong somewhere. However, since he was keen to gain his long cherished goal of marrying the girl, he decided to try again.

He again started the ropewalk, which to him was as easy as walking on the ground. He triumphantly looked around. From that height he noticed that a beautiful woman was offering sweet food to a monk a little distance away. She was in the prime of her youth and was very attractive and highly graceful. Ilächikumar was 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 the 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 was far more attractive. What was the force that kept the monk aloof in the presence of that woman? In addition, 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 perform on the rope again and again. He suspected that the king was in all probability attracted to the girl and was waiting for him to fall from the rope. "In that case I will never secure the girl for whom I have abandoned my home and my parents." The happiness that he was looking for was an illusion. At home, he had been somewhat exposed to religious

principles. He had learned 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 a fall from the high rope and result in my death. Why then should I not use the same vigilance for the sake of spiritual uplift?"

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

Key Message:

The focus of this story is on the principle of detachment. Attachment to materialistic things, people or feelings often times causes miseries to others and to us. We should strive to minimize our attachment to the outer world (i.e. detach ourselves) and focus on our inner self. Attachment is an obstacle to the path of self-realization. A Sādhu's detachment towards a woman guided Ilāchikumar onto a right path.

Monk Kurgadu or Kulguru

In ancient times there was a businessman named Dhandatta. He was highly religious. He had a son who was also very religious. Once, Dharmaghosh-suri, the highly enlightened Āchārya of that time, came to the town, where Dhandatta lived. Dhandatta and his son went to listen to his sermon. The boy was so impressed by the Acharya's talk that he decided to become his disciple. Accordingly, he renounced the worldly life and became a monk at a very young age. The Āchārya saw 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 studied the holy books and correctly grasped their essence. He realized the role of Karma in the life of every being and thereby he learned to maintain a high level of equanimity. He also rigorously observed the code of conduct for monks. However he had a problem. He could not stay hungry and as such could not fast. He had to eat at least once a day. Even during Paryushan Parva, he could not fast for an entire day. When he had to eat on the days of Parva, he felt bad and regretted that he was not able to fast because of his previous Karma. When other monks observed fasts, he praised them and rendered every type of service to them. He wished in his heart that he could someday observe fasts.

Jain monks do not move from place to place during the rainy season commonly known as monsoon that normally falls during the months of June thru October in India. The Paryushan Parva falls during the monsoon season. Once, during Paryushan Parva, Āchārya Dharmaghosh-suri along with his many disciples including Muni Kurgadu was in one town. Many of the monks undertook long fasts extending more than a month. One of the senior monks had undertaken a one month fast. Kurgadu felt sad that he could not undertake such austerities. Everybody observes various austerities during Paryushan Parva. Now, on the day of Samvatsari, he wished that he could observe a fast of at least one day. However, before noon he felt very hungry and could not do without food. He wondered what sort of karma he had acquired that he could not fast even for one day! As it was impossible for him to do 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 for at least for one day. He should be inspired to observe a fast at least for that day, especially when all his colleagues were on long fasts. Kurgadu humbly replied that he did wish to observe a fast and 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 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 did this in all modesty. The monk however became very annoyed by the 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 audacity and disparagingly said the miserable wretch did not deserve to be a monk. So saying, he nastily pushed the food bowl towards him. Kurgadu accepted the scornful gesture as graceful permission, went to a corner, and reluctantly started to eat.

All the other monks were watching with disgust that Kurgadu was eating on that auspicious day and felt sorry that he was acquiring unwholesome Karma by eating on the day of Samvatsari. While eating, Kurgadu dwelt deeply 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 all Karmas are shed after extending the appropriate consequence and this Karma too was going to be shed. He made up his mind to dispassionately bear what had been ordained by his Karma. Because of his study of the scriptures, he had gained insight about the true nature of soul. Despising himself for not observing a fast was functioning as a handicap to 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 to offer their obeisance. When other monks saw the heavenly beings coming to the place for that purpose, every one thought that the heavenly beings must have been pleased by the severe 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 understand why those observing severe austerity were left out while the one who could not observe it at all had gained full enlightenment.

In amazement they went to Dharmaghosh-suri and asked the reason for what had happened. The Āchārya said that all of them were feeling too proud of their austerities and were unnecessarily disapproving of Kurgadu for not observing a fast. Thereby they were smeared by 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 to attain equanimity. They had misjudged Kurgadu who had realized the essence of religion. Earlier he had acquired 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 acquired right perception. He did regret that Karma but he was bearing the consequence of it with equanimity. This helped in wiping out the previously acquired Karmas without incurring new bondage.

Key Message:

All the monks realized that they were indulging in unnecessary vanity that obstructed the dawn of right perception. The Āchārya also explained that the soul had really nothing to do with the state and activities of the body. The body is obtained 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 were used purposefully. Understanding the true nature of soul was the essence of religion and that is the main thing worth pursuing in this life. One must remember that we should never look down upon anyone who cannot observe austerity and penance, or the one who cannot follow religious principles as much as others. Rather than putting these people down, one must encourage them to do so with compassion and realize that it is due to the Karmas of that person that he is unable to do so. One must never be proud of the austerities that one is able to perform.

Aimuttā Muni

Once upon a time in the streets of Polaspur, a six-year-old child named Aimuttä was playing with some friends. He was the son of King Vijay and Queen Shrimati. While playing, he saw a monk. The monk's name was Gautam-swämi, who was bare-foot and bald. He was out getting alms (food). Aimuttä ran to him and invited him to come to his palace to get food. This would make his mother and him happy. Gautam-swämi agreed and they went to the palace. Aimuttä's mother, Queen Shrimati, was standing on the balcony overlooking the garden. She saw Gautam-swämi and Aimuttä coming to her palace. She was very happy and came down to receive Gautam-swämi. She welcomed him with full devotion and said, "Matthaena Vandämi (my salutation to you)." She introduced Gautam-swämi, a staunch disciple of Lord Mahävir, to Aimuttä. She asked Aimuttä to go and get his favorite food to offer Gautam-swämi. Aimuttä brought Ladoos (sweets) and started putting them in a pot even though Gautam-swämi said he didn't need that many. Aimuttä was very happy to be offering food to the monk.

As Gautam-swämi started to leave, Aimuttä said, "Your bag is heavy, let me carry it for you."

Gautam-swämi said, "Aimuttä, I cannot give it to you because it can only be carried by those who have taken Dikshä."

Aimuttä asked, "What is Dikshä?"

Gautam-swämi explained to him that when someone takes a vow of Dikshä, he renounces the worldly life, his house, family, and all other social and economical ties. Then he becomes a monk. People take Dikshä to avoid the accumulation of bad karma. In normal every day living, people are involved in various activities all of the time which causes them to accumulate karmas. On the other hand, a monk does not do those things. Thus, monks and nuns can avoid most of the activities of householders and avoid accumulating these karmas.

Aimuttä became curious and asked, "Gurudev, you do not do sins! But don't you need to eat? Don't you need a place to live? All these activities cause sins (i.e. pap karmas)."

Gautam-swämi was pleased with the child's interest to learn more. So he explained, "We take food but we do not accept food which is made especially for us. We stay in a place but we do not own it and we do not stay there for more than a few days. We do not keep money and we do not take part in business or any organizations. Thus, as a monk, we do not do any activity that causes sins.

Aimuttä said, "Gurudev, in that case I want to take Dikshä."

Aimuttä and Gautam-swämi walked to a place where Lord Mahävir was giving a sermon. Aimuttä joined others to listen to his teachings. In that sermon Aimuttä learned what life is all about and what one can do if he or she wants to be relieved of worldly sufferings. Aimuttä expressed his desire to accept Dikshä to Lord Mahävir. Lord Mahävir said, "We can not give you Dikshä without your parents' permission." Aimuttä replied, "That is easy. I will go home to get their permission and come back."

Therefore Aimuttä went home. He told his mother, "Mom, I want to take Dikshä. Remember that you used to say that our social life is full of violence and causes sins? Gautam-swämi and Lord Mahävir also said the same. I want to be free of sins. Therefore, please give me permission to take Dikshä."

Aimuttä's mother was surprised by his words. She was happy in her mind for his fear of sins and his desire to take Dikshä because she was also a religious woman. However, she wanted to be sure that Aimuttä understood what "taking Dikshä" meant. So she said, "My son, to take Dikshä is not a joke. It is a very hard and disciplined life. You will not have a mother or father to take care of you. How will you be able to handle such suffering?"

Aimuttä said, "Mother, this social life also has a lot of suffering. At least we know that as a monk the suffering will help destroy karmas and lead to salvation."

His mother was very happy to hear this. However, she wanted to test Aimuttä's determination some more. She said, "Son, why are you in such a hurry? Wait for some period of time. You need to take care of us when we get old and you will have your own family too."

Aimuttä said, "Mother, I learned from Lord Mahävîr that no one is young and no one is old. I also learned that no one knows what is going to happen tomorrow. No one knows who will die first or last. So why wait and miss the opportunity which is available to me today?"

His mother was very happy that her son fully understood what Dikshä meant and what his desire was.

She said, "Congratulations my son. I am very proud of you. You will be a good monk. Do not forget that your goal is to attain salvation and be sure to observe ahimsa (nonviolence) throughout your life. I give you permission to take Dikshä."

Aimuttä said, "Thank you, Mother. I will remember your advice."

Aimuttä's mother blessed him and wished him success in his new life. She also helped him get permission from his father, King Vijay.

A few days later he took Dikshä and became a monk called "Bälmuni (young monk) Aimuttä."

One day while returning from the outside, Bälmuni Aimuttä saw some children playing with a paper boat in a water puddle. He became excited about playing and forgot that as a monk he could not play with water. He ran towards the kids and asked if he could play with them. The kids became excited about a monk asking to play with them and said "Yes." He took the lid off the pot he had and started playing with it as if it were a boat. He said, "Look, my boat is also sailing." Meanwhile other monks came there and saw him playing with water. They said, "Bälmuni, what are you doing? Did you forget that as a monk you can not play with water? By playing with water, we cause harm to many water bodied souls. We have all taken a vow not to hurt any living being. This is very bad. You have violated your vow and accumulated sins."

Bälmuni Aimuttä realized his mistake. He immediately started repenting, "Oh! What have I done? I promised my mother that I would not do any sinful activity. How sinful I am? How nice these monks are to remind me of my mistake! What would have happened if these monks had not seen me?" He was truly regretful for what he did. He left with the other monks. Every monk has to recite the Iriyävahiyam Sutra after they return to their place from outside. Therefore, Bälmuni also recited this sutra. When he came to the part, "Pänakkamne, Beeyakkamne, Hariyakkamane, Osäuttinga Panag-Daga-Matti, (if I have hurt any living beings of water, green grass, and clay, then I am asking for forgiveness)" his repentance had no bound. He was very sorry for what he had done. He began thinking, "What did I do? I have hurt so many living beings. How can I be free of these sins? How will I face Lord Mahävîr? Oh living beings, I have caused harm to you. Please forgive me of my sins. I will never commit these sins again." Because of his sincere repentance, all of his bad karmas were destroyed and he attained Kevaljnän (omniscience or perfect knowledge). He became Kevali.

After this, Kevali Aimuttä Muni went to Lord Mahävîr's assembly and started walking towards other Kevalis. Some senior Munis noticed this and told him, "Oh, Aimuttä!! Where are you going? That is the place for Kevalis to sit. Go over there where the other monks are sitting."

Lord Mahävîr interrupted them and said, "Monks, you should not insult a Kevali. Aimuttä Muni is no ordinary monk now. While reciting Iriyävahiyam Sutra, he destroyed all of his Ghäti (destructive) karmas, and became a Kevali."

The monks realized their mistakes, bowed down to him and thought, "There is no age barrier to be a Kevali." At his death Bälmuni Aimuttä attained liberation.

Key Message:

The pursuit and understanding of Jainism has no age limit but is rather driven by one's own true faith, understanding, and the passion to learn the principles of Jainism. All of us make mistakes which cause bad karmas. Mistakes can be intentional or unintentional. It is possible that karmas which result from unintentional mistakes can be eliminated by true and sincere repentance. One should not intentionally make a mistake knowing that they plan to repent later. Such repentance will be in vain since it is not true or sincere.

Anand Shrāvak

Once upon a time there lived a king named Jitshatru in the city of Vānījya. A rich householder named Anand also lived in the same city. He was so rich that he had 4 million gold coins, an equal amount of cash, an equal amount invested in business, lots of jewelry, and many other assets. He also owned 40,000 cows. He was highly respected by the king as well as by the people of the town.

One day Lord Mahāvīr visited Vānījya and gave a sermon. After listening to the sermon Anand decided to accept the twelve vows of a householder. Anand observed these vows for fourteen years and then decided to renounce worldly affairs. Therefore, he talked to his children, handed over all his businesses and family responsibilities to them, and told them not to stop him in his spiritual pursuit. He was going to spend rest of his life in penance and meditation.

After some time, he attained Avadhījnān (clairvoyance) due to austerities, a pure mental state, and the resulting purity of his soul. It just so happened that Lord Mahāvīr and his disciples were in town at this time. One day when Gautam-swāmi (Lord Mahāvīr's chief disciple) went to get alms (food), he overheard people talking about Anand's poor health and that Anand had attained Avadhījnān. Therefore, Gautam-swāmi decided to visit Anand. When Gautam-swāmi arrived, Anand offered his salutation while lying in bed. He told Gautam-swāmi about his Avadhījnān and that he could visualize up to the twelfth Devaloka (heaven or celestial abode). Gautam-swāmi told Anand that although such knowledge was possible for a householder to attain, it was not possible to see that far. He told Anand that he should do Prāyashchitta (repentance) for telling a lie. Anand was puzzled because he was telling the truth. He did not want to disobey his spiritual teacher but at the same time he thought it was not fair to repent for telling the truth. Therefore, he respectfully asked Gautam-swāmi, "Guruji, is it necessary to repent even when someone is telling the truth?" Gautam-swāmi said, "No." Gautam-swāmi still did not believe Anand so he went back to Lord Mahāvīr to get advice.

Gautam-swāmi told Lord Mahāvīr about his conversation with Anand. Mahāvīrswāmi said, "Gautam, Anand is right. He has attained such Avadhījnān that he can see that far. How could a knowledgeable person like you make such a mistake? You should ask for his forgiveness." Gautam-swāmi realized his mistake and immediately went to Anand to apologize and ask for forgiveness. Anand was very happy that Lord Mahāvīr took the side of truth and not that of his chief disciple, Gautam-swāmi. He was also happy that even a great monk like Gautam-swāmi came back to ask for forgiveness. He felt very strongly about his religion and the monks who follow it. Anand fasted until death and was reborn as a heavenly being in Saudharma Devaloka (a heavenly region). After the completion of that heavenly life, he would be reborn as a human in Mahā-Videha and would attain liberation from there.

Key Message:

The essence of human life is to practice one or more of the twelve vows in daily life. This story tells us how householders (Shrāvaks) should have faith in truth. It also shows that Gautam-swāmi was simple, humble and a true follower of Lord Mahāvīr. When Lord Mahāvīr pointed out his mistake, Gautam-swāmi went to Anand without any argument to ask for forgiveness even though he was the chief disciple of Mahāvīrswāmi. It also shows how impartial Lord Mahāvīr was because, even though it was the mistake of his chief disciple, he did not cover it up. On the contrary, he took the side of truth and explained to Gautam-swāmi his mistake.

Sage Nandisen

Sage Nandisen was a great ascetic and well versed in the scriptures. He took a vow to serve monks with utmost devotion. His devotion of serving the monks was popular even in the heavenly abode.

One day his services were commended by Indra in an assembly of angels. One of the angels could not believe this and decided to check out the worthiness of sage Nandisen.

The angel gods, due to their miraculous power, can assume any form they desire and can reach anywhere in a split second. This god arrived at the outskirts of the village where sage Nandisen was to test his "Vow of Service" and the god assumed the form of two monks. One became a very old and injured monk while the other became a young and healthy monk.

It was a day when sage Nandisen was to break his fast. After he came from gathering Gochari (alms) and was about to break the fast, the young monk came to him and said, "Oh blessed one! There is a very old monk suffering from diarrhea, extreme thirst, and hunger. He is weak and needs your help."

Hearing these words, sage Nandisen immediately got up, took clean water with him and went to the place where the old monk was. Seeing Nandisen, the old monk at once raged, "Oh you wretch, I am lying here suffering and you did not even care to find if anyone needs help."

Sage Nandisen was not offended by these words. He had developed virtues of tolerance, forgiveness and compassion. He calmly replied, "Oh, the best of the monks, kindly excuse my oversight. I have brought clean water for you to drink."

He helped the old monk drink the water. He cleaned his clothes, his body, and helped him sit up. The old monk again became irritated. He frowned, "Oh you fool, don't you see that I am too weak to sit. What are you doing to me?"

Sage Nandisen said, "I will help you." After helping the old monk to sit up, he said, "Oh revered monk, if you desire, I shall carry you to Upāshray (place where monks stay temporarily) where you will be more comfortable."

The monk replied, "Why are you asking me? You may do so if you wish."

Sage Nandisen seated the monk on his shoulders and slowly proceeded towards Upāshray. He walked slowly, watching every step carefully. The old monk (angel god) was determined to test him so he increased his own weight gradually. With the increased weight on his shoulder, sage Nandisen began to tremble and he almost fell. The old monk said, "Oh you wretch, what is wrong with you? Don't you know how to walk? You are shaking my entire body. Is this the way to serve the sick?"

His words were very rude and harsh but sage Nandisen was not disturbed at all. He said, "Pardon me. I shall be more careful."

He ignored the monk's comments, continued walking, and took care not to offend the monk with any more of his actions. On the way he thought about how to cure the monk.

He arrived at the Upāshray with the monk. During all this, the old monk was watching sage Nandisen and did not see any change in the helping nature of him even after all the aggravation. Therefore the old monk turned back into an angel and bowed down at once to sage Nandisen, saying, "Blessed are you. Oh sage, you are the illustration of a real monk. You deserve all the praise given by Lord Indra. I am very pleased with you and grant you whatever you choose."

"Oh heavenly angel, this human life is very precious. Nothing is more valuable than human existence. I am content. I crave for nothing", said sage Nandisen. The heavenly angel bowed his head at the feet of the sage and returned to his abode, applauding the merits of the sage.

Key Message:

This story teaches us the importance of tolerance, discipline, and contentment, which are all fundamental principles of Jainism. First and foremost, sage Nandisen chose to devote his life to serve monks which is very admirable and requires an utmost level of dedication and discipline. The important point to realize is that sage Nandisen demonstrated his tolerance (i.e. abstinence from getting angry) and willingness to serve others before serving himself without even knowing that he was being tested by the angel god. This means that he was truly dedicated to the monks and believed in what he was doing. He also indicated his contentment with the human life when asked for a wish. This contentment is symbolic of the principle of non-possessiveness.

Queen Chelna and King Shrenik

This is a story from the time of Bhagawän Mahävira. At that time king Chetak was the ruler of Vaishali. He had a beautiful daughter named Chelna. Once, Bharat an artist, painted a picture of Chelna and showed it to king Shrenik of Magadh. Charmed by Chelna's beauty, Shrenik fell in love with her. One day Chelna came to the city of Magadh where she saw king Shrenik and she fell in love with him. They soon got married.

Queen Chelna was a devoted follower of Jainism, while Shrenik was influenced by Buddhism. The king was generous with a big heart but somehow he was not happy with his queen's devotion to the Jain monks. He wanted to prove to Chelna that Jain monks were pretenders. He strongly believed that no man could follow the practice of self-restraint and non-violence to that extent and that the equanimity shown by Jain monks was superficial. Chelna was greatly disturbed by this.

One day King Shrenik went on a hunting trip where he saw a Jain monk, Yamadhar, engaged in deep meditation. Shrenik let his hunter dogs go after Yamadhar but the monk remained silent. On seeing the calmness and composure of the monk, the dogs became quiet. King Shrenik got angry and thought that the monk had played some trick on them. Therefore, he started shooting arrows at the monk but they kept on missing him. Becoming more upset, he finally put a dead snake around Yamadhar's neck and returned to his palace.

The king narrated the whole incident to Chelna. The queen felt very sorry for Yamadhar and took the king back to his meditation place. Because of the dead snake, ants and other insects were crawling all over the monk's body but the monk did not even stir. The couple witnessed the limits of human endurance. The queen gently removed the ants and snake from the monk's body, and cleaned his wounds. She applied sandalwood paste. Sometime later Yamadhar opened his eyes and blessed both of them.

The monk did not distinguish between the king who had caused him pain and the queen who had alleviated his pain. King Shrenik was very impressed and became convinced that Jain monks were truly beyond attachment and aversion. Thus, king Shrenik along with queen Chelna became devoted to Jainism and Bhagawän Mahävira.

Key Message:

One should not question the will power and devotion of someone who is more religious than oneself, especially if one can't perform comparable level of penance and devotion. In fact, one should be respectful of such individuals. It is important to serve and support these people rather than cause them pain and suffering. This will help avoid accumulating bad karmas. Learn to accept and appreciate virtues.

Punia Shrāvak

Punia Shrāvak and his wife were poor villagers by their own choice. They lived in a small shack made of mud and grass. Punia had a vow not to earn more than 12 Dokadas (1/12 rupee) a day. He earned that by spinning cotton yarn in his house and selling it. He also had another vow which was to offer food to a Sādhamik (virtuous people). As they could not afford this vow, he would fast one day and his wife would fast the next day. In spite of their being so poor, they always offered their hospitality to fellow beings. In this way the couple did Sādhamik Bhakti (helping deserving people) every day.

Punia Shrāvak was known for his practice of Sāmāyika. Once during Sāmāyika, he could not concentrate on meditation. He wondered what he had done that was disturbing his meditation. He could not think of anything that would disturb his meditation. Therefore, he asked his wife, "What have we done different that I can't concentrate today." At first his wife could not think of anything either. But as she kept on thinking, she remembered that today while coming back from market, she had picked up dry cow-manure from the street and used that as cooking fuel. She told Punia about this. He told her that she should not have done that even though it did not belong to anyone. We should only use things which are bought from our own daily earnings. Punia could do a true Sāmāyika because he lived a life of such high morals.

Even Lord Mahāvīr praised his Sāmāyika. Once when king Shrenik asked Lord Mahāvīr how he could destroy his bad karmas to avoid being born in hell in his next life, Lord Mahāvīr said, "If you can buy Punia Shrāvak's Sāmāyika then it may be possible." King Shrenik went to Punia Shrāvak and asked him if he could buy his Sāmāyika. He said, "I do Sāmāyika not to sell but to uplift my own soul. Religious rituals can't be purchased. One has to do for himself." King Shrenik left disappointed but with admiration for Punia's real faith in religion.

Key Message:

This shows that one can live a life of contentment even with limited earnings. We should not take anything which is not given to us. We should not accumulate more money than necessary because it will create problems. Vows or rituals are done for spiritual uplift and not for monetary gain. In order to gain benefit from Sāmāyika and other forms of meditation and penance, they should be motivated by one's inner self and not by any motives that conflict with Jain principles.

Shālibhadra

Once upon a time a poor woman and her son lived in a small village. One day there was a festival in the village and all the kids, including the poor boy, came together to play. After playing, everyone started to eat kheer (sweet rice pudding and milk) that they had brought with them. The poor boy did not have anything with him. He felt bad and ran back to his mother. He asked her if she would make him some kheer since all the other children were eating it. His mother said that she could not make kheer and told him to eat whatever she had cooked. He started crying and insisted on having kheer. His mother could not bear to see him cry. Therefore, she went to a neighbor's house and borrowed some milk, sugar, and rice to make kheer for her son. She poured kheer into a dish and left to fetch water from the well. As the boy was about to start eating, he heard the words, "Dharma Lābha," (meaning, may you be blessed with spirituality usually spoken by Jain Sādhus). He saw a Jain Sādhu at the door for alms (food). Without any hesitation, the hungry boy invited the monk in and offered him kheer. He poured all of the kheer from his plate into the monk's pot. He was happy that he could offer this to the monk even though nothing was left for him to eat. His good intention brought him good karmas, and in his next life he was born as Shālibhadra.

Shälibhadra's mother was Bhadrä Shethäni and his father was Gobhadra Sheth. His father had renounced the world to become a monk when Shälibhadra was a young boy. Shälibhadra was born into a multi-millionaire family. His life was like being in heaven. It was said that even the heavenly angels were jealous of his lavish lifestyle. He had 32 beautiful wives. His mother never let him out of his palace for fear that he might become a monk like his father.

One day, some merchants from Nepal came to sell some very expensive shawls. They went to king Shrenik's court where the king told them that he could not afford to use his citizens' money for such expensive shawls. They returned from court in utter disappointment because they had high hopes of selling shawls in this city. When Bhadrä Shethäni came to know about this, she sent for the merchants. The merchants were reluctant to go because if the king could not buy a shawl, how could any of the residents buy such expensive items. However they went anyway. Bhadrä Shethäni asked, "What do you have?" They said they had sixteen shawls. She said, "Only sixteen? I need thirty-two shawls because I have thirty-two daughters-in-law." The merchants thought she was joking and would not even buy one. She said, "What are you waiting for. Take out those shawls." They took out the sixteen shawls. The merchants were surprised that without a second thought she bought all sixteen shawls. They were further dazed to see her tearing such precious shawls into two pieces in front of them and giving a piece to each of her daughters-in-laws to wipe their feet. The merchants were stunned but left in joy. The daughters-in-law used the pieces once and threw them away.

One of the servants at Shälibhadra's palace liked the queen so she took a piece for the queen. The queen was baffled but happy that such rich people lived in her kingdom. She told this to king Shrenik. He also felt very proud of such rich people upholding the good name of his kingdom. He invited Shälibhadra to his court to honor him. When Bhadrä Shethäni found out, she went to the king and told him her son was very shy and invited the king to come to their palace to honor Shälibhadra. King Shrenik accepted the invitation and went to Shälibhadra's palace. When King Shrenik reached there, he realized that his own palace was nothing compared to Shälibhadra's palace. Bhadrä Shethäni offered him a place to sit and asked Shälibhadra to come down to see the king. Shälibhadra did not know anything about the king or his kingdom and thought there was some sort of merchandise that his mother wanted to show him. So he said, "I do not want to see that but go ahead and buy it." His mother said, "This is not the merchandise. He is our king, our master, and you need to come down to greet and honor him." The word "master" started ringing in his ears. He wondered, "Why should I have a master over me. I should be the master of myself." While thinking like this, he came down and paid his respect to the king, but he could not stay there very long and went back.

He kept on thinking he was not free because there was someone over him. He started to think about his father (who had become a monk) and the real meaning of life. He decided at that very moment to become a monk and told his family about the decision. His mother and wives tried to convince him to spend some more time with them. However he was determined to renounce the world. He did agree that instead of renouncing all thirty-two wives at once, he will renounce one wife at a time and then he would definitely become a monk. He started to do that the very same day.

A few days passed. His sister Subhadrä was giving her husband Dhannä a bath and suddenly tears rolled from her eyes and fell on him. He looked up and saw his wife crying. He asked her why she was crying. She told him that her brother had decided to become a monk and he had begun renouncing one wife a day. Dhannä laughed and told Subhadrä, "Your brother is a coward. If he wants to leave his wives, why wait?" Subhadrä was upset to hear that, and told her husband, "It is easier said than done." This sparked awareness in Dhannä's mind and he told her, "I am leaving all eight of you right now to become a monk." Subhadrä was taken by a surprise. She told him that he must be joking. But Dhannä said, "It is too late now. I am determined to become a monk. If you all want to join me you are welcome." Seeing Dhannä's determination, Subhadrä and his seven other wives decided to become nuns.

Dhannä then went to his brother-in-law Shälibhadra's place and challenged him, "Hey Shälibhadra! If you really want to leave your family and become a monk, then what are you waiting for? Join me."

Shālibhadra heard him and accepted the challenge. He told his wives, "Sorry, but I am leaving you all today." He went down to join his brother-in-law. His wives joined him too. All of them went to Lord Mahāvīr and accepted Dikshā.

After observing penance as a monk, Shālibhadra was born as an angel in heaven. From there, he would be born in Mahā-Videha Kshetra and ultimately attain liberation, Moksha.

Key Message:

Selfless service always pays off. Neighbors helping neighbors reflects a caring society. The virtue of a charitable act in the life of a little boy was rewarded multiple times in the life of Shālibhadra. As a result, he was able to leave everything easily. Good deeds always leave an imprint on the soul. Good deeds and practicing penance as a monk ultimately lead to the liberation of the soul.

Meghkumar

King Shrenik of Magadh had a beautiful queen named Dhārini. Once, while she was sleeping, she had a dream that a white elephant was entering her mouth. She immediately woke up and told the king about the dream. Shrenik knew that it was an auspicious dream. He called the dream experts, who stated that the queen would give birth to a very handsome and intelligent son who will excel in everything. The king and queen were very much pleased to hear this.

During the third month of her pregnancy, Dhārini had an irresistible urge to ride an elephant in the country with the king when the sky is decorated with the clouds of colorful hues, lightning is flashing and rain is pouring. In most parts of India, it rains only during the monsoon season, which is usually from June to October. Dhārini, however, had the urge during off-season. The fulfillment of her urge was therefore a problem. In order to see that her health and well being are not affected by the unsatisfied urge, king asked his eldest son Abhaykumar, who was also the Prime Minister of the state, for a solution so that the King can satisfy the queen's urge. Abhaykumar had a friend who could do miracles. That friend arranged events exactly according to Dhārini's urge. She therefore could ride on an elephant with the king and satisfy her urge.

In due course queen Dhārini gave birth to a very handsome, and an adorable baby boy. Rain in Indian language is called Megh. In commemoration of her urge during pregnancy, the boy was named Meghkumar. At the age of 8, he was sent to school where he learned all 72 arts and crafts and became known as an accomplished youth. He was then married to 8 beautiful girls with whom he enjoyed all the pleasures of the worldly life. Once Lord Mahāvīr came to Rājgruhi and was staying in Gunashil monastery. Almost every resident of Rājgruhi used to go to listen to His sermons. Meghkumar went as well, and was very much impressed. Realizing the transitory nature of the worldly situations, as explained by the Lord, he decided to renounce his worldly life. However, his parents were sad to hear about his intentions. They tried all possible means to prevent him from renouncing. He however remained very firm. Nevertheless, in order to satisfy his parents' wish, he agreed to become the king for one day and was ceremoniously crowned as a king with all the royal pomp. Immediately after that, he left everything, renounced the worldly life and became a disciple monk of Lord Mahāvīr.

At night, he was given a place near the door to sleep. During the night, monks going for bathroom had to walk past 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 Meghkumar 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 be accidentally kicked by 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 the monkhood life.

In the morning, he went to the Lord to seek permission to return home. The Lord was aware of the discomforts that he had faced. He however asked him, 'Megh, do you remember the discomforts that you had faced during the previous life?' Since Meghkumar did not, the Lord described his previous life:

"During the previous life you were the king of elephants and were known as Meruprabha. Once there was a forest 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 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.

Again, there was a wild fire in your forest. All the animals came running and took refuge on that stretch. You were also there. During that time, you raised your foot to scratch your body because of an itch. That very time a rabbit was pushed in that space by 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 the rabbit. The fire raged for two and a half days during which you continued to hold your foot up out of compassion for the rabbit.

At the end of fire as the animals retreated, you tried to lower your foot. It was however so stiff by then that you could not keep your balance and fell down. You felt agonizing pain and could not get up. That way you spent three days and nights suffering from severe pain. Ultimately you died, your soul left that body and you were born here as the prince of Shrenik, because of your compassion for the rabbit. If you could face that much distress for the sake of rabbit and attain this priceless human life in return, how come you cannot face the accidental kicking and the dirt of the feet of your fellow monks? Do you realize that by renouncing this worldly life and by becoming a monk you have taken the first step towards the long journey of liberation? Remember that all these sufferings and happiness are only due to our own Karmas. They all are only temporary by their very nature. The everlasting happiness is achieved only upon liberation.

Meghkumar was spellbound by the Lord's words and realized his mistake. 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 Meghmuni, as he was called after that, started leading rigorous, austere life. Fasting for days together, he stayed, most of the time, in meditation in order to eradicate his Karmas. The Lord and Gautam-swāmi 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 (Sallekhanā). That he did for a month on mount Vaibhārgiri near Rājgruhi. Upon death, he was born in heaven. The Lord has stated to Gautam-swāmi that at the end of the heavenly life, he would be reborn in Mahā-Videha Kshetra and would attain salvation.

Key Message:

Here is a great example of compassion. An elephant bears discomfort and pain to save a little animal. We are more developed and rational beings. We should learn from these animals to be helpful to each other. Besides, when one takes an oath to lead the life a monk, one should not revert to a worldly life. This is a very tough and rigorous life, which makes one realize and understand the true nature of the soul. In order to achieve this understanding, one must put aside the worldly life permanently because it tends to distort things. Suffering occurs because of one's past karma so one should accept it and focus on the soul for self-realization.

Abhaykumar and Rohineya

In times of Lord Mahāvīr, there was a burglar named Lohkhar. He lived in a remote cave of Vaibhārgiri near Rājgruhi. He was very smart in his activity and never left any trace of his burglary. His wife's name was Rohini and they had a son named Rohineya. As Rohineya grew up, he also learned burglary from his father and eventually became an 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 outrun anyone. He could even jump over walls when necessary. He committed burglary mostly from houses of noblemen

and rich people and hid the treasures of his burglaries in the most unexpected and 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. Therefore, they were not willing to help the Government officials in tracking him down.

Lohkhur was now very old and could see that his life was coming to an 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 Mahāvīr, because his teachings were not conducive to their profession. Rohineya promised his father to abide by his advice. Therefore, Lohkhur could breathe his last breath with a sense of satisfaction.

After he died, Rohineya expanded his burglary to a large scale so much, that it became almost impossible for the well-to-do families to ensure the safety of their property, if they needed to go out. They were constantly afraid, that Rohineya would go to their home during their absence and take away jewelry and other valuables from the house. Once some people went 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 about the matter. The king therefore asked Abhaykumar to take a charge of arresting Rohineya.

Once, 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, not to ever listen to Lord Mahāvīr's sermon. He therefore put his hands on his ears. Unfortunately, he was struck by a sharp thorn deep into his foot that very moment. He had therefore to take his hands off from the ears in order to take out the thorn. During this time, words of the Lord reached his ears. He heard the 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 a 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 the ground. Their bodies are shadow less; their eyes remain steady and their garlands do not wither. That life, however, does not lead to ultimate liberation, which provides eternal bliss. Therefore, heavenly beings too crave for obtaining a human life.' By that time Rohineya had removed the thorn from his foot and covering his ears with his hands again, he proceeded towards the city.

Since being entrusted with the task of arresting Rohineya, Abhaykumar had secretly posted 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 disguise of a farmer. The watchman sent a message to Abhaykumar that some unidentified person had entered the city. Abhaykumar became very 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 were soldiers near the wall to capture him. He was thus easily apprehended and was put in jail.

The next day, he was presented in the royal 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 a proof of his identity? 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 to visit 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 inquiries were made in that village, the people corroborated what Rohineya had stated in the court.

Abhaykumar had to devise a plan for getting a confession from Rohineya regarding the burglaries. He came to know that Rohineya was fond of drinks. He therefore arranged for serving excessive 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 heard in the background; fairylike dancers 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. He had attained all the divine comforts, which now belonged to him. He could live like Indra, the king of heaven and enjoy with the heavenly damsels the way he wanted. 'Could this be true for a burglar like him?' he asked himself. However, 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 the truth. He therefore thought it was best 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 woken up and they had been getting ready to celebrate his arrival in the heaven by presenting the divine concert. 'Let me make sure that all preparations pertaining to his arrival have been completed before you start your concert; and let me also get from him some information that the heavenly realm needs to know.' As he was saying this, he came to Rohineya. Opening his book, he asked Rohineya to narrate his deeds from his previous life, prior to enjoying the amenities of heaven.

Meanwhile, Rohineya was watching all around. He remembered what he had heard from Lord Mahāvīr about heavenly beings, when he was struck by a thorn in his foot. He observed the movements of the so-called heavenly beings in front of him. He noticed that their feet were touching the ground, their bodies had shadows, 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, and 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. Abhaykumar's plan backfired and Rohineya was set free as being the innocent farmer that he pretended to be.

Rohineya was released, however, he constantly thought about what had happened. He realized that what he had accidentally heard from Lord Mahāvīr had saved his life. Then how could his father 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, imagine how helpful his entire teachings could be?' he asked himself. Did he 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 disciple. He also offered to become a monk, if the Lord considered him fit for renouncement. As the Lord thought him worthy to become his disciple, 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 please accept back all the treasures he had collected during burglaries. .

Since Rohineya had voluntarily confessed and had willingly returned everything that he had taken during burglaries, the king decided to pardon him and permitted him to be the Lord's monk. Rohineya deeply repented for what he had done in his life. 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 until death) with the permission of the Lord and was born in heaven upon his death.

Key Message:

Theme here focuses on honesty and principle of non-stealing. One should not steal from others even if one intends to donate the stolen items to poor people. Wrongdoing is still wrongdoing regardless of how much good you are doing in other areas. One must repent for it in order to destroy the bad karmas that

accumulate as a result of it. Second thing we learn from this story is that we can attain liberation only through human form. Even heavenly beings can't attain liberation without taking a birth as a human being first. So we should realize how fortunate we all are to have this human birth, make the most of it, and wash away as much bad karma as we possibly can. Also, look at the power of Lord Mahāvīr's sermon. Just few words from his sermon can save and then ultimately change Rohineya's life forever. Imagine the benefits of listening to all of His teachings. Unfortunately, we cannot listen to His sermons, but we have his teachings available to us as Āgams. We should study and understand Āgams as much as we can so that our lives also can change for good just like that of Rohineya.

King Samprati

King Samprati was a great Jain king who lived during the second half of the third and the first half of the second century BC. He was the grandson of the great king Ashok. History, however, hardly mentions Samprati. That can be attributed to two reasons. The ancient history of India revolves around Magadh and its capital Patliputra. Since Samprati ruled over Malwa in central India, his character might not have received attention. Moreover, Samprati was a Jain. Since most historians until recently took Jainism as a part of Buddhism, their attention was not drawn to the important role that Samprati played in Jainism.

The authenticity of Samprati as a great king is, however, beyond doubts. Jain history obviously provides enough details of his life. The Buddhist literature also has made mention of him by the Prakrit name Sampadi. His name also occurs in some of the Hindu Purāns, wherein he is variously referred to as Samprati, Sampati, and Saptati etc. Moreover, coins depicting a crescent and bearing his name have now been found. The sign of crescent represents the Jain symbol of Siddhashilā and three dots are symbolic of the Jain trio of right perception, right knowledge and right conduct. Some of the coins also show Swastika below the three dots. This is the conclusive evidence of him being a Jain king. He was the son of prince Kunāl.

Samprati was raised and educated in Avanti and became the king of Avanti in 232 BC. When he was a prince, he once happened to see a grand Jain procession led by Āchārya Suhastigiri, who was the head of the Jain religious order. On seeing the Āchārya, Samprati felt that he had seen him somewhere. While deeply pondering over it, he faintly remembered that the Āchārya was his Guru in earlier life. He bowed to him and asked whether the latter knew him. The Āchārya thought for a while and remembered that Samprati was his disciple in the previous life.

There was a severe famine, when Āchārya Suhasti was once in the city of Kaushambi. In those difficult days, it was very difficult for Jain monks to get alms. Jain householders, however, made sure that the monks received their alms. At that time, there was a poor man who could hardly get any food and was starving. He noticed that the monks were getting enough food even in the time of that severe draught. Therefore, he requested the Āchārya to give him some food. Foreseeing that the man was destined to be a great Jain in the next birth, the Āchārya told him that he could get the food if he became a monk.

The man gladly agreed. Accordingly, he was initiated and thereby he received enough food to eat. Since he was starving for many days, he ate too much. Consequently, he had severe pain in the stomach, which, he endured patiently, while cursing himself for eating too much. Other monks, of course, served him in all possible ways, but the pain did not subside. On the contrary, it continued to become worse and the newly initiated monk died of the pain that very night. Due to his adopting the restraints as a monk and on account of bearing the pain quietly, he was reborn as the grandson of Ashok.

The Āchārya narrated the entire episode to him. Samprati was glad to hear that. He realized the benefits of adopting Jainism even for a short while. He therefore adopted it as his faith and formally accepted the Āchārya as his Guru. After he became the king, he offered the kingdom to the Guru, because it was obtained on account of his benevolence. Āchārya, however, declined to accept the same and said that as a Jain monk he did not want to possess anything. He, however, pointed out that he should try his best to promote and encourage Jainism in his kingdom and beyond.

Samprati accepted the advice. He became a devout Jain and the follower of the omniscient Lords. He was a brave king and expanded his kingdom considerably in the South up to Vindhya and in the West up to the Arabian Sea. He constructed temples, not only in his dominion, but also encouraged the rulers of Andhra Pradesh, Karnatak, Maharashtra, etc to do so. Jain tradition maintains that during his lifetime he arranged for installation of more than 100,000 Tirthankar idols and for constructing or renovating 36,000 temples. He also sent his emissaries abroad to Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma and even China for spreading message of Jainism. It is therefore hardly surprising that in 'Early History of India' Vincent Smith calls him Jain Ashok.

He treated other followers of Jainism very affectionately and helped them in every way. Since he vividly remembered his starving condition in the previous life, he was sympathetic to all poor people and took care to see that they did not starve. He set up 700 charitable cafeterias where any one could eat free of charge.

Samprati had no children. He took this as the consequence of the earlier Karma and observed the religious customs more scrupulously. After ruling over his large dominion for 53 years, he died in 179 BC. Jain tradition believes that he has been reborn as a heavenly being.

Key Message:

Service to others is one of the many ways one can follow Jainism and Samprati certainly demonstrated this quality. He not only helped promote Jainism by renovating and building temples and installing Tirthankar idols in existing temples, but also helped reduce the pain and sufferings of the poor. We should also strive to serve others. His life story also demonstrates that, a religious deed performed even for a short while, gives manifold results. In addition, it creates a chain of good deeds leading to beneficial results.

Āchārya Hemchandra

Āchārya Hemchandra was born in 1088 A.D. in the caste of Modha Vanik (merchant) in the town of Dhandhuka, sixty miles from the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat State. His parents were Chachadev and Pahini. When Pahini was pregnant, she had a beautiful dream. She narrated her dream to Āchārya Devasuri, who was in Dhandhuka at that time. The Āchārya said that Pahini was to give birth to a son who would make great progress in the areas of spiritual knowledge, intuition, and conduct. Upon his birth, the child was named Changdev.

The next time Āchārya Devasuri was in Dhandhuka, he saw Pahini carrying her son. He said to Pahini, "Let me take care of this brilliant son. He is destined to be a great spiritual leader." However, he could not convince her to give her son to him. The Āchārya kept pursuing her and reminding her that her son would become a famous monk and would glorify the Jain order. Again, he requested that she should sacrifice self-interest and love for the child for the good of the people. Ultimately, Pahini let the Āchārya take her son with him.

He initiated Changdev into monkhood and named him Somachandra. The disciple was very intelligent and soon mastered various philosophies, logic, scriptures, Nyāya, grammar, etc. At the same time, he cultivated excellent virtues like forbearance, tolerance, holiness, simplicity, discipline, chastity, and generosity. Somachandra was incomparable in administration and efficiency. Āchārya Devasuri made Somachandra an Āchārya when he was only twenty-one years old. At that time, he was given the name Hemchandra Āchārya.

The fame of Hemchandra's efficacy and knowledge gradually spread everywhere. The noble culture was on the rise in Gujarat due to the ability of Hemchandra and the cooperation of King Siddharāj of Gujarat.

Kumärpäl succeeded King Siddharāj. Hemchandra had predicted seven years earlier that Kumärpäl would be the king. In addition, the Āchārya had once saved Kumärpäl's life. Therefore, Kumärpäl considered Hemchandra his spiritual teacher (guru) and benefactor. Kumärpäl gave him exceptional honor and sought his advice in the shaping of his kingdom in Gujarat. In a very short time, Gujarat became a center of non-violence, learning, and good culture.

Hemchandra did not only think of the development of his own career, but always thought of universal welfare. In spite of this, some Brahmins were very jealous and they tried to disgrace Hemchandrāchārya and Jainism. Some Brahmins approached King Kumärpäl and said, "Hemchandrāchārya is a very egoistic person and he does not respect Hindu Gods." King Kumärpäl was not ready to accept these views about his spiritual teacher, Hemchandrāchārya. The Brahmins requested King Kumärpäl to invite Hemchandrāchārya to come to the temple of Lord Shiva. The purpose of this was to humiliate Hemchandrāchārya because they thought he would not go to the temple of Lord Shiva and bow down to Lord Shiva. When Hemchandrāchārya came, King Kumärpäl said, "We will go to the temple of Lord Shiva." He accepted the offer without any hesitation. The Brahmins were happy in their mind thinking that they would be able to make their point today and glorify their religion. Yet, they were wrong. They underestimated Hemchandrāchārya. To the surprise of the Brahmins, Hemchandrāchārya bowed down in front of Lord Shiva and said,

***"Bhavbijānkura jananā Rāgādyāhā Kshayamupāgatā Yasya;
Brahmā Vā Vishnurvā Haro Jino Vā Namastasmai."***

"I am bowing down to that god who has destroyed passions like attachment (Rāga) and hatred (Dvesha), which are the cause of worldly life, whether he is Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, or Jina."

This showed that indeed the Āchārya was a genius and had a broad-minded attitude based on basic Jain principles. Under Hemchandra's influence, King Kumärpäl accepted Jainism. He prohibited violence and the killing of any animal in his kingdom. King Kumärpäl made many laws that nurtured the Jain religion. Vegetarianism was found not only in the Jains, but also in all the people of Gujarat. Jainism became the religion of the region.

Hemchandra composed several literary works that included many verses. The Āchārya was the first one to put non-violence on a political platform. He was the architect of the greatness and unity of Gujarat. In the field of metaphysics, he was a Yogi. His work Yoga-Shāstra, a treatise on yoga, is very famous. People called him 'Kali-Kāl Sarvajna' meaning 'all-knower in the dark period'. He died in 1173 AD at the age of eighty-four. The Jain culture still shines brightly in Gujarat, due to the influence of the literary works contributed by the great Āchārya Hemchandra.

Key message:

Āchārya Hemchandrāchārya was the spiritual teacher of King Kumärpäl of the state of Gujarat. It is because of Hemchandrāchārya that Kumärpäl accepted Jainism and became a Jain. It is because of this reason that Jainism and vegetarianism flourishes well in the state of Gujarat. Hemchandrāchārya has composed many literary masterpiece works and has written treatise on many original Jain texts and Āgams.

Vimalshā - The Architect of the Famous Delwädā Temple

The Solanki dynasty was the golden period for Gujarat, when the authority and prosperity of the State reached their peaks. The credit for putting Gujarat in this position mainly goes to the king's chancellors and commanders, who were at the helm of affairs. It would be of interest to us to learn that many of the chancellors and some of the commanders of that period were Jains. Vimalshā and Tejpal (of the Vastupal-

Tejpäl fame) were very capable commanders. However, Vimalshä can be considered outstanding in several respects.

King Mulraj, the founder of the Solanki dynasty, had an advisor named Vir Mahattam. His wife's name was Virmati. They had three sons named Nedh, Vimal, and Chahil. While they were still very young, their father renounced worldly life and became a monk. Their mother then went to her parents' place and began to rear her sons with love and care. Nedh was very intelligent and grew up to be a wise, considerate youth. Vimal was bold and smart. He liked horseback riding and archery. He steadily gained expertise in those arts and in due course turned out to be a well-known equestrian and accomplished archer.

As the sons grew older, their mother brought them back to Patan so that they could pursue a career of their choice. In tune to their tastes, Nedh joined the royal court and Vimal joined the army. Both of them quickly began to rise in the ranks and became known for their outstanding capabilities. Since Vimal in particular was handsome and brave, he impressed a multimillionaire of Patan. He had a beautiful daughter named Shridevi. He thought Vimal would be a perfect husband for her daughter. Vimal's mother Virmati was looking for such an opportunity and gladly accepted the offer. Vimal agreed and Shridevi and Vimal got married.

Luck continued to favor both the brothers even thereafter. During the reign of Bhimdev, who came to the throne in 1021 A.D. Nedh became the chancellor, and Vimal secured the position of the commander. Vimal was thus fortunate to get a beautiful, loving wife and a high military position at a relatively young age. Moreover, because of his amicable nature, he soon won the hearts of everyone and came to be known as Vimalshä.

Some people at the court could not bear the good fortune of Vimalshä. They felt jealous and began to look for his drawbacks. They noticed that Vimalshä would not bow to anyone, not even the king, before offering obeisance to the omniscient Lords. Thereupon, they started telling Bhimdev that Vimalshä was arrogant due to his position and was not even willing to bow to the king. They said that his ambition knew no bounds and he might even try to acquire the throne. Unfortunately, Bhimdev started to believe those courtiers and began to look at Vimalshä with suspicion.

When Vimalshä came to know of the disaffection of Bhimdev, he decided to leave Patan. Accordingly, he went to Abu (which was known as Chandraväti) with his followers. There, he noticed that Dhandhuk; the chief of Chandraväti was aspiring to become independent. Vimalshä therefore attacked him with the force at his command. Dhandhuk could not stand against him and fled away. Vimalshä thus occupied Chandraväti. He had, however, no ambition to become the king. He therefore took possession of Chandraväti in the name of Bhimdev and considered himself as the governor of the place.

Vimalshä was now happily passing his days at Chandraväti in company with his wife. Shridevi was a very affectionate lady and made him happy in every respect. She had no child. Being religious-minded, however, the couple considered it as the consequence of their unwholesome Karma. Once, they happened to meet Dharmaghosh-suri, who was the well-known Jain Ächärya of that time. Vimalshä used to attend his sermons regularly. That made him religiously oriented even more.

As he remembered his war exploits, he felt sorry for his involvement in the violence and sincerely repented. In view of his genuine repentance, the Ächärya asked him to construct a temple at Chandraväti and make it a center of pilgrimage, which will help in atonement of the violence caused during the wars. Vimalshä was pleased to hear this suggestion and made up his mind to construct a grand temple.

He was a devotee of Ambika, the goddess in charge of Lord Neminäth's order. He decided to invoke her in order to get her blessing. The goddess was pleased with the earnestness of his worship and asked him what he wanted. He asked for a son and the capability to construct a monumental temple at Chandraväti. However, the goddess asked him to select one of the two. Thereupon Vimalshä opted for the temple. Goddess Ambika granted his wish.

Then Vimalshā selected the site of the temple for the project on the top of a mountain and bought the land for 45,360,000 gold coins. The foundation stone was laid with a deep faith. However, it was not easy to construct the temple. It was a Herculean task. Artisans were not locally available, there was no road leading from the foot to the top of the mountain, and marble had to be brought from a great distance. Vimalshā was, however, determined to complete the project at any cost. He made all the necessary arrangements for transportation of materials to the top and hired the best sculptors of the country for carrying out the work.

All possible care was taken to see that the artisans did not face any difficulty and the project did not encounter any problem. It took 14 long years to finish the project and the temple was constructed at the cost of 185,300, 000 gold coins. The opening ceremony was performed with great fanfare and enthusiasm under the tutelage of Dharmaghosh-suri, Vardhamānsuri, and other Āchāryas.

It is a spacious all marble temple. There are highly artistic figures in its domes, arcs, and panels. Very lively damsels have been carved out on its decorative pillars and many other places. The sculpture is exquisite. Every part of the decorative figures and the limbs and gestures of the damsels are presented with the utmost precision. It would be nearly impossible to bring out that sort of accuracy even in wax. The fact that the artists have done it on the marble stones is marvelous and draws the instantaneous admiration of every visitor. That type of sculpture is not found anywhere else in the world. It is said that Vimalshā paid to the artists as much gold in weight as they turned out the stone powder during the carving. This temple has immortalized his name. It is virtually a wonder of the world. When you happen to go to India next time, do not fail to see it.

Later on, Vimalshā led a Sangh to Shatrunjay (the mountain in Palitānā town) that cost 40 million gold coins. He constructed Vimalvasahi temple there. That is located on the way to the main complex on the hill. It is a small but equally exquisite temple. It is popularly known as Bhulbhulamani, meaning a maze. He also constructed the well-known temples of Kumbhāriā on the Ārāsūr hill on the northern border of Gujarat. Moreover, he is credited with the construction of a beautiful temple at Patan.

One successful but highly instructive anecdote is associated with his later life. It is said that once Shridevi happened to have a dream in which she saw a goddess. The goddess asked her to go to her temple along with her husband on a specific date at midnight and ask for whatever they wanted. Both of them were eager to get a son and went to the place to express their wish. While they were waiting for the midnight, they felt thirsty. Vimalshā therefore went to an adjoining well to fetch water. Inside the well, there were steps, which went all the way down to level of the water. He went down the steps and as he was going to get some water, someone asked him to pay the toll for the water. Vimalshā was amazed to listen to that and asked the person who he was to demand the toll. The guy replied that he was a descendent of the person who had built the well. Since he was now without any resource, he was collecting toll for using the well.

Vimalshā was taken aback to hear that. He asked himself, "What would happen if someone of my own descendents one day tries to collect toll for the temple that I have built?" He shuddered at the idea and again asked himself whether it would be better in that case to remain without child. He went up and told his wife about that. She concurred with his thinking. At midnight when the goddess asked them what they wanted, Shridevi replied that she wanted to remain childless. Now, it was the turn for the goddess to be taken aback. She asked whether Shridevi was in her senses. Vimalshā then narrated what he had experienced and said that they really wanted to remain childless. That wish was accordingly granted to them.

Key Message:

Vimalshā's accomplishments as a Shrāvak are very inspiring to all of us. His dedication for the religion, perseverance, and honesty are praiseworthy. His contribution to the Jain architecture is our great heritage. We all can be very proud of him.

Udayan Mantri and His Sons - Āmbad and Bāhad

The Solanki dynasty was the golden period for Gujarat and that the authority and prosperity of the State reached their peaks during the reign of King Kumārpāl. The credit for attaining that position mainly goes to his chancellors who were known as Mantri. It would be of interest to learn that many of the chancellors of the Solanki period were Jains. The contribution of Udayan Mantri and his sons Āmbad and Bāhad to the rise and success of King Kumārpāl was substantial.

Originally, Udayan was a simple merchant in a village named Vāgharā lying near Jālore in Rajasthan. He could hardly make ends meet and was passing his days in hardship. His wife Suhādevi suggested to him to move to a place with better economic prospects. During this time, Siddharāj was ruling over Gujarat and its prosperity was increasing by leaps and bounds. Udayan therefore thought about migrating to Gujarat.

By that time, Siddharāj had set up Karnāvati near Ahmedabad in the memory of his father Karnadev. Since it was a fast growing city, Udayan decided to move there in order to try his luck. He did not know anyone there, so he first went to the local Jain temple. When Udayan arrived at the temple, a religious lady named Lachchhi was worshipping there. As she came out, she noticed the young couple and asked them where they had come from. Udayan replied that he was from Rajasthan and was looking for some business in Karnavati.

Lachchhi was compassionate by heart and had a special regard for Jains. As she knew that the newcomers were Jains, she took them home and treated them as her guests for a couple of days. Then, she gave them an old house for shelter. Udayan settled there and started a small business. Luck favored him and within a short time, he earned and saved enough to reconstruct this old house. While excavating the ground, he came across a hidden treasure. Honest as he was, he took the treasure to Lachchhi's place and offered it to her. She, however, declined to accept it stating that since the property was granted to Udayan, the treasure also belonged to him.

Udayan now had enough money to start a business on a large scale. Thereby, he made much money and in due course, he became the wealthiest man of Karnavati. The State also recognized that status and gave him the position of the first citizen of Karnavati. In that capacity, he rendered valuable service to the people of Karnavati and became known as a capable administrator.

At that time, Khambhāt was the most lucrative port on the western coast of India. The politicians vied with one another to get the position of governor there. In view of the proven capacity of Udayan, he was appointed as the governor of that port in 1120 A.D., and he held that position for a fairly long period. Two major events have been attributed to him during his tenure as the governor. At the suggestion of the mother queen Minaldevi, he abolished the pilgrim tax of Bholad and he actively helped Devchandra-suri in initiating the five year old boy, Changdev, who was destined to shine out as the great sage Hemchandrāchārya.

His loyalty to the king was unquestionable. As such, he was hesitating to help Kumārpāl, who in his early days was roaming from town to town to hide from king Siddharāj. However, when Kumārpāl came to Khambhāt in search of shelter, Hemchandrāchārya advised Udayan to help him. Since Udayan held the Āchārya in high esteem, he agreed to hide Kumārpāl in his basement. Sometime after that, Siddharāj died and Kumārpāl became the king. He initially continued Udayan in his position as the governor of Khambhāt and later brought him to Pātan to work as his trusted advisor.

Udayan had not forgotten how the religion was helpful to him during the time of his bad times. He therefore used his wealth and position for promoting Jainism. Moreover, as a token of his devotion to the faith, he constructed several Jain temples. Three of them are recorded in Jain history. One was the temple known as Udayanvihār in Karnavati, another was Udāvasahi in Dholka, and one more, whose name is not recorded, was in Khambhāt.

During the later part of Udayan's life, Kumārpāl sent him to overcome Sumvar, a notorious bandit in Saurāshtra. In that mission, he had to pass by Palitānā. Thereupon, he decided to have a pilgrimage of

Shatrunjay. To commemorate his pilgrimage, his statue has been erected on a camel back in a small temple on the way, which leads to the main complex of the hill. That place is mistakenly known at present as Pāp Punya ni Bāri.

There was a wooden temple on the hill at that time. While Udayan was worshipping there, he saw that a mouse took the lighted wick in its mouth and began to roam about. Udayan brought back the wick, but he could visualize that the temple could be set ablaze in this way by a mouse. He therefore vowed to himself to construct a new temple there.

He succeeded in his expedition against Sumvar, but he was badly wounded in the combat and his death was imminent. His soul, however, could not leave the body, because his vow had remained unfulfilled. His sons noticed his anxiety and asked what was on his mind. As he told them about his vow, his sons promised him that they would fulfill his vow. Thereafter he died peacefully knowing that his vow will be fulfilled.

Udayan had 4 sons, named Āmbad, Bāhad, Chāhad, and Sollak. Āmbad was a poet and a bold warrior. He had become the chancellor of Kumārpāl and is known as the conqueror of Mallikārjun of Konkan. He constructed the western pathway of Shatrunjay, which is now known as Gheti ni Pāg. He expanded Udāvasahi of Dholka and renovated the well-known temple of Shakunikāvihār at Bharuch.

There is an interesting story about that Shakunikāvihār temple. A bird once built her nest in a tree in the vicinity of Bharuch. Once, while she was out getting food for her young one, a hunter flung an arrow at her. She was fatally wounded and fell down near the temple known as Ashvāvbodh. While she was dying, a monk passed by. He recited Navakārmantra to her and she attentively listened to the recitation of Navakārmantra. She died soon after that, but by virtue of attentively listening to that Mantra she was reborn as a princess to the king of Ceylon.

She was very beautiful and attractive. Her parents therefore named her Sudarshanā and raised her with all the comforts. She grew to be a learned girl and began to come to the royal court in the company of her father. Once a Jain merchant Rushabhadatt went to Ceylon and was hosted by the royal family. Once while sneezing he uttered Namō Arihantānam as per his usual practice. As the princess heard it, she got the inclination that she had heard it earlier. As she tried to contemplate deeply, she recalled that the monk uttered it at the time of her death in the previous life. She also realized that by virtue of her listening to that Mantra, she had gained the life of the princess.

She told her father about that and requested him to allow her to go to Bharuch. After locating the exact spot of her death, she decided to renovate the Ashvāvbodh temple, which was dedicated to Lord Munisuvrat-swami. It was not an easy task, because Bharuch was far away from her native place. Nevertheless, without being disheartened, she made all the necessary arrangements for the purpose. At last, the project was completed and the grand temple came into existence. At the time of renovation, she arranged for drawing depicting her life as the bird and her rebirth as the princess to be put inside the temple.

Āmbad had pledged his allegiance to Kumārpāl and served him with utmost sincerity and loyalty. When his successor Ajaypāl came to the throne, he began to undo whatever Kumārpāl stood for. As such, Āmbad decided to resist him with all the means at his command. Thereafter Ajaypāl sent a troop to subdue him. Āmbad, however, refused to be subdued and died fighting against Ajaypāl's troops.

Bāhad, who is also known as Vāhad, was a politician and statesman. He entered the court during the time of Siddharāj and under Kumārpāl's regime; he became the king's trusted hand. When Kumārpāl undertook the renovation of Somnāth, the project was entrusted to Bāhad, who carried out the work very well. In order to redeem the pledge of his father, he undertook the construction of a grand temple on Shatrunjay. The temple was readied in 1155 A.D., but soon after, portions of the temple fell down due to intense air pressure. Bāhad then arranged to reconstruct that part so it could withstand the pressure in the future.

There is an interesting anecdote associated with the construction of that temple. When Bāhad undertook the work, many people were desirous of contributing to the project. A list of donors was therefore prepared

in order to accommodate them. At that time, there was a petty hawker named Bhim, who used to earn his livelihood by vending Ghee from place to place. He also came to the place, where the list was being drawn. He had an intense desire to contribute to the project; but he had only one coin that he had earned that day. How could he speak about donating the trifling amount, where people were contributing in thousands and millions? Bāhad noticed his eagerness and called him to his side. He gently asked Bhim to contribute whatever he wanted to give. Bhim naturally had his hesitation. At last, he said that he wanted to contribute the coin that he had earned that day.

Bāhad not only accepted the offer, but also wrote Bhim's name at the top of the donors' list. When he was asked to explain it, Bāhad said that the other donors, inclusive of him, had contributed a part of their wealth, while Bhim had contributed his entire wealth.

It so happened that when Bhim came home, he was asked by his wife to fix the cow post. As he was digging for this purpose, he came across a box lying under the ground. As he opened it, he noticed that it contained gold coins and other valuables. He thought that it was the consequence of his contribution for the temple. He therefore took the entire wealth to Bāhad as his contribution. The construction project was completed at a cost of 29.7 million coins and the opening ceremony was performed on a grand scale in the presence of Hemchandrāchārya in 1157 A.D.

Key Message:

The life story of Udayan, a religious and hard working Shrāvak, is very inspiring to all of us. He was always humble and never forgot his benefactors. He raised brave and virtuous sons, Āmbad and Bāhad, the two gems of the Jain Sangh. Bhim's generosity is also praiseworthy. Bāhad's act of putting Bhim's name at the top of the donors' list shows his unbiased leadership.

Nobility of Savchand and Somchand

The Shatrunjay hill is considered a highly sacred place of pilgrimage for Jains. It is located at Palitānā, which is about 140 miles southwest of Ahmedabad. There are nine temple complexes on the hill. They are popularly known as Tuks. One of them is Chaumukhji Tuk, located on the peak of the hill. This story is concerned with the construction of a temple complex there.

During the latter part of the 16th century, when King Akbar, the great Moghul, was ruling over India, there was a businessman named Savchand Jeram in the town of Vanthali in Saurashtra state. He owned a very large business. He had a fleet of ships that used to transport goods to far-off places such as Indonesia. During voyages, they would buy merchandise at one place and sell it at another for a profit.

Once, a fleet of 12 ships set sail with valuable merchandise. After selling it at a foreign port, they were returning with valuable foreign merchandise. On the way back, the fleet encountered a heavy storm and had to wait at a far-off island. Meanwhile, monsoon set in and the fleet were stranded on the island for a couple of months. Because the ships did not come back for a long time, Savchand's shipping agents made all possible efforts to locate them. Since they did not find any trace of the fleet, they reported to Savchand that the ships were lost.

This was a heavy loss to Savchand. He had invested a significant amount of money on the voyage and was expecting a handsome return by selling the merchandise that the ships were expected to bring. With their loss, he faced an acute shortage of funds and it was hard for him to pay back his creditors. As the news about the loss of ships spread, people started talking about how Savchand had almost lost everything and that his creditors would have to write off their dues.

That set a panic among his creditors. In order to realize their dues, they began to present their claims. Savchand was highly religious and honest to the core. He knew that if he did not pay his debts, he would

have to pay heavily in the next life. He therefore began to pay the creditors to the extent of his remaining resources. One of the creditors was the prince of Mangrol, a place not far away from Vanthali. He had deposited Rs.100, 000 in Savchand's firm. That was a substantial amount, because one rupee of that time would be worth about Rs. 1000 today.

When the prince learned about the loss of Savchand's ships, he also became impatient and called for the repayment of his deposit. Savchand could not raise such a large amount so suddenly. Therefore, he requested the prince to wait for sometime during which he would raise the amount. The prince, however, insisted on getting the amount immediately. The credit of Savchand was thus at stake. In order to maintain it he had to arrange for paying the prince somehow.

At that, time there was a businessman named Somchand Amichand in the city of Ahmedabad. Savchand did not have any trade connection with him, but he had heard about Somchand's firm and knew Somchand to be a very noble gentleman. An idea therefore occurred to him to satisfy the prince by giving him a promissory note, which can be honored by Somchand's firm. As the prince was agreeable to that mode of payment, Savchand wrote a promissory note payable to the prince by Somchand without Somchand's permission. Since he had no right to write this, he was overcome with sadness and guilt while preparing it and tears began to flow from his eyes. Two drops of the tears fell on the document and spread on the promissory note. Then, with a heavy heart, Savchand handed over the note to the prince and requested him to cash it at Ahmedabad.

The prince did not intend to lose any time. He immediately proceeded towards Ahmedabad and upon arriving; he presented the bill to Somchand's firm. The accountant took the bill in his hand and asked his men to look for Savchand's account. The men searched their books, but they did not come across any account in the name of Savchand. Thereupon they reported that he had no trade connections with their firm. The accountant then went to the master's chamber and informed him that he had received a bill of exchange from Savchand of Vanthali, which, being unduly drawn, could not be honored.

Somchand was puzzled to learn that. He knew Savchand's firm by name and was aware that it was a well-reputed business organization of Vanthali. He could not make out why Savchand should have drawn the bill for a big amount, when he did not have any trade link with his firm. He looked at the bill again and noticed the letters smeared by Savchand's tears. He could make out from the spots that Savchand must have been in a very embarrassing position and must have drawn the bill out of sheer desperation.

It was clear to Somchand that Savchand had reposed trust in him by writing the bill. It was now his turn to reciprocate. What would be the use of his wealth, if he could not extend a helping hand to a gentleman in distress? He therefore decided to oblige and asked the accountant to honor the bill. The accountant was confused to hear that and asked to which account the amount should be debited. Thereupon Somchand instructed him to debit it to his personal account.

The bill was accordingly accepted and the amount was paid to the prince. He did not actually need the amount and had asked for payment because of his doubt about the financial stability of Savchand. When the bill was honored, he felt reassured about the latter's credibility and repented for insisting upon the return of his deposit. On his way back, he went to Savchand and told him that he had received the amount from Ahmedabad. Savchand heartily thanked Somchand for that act of grace.

At the end of the monsoon, the ships resumed their return journey and safely came back with the merchandise. Savchand was pleased and thanked God for the same. He could make a real fortune by selling the merchandise and his prestige rose even higher than it was before the loss of ships. It was now time for him to pay back the amount to Somchand. For that purpose, he personally went to Ahmedabad and offered the amount of Rs. 100,000 with interest. Somchand, however, declined to accept it, on the grounds that his books did not show any amount due from Savchand.

Savchand could not accept that plea. It was due to the gracefulness of Somchand that he had honored his bill and he felt much indebted for that. How can he go back without repaying the debt? He therefore pressed Somchand to accept the amount and said that he was willing to pay any amount that Somchand

would ask for. Savchand added that if he failed to repay, he would feel guilty forever for drawing the undue bill. Somchand, however, replied that he had bought the bill for the drops of tears. Those two drops of a respectable man were worth Rs. 200,000 for him. Of that, he had paid Rs. 100,000 to the prince and another 100,000 were still due to be paid. So saying he offered Rs. 100,000 to Savchand.

But how could Savchand accept that? He was indebted to Somchand for his act of grace in honoring the bill. For that grace, Savchand was willing to pay any amount to Somchand. Instead of accepting the amount, Somchand was offering another Rs. 100,000 to him! As Savchand repeatedly insisted on repaying the amount of his bill, Somchand explained that he was unable to accept the amount, because his books did not show any amount due from Savchand. In a way, he was right, because while paying to the prince the amount of Rs. 100,000 was debited to his personal account and not to Savchand's account.

In Rāmāyan, there is an interesting event when neither Ram nor Bharat is willing to accept the throne and they ask each other to occupy it. A similar dispute arose between Savchand and Somchand. Both of them offered a high amount to each other and neither of them was willing to accept the other's offer. Savchand continued to insist that Somchand accept the amount of his bill, but the latter would not only decline, but insisted on Savchand to accept another Rs. 100,000. At last, it was decided to refer the matter to the mediation of the Sangh.

The heads of Ahmedabad Sangh came together and held discussions with both of them. After hearing them patiently, the Sangh concluded that since neither of them was ready to accept the amount offered to the other, the amount should be used for some noble cause. Both of them agreed and making substantial addition to the said amount, they decided to spend the money for constructing a temple complex on Shatrunjay. Accordingly, construction was undertaken in right earnest. After completion, the opening ceremony of the complex was performed with great fanfare in 1619 A.D. In commemoration of their names, the complex is known even now as Savä-Som Tuk.

Key Message:

Honesty in the life as well as in the business always pays off.