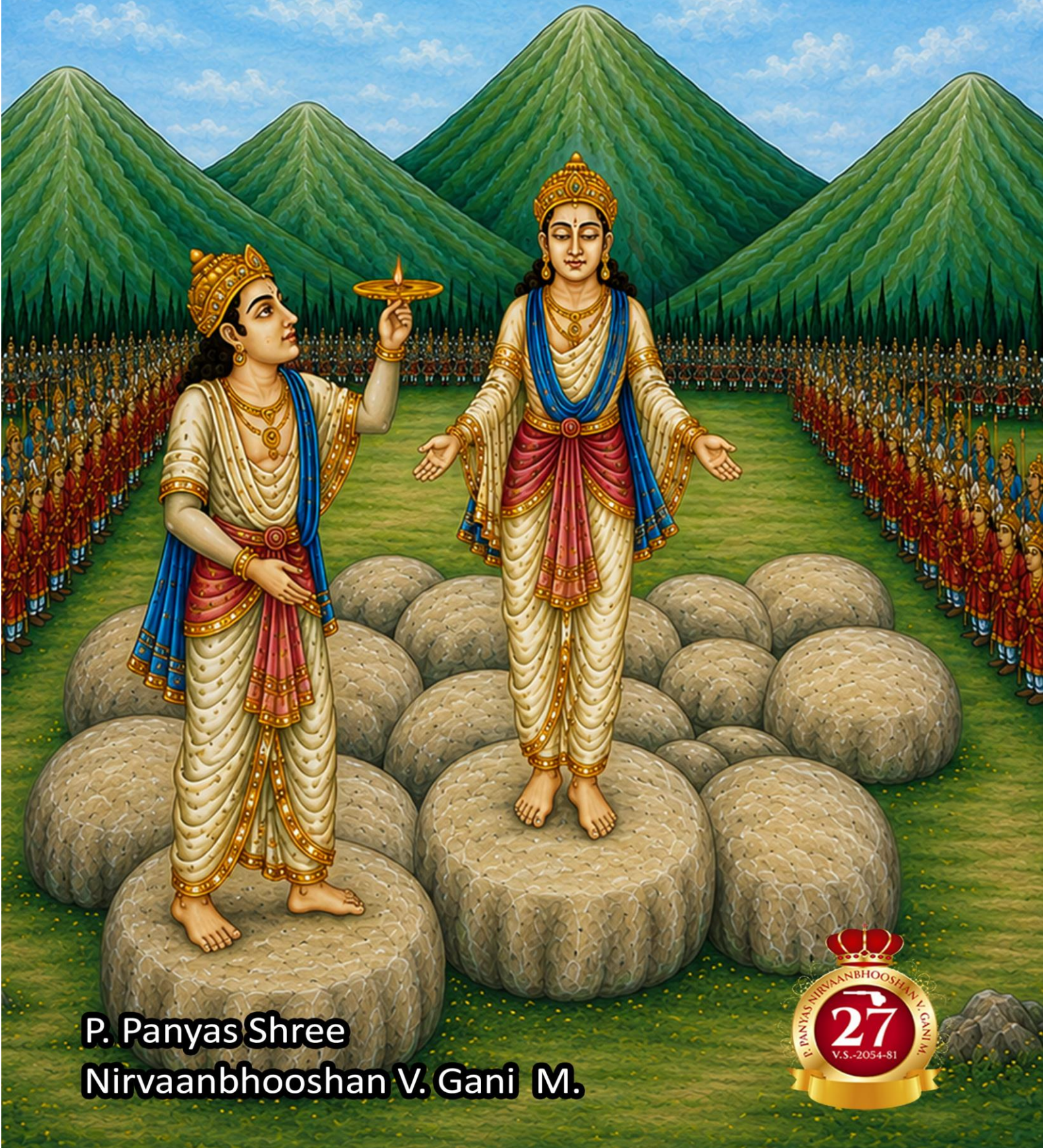


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Since P. Muniraj Shri Nirvaanbhooshan Vijayji has a good command over English language, even before this book, the English books written by him have been welcomed. In the same style and words, Mayanasundari's life events have been illustrated in English language. The pictures are stunning. English speaking readers will find such English publications useful. The most popular talks of Jain Ramayana are included with exclusive pictures. ‘Bhadrabahu’ is also too good. Pradyumna & Shamba with exclusive pictures is also best. Each book will inspire new generation, to walk on the path of humanity and Jainism

(Kalyan Magazine – Top magazine of Jainism) Yr.- 79/81. Volume -12/12

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This is the experience of years that the children learning in English medium don't have full understanding of Gujarati language. Gujarati discourses pass over their heads; even they feel Gujarati books boring. This is the condition of whole new generation. The age of cultivating moral values is being wasted in education and entertainment. This is the great matter of concern for the well-wishers of Shri Jain Sangh. All of them are concerned about how to make children virtuous, cultured, pious and afraid of sin .

Among many solutions, one solution, perhaps most simple and successful, is : tell the children the stories of Tirthankars, ascetics, great men and great women of virtue. All like stories; children like the most. In addition, it is a matter of experience that an inspiring life-character is more effective example than an inspiring preaching. The horrible results of sins and the sweet fruits of *dharma* can be explained in a simple way through stories.

The learned Muniraj Shri Nirvaanbhooshan Vijay understood this thing years ago and started right efforts in this direction. As a result, today 27 books compiled by him have been published. As these stories of Jain history is reaching to people, their demand is ever increasing. New editions of many books are being published.

It is a matter of delight that Munishri is making his contributions in this great *yagna* for familiarizing lakhs of children of Jain families with the best conduct, thinking, philosophy and history of Jain religion. May Munipravarshri continue to get more and more success in this challenging task – this is my heartfelt greetings!

Vijay Mokshrati Suri

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Thanks for Appreciable Letters / Opinions/ Guidance
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1. Metarya Muni

If an intelligent man protects living beings on this earth just as he protects his own body, he swiftly attains the wealth of well-being— much like Metarya Muni.

In the city of Saketpur— a city whose splendor, through its own inherent glory, surpassed even the celestial city of Indra— King Chandravatansa reigned with justice. He had a queen named Sudarshana and two sons named Sagarchandra and Munichandra. The King bestowed the title of Crown Prince upon Sagarchandra and granted the kingdom of Ujjayini to Munichandra. Subsequently, King Chandravatansa had a second queen named Priyadarshana, who gave birth to two sons named Gunchandra and Balchandra. King Chandravatansa practiced Dharma (righteous conduct) for the welfare of both this world and the world hereafter.

Once, having concluded his royal duties, King Chandravatansa performed his evening spiritual rituals, including Pratikramana, and entered a state of Kayotsarg. He took a solemn vow: "I shall remain in this state of Kayotsarg for as long as this lamp continues to burn." A maidservant, observing this, thought to herself: "If this lamp were to go out, the King's vow of Kayotsarg would become exceedingly difficult." Consequently, she continued to pour oil into the lamp repeatedly throughout the night, ensuring it remained lit until the break of dawn. When the lamp finally flickered out in the morning, the King concluded his Kayotsarg. Shortly thereafter, upon the sudden exhaustion of his lifespan, the King ascended to the heaven. In his place, King Sagarchandra began to rule the kingdom with justice.

Once, King Sagarchandra said to his stepmother, Priyadarshana: "Without my father, neither this kingdom— which is akin to the Goddess of Wealth— nor this world brings me any happiness. Therefore, if I have your permission, I wish to relinquish this kingdom to my younger brother, Gunchandra, and embrace the ascetic life." She replied, "O Son! You are truly blessed, for your mind finds no attachment in this transient world. However, bearing the burden of kingship is arduous, and since your brother is still young, he is incapable of shouldering such a responsibility. Therefore, speak no more of renouncing the kingdom at this time." Thus counseled by Priyadarshana, King Sagarchandra continued to nurture and protect his subjects with a mind free of all doubts or reservations. As she observed the King— whose prosperity and power were steadily growing— Priyadarshana began to harbor feelings of envy, a sentiment all too common to the female nature. As it is said:

"It is women who often nourish the very roots of discord among people; what, then, need be said of a stepmother— the very birthplace of discord?"

People speak of Brahma as the creator of this universe; yet, even Brahma himself cannot fully comprehend the minds and characters of women."

Consequently, Priyadarshana began to harbor malice even toward that blameless King.

On one occasion, the King went into the forest to engage in equestrian sports. While the King was still in the forest, Sudarshana sent him modaks (sweet dumplings) for his morning meal, through a maidservant. However, the stepmother, Priyadarshana—harboring a desire to kill the King— took the modaks into her own hands, laced them with poison, and then, feigning affection, handed them to the maidservant. After spending time in recreation within the forest, the King accompanied by his two younger brothers returned and took his seat upon the royal throne; at that moment, the maidservant arrived and presented the modaks. The compassionate King then distributed the modaks among his two brothers. "Because these two are my younger brothers, whereas I am the elder; therefore, it would not be fitting for an elder brother to consume food before his younger siblings." When the brothers ate the laddus, they both fell unconscious. Upon seeing them in this state, the King pondered: "A mother never gives poison to her own son; then for what reason has such a thing occurred here?" Immediately thereafter, the King administered a golden elixir to both of them, by which they were restored to health. Subsequently, having questioned the maidservant regarding the nature of the poisoning and having ascertained the entire sequence of events, the King entered the inner quarters of the palace and addressed his stepmother: "Shame upon you! You resorted to such deceit in an attempt to kill me. The treachery you intended for me has, in fact, recoiled upon your own two sons—whom I have now restored to health. I never harbored a desire for the kingdom in the first place; it was solely at your insistence that I consented to rule. But of what value is a kingdom that fosters such sinful intent— an intent that leads to the accumulation of karmic bondage and condemns one to the torments of hell?" Having spoken thus, King Sagarchandra, filled with affection, bestowed the kingdom upon Priyadarshana's eldest son, Gunchandra, and himself embraced the ascetic life. In due course, he attained mastery over the eleven Angas and became known as Sage Sagarchandra.

On one occasion, a pair of ascetic monks arrived from the city of Avanti. Sage Sagarchandra inquired of them regarding the state of affairs in Avanti. They replied, "In that city, the son of King Munichandra— along with the son of a royal priest named Sauvastika— is causing immense suffering to both genuine ascetics and impostors alike." Upon hearing this, and having obtained permission from his Guru, Sage Sagarchandra traveled personally to the city of Avanti and took his rest at the Upashraya designated for ascetics. The following morning, having explained the true purpose of his visit— to spiritually awaken his brothers, nephews, and other kin— the Sage set out in the afternoon under the pretext of going to collect alms (Gochari). As Sage Sagarchandra approached the royal court, the townspeople called out to him: "O highly blessed soul! Do not enter this royal court; the Prince is a wicked man. Together with the priest's son, the Prince habitually harasses and torments ascetics. Therefore, please seek alms at some other household." Turning a deaf ear to their warnings, the Sage proceeded toward the royal palace. As he entered the premises, the two youths (the Prince and the priest's son) stepped forward and began to taunt him, saying: "O Sage! Will you play with the two of us?" The Sage replied, "Certainly, I will play." Thereupon, withdrawing secretly into a secluded chamber, the two princes

began to play with the Sage. Speaking recklessly and irreverently, they began to show disdain for the Dharma. Consequently, under the pretext of a mock combat, the Sage loosened the joints of the two princes' bodies; he then left from there and went to the garden outside to engage in Kayotsarg. Upon seeing the two princes wailing in distress— and realizing that they had been vanquished by the Sage— the enraged King commanded: "O Soldiers! Search for the Sage who has reduced these two princes to such a wretched state!" The King's men soon discovered the Sage standing in Kayotsarg and reported this to the King. The King then proceeded to the forest, and upon beholding the great Sage, he said: "O Sage! Why have you committed such a sinful act?" The Sage replied: "O King! We, too, were born into a noble lineage; is it, therefore, fitting for you to inflict such injustices— even to the point of death— upon ascetics?" Hearing this, the King, overcome with shame, bowed his head in reverence and offered his salutations to the Sage. Bestowing the blessing of Dharmalabh, the Royal Sage spoke: "O sons of King Chandravatansa! It does not befit you to treat ascetics with such disregard and contempt." As it is said:

"Disrespecting holy ascetics leads to the attainment of a terrifyingly dreadful hellish existence, whereas reverently serving and worshipping them paves the way for human beings to attain the ultimate liberation (Moksha)."

"Your son shows disdain for ascetics, and yet you stand by and tolerate it all." Recognizing the Sage as his own brother, the King replied: "These two princes are merely ignorant youths. Henceforth, they shall never again show disrespect to any holy ascetic." The Sage said: "I shall release them only if they agree to embrace initiation; otherwise, let them face the consequences and suffer the fruits of the sins they have committed."

Then, reverently bowing to his ascetic brother, the King brought his own son close. The King said, "O Son! This ascetic is your uncle, yet you persist in offending holy men. If both of you were to embrace initiation, this sage would restore your bodies to health; otherwise, you are certain to meet your death due to this affliction." Overcome with intense suffering, both of them replied, "We shall do exactly as the sage has instructed." Thereupon, the ascetic healed them both, and they formally took initiation. The King, too – having heard the teachings of Dharma from the lips of Sage Sagarchandra– began to engage in acts of exceptional merit, dedicating his wealth to charitable causes across the seven fields of charity. Both the Prince and the Priest's son began to observe a life of pure ascetic conduct. However, being of the Brahmin caste, the Priest's son would occasionally feel revulsion upon witnessing bodily impurities and waste matter, thinking to himself, "There is absolutely no purity to be found in the ascetic way of life."

Having steadfastly observed the vows of pure self-restraint, and having passed away in due course, both of them were reborn as Devas in the heavenly realms. They made a mutual pact: whichever of them should first descend from heaven to be reborn as a human being, the one remaining in heaven would descend to earth to impart the

knowledge of Dharma to him. Subsequently, the soul of the former Brahmin descended from heaven and took birth in the womb of a Chandal woman in the city of Rajgrih. This Chandal woman worked as a domestic helper in the household of a Shreshthi. She once procured and provided meat to fulfill a specific pregnancy craving (dohad) of the Shreshthi's wife— a deed that endeared her greatly to the Shreshthi's wife.

On one occasion, the Chandal's wife asked the Shreshthi's wife, "O Friend! O Mistress! Why does your mind appear so despondent? Has your husband offended you, or is it someone else?" The merchant's wife replied, "To whom shall I confide the sorrow that weighs upon my heart? Every child I bear is fated— due to the force of past Karma— to die shortly after birth; what, then, am I to do?" The Chandal's wife responded, "Your pregnancy and mine are alike in nature; as for me, I am invariably blessed with sons. Therefore, when I have a son, we shall secretly exchange our children. Upon the birth of a son to both of them, they exchanged the infants with one another. Whenever the Chandal's wife visited the Shreshthi's wife, she would remark to her, 'This son of yours is growing up.' The Shreshthi, celebrating the birth with great festivity, named the boy Metarya. Nurtured and raised by the Shreshthi's wife, and diligently studying the scriptures, Metarya Kumar reached the age of sixteen.

Meanwhile, a Dev – a friend from Metarya's previous life who now resided in heaven— descended and revealed his true identity to Metarya. He asked, 'Do you remember the vow we both made while we dwelt in the Devlok ?' He continued, 'This world is devoid of substance; therefore, embrace initiation.' For it has been said:

Just as the wind extinguishes a lamp, so too has the passage of time destroyed thousands of Indras and hundreds of Chakravartis.

The body is transient; material wealth is a breeding ground for calamities; the reunion with loved ones is akin to a dream; and everything that is created is ultimately perishable.

Despite being constantly enlightened by that Dev, Metarya did not attain a sense of detachment from worldly life. Meanwhile, his father arranged Metarya's marriage to the eight daughters of Shreshthis. Then, on an auspicious day, the father solemnized Metarya's marriage to these eight daughters. Thereafter, seated in a palanquin alongside his newlywed wives, Metarya proceeded along the royal highway toward his home amidst great pomp and celebration.

At the same time, the Chandal— whose body was now inhabited by the Dev who had been Metarya's friend in a previous life— spoke to his wife: 'Had our daughter not been stillborn, I, too, would have celebrated her wedding with just such grandeur. Through her marriage, I would have fulfilled my heart's deepest desire.' Upon hearing this, the Chandal's wife revealed the truth regarding the birth of their son; at that moment, overcome with rage, the Chandal came onto the highway, lifted Metarya down from his palanquin, and— in the presence of all the onlookers— spoke thus: "O Son! Why

have you married these maidens who are of an unequal lineage? You ought to marry maidens who are of a status equal to your own clan. Therefore, abandon these maidens and grace our home with your presence; accept maidens who are befitting of our lineage." While everyone watched, the Chandal led Metarya away to his own home. Meanwhile, the parents of those maidens took their respective daughters back to their own homes. Then, the Dev manifested himself and spoke privately to Metarya: "In the Devlok , you once made a solemn pledge to me that whichever of us were to fall from heaven first and be reborn as a human would be visited and spiritually awakened by the one remaining in heaven. You were the first to fall from heaven and attain human birth. Yet, despite my attempts to awaken you, you remained unawakened; that is why I resorted to this act. Fulfill the true purpose of this human life by embracing initiation." Metarya replied, "You have indeed performed a noble deed by awakening me— one who was so deeply ensnared by worldly pleasures. However, I am overcome with profound sorrow at the fact that I have now become a subject of public disgrace." The Dev responded, "This world is, in truth, devoid of sweetness; for it has been said:

Even those who are dearer to us than life itself— without whom we cannot find happiness for even a single moment— must eventually be parted from us; because the nature of worldly existence is to inflict immense suffering.

Time holds nothing dear; Wealth (Lakshmi) too holds no one dear; and there is no one who does not eventually succumb to the ravages of old age. Given this reality, why do you sit here so complacently?"

Metarya replied, "If this stain upon my reputation can be washed away, then— after having indulged in worldly pleasures for twelve years— I shall most certainly do exactly as you have instructed. after all, you are a being of great compassion." Hearing this, the Dev – his friend from a previous life— was filled with joy, and having bestowed a goat capable of yielding a multitude of gems, and having imparted a specific vidya, ascended to the heavens. Thereafter, the goat would daily yield a specific quantity of gems. Acting upon his son's behest, the Chandal would fill a platter with these gems, present them as a gift to the King, and request the hand of the King's daughter for his son. Although the ministers repeatedly expelled him, he persisted in this routine every single day. Beholding those gems— which radiated their brilliance in every direction— the King was delighted; yet, he still refused to give his daughter in marriage.

On one occasion, Abhaykumar granted a pledge of safety to the Chandal and inquired into the story of his acquisition of the gems. The Chandal then revealed to him the true nature of the goat. Subsequently, having observed the goat that yielded gems, Abhaykumar described its nature to the King and brought the goat to his own residence. However, instead of gems, the goat now began to yield only foul-smelling excrement. Consequently, the goat was returned to the Chandal. Abhaykumar then addressed the King, saying: "O Sovereign! The goat yields that multitude of resplendent gems within the Chandal's home solely due to the illusory power (maya)

of a Dev . Therefore, we must put this man to the test to determine whether he is truly a Chandal or a noble soul." Acting upon his father's instructions, Abhaykumar summoned the Chandal and said: "Lord Mahavir has arrived at Mount Vaibharagiri; however, the path leading there is rugged and treacherous. You must construct a new path and render it easily accessible." With the aid of the Dev, the Chandal accomplished the task assigned by Abhaykumar in a mere instant. That path remains visible even today in Rajgrih. At the King's behest, Abhaykumar commissioned the Chandal to construct a magnificent golden fortress– adorned with spires resembling towering mountain peaks. Then Abhay kumar spoke: "O Chandal! If you can arrange for your son to bathe within the currents of the ocean, I shall ensure that your son wins the hand of the King's daughter." Thereupon, the Chandal– seeking the aid of the Dev – summoned the currents of the ocean and had Metarya undergo a bath in the ocean, in presence of everyone as witnesses. Yet, the King still refused to give his daughter to him. At that point, Abhay intervened, asking, "In ancient times, when all people belonged to a single social class, did marriages between those of superior and inferior status not take place?"

Upon hearing these words from Abhay Kumar, King Shrenik finally gave his daughter to Metarya. Metarya also graciously accepted the eight maidens he had previously married. The King had a magnificent white palace built and presented it to him. Metarya spent twelve years living a life of comfort and pleasure in the company of his nine wives. Then, once again, the Dev appeared to awaken his spiritual consciousness. Attaining a state of deep detachment, Metarya distributed his wealth among his sons, then– with profound reverence– accepted initiation from his Guru and, in due course, embraced the austere ascetic path of the Jinkalpa tradition.

On one occasion, while wandering through the city on his daily alms round (Gochari), the ascetic Metarya Muni arrived at the home of a goldsmith. Now, King Shrenik was in the habit of performing divine worship three times a day; furthermore, he would daily create a Swastika symbol before the Lord's idol using one hundred and eight grains of gold. Upon the Muni's arrival, the goldsmith left the gold grains right where they lay and stepped inside his house to fetch an offering for the ascetic. At that very moment, a Krauncha bird (crane) suddenly appeared; mistaking the gold grains for ordinary food, it swallowed them right in front of Metarya Muni. When the goldsmith returned and failed to find the grains, he confronted the Muni, asking, "Where have my grains gone? Did you take them, or did someone else carry them away?" The Muni– who was deeply averse to causing harm– reasoned that if he revealed the truth, the goldsmith would surely kill the Krauncha bird. Consequently, Metarya Muni maintained a steadfast silence. Interpreting his silence as an admission of guilt, the goldsmith shouted, "You are the thief!" and proceeded to tightly bind a leather strap around the Muni's head. Under this immense pressure, the Muni's eyes bulged from their sockets; yet, even in that moment of agony– while meditating upon the principle of compassion for all living beings– Metarya Muni attained Keval Gyan . His earthly life came to an immediate end, and his soul ascended to Moksha (Liberation).

Meanwhile, the Krauncha bird, which was pecking for food in the goldsmith's courtyard, was suddenly startled by a maidservant; in its fright, the bird involuntarily expelled the grains through its anus in the form of excrement. Upon seeing the grains—which had been swallowed and subsequently regurgitated by the Krauncha bird— and the deceased sage, the people remarked, "This sage was, in fact, the King's son-in-law. This goldsmith has killed him without cause; therefore, the King will surely have this goldsmith and his entire family executed by impalement." Subsequently, upon learning of the sage's demise, the King dispatched his servants to apprehend and execute the goldsmith along with his family. By the time the King's servants arrived at the goldsmith's residence, the goldsmith— driven by a sudden, instinctive presence of mind and gripped by fear— had already assumed the attire and appearance of a sage. It is said:

"Any individual who embraces this pure and pristine Dharma— whether motivated by modesty, pride, humility, aesthetic inclination, the pursuit of fame, suffering, curiosity, astonishment, habit, family tradition, or spiritual detachment— attains a magnificent spiritual reward."

Thereafter, the servants returned to the King and reported, "O King! The goldsmith, having taken initiation along with his family, now sits trembling in fear." The King then proceeded to the site and addressed him, saying, "O Goldsmith! You have incurred the grave sin of killing a sage; however, since you have now taken initiation, I grant you your life. If you or any member of your family would ever renounce this initiation, I shall have you executed with your family." Subsequently, the goldsmith sought refuge at the feet of Vir Prabhu, formally accepted initiation, and in due course enjoyed the divine pleasures.

The Story of Sage Metarya Concludes.



2. Sthulbhadra

Those who desire the opulence of contentment lack wisdom in the kingdom. Sthulbhadra renounced the ministerial position and embraced celibacy.

The ninth Nand king reigned in the city of Pataliputra. His minister, Shakdal, was like the jewel of the Kalpa dynasty. His wife's name was Lakshmivati. They had two sons, Sthulbhadra and Shriyak, and seven daughters. After Minister Shakdal passed away, Nand king instructed his son, Shriyak, to take up the ministerial position. Shriyak replied, "My elder brother, Sthulbhadra, is living in the house of a prostitute named Kosha. He has been living there for twelve years." The king summoned Sthulbhadra from the prostitute's house. Then he reached to the king. After bowing to the king, Sthulbhadra stood before him until the king respectfully told him, "Your father has passed away, so you should accept the ministerial position that has come your way." Sthulbhadra said, "O lord! Your order is the proof, but I will accept the post of minister after thinking carefully." The king said, "Think carefully." Then, going to the Ashoka forest, Sthulbhadra started thinking that taking up the task at hand makes one dependent. If I do not act as per the king's wishes, the enraged king will take my life in a moment. It is said that :

The poor, the sick, the foolish, the migrant and the one who serves daily, these five people are considered dead even when they are alive.

Blessed are those who, giving up the pleasures of worldly pleasures, easily adopt the restraint that gives the happiness of liberation.

Thinking thus and performing Loch (the plucking out of hair), Sthulbhadra taking his Rajoharan and Muhapatti (mouth-veil), approached the King and offered the blessing of Dharmalabh (spiritual gain). The King asked, "What have you decided?" To this, Sthulbhadra replied, "I have performed Loch. What concern do I have anymore with the affairs of a ministerial post?" Having spoken thus, he continued:

"A seal (mudra) in the hand, a seal upon the lips, seals upon both feet, and a seal within the home— such is the nature of this five-fold worldly trade."

Having spoken these words and bestowed the blessing of Dharmalabh, Muni Sthulbhadra approached Acharya Shri Sambhutivijay and, renouncing all sinful worldly activities, received initiation.

Meanwhile, King Nand appointed Shriyak to the post of minister. Shriyak counseled the courtesan— who was distraught over her separation from Sthulbhadra— and helped alleviate her grief. Serving at the feet of Acharya Sambhutivijay, Muni Sthulbhadra engaged in ascetic penance while diligently studying the Sutras (scriptures) and their deeper meanings.

Once, at the onset of the rainy season, three disciples approached Acharya Sambhutivijay and undertook vows (Abhigraha). The first disciple declared, "For

these four months, I shall remain in Kayotsarg (meditative standing posture) near a lion's den." The second disciple vowed, "For four months, I shall remain in Kayotsarg beside the burrow of a venomous serpent." The third disciple pledged, "For four months, I shall remain in Kayotsarg while standing upon the wall of a well." The fourth disciple, Sthulbhadra, then spoke: "O Lord! For these four months, I shall reside in the art gallery (Chitrashala) within the home of the courtesan Kosha, taking the six types of food." Upon hearing this, Acharya Sambhutivijay instructed them, "All of you may proceed to your respective chosen locations; there, remain steadfast and diligent in the practice of Dharma." The three monks– the one bound for the lion's den, the one for the serpent's burrow, and the one for the well-wall– departed for their designated spots. Muni Sthulbhadra, too, having paid obeisance to his Guru, proceeded to the art gallery of the courtesan Kosha. As he arrived, the courtesan Kosha, filled with joy, standing up with folded hands and extending a welcoming reception to the monk, said, "O my lord! Please come and stay here and give me your orders. I will do whatever you like." Sthulbhadra Muni said, "O Bhadre! May you benefit from the Dharma. Please give me the art gallery to stay in during Chaturmas." The prostitute allowed him to stay in the decorated art gallery, and the self-controlled Sthulbhadra Muni stayed there.

The prostitute then thought that this monk, with a very delicate body, was unable to bear the burden of initiation, therefore he has come to live here. Due to shyness he is not speaking now. He would speak later and give me money. I would drown him in the ocean of love in a moment." Therefore, the prostitute fed him meal of six flavours, and at mealtimes, she herself would eat whatever was left after the monk had eaten. The prostitute prepared three types of grains, milk, curd, ghee, buttermilk, and delicious juices, along with six types of dishes of sugarcane, creepers, leaves, flowers, and fruits, and offered them to the sage Sthulbhadra.

Filled with desires, shooting unbearable arrows in the form of eyebrows, with playful eyes like a mare, and intoxicated movements like an elephant, and resembling the army of Kamdev , the prostitute approached the sage who was fully committed to Dharma.

Despite her outward appearance and beauty, the sage remained unimpressed, but upon seeing her inner state and the impurity within, he became indifferent to her. All the methods the prostitute used to seduce the sage proved futile on him. It is said that :

Just as painting in the sky or lighting a fire with water are futile, in the same way all gestures of the prostitute proved futile on the sage.

Day after day, the courtesan Kosha– displaying an ever-increasing allure– relentlessly sought to disturb the ascetic. Yet, the sage remained unshaken, steadfast in the essence of his meditation.

Just as the valor of a noble warrior is heightened by the assaults of his enemies, so too did the sage's righteous contemplation shine even more resplendently in the face of the tribulations inflicted upon him by the courtesan.

Then, continuing to tempt the sage repeatedly as she had before, the courtesan—seeking to persuade him to yield to sensual pleasures—fell at his feet. Thereupon, the sage Sthulbhadra spoke: "O highly blessed soul! These sensual pleasures have been indulged in countless times by living beings, yet they have never brought true satiety. For it is said that:

Sensual pleasures are a piercing barb; sensual pleasures are poison; sensual pleasures are akin to a venomous serpent. A living being is condemned to a wretched destiny merely by desiring such pleasures, even without having actually indulged in them.

This attachment (Raga) fosters vices even in inanimate objects. For instance, to extract dye from the Manjishtha, it must be subjected to intense pounding and extreme heating.

Even a one-sensed being—such as the soil—must endure excruciating suffering due to the vice of attachment; it is subjected to the agony of having filth thrust into its mouth or being crushed beneath a stone.

The group of sensual objects holds sway only over the faint-hearted man; it has no power over the virtuous. Because a thread can bind only a mosquito, never an elephant.

Within the female reproductive organ reside countless two-sensed beings; furthermore, innumerable Sammurchhim (spontaneously generating) beings are constantly born and perish there.

A living being consumed by the urge for sexual union destroys nine lakh subtle organisms. Such is the pronouncement of the Agam (scriptures); therefore, sexual intercourse constitutes the primary act of violence against living beings."

Inspired by such teachings delivered by Muni Sthulbhadra, the courtesan renounced the traditional way of life of her lineage and embraced the Shravak Dharma (the path of a lay devotee). Without the favor of destiny, one cannot abandon a wrongful path. It has been said:

Only those men and women who walk upon the righteous path become the rightful possessors of the wealth known as Liberation.

Witnessing Muni Sthulbhadra's supreme victory—manifested primarily through his mastery over the senses—the courtesan Kosha, too, undertook a solemn vow: "From this day forward, with the sole exception of the man whom the King, in his pleasure, may send to me for enjoyment, every other man shall be as a brother to me."

Meanwhile, upon the completion of the Chaturmas (the four-month monsoon retreat), the three monks—having successfully fulfilled their respective vows—returned to their

Guru. Upon arriving, all three bowed down at the Guru's feet. Acharya Sambhutivijay then addressed them, saying, "All three of you have accomplished a truly arduous task!" Subsequently, upon seeing Muni Sthulbhadra arrive, the Guru personally rose from his seat and declared, "You, Sthulbhadra, have accomplished a task of extraordinary difficulty!" Hearing this, the three monks who had arrived earlier reflected amongst themselves: "We were born into ordinary families, whereas this Muni Sthulbhadra is the son of the illustrious Minister Shakadal . That is why the Guru has singled him out for such high praise, and has hailed Sthulbhadra– who subsisted on foods of six flavours– as the one who performed the most arduous feat of all." For:

Even while residing in the home of the courtesan Kosha– reclining upon a sumptuously adorned bed, surrounded by the finest garments and ornaments, and in the presence of Kosha herself, a woman of exquisite beauty who harbored deep affection for him– Shri Sthulbhadra conquered Kamdev (the God of Desire), the very deity who holds dominion over the entire world. Thus, he returned to his Guru and earned the accolade of having performed the most arduous feat .

[The other monks thought:] "To the Guru, one disciple appears superior, while all others seem lesser. During the upcoming Chaturmas, we, too, shall undertake a task of extreme difficulty!" Having resolved this in their hearts, and having spent eight months enduring various hardships, the monk who dwelt in the lion's cave requested permission to undertake the very same vow (Abhigraha)that Muni Sthulbhadra had successfully fulfilled. The Guru said:

"O Noble Soul! What kind of rivalry is this that you harbor against Sthulbhadra? No one else possesses the capability to accomplish what the ascetic Sthulbhadra has achieved. Who, other than the Sun, is capable of bringing forth a new day? Who, besides the Moon, can cause nectar to flow? Who, without the rain, can bring forth the harvest? Who, other than a Chakravarti (Universal Emperor), can conquer the six divisions of the world? This vow you have undertaken will serve only to nullify the ascetic penance you have performed in the past. Indeed, a single bitter gourd is sufficient to spoil thousands of kilograms of jaggery."

Thus, despite the Guru's stern admonition, the ascetic who dwelt in the Lion's Cave– emulating the very vow that Sthulbhadra had undertaken– proceeded to the abode of the courtesan Kosha and resided in the picture gallery, just as Sthulbhadra had done. Perceiving that this ascetic had arrived there solely out of a spirit of rivalry with Sthulbhadra, the courtesan served him a meal comprising the six distinct flavors. Thereafter, Kosha– the courtesan with breasts as shapely and full as earthen pitchers, and ever-adept in the arts of alluring gestures and amorous expressions– approached and stood beside the ascetic. Beholding the courtesan in such a guise, the ascetic's mind became deeply agitated; for it has been said:

"Who does not falter upon beholding a woman of exquisite beauty? What does fire not consume? Who does not succumb to delusion when beguiled by the goddess of wealth? And who, ultimately, does not yield to the dictates of destiny?"

Observing the ascetic— who was now tormented by lust and consumed by a craving for sensual pleasures— the courtesan spoke: "I desire wealth; for without wealth, no one possesses the means to take in such worldly enjoyments." Tormented by desire, the ascetic replied: "O Beautiful One! At this moment, I possess no wealth; I shall provide it to you at a later time." Thereupon, seeking to awaken his conscience, the courtesan spoke: "If indeed you yearn for such worldly pleasures, then travel to the land of Nepal. There, the King bestows upon a truly exceptional ascetic a gift of jeweled blanket worth one lakh. Go there, procure the jeweled blanket, and thereafter fulfill your desire.

Thus, the lust-stricken ascetic traveled to the land of Nepal, even during the holy season of Chaturmas. Having received the jeweled blanket from the King, he began his return journey; however, as he proceeded along the path, a parrot belonging to a den of thieves spotted him and cried out, "A fortune passes by!" Hearing this, the thieves rushed to the spot and seized the jeweled blanket from him. Subsequently, the ascetic disguised himself, returned to Nepal, obtained another jeweled blanket from the King, and— having concealed it within a hollow bamboo staff— he set out on his return journey once again.

Just as before, guided by the parrot's cries, the thieves intercepted him two or three times; yet, they failed to discover the jeweled blanket. Having brought the blanket back with immense difficulty, the ascetic presented it to the courtesan, Kosha. The courtesan, however, merely used the blanket to wipe her body and then— without a second thought— tossed it into the muddy filth of her household drain. The ascetic exclaimed, "O Courtesan! Why have you so wantonly cast this immensely valuable jeweled blanket into the drain?" The courtesan replied, "O foolish ascetic! Why do you grieve over the loss of this jeweled blanket? Why do you not grieve instead over the fact that you are squandering this human birth— a life attained with such arduous effort and meant to be adorned with pure spiritual conduct— by casting it away upon my body, which is nothing but a vessel of filth and waste?" Hearing this, the ascetic— suddenly realizing the poisonous nature of his lust— was awakened to a profound sense of detachment through the words of the courtesan, and he spoke:

"O Courtesan! I had fallen into the snare of Mahamoha(the great delusion) which yields only endless suffering; yet, through your clever stratagem, you have brought about my deliverance.

O Kosha, free from sin! I shall now perform the necessary penances to atone for the transgressions I have committed, thereby purifying myself of all sin. I now depart to seek the guidance of my Guru. May you be eternally blessed with the fruits of righteousness."

The courtesan, Kosha, replied, "O Master! Please forgive any disrespect or offense I may have inadvertently shown you– I, who am bound by the vows of celibacy– in my efforts to awaken you to the truth."

She praises Muni Sthulbhadra in the following manner:

Thousands of people can keep their senses under control by dwelling in mountain caves or deep within desolate forests; however, only Sthulbhadra– the son of Minister Shakadal– is capable of mastering his senses while residing in a magnificent palace, in close proximity to a woman.

He is the one who remained unburnt even upon entering fire; who remained unpierced even by the thrust of a sharp sword's tip; who, despite dwelling in the lair of a black serpent, was never bitten; and who, despite residing in a house filled with soot, remained utterly unstained.

He had a devoted and enamored woman; he had access to food rich in the six distinct flavors; he dwelt in a pristine white palace; he possessed a handsome physique and the vigor of fresh youth; and he faced the Chaturmas– the rainy season– a time known to ignite the fever of desire. Yet, despite all these circumstances, this great soul effortlessly conquered Kamdev (the god of desire). Salutations to that revered Muni Sthulbhadra, the enlightener of that woman!

Having thus pleased the courtesan– who spoke these words– with his potent spiritual blessings, the ascetic, who dwelt in the lion's cave, returned to his Guru. The Guru addressed him, saying: "O Noble Soul! I had previously forbidden you from going there, for no one else possesses the capability to accomplish what Muni Sthulbhadra has achieved. There is truly no one equal to Sthulbhadra." Poets extol him in the following verses:

"O Kamdev ! Women are your primary weapons; the season of spring, the cuckoo's call, the pancham raga (the fifth musical mode), and the moon are your chief warriors. Furthermore, Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh serve as your attendants. Despite commanding such a formidable array of warriors and servants, how is it that you were defeated by a solitary ascetic?"

"O Ratipati Madan! You perceived this Muni Sthulbhadra through the same lens of judgment with which you viewed Nandishen, Rathnemi, and Ardrakumar. Yet, you failed to realize that he is the Neminath, Jambukumar, and Sudarshan; and defeating me in battle he will be in fourth place."

If we compare Neminath and Sthulbhadra Muni, son of Shakdal Minister, we would consider Sthulbhadra Muni to be the most heroic warrior, because Lord Neminath conquered attachment by climbing Mount Girnar, but this Sthulbhadra Muni conquered attachment by entering the home of attachment itself.

Only men with fickle minds are seduced by a woman's taunts, but men of patience like Sthulbhadra remain unaffected even in such a crisis. Just as a stone can be broken, but the gem of Vaidurya remains uncorrupted even when burned in fire.

Once the king became aware of the prostitute's character. The king entrusted the prostitute to a skilled carpenter, and the carpenter went to the prostitute. To enlighten him, the lustless prostitute said that no other man except Sthulbhadra appeared to be virtuous or skillful. Unable to tolerate the prostitute's praise of Sthulbhadra, the carpenter, sitting on his bed, pierced a bunch of mangoes in a nearby mango grove with an arrow and then pierced the back of that arrow with another arrow, thus forming a long chain. Then, piercing the circle of that chain with a crescent arrow, he took the mango bunch in his hand and gave it to the prostitute and said, "Look at my skill." Seeing this, the prostitute placed a needle on the pile of grass and a flower on it and danced on it. Not a single particle of the grass, needle or flower, moved even a bit. Delighted with the prostitute's skill, the carpenter respectfully said, "Tell me, what should I give you?" The prostitute replied, "I haven't shown you any skill; all this is given to the living beings in their previous lives." It has been said:

Fish swim in the ocean, birds fly in the sky, and deities traverse the three realms— all these feats are inherent to their very nature; there is absolutely nothing astonishing about them.

Your feat of piercing a cluster of mangoes, and my act of dancing— all these are accomplished solely through practice. Therefore, whatever we both performed with such delight was not in the least bit arduous.

However, what Sthulbhadra— whose body was radiant from indulgence and who was raised amidst luxury— accomplished was neither inherent to his nature nor the result of prior practice; therefore, it is his achievement that is, without a doubt, truly arduous.

He who shared twelve years of indulgence with me— residing within my art gallery and taking the finest six-course meals— yet did not violate his vows in the slightest that is surprising. And the courtesan further said:

"Neither is the piercing of a mango cluster arduous, nor is the act of dancing upon a flower placed atop a mustard seed difficult; rather, it is the fact that that noble ascetic remained utterly detached even while residing within a courtesan's art gallery— that is the truly arduous feat."

The carpenter asked the courtesan, "O noble lady! Who is this Sthulbhadra of whom you speak with such high praise?" The courtesan replied, "It is Sthulbhadra, the son of Minister Shakadal ." Upon hearing this, the carpenter exclaimed, "If he is truly such a man, then I am but the servant of his servant!" Having heard the account of Sthulbhadra's character and the principles of Dharma from the courtesan— and thereby attaining a state of spiritual detachment— the carpenter sought out Sthulbhadra, informed the King of his intentions, and subsequently received initiation from a Guru.

Once, following a consecutive twelve-year period of severe famine, a community of ascetics approached their Guru, who was residing by the seashore. Faced with such arduous time and the suffering caused by hunger, the ascetics were unable to revise their scriptures; consequently, they forgot a significant portion of the texts. Subsequently, a congregation of ascetics gathered in the city of Pataliputra. At that time, by compiling whatever specific sections and teachings of the scriptures each ascetic could recall, the Sangh (monastic community) successfully reconstructed the eleven Angas. Thereafter, regarding the twelfth Anga– known as Drishtivad – the Sangh dispatched two monks to seek out Shri Bhadrabahu Swami. Upon paying their obeisance to Bhadrabahu Swami, the two monks conveyed to him that the Gurus in the city of Pataliputra were summoning him. Bhadrabahu Swami replied, "I have currently commenced a meditative practice known as Mahapran Dhyam; therefore, I am unable to travel there at this time." Returning from there, the two monks reported exactly what Bhadrabahu Swami had said. Consequently, the Guru and the Sangh once again instructed the two monks and sent them back to Bhadrabahu Swami with a specific inquiry:

"What form of punishment should be meted out to an individual who fails to comply with the directives of the Sangh?" Upon hearing this, Bhadrabahu Swami replied, "Such an individual must be expelled from the Sangh." The two monks then responded, "O Lord! By the very logic of your own words, it is you who must now be expelled from the Sangh." Bhadrabahu Swami replied, "It is indeed my sacred duty to obey the commands of the Sangh; however, due to my current engagement in Mahapran Dhyam, I lack the requisite time. Nevertheless, I shall impart seven Vachanas (sessions of scriptural instruction) to the monks."

"I shall deliver the first Vachana immediately after returning from my alms-round (Gochari); the second during the midday hours; the third after returning from attending to nature's calls; the fourth during the evening twilight; and the remaining three Vachanas after the completion of the daily obligatory rituals. In this manner, the objectives of both myself and the venerable Sangh shall be successfully fulfilled."

Having heard this, the two monks paid their respectful obeisance to Bhadrabahu Swami and on returning, they said those things to the Sangh. The delighted Sangh appointed five hundred monks, including Sthulbhadra, to study the Drishtivad. While studying the Drishtivad, all the monks, except Sthulbhadra, became distressed by the short recitation and returned to their respective places. Bhadrabahu Swami asked Sthulbhadra, who was now worried, why were you so distressed? Sthulbhadra replied, "I am not satisfied with a short recitation." Bhadrabahu Swami then said, "O Bhadra! Don't be sorry, my meditation is almost complete. I will give you the recitation after the meditation is over, until you are satisfied." After the meditation was over, Bhadrabahu Swami instructed Sthulbhadra Muni to study. Being extremely intelligent, Sthulbhadra Muni learned all ten things except two.

On this side, when Shriyak, who had attained renunciation after listening to the religious teachings of Sambhutivijay Acharya, was ready to take initiation, then seven sisters like Yaksha etc. told him that if he accepts initiation, then all of us sisters will also accept the wealth of restraint. Because without restraint, there is no salvation from the world.

Shriyak then took permission from the king and appointed his son Shridhar as a minister and took initiation along with those seven sisters. Yaksha etc. Sadhvis, ready to study, recite and perform penance under Shri Sambhutivijay Acharya, used to wander with the Guru.

One day, when the Paryushan festival came, the Yaksha nun said to her brother Shriyak, "O brother! Today is the day of the annual festival, therefore, perform Pachakkhan. Because the virtue of giving charity and penance on such a festival is said to have infinite results. Because:

The person who with concentrated mind remain ever-ready to perform worships and influences the Jain religion and listen to the Kalpasutra twenty-one times swiftly swim across and transcend this ocean-like world.

Residing in the presence of his Guru, and moved by the words of his sisters, Shriyak undertook a fast by progressively observing vows (Pachchakkhan) in the following sequence: Porisi, followed by Sadhaporisi, then Purimaddh, and finally Avadh. Due to the festive atmosphere, Shriyak's day passed in a state of spiritual tranquility (Samadhi); however, the night proved to be agonizing. In the dead of night, amidst great physical distress and mental agitation– yet constantly meditating upon the Panch Parameshthi Namashkar– Shriyak passed away and departed for the other world. Upon her brother's death and the subsequent performance of his cremation rites, the grief-stricken Sadhvi Yaksha addressed the Shri Sangh, lamenting: "I did not undertake this action after due deliberation, and as a result, my brother has met his demise. How shall I ever atone for this sin? I have effectively caused the death of a monk, and therefore, I am destined to fall into hell. Consequently, I shall end my life by committing suicide." The Shri Sangh replied: "You bear absolutely no fault in this matter; you encouraged your brother to fast solely out of a benevolent desire for his welfare, and thus, you shall accrue only virtue. Your brother has surely ascended to the heavens." Hearing this, Sadhvi Yaksha said: "I shall not accept this unless I hear it directly from the lips of the Lord Jineshwar. Only if the Jineshwar himself affirms this, my doubts will be dispelled." Thereupon, the Shri Sangh performed Kayotsarg, due to which the Shasan Devi (the guardian goddess of the order) gently lifted Sadhvi Yaksha and transported her through the skies to reach Shri Simandhar Swami. There, she paid her obeisance to the Jineshwar and presented her doubts before him. Shri Simandhar Swami then spoke: "Through the power of that very fast, Shriyak has expiated a vast amount of karmic matter; he has ascended to the First Devlok and, in due course, shall attain Moksha (liberation)." Thereafter, through his spiritual discourse, Shri Simandhar Swami bestowed upon her the "Four Chulikas"

(supplementary teachings). With single-minded devotion, Sadhvi Yaksha wholeheartedly embraced and accepted all four Chulikas.

Thus, with her doubts completely resolved, Sadhvi Yaksha, after paying homage to Shri Simandhar Swami, and having received the blessings of the Shasan Devi, returned to her place and bestowed the four Chulikas upon the Sangh.

Once, seven sisters— led by Yaksha— went to pay their respects to their brother, Sthulbhadra. In the midst of the forest, having bowed down at the feet of Master Bhadrabahu, they asked, "O Lord! Where is our brother?" The Guru replied, "Proceed further ahead. Sthulbhadra is engaged in scriptural study in solitude beneath an Ashoka tree." As they advanced to pay homage to Sthulbhadra, they were terrified to find a lion at their brother's location instead of him. Distraught, they returned to the Guru and reported, "A lion has devoured our brother, Sthulbhadra. We saw a lion there, but our brother was nowhere to be seen." The Guru reassured them, "Do not grieve; your brother is safe and sound. Return to that spot and pay your respects to him." The sisters then went back to the location, paid homage to their brother Sthulbhadra, and witnessed the surprise. Upon questioning the ascetic brother Sthulbhadra, he revealed, "It was I who assumed the form of a lion." Subsequently, having paid their respects to Sthulbhadra, they recounted the incident regarding the lion to Bhadrabahu Swami, bowed down to him, and returned to their own place. Thereafter, having completed his scriptural study at that location, Sthulbhadra returned to the Guru and requested further instruction. The Guru declared, "From this day forward, I shall impart no further instruction to you, for you are not eligible. If you have utilized your powers to assume the form of a lion, what restraint can be expected from you in other matters? Knowledge must be imparted only to a worthy recipient, never to an unworthy one; nor should it be bestowed prematurely— before the proper time or before the recipient's nature is fully prepared— for doing so constitutes a desecration of knowledge." It has been said:

Just as water contained within an unbaked earthen pot leads to the destruction of both itself and the pot, so too does the imparting of knowledge to an unworthy recipient result in the ruin of both the knowledge itself and the one who receives it.

Thereupon, falling at his Guru's feet and begging forgiveness for his transgression, Sthulbhadra said, "From this day forward, I shall never commit such an offense again." Yet, even after this assurance, when the Guru still withheld the Vachana, Shri Sangh said, "You have already imparted the Vachana for the initial Purvas (ancient scriptures). Then Guru said that if even he has been unable to assimilate this knowledge, how can others possibly hope to do so, especially given that we have entered the Dushama period (a time of spiritual decline)?" Hearing this, the Shri Sangh warned, "If matters proceed in this manner, the entire lineage of the Purvas will face extinction, and the sin of causing such a severance will fall upon you." In response, Bhadrabahuswami said, "I shall grant him the Vachana on the condition that, from this day forth, Sthulbhadra does not teach the remaining four Purvas to any

other ascetics." The Sangh readily agreed, saying, "It shall be exactly as you have decreed." Consequently, Bhadrabahuṣwami imparted to Sthulbhadra only the Sūtras of the remaining four Pūrvas, withholding their deeper meanings and commentaries.

Now, Sthulbhadra remained the sole ascetic on earth to possess the complete mastery of the fourteen Pūrvas. Subsequently, after engaging in rigorous asceticism for a prolonged period and spiritually awakening numerous worthy souls, Muni Sthulbhadra ascended to the first Devloka .

The Story of Shri Sthulbhadra Concludes.



3. Vajraswami

Noble souls should ceaselessly practice the Jain religion– which bestows liberation even in childhood– just as Vajrakumar did.

Any soul that, through exceptional virtues, subtly yet steadfastly propagates the glory of the Dharma attains spiritual powers (Labdhi) akin to those of Vajraswami.

Within the lineage of Suhastisuri, Vajraswami successively revived and restored the sacred teachings. It is the story of this very Vajraswami that I now recount.

There is a land named Avanti, which is a jewel adorning Jambudvīpa. Within that land lies a place known as Tumba Forest. Residing there was a merchant named Dhanagiri– a religious man whose wealth rivaled that of Kuber (the Lord of Riches). Even in his childhood, Dhanagiri was a veritable reservoir of the nectar of equanimity. Desiring to arrange his marriage, his parents began searching for a maiden worthy of Dhanagiri. When prominent merchants approached them with offers of their daughters' hands in marriage, Dhanagiri addressed them, saying: "You may indeed wish to offer me your daughters; however, I will embrace initiation. Should I eventually renounce my married life and abandon my wife, do not hold me at fault." Upon hearing this, Sunanda– the daughter of a merchant named Dhanapala– declared: "In this very life, I shall marry no man other than Dhanagiri." Although he harbored no personal desire for marriage– being intent upon embracing initiation– Dhanagiri reluctantly accepted Sunanda as his bride amidst a grand wedding ceremony.

On one occasion– despite his inherent detachment from worldly pleasures– Dhanagiri, influenced by the karma, engaged in conjugal intimacy with Sunanda after she had performed the ritual bath following her menstrual cycle. Meanwhile, Tiryak-Jrīmḥak

Dev – who had previously listened to the sacred Pundarik chapter of the scriptures in the presence of Shri Gautam Swami at the holy site of Ashtapada– descended from the heavens and entered the womb of Sunanda, who was then in a fertile state. Thereafter, realizing that his wife was pregnant, the intelligent Dhanagiri said, "O noble lady, may this pregnancy prove to be for your well-being. I, too, shall embrace the ascetic life under the guidance of the very same Guru Sinhgiri– the one under whom your brother, Aryashamit, has already taken restraint." Thereafter, leaving his wife in this delicate condition, he embraced restraint; engaging in various forms of penance, Dhanagiri began to take the nectar-like essence of scriptural wisdom.

Meanwhile, on an auspicious day when all the planets were in their exalted positions– just as a diamond mine yields a gem, or the eastern horizon gives birth to the sun– Sunanda gave birth to a son as strong as a Vajra. Thereupon, Sunanda's companions arrived and addressed the infant thus:

"O child! Had your father not already embraced initiation, the celebration of your birth would have been observed with immense pomp and grandeur. Women, acting alone and without the presence of men, cannot organise a birth celebration that brings joy to the entire world– much in the same way that a lamp, in the absence of the sun, cannot transform night into day."

Hearing these words spoken by the companions, the infant– his mind deeply absorbed in contemplation and focused with singular intent– attained Jati Smaran Gyan (knowledge of past lives). Recalling his previous existence and filled with a fervent desire to embrace the ascetic life, he began to weep bitterly; for he reasoned that unless he cried in this manner, his mother would never consent to let him go. Thereupon, his mother and her companions attempted to soothe the child in myriad ways– with words as sweet as nectar, with gentle conversation, by planting kisses upon his forehead, and by rocking him in his cradle– yet he did not cease his weeping. "How would I to find relief from this incessantly weeping child? Since I am the one who gave him birth, I cannot bring myself to harm him; yet, were his father to return here, I could entrust the child to his care and thereby find peace– for what purpose does one have for a son who fails to bring even a single moment of happiness. If, despite being so little, this child behaves in such a manner, what will he be like when he grows?" Lamenting in this manner, Sunanda became deeply distressed.

Meanwhile, Acharya Shri Sinhgiri– accompanied by ascetics such as Dhanagiri and Aryashamit– traveled from another region and arrived at that place. When the Shravakas celebrated the grand festival marking the Acharya Bhagavan's entry into the city, the Guru delivered a spiritual discourse. At noon, Dhanagiri along with Aryashamit– addressed the Guru, saying, "O Lord! Please grant us permission to enter the city to collect alms."

The Guru, possessed of profound wisdom, said to them: "Today, you shall attain a great spiritual gain. Once there, you two must make no distinction between animate and inanimate objects; that is to say, accept whatever you receive." Hearing these

words from the Guru, they replied, "We shall do exactly as you command." Having thus affirmed, Dhanagiri— accompanied by Aryashamita— went from house to house of the Shravakas collecting alms, until they eventually arrived at Sunanda's home. Upon seeing the ascetic arrive at her doorstep, the sorrow-stricken Sunanda spoke to her husband: "I have become utterly overwhelmed and tormented by this son. He is, after all, your son; therefore, take him away with you, for I have absolutely no use for him. To me, he is akin to Yamraj (the God of Death) himself; thus, in an act of mercy toward me, please take him away."

"O ocean of compassion! You are the foremost among those who have renounced all worldly attachments; nevertheless, accept this son of yours and show me mercy."

Hearing this— and recalling the words previously spoken by his Guru— Dhanagiri replied, "Do whatever your heart desires." He then added, "O noble lady! You will surely come to regret this later. Once given to us, this son of yours shall never, under any circumstances, be returned to you."

Sunanda then declared, "These companions of mine stand as witnesses to this act. I shall never ask for him back." Having spoken thus, Sunanda placed the child into the alms-bag held out by the ascetics. Thereupon, Dhanagiri— after first bestowing the spiritual blessing— accepted the child and proceeded back to the presence of his Guru.

Upon seeing Dhanagiri approaching— his arms bowed down under the sheer weight of the child he bore — the Guru declared, "This child possesses a weight akin to that of a Vajra (thunderbolt); therefore, let his name be Vajrakumar." The Guru then took the living child into his lap; as he gazed into the infant's face, the child was filled with delight. Subsequently, the Guru entrusted him to the care of the Sadhvis (Sadhvis) for his upbringing. For his daily nurturing, the Sadhvis, in turn, handed him over to the laywomen (Shravikas) who provided the Upashraya. Residing within the Upashraya— lying in his cradle without ever crying, and being lovingly raised through nursing and care— the child Vajra, even at that tender age, learned the Eleven Angas (scriptural texts) simply by listening to the Sadhvis recite them repeatedly. At the mere age of three, the child Vajrakumar would play with children of his own age, using religious implements as his toys. As it has been said:

That child— the very embodiment of good fortune for the Shravikas who, like Indrani herself, served as his caretakers— would move from one lap to another, just as a swan glides from one lotus blossom to another.

The women, too, would play with the child and converse with him in the endearing language of infancy, singing songs to him in voices that sounded like nectar pouring into his ears.

Vajra, through the sheer force of his virtues, pierced even the hearts of those women— hearts that were otherwise as hard as a thunderbolt; for it is truly said that a thunderbolt can only be pierced by another thunderbolt.

Sunanda, too, would visit the Upashraya under the pretext of offering her obeisance, and while there, she would breastfeed her son and nourish him.

Here flowed two renowned rivers named Kanya and Purna. The earth lay adorned by these rivers, much as a body is adorned by a garment. On the land situated between these two rivers, there dwelt an ascetic (Tapas) having whitened his body applying the sacred ash (Vibhuti). Among those ascetics, one ascetic would cross the river without his body touching the water, simply by wearing a pair of sandals coated with a special unguent. Witnessing this marvel, the onlookers would praise that ascetic, as well as the others, and challenge the Jains, asking, "O Jains! Is there anyone in your religion comparable to these ascetics? Who among you possesses such spiritual power?" Such were the taunts they hurled. Consequently, the devotees of those ascetics would mock and ridicule the Jains.

At this juncture, Vajrakumar's maternal uncles— the revered Acharyas Yogasiddha and Taponidhi Aryashamit— arrived at the site while traveling on their spiritual pilgrimage. Bowing down in reverence to these spiritual masters, an elderly Shravak addressed them, saying, "O Lord! These ascetics are disparaging the Jain faith while flaunting their own miraculous powers." Upon hearing this, Acharya Aryashamit—who was endowed with Avadhi-gyan (clairvoyant knowledge)— explained to the Shravaks, "This is not a manifestation of that ascetic's ascetic power; rather, he walks upon the river by applying a coating of certain medicinal herbs to his sandals." Then, speaking privately to a Shravak of great spiritual attainment (Riddhi), he instructed, "Go to that ascetic, and once there, do exactly as I have told you." Accordingly, the lay devotee approached the ascetic and said, "I have never encountered any ascetic like you who possesses the power to walk upon water. I have observed the Jain faith as well, but I have seen no manifestation of ascetic power of this magnitude there. Therefore, I accept you as my spiritual teacher." The ascetic asked, "Will you not go back on your word?" The Shravak replied, "Consider my word to be as unshakable and steadfast as Mount Meru." He then extended an invitation: "Please come to my home for a meal on the day you break your fast (Parana)."

The ascetic accepted the invitation and arrived at the Shravak's home for the meal. There, feigning an air of profound devotion, the Shravak washed the ascetic's feet; and, while doing so, he surreptitiously washed the ascetic's sandals as well. After serving the ascetic a sumptuous meal, the merchant— accompanied by a crowd of thousands— set out to see off him on his way. When the ascetic reached the vicinity of the river, Acharya Aryashamit had also arrived there by that time. As the ascetic stepped into the river, he began to sink. At this, the onlookers burst into laughter, exclaiming, "Alas! Where has this ascetic's penance vanished today?"

Subsequently, the Acharya addressed the crowd: "O ascetics! O people! Pay heed and witness the power of the Jaina doctrine!" The Guru then spoke to the river: "O River! If my penance is truly unwavering, then part into two channels and grant me a passage." Thereupon, traversing the path opened by the river, Acharya Aryashamit—

accompanied by his retinue— crossed over to the opposite bank. Witnessing this miracle performed by Acharya Aryashamit, all the ascetics— their pride completely humbled— embraced initiation. For it has been said:

Penance is worthy of praise, for through penance, the succession of obstacles is annihilated; Devas become one's servants; carnal desires are quelled; the multitude of senses is subdued; spiritual well-being is attained; great spiritual powers are acquired; the accumulated mass of karmas is destroyed; and the realms of the gods as well as the ultimate liberation (Moksha) are brought under one's command.

Other individuals, who had previously been devotees of the ascetics, also became Shravaks. Since these ascetics resided on the island of Brahma-dvipa, they became renowned by the name Brahmadipakas.

Meanwhile, as Vajra Kumar turned three years old, the ascetic Dhanagiri— along with other monks— arrived in that region during their wandering pilgrimage. Upon learning of Dhanagiri's arrival, Sunanda was filled with joy, thinking, "Now I shall reclaim my son." She then approached the revered monks and requested the return of her son. However, the monks refused to hand the boy over, stating, "You had entrusted your son to Dhanagiri in the presence of all these witnesses. Why, then, are you demanding him back now? Do you feel no shame in making such a demand? That which has been sold or given away can never be rightfully reclaimed." To this, Sunanda said: "I gave away my son without due deliberation. Actions undertaken impulsively— without forethought— does not end." At that moment, Shri Sangh said: "O Sunanda! You had previously made a decision and entrusted your son to the Guru. Now, how can the Guru return a son whom he has already accepted? Ascetics, once they have accepted a disciple, never give him back." Consequently, the Sangh and Sunanda, amidst their dispute, approached the King; the ascetics also accompanied them there. The King declared: "This child shall belong to whomever he chooses to go." Sunanda argued: "This child has already been acquainted with these ascetics for a long time. Therefore, I shall first attempt to summon him by offering him various food items." The King assented: "Proceed as you suggest." Thereupon, Sunanda brought forth various delicacies— such as laddus, sweet grapes, and varsolaka— along with playful ornaments, including a golden ball, a decorative hair ornament to be worn on the forehead, a crescent-shaped necklace, and a waist-belt. Standing to one side, she called out: "O my son! O my child! Come and accept these gifts."

"O Vajra! You are the child destined to be my protector; you are a source of joy and guidance. You alone are my sole support; O my son, come and sit in my lap."

"Your father left me prematurely to embrace initiation; therefore, O my son, at this moment, you alone are the very sustenance of my life."

"O my son! In the eyes of the world, I stand here like a destitute soul. Come to me, embrace me, and thereby absolve yourself of the debt you owe for the nine months I carried you within my womb."

Acting upon the King's command, Sunanda— while displaying to her son various toys suitable for a child's play, along with an array of food items— spoke in this manner:

"Here is an elephant; here is a horse; here are soldiers; here are chariots. O my son! All these have been brought here solely for your amusement; come, therefore, and accept them!"

"O my son! Whether it be laddus, khajas, sugar candies, or any other sweet— take whatever your heart desires."

Upon hearing these words from his mother, Vajra reflected: "It is indeed true that people revere a mother as a sacred shrine (Tirtha); yet, a mother in this world is a source of happiness if there is wealth. A mother gives birth to a son out of self-interest rather than for the sake of the son himself. The Shri Sangh and the Guru, however, bestow happiness in both this world and the hereafter; and the Shri Sangh is revered even by the Tirthankaras. By revering the Shri Sangh, one automatically fulfills the duty of revering one's mother. As for a mother, one has had countless mothers across countless lifetimes. For it has been said:

"In this infinite cycle of worldly existence, living beings have consumed mother's milk in quantities exceeding even the waters of the ocean."

The Shri Chaturvidh Sangh (the Four-fold Holy Community) is the bestower of supreme bliss, such as liberation, and the opportunity to encounter it arises only in a few lifetimes. Even if we have been fortunate enough to get the Shri Sangh, we have rarely— across our many lifetimes— truly heeded and followed its teachings. Therefore, if I were to heed my mother's words at this critical juncture, I would undoubtedly suffer a downfall into the depths of hell. At that moment, the ascetic Dhanagiri, holding up a Rajoharan (a soft whisk used to gently clear the path), spoke thus:

"O Vajra! If you are truly resolved to practice the path of Dharma (righteousness), then this is a Rajoharan— the banner of Dharma— capable of sweeping away the dust of Karma, accept it now."

For souls bound by the Karma, finding a mother is an occurrence common to every single lifetime; yet, the attainment of that true Dharma— the spiritual path capable of eradicating Karma from its very roots— is rare.

Hearing these words spoken by the Shri Sangh and Dhanagiri, Vajrakumar was filled with boundless joy. Thereupon, the Shri Sangh— guided by the Guru— presented the Rajoharan and the Muhapatti (mouth-cloth), saying: "O Vajra! If it is your desire to embrace the path of restraint, then accept the Rajoharan etc. If not, then accept instead the worldly objects your mother has placed before you." Resolving that "the word of the Shri Sangh alone is the ultimate authority," Vajra placed the Rajoharan and the Muhapatti upon his head and began to dance.

Seated in his father's lap, with the Rajoharan held in his hand, Vajra shone resplendently like a cygnet resting upon a lotus in the lake of the nectar of equanimity.

Witnessing this, Sunanda was overcome with deep sorrow and began to reflect thus:

"My son has embraced initiation; my husband and my brother, too, have renounced the world. I no longer find it fitting to remain alone in this household; therefore, I, too, shall soon embrace the path of initiation."

Resolved thus, Sunanda departed for her home, while Vajra was taken by the ascetic to their own abode. There, the Guru entrusted the young Vajra to the care of the Sadhvis (female ascetics). Residing amongst them, Vajra observed the Sadhvis— who were then engaged in studying the Eleven Angas (scriptural texts)— and, by merely listening to them, he too mastered all eleven Angas.

Having merely listened to the Eleven Angas and grasped their essence through the sheer power of his intellect, Vajra— endowed with such extraordinary wisdom— proceeded to dispel the spiritual ignorance and latent impurities inherent in children throughout the entire world.

Sunanda, too, having realized the ephemeral nature of worldly existence, received her initiation from the revered Guru Singhagiri. At the conclusion of six years, Acharya Singhgiri formally initiated Vajra into the ascetic order. In due course, Vajra attained the age of eight years.

On one occasion, the Guru, accompanied by Vajra, set out on a Vihar (spiritual journey) toward the region of Avanti. While they were traveling, heavy rains began to fall; consequently, the entire assembly of ascetics took shelter within a Yaksha-mandap (a shrine dedicated to a celestial spirit). Meanwhile, Jrimbhak Dev who had been a close friend of Vajra in a previous incarnation— descended into that very forest to put Vajra to the test. Assuming the name of a Sarthvah, he pitched a tent nearby and took up residence within it. Amidst the rain, the Dev — still disguised as a merchant— approached the Guru, paid his humble obeisance, and spoke thus: "O Revered Master! Kindly send the ascetics to my tent to take of pure food." Observing that the rain had begun to subside, the Guru addressed Vajra: "O Vajra! Proceed to the abode of this Shravak to take food." Intent upon testing Vajra's spiritual fortitude, the Dev— employing his divine illusory powers (Deva-maya)— created minute droplets of water. Upon observing the water droplets formed from this act, Vajra Muni retired to a grass hut in the forest. When the Sarthvah was offering alms, Vajra reflected: "His feet do not touch the ground; his eyelids do not blink; and the food he is currently collecting— such food is not even in season at this time." Pondering these signs, Vajra spoke up: "Food offered by Devas is not permissible for ascetics." Impressed by Vajra Rishi's astuteness and spiritual fortitude, the Devas revealed themselves to him and bestowed upon him the knowledge to attain Vaikriya Labdhi (the supernatural power of transformation).

On another occasion, assuming the guise of merchants, those same deities encountered Vajra while he was wandering and invited him— during the month of Jyeshtha— to accept alms of ghee-laden malpuas (sweet pancakes) just outside the city gates. Yet

again, recognizing the illusion created by the deities, Vajra replied: "Food offered by Devas is not permissible for ascetics." Acknowledging Vajra Muni as a being of profound wisdom, the deity then bestowed upon him the Akashgami Vidya (the supernatural power of aerial flight).

Once, the senior monks (Sthaviras) addressed Vajra, saying: "O Vajra! You must engage in scriptural study." The deeply composed Vajra, however— while concealing his own immense capabilities— simply stood there in silence.

One day, while all the other ascetics had gone out to collect alms and the Acharya had gone to Standil land, Vajra remained alone in the Upashraya (monastic residence). He arranged all the Upadhis (ascetic requisites) in the formation of a circle— resembling the seated assembly of monks— and, positioning himself in the center like a spiritual teacher, began to recite the Eleven Angas in a loud, clear voice. Meanwhile, the Guru approached the entrance; hearing Vajra reciting the Eleven Angas, he paused for a moment and wondered: "Have the ascetics returned from their alms-round already? Is Vajra reciting the scriptures to them?" Peering through a small aperture in the door and seeing Vajra sitting there entirely alone, the Guru thought: "Oh! What profound composure this young ascetic possesses! Despite possessing such extraordinary scriptural knowledge— and being a master of the Eleven Angas himself— he has never revealed his true capabilities to anyone." This young ascetic engaged in such activity should not feel even the slightest embarrassment upon being observed, the Guru, having thus reflected, called out "Nisihi" in a loud voice from outside the door. Recognizing the Guru's voice, Vajra immediately returned his Upadhis to their proper places; he then stepped forward, opened the door, and reverently wiped the dust from the Guru's feet.

Here, the poet offers a poetic conceit:

The tilak (sacred mark) that the young ascetic Vajra applied to his forehead— using the dust from his Guru's feet— serves as the very means to win over the Goddess of Wealth in the form of Moksha (Liberation).

Vajra— whose radiance shone as brilliantly as the sun— seated the Guru upon his designated seat and washed his feet with pure, consecrated water.

Deeming Vajra to be a humble and learned ascetic— one who had mastered the eleven Angas— the Guru, one day, expressed his intention to travel to a different village. He said to the other ascetics, "I will undertake a spiritual journey (Vihar) through the neighboring villages, and it will last for four days." The ascetics replied with a humble plea: "We, too, wish to accompany you." The Guru responded, "It is not appropriate for a large number of ascetics to travel to small villages, for doing so increases the likelihood of incurring various transgressions, such as Adhakarma." It is said that:

" Adhakarma, Uddeshika, Putikarma, Mishrajata, Sthapana, Prabhrutika, Pradushkruta, Krita, Pramitya, Paravarta, Abhyahruta, Udbhinna, Malapahruta,

Achchhedya, Anisrushta, and Urdhvapooraka are the sixteen specific faults (Pinda Doshas)."

Upon hearing this, the ascetics inquired, "Then who shall impart the scriptural lessons (Vachana) to us?" The Guru replied, "Vajra shall impart the lessons to you." Accepting the Guru's word— and holding the firm conviction that the Guru's pronouncements could never be fallible— they readily agreed to his instruction.

The following morning, after the Guru had departed on his spiritual journey to the other village, the ascetics requested Vajra to deliver the Vachana; Vajra thereupon delivered the Vachana. As they absorbed Vajra's teachings— which were articulated with such clarity and simplicity that they were effortlessly understood— the ascetics found themselves wondering: "Is this Vajra, in truth, the Goddess Saraswati or Brihaspati?"

Now, having completed his wandering pilgrimage, the Guru returned to that place and asked his disciples, "O ascetics! Did your Vachana went smoothly?" They replied, "From this day forth, let Vajra alone be our Vachanacharya (lecturer). Although he is but a boy, he possesses the stature of an elder; indeed, it seems to us that the Goddess Saraswati herself has manifested in the form of Vajra to impart knowledge to us." Thereupon, recognizing the brilliance of Vajra's awakened intellect, the Guru initiated him into the profound mysteries of all the scriptures. Vajra continued to study under the Guru's guidance until he had mastered the Drishtivad (a comprehensive branch of scriptural knowledge).

Subsequently, the Guru— the remover of the sins of all living beings— journeyed to the city of Dashapura, accompanied by Vajra. On one occasion, the Guru addressed Vajra, saying, "In the region of Avanti resides Bhadruguptasuri, a master of the Dashapurvas (the Ten Ancient Texts). You must go to him to undertake the study of these Dashapurvas. Apart from you, neither any other disciple of mine nor any of his own disciples is capable of mastering the Dashapurvas. Therefore, O beloved Vajra— you who are dedicated to the welfare of our spiritual lineage(Gachchh)— proceed to Ujjayini, master the Dashapurvas, and thereby enlighten and guide living beings across the ten directions."

"By partaking of this nectar-like treasury of the Dashapurvas, the Shasan Devta (Guardian Deity) shall, out of sheer delight, remain in your constant presence, day and night."

Taking these words of the Guru to heart— and with his heart overflowing with joy— Vajra set forth toward Ujjayini, accompanied by monks. Just as the sky is adorned by the presence of the Sun, Mercury, and Venus, so too was Vajra resplendent as he journeyed along the path, surrounded by his assembly of monks.

Filled with an ardent desire to behold Acharya Bhadrugupta— who was akin to an ocean of the nectar-like Dashapurvas— Vajra arrived at Ujjayini; however, as night had already fallen, he chose to remain encamped just outside the city.

Meanwhile, having awakened from his slumber, Acharya Bhadracharya spoke to his disciples the following morning: "This very morning, I experienced a dream in which a visitor took the vessel filled with milk from my hands; having drunk it, he felt fully satiated and was filled with immense joy.

Therefore, today, a monk— preeminent among the wise— will surely arrive here. And from me, he shall receive the Dashapurva (the knowledge of the Ten Purvas).

Today, my custodianship of the Dashapurva shall bear fruit, for a monk worthy of receiving it is destined to arrive this very day.

How fortunate am I that the lineage of the Dashapurvas I hold will not be broken, for, without a doubt, a most worthy recipient will arrive here today.

As the Acharya, his mind overflowing with joy, spoke these words, Vajra— announcing his arrival with the traditional salutation of Nisihi— appeared at the entrance of the Upashraya (monastery).

Observing his physical appearance and innate demeanor, the Guru realized: "The very person I beheld in my vision last night has now manifested here in reality."

Filled with supreme joy and deeply moved, Vajra reverently circumambulated the Guru three times; then, bowing his head repeatedly in humility, he paid homage at the Guru's feet. The Guru, too, with profound affection and esteem, embraced Vajra with his own hands. Recognizing him with certainty— based on his renowned appearance— as none other than Vajra, the Guru spoke: "Has your spiritual journey (Vihar) proceeded smoothly? Is your body free from illness? Is your ascetic practice (Tapa) proceeding without obstruction? Is your Guru in good health?"

"For what specific reason has your journey led you toward the region of Avanti?"

Filled with intense devotion and with his hands folded in reverence, Vajra paid homage to the Guru and replied:

"Regarding the inquiries you graciously made at the outset— concerning my well-being and the smooth progress of my journey— all is indeed well, by the grace of the divine and the blessings of my guru's feet.

Acting upon my Guru's command, I have come to the feet of Your Holiness to undertake the study of the Dashapurva; I therefore humbly request that you bestow your grace upon me by imparting this knowledge." Thereupon, Acharya Bhadracharya, realizing him as worthy, undertook the task of instructing him in the Dashapurvas (the Ten Ancient Texts). Studying with humility and devotion, Vajra became a master of the Dashapurvas within a very short time. For it is said:

Oil upon water, a secret shared with a wicked man, charity bestowed upon a worthy recipient, and scriptural knowledge within an intelligent mind— all these things expand and flourish solely by virtue of their own inherent nature.

Subsequently, having sought permission from Guru, Shri Bhadrugupta, Vajra set out towards Dashapur. Filled with reverence and now a master of the Dashapurvas, Vajra circumambulated Sinhgiri and paid his obeisance to him. Thereupon, the Jrimbhak deities– Vajra's friends from a previous incarnation– celebrated a grand festival in honor of Vajra, the master of the Dashapurvas. Thereafter, the Guru bestowed upon Vajra the title of Acharya and entrusted him with the leadership of the monastic order (Gaccha). Subsequently, having embraced the vow of Anashan (fasting unto death), Acharya Sinhgiri departed for the Devlok. Surrounded by a retinue of five hundred disciples, Shri Vajrasuri began his wanderings across the earth. Wherever Vajraswami traveled, the people there embraced the twelve fundamental vows of Samyaktva (Right Faith).

Meanwhile, in the city of Pataliputra, there lived a wealthy merchant. His daughter, Rukmini, was as beautiful as a celestial maiden. Vajraswami's Sadhvis (female ascetics) were staying in that merchant's residence. While delivering religious discourses to the Shravikas, the Sadhvis extolled the virtues of Shri Vajraswami– praising his auspiciousness, his physical grace, and his other noble qualities.

Hearing such lavish praise of detached Vajraswami's virtues from the lips of the Sadhvis, Rukmini found herself becoming deeply enamored of him.

Rukmini said to the Sadhviji: "May Shri Vajraswami become my husband in this very life." The Sadhvi replied: "O innocent girl! O sweet-spoken one! Do not speak in such a manner! This obstinate desire you harbor in your mind will prove utterly futile in the presence of our Guru." Rukmini responded: "If this wish of mine does not come to fruition, then the path of restraint alone shall be the best for me."

Meanwhile, wandering in this direction, Shri Vajraswami arrived at the outskirts of the city of Pataliputra. There, amidst an elaborate ceremonial procession organized by the King, Vajraswami entered the city. The King wondered, "Who among these ascetics is Vajraswami?" At that moment, the monks who bore a resemblance to Vajraswami pointed him out, saying, "This is Vajraswami." Thereupon, the King bowed down to Vajraswami with deep reverence. Subsequently, having listened to the religious discourse delivered by the Guru, the King and the citizens returned to their respective abodes. Upon hearing the King recount the virtues of Vajraswami, the King's wives also came forth with great festivity to pay homage to Vajraswami, the foremost among spiritual masters. There, the Guru delivered a religious sermon as follows:

"The soul that embraces the path of righteousness with sincere inner conviction attains all forms of well-being and swiftly ascends to the supreme state– the ultimate liberation known as Moksha. Thus has it been proclaimed by the Jineshwaras."

The following day, upon hearing of Vajraswami's arrival, Rukmini cast aside all hesitation and spoke to her father: "Vajraswami has arrived here– the very one I desire to marry. He alone shall be my husband; otherwise, death remains my only refuge."

Moved by the desire to arrange his daughter's marriage to Vajraswami, Dhan Shreshthi set out, taking with him his daughter, who was adorned with resplendent divine ornaments. Along the way, as he listened to the people extol Vajraswami's physical beauty, auspicious grace, generosity, and virtues of forgiveness, Dhan Shreshthi reflected: "My daughter is truly blessed, for she aspires to wed such an exalted groom." Upon reaching there, Dhan Shreshthi bowed down to Vajraswami; after listening to his religious discourse, he folded his hands and pleaded: "This daughter of mine harbors a deep affection for you; therefore, please accept her as your bride.

'Vajraswami alone shall be my husband; otherwise, death is my only refuge'— such is her solemn vow. Therefore, O Compassionate One, I beg you to bestow your grace. Along with this maiden, I shall give you ten million gold coins; please accept her hand in marriage." Upon hearing these words from the Dhan Shreshthi, Vajraswami replied:

"Worldly pleasures are as restless as the ripples of a river and as unstable as the flapping ears of an elephant; moreover, they afflict the wealth of spiritual merit with disease. Therefore, who would desire such pleasures?

Since time immemorial, it has been deemed proper to bestow the gifts of wealth and a bride only after a firm resolve to do so. So, O noble soul, why have you come here offering them to me?

Has this maiden become enamored with my body— a mere composition of flesh, blood, and bone? Her true husband shall be one who is rare even to the gods— one for whom all virtues serve as attendants, for whom the goddess of beauty acts as a handmaiden, for whom the entirety of worldly wealth is but a consort, and who is utterly devoid of any impurity.

It is through the mere particles of his grace that gods, demons, and kings alike shine forth in splendor; and it is through profound devotion to him that one attains the treasure trove of liberation.

The spiritual discipline I have just described is, in truth, the 'wealth of the mind' that your daughter possesses. Therefore, if you grant me your permission, I shall here and now unite her with this true spouse."

" Youth— as fleeting as a flash of lightning— is inevitably destroyed through the death, rebirth, and old age. The desire for material wealth destroys one's inner contentment. The seductive allure of mature women shatters peace and happiness. Envious people seek to destroy the virtues of others. Serpents ruin the forest land. Wicked people bring about the downfall of kings, and restlessness destroys one's patience. Thus, in this world, what is there that has not been subject to destruction?

Old age lurks all around us like a tigress, diseases attack on body like enemies, and life ebbs away like water leaking from a broken pitcher. Yet, it remains a matter of astonishment that people continue to engage in harmful conduct.

In one moment, a human being is a child; in the very next, an ardent seeker of worldly pleasures. In one moment, he is destitute; in the next, wealthy again. In one moment, his body is frail and ravaged by old age; in the next, it is adorned with wrinkles. Like an actor with a body worn out by age, he passes behind the curtain— into the realm of Yama, the Lord of Death. That is to say, just as an actor dons various costumes to perform a play before finally exiting behind the curtain, so too does a human being assume the guises of childhood and other stages of life, ultimately entering the abode of Yama.

Like a hammer forged of iron, Rukmini— herself a formidable force— struck repeatedly, yet failed to pierce him even slightly; thus, Vajraswami stands firm and unyielding, akin to a diamond gem.

Her fever of delusion quelled by the nectar-like wisdom of Vajraswami's teachings, Rukmini embraced the ascetic path. At that time, many others, too – captivated by Vajraswami's enchanting eloquence – developed deep reverence for the Dharma expounded by the Jineshwar.

On one occasion, drawing from the Mahaparigya Adhyayan, Sri Vajraswami utilized his Padanusari Labdhi (the supernatural power of following the tracks) to extract the Akashagamini Vidya (the science of aerial flight) for the benefit of the Sangh (the monastic community). However, anticipating that future generations of living beings would possess extremely feeble spiritual strength, Sri Vajraswami— standing before the Sangh— refrained from bestowing this Akashagamini Vidya upon any of the ascetics.

Once, while on his spiritual wandering (Vihar), Vajraswami traveled from the east toward the north. There, a severe famine struck; suffering acutely from hunger, the members of the Sangh approached Vajraswami, bowed reverently, and submitted this plea:

"O Lord! Amidst the dominion of this famine, the Dhan Shreshthis find no satiety even after eating repeatedly. Just as a Yogi, fearing the allure of worldly objects, refrains from opening his eyelids, so too does a wealthy merchant, fearing the mendicants, refrain from opening the doors of his home.

No one remains capable of consuming even the food they have cooked. At this time, the trade of buying and selling has also become nearly impossible. Even when struck with a staff, the mendicants forcibly snatch food with their hands and devour it. People are unable to offer pure food even to the ascetics who arrive for their daily alms round. Out of fear of the mendicants, they cannot even bring themselves to open their doors. The mendicants even snatch away the food that has already been accepted into the hands of the ascetics. One is unable to engage even in righteous meditation; for it has been said:

"O Lord! Only You are capable of delivering the Sangh from the throes of such suffering, for You alone are the very ocean of countless miraculous spiritual powers."

Observing the Sangh in such a state of distress, Vajraswami reflected: "He who possesses the capability to aid the Sangh, yet chooses to conceal his own power, becomes destined for a wretched fate; for the Sangh is held in high esteem even by the Tirthankaras themselves."

Having thus resolved, Vajraswami– beloved of the people– swiftly unfurled a vast cloth, magnificent as the 'Charma-ratna' of a Chakravartin Emperor.

Seating the entire Sangh upon it– and taking his own seat as well– Vajraswami activated the Akashagamini Vidya

As Vajraswami ascended into the sky, borne aloft by the cloth through the power of the Akashagamini Vidya, the sight created an illusion in the minds of onlookers– as if a celestial chariot of the gods were gliding across the heavens. Meanwhile, his own Shayyatar (the devotee who provided his lodging) had stepped out for some work. Upon returning and beholding Vajraswami soaring through the sky, he called out:

"O Master! Once I served as your Shayyatar, but now I stand before you as a fellow spiritual seeker! O Jagadguru! Why are you leaving me behind in such a place?"

Hearing these words from the Shayyatar, Vajraswami recalled the meaning of a specific Sutra:

"Those individuals who are earnestly devoted to Sadharmik Vatsalya (affection for fellow practitioners), to scriptural study (Svadhyaya), to righteous conduct (Charitra), and to the magnificent propagation of the Dharma– such souls must undoubtedly be uplifted and guided to salvation by a Muni (sage)."

Thus, having reflected upon the true import of the sacred scriptures, Vajraswami– the son of Sunanda– seated that very Shayyatar upon the miraculous Vidyapat (mystical flying platform).

Thereupon, the platform took flight– illuminating the directions like the sun through the collective radiance of the Sangh seated upon it– much as a cloud, the very essence of the cosmos, traverses the vast expanse of the sky.

Vajraswami, revered by all Gandharvas and Yogis alike, brought great joy to the Sangh, whose faces were bowed in humble devotion.

Subsequently, Vajraswami guided the Sangh– still seated upon the platform– to the city known as Mahapur. As the region was blessed with bountiful prosperity, the Sangh found great contentment there. Within that city, the Jains and Buddhists– locked in perpetual disputes– were constantly engaged in mutual conflict; yet, day after day, the Jains consistently emerged victorious over the Buddhists.

Meanwhile, as the Jain festival of Paryushan approached, the Buddhists approached the King and said: "O Sovereign! Today marks the annual festival of these Jains; therefore, you should issue orders to the gardeners to deliver all their flowers exclusively to your own royal temples. By doing so, the arrogance of these Jains– who

have become haughty in their pride– will surely be humbled." When the King acted in accordance with this suggestion, the Shravaks approached Shri Vajraswami and pleaded: "Our annual festival has arrived, yet it would be unseemly for us to perform our worship during this sacred occasion without the offering of flowers. Due to the King's decree, the gardeners are refusing to provide us with any flowers. Only you possess the power to procure these flowers and to curb these wicked individuals." One who possesses such spiritual power should not tolerate any act of disrespect or defiance against the Shasan (the religious order). As it has been wisely said:

"For the advancement and glory of the Tirtha (the sacred path of the Jinas), ascetics strive earnestly every single day, therefore, O Master, you ought to bring glory to the Tirtha.

Upon hearing this, and with the aim of furthering the progress of the Order, Vajraswami utilized the Akashgami Vidya (the science of aerial flight) to travel to a garden situated near the city of Maheshwari. There, he encountered Tadit– a gardener who was a friend of his father, Dhanagiri. Upon seeing Vajraswami, Tadit was filled with joy and exclaimed:

"O Vajra Muni! By the mere sight of your blessed countenance today, I feel that my life has been fulfilled. Please, command me to perform any task whatsoever through the utterance of your sacred words."

Vajraswami replied, "Flowers are required for the worship of the Lord." Thereupon, the gardener presented him with twenty-one crore flowers. From there, Vajraswami proceeded to the Kshulla Himavanta mountain range; after paying homage to the Eternal Jinas enshrined there, he gathered flowers from the Devas residing in that region and set off toward the city of Mahapur. En route, he also obtained exquisite flowers from the forest of the Hutashana Yaksha. In this manner, Vajraswami returned from various forests, bearing baskets overflowing with flowers.

At that time– witnessing the abundance of flowers brought by the Devas for the festival, and observing the grand celebrations underway within the Jain temple– many Buddhists cast aside their arrogance and bowed down at the feet of Vajraswami. The Buddhist King, too, became a devout follower of the Jain faith.

Meanwhile, in the city of Dashapur, there lived a Brahmin named Somdev. His wife, named Rudrasoma, was a devout practitioner of the Jain religion. The couple had two sons named Aryarakshit and Phalgurakshit.

The brilliant Aryarakshit, while pursuing his studies following the sacred thread ceremony (Upanayana), mastered every branch of knowledge that his father possessed.

Subsequently, in order to pursue even higher learning, Aryarakshit traveled to Pataliputra. There, having become a scholar proficient in all branches of knowledge, he returned to the vicinity of his hometown. Recognizing him as a master of all

disciplines, the King went forth, seated him upon an elephant, and brought him into the city amidst a grand celebration. The King honored him with gifts of wealth. Subsequently, many other people also presented him with gifts. Even the bards sang his praises in the pavilion outside his home. His relatives, too, adorned the house with festive arches (toranas) and auspicious symbols (swastikas).

One day, Aryarakshit reflected: "Woe is me! Despite having attained such a prestigious position, I have not yet gone to bow at my mother's feet.

My mother– who rejoices in my happiness and grieves in my sorrow– deserves to be gladdened by receiving the knowledge and wealth I have acquired as the fruit of my travels."

Pondering thus, Aryarakshit entered the house and bowed at his mother's feet. The mother then spoke: "O Son! May you be blessed with a long life." However, Aryarakshit did not perceive his mother to be truly joyful. Hearing no words of affectionate delight from his mother, Aryarakshit wondered: "Why does my mother not speak to me with evident pleasure? What offense have I committed?" Bowing once more to his mother, he asked: "O Mother! I have returned after mastering numerous scriptures; yet, why do you not appear happy?" The mother replied: "O Son! What concern could I possibly have with this 'false knowledge' (kuvidya)– the very cause of damnation to hell?

What is the worth of such grass-like knowledge, which comprises a million verses, failing to teach even the fundamental truth that one must not inflict pain upon others?" The son asked: "O Mother! Which scripture, if I were to study it, would bring you joy?" The mother replied: "O Son! If you are truly devoted to your mother, then study the Drishtivad – the scripture that bestows the bliss of liberation.

To become proficient in the study of the Drishtivad , you must become a Shramanopasaka (a lay follower of the ascetic path); for just as light cannot be perceived without the sun, true insight cannot be gained without the proper spiritual foundation.

Go to the Ikshu-van and, taking support from the venerable Acharya Tosaliputra like a stick, undertake the study of the Drishtivad ."

"O Mother! I shall do exactly as you have instructed me this morning." Having spoken thus, Aryarakshit spent the night contemplating when the study of the Drishtivad would commence.

At dawn, having sought permission from his parents, Aryarakshit set forth. As he was exiting the city, a stranger asked Aryarakshit, "Who are you?" He replied, "I am Aryarakshit." Thereupon, the man embraced him and said, "I am a Mahadvija (a high-ranking Brahmin) hailing from Shakhapur, a friend of your father, and I am currently immersed in domestic anxieties. You, too, appear to be in a state of eager anticipation; therefore, accept these nine and a half sugarcane stalks." Accepting the sugarcane

stalks, Aryarakshit said, "I am proceeding further afield to attend to some urgent business. Please convey the details regarding these sugarcane stalks to my mother." With these words, Aryarakshit continued on his way. When the Brahmin recounted Aryarakshit's demeanor and the incident of the sugarcane stalks to his mother, Rudrasoma, she reflected, "My son is destined to acquire knowledge extending up to nine and a half Purvas (ancient scriptural divisions)." Aryarakshit, too, mused, "Since I have received nine and a half sugarcane stalks, I shall surely master nine and a half Purvas of scripture. But by what protocol should I offer my salutations to the Guru?" Pondering thus, he arrived at the entrance of the academy. There, hearing the Guru's melodious, resonant voice— soft yet distinct— as he instructed his disciples, Aryarakshit was filled with joy; he then considered the proper etiquette for entering the monastic residence. At that very moment, a devout lay-disciple named Dhaddhar entered the residence, announcing his entry with the traditional invocation, "Nisihi". Dhaddhar Shravak offered loud and reverent salutations to the Guru and the other monks present; thereafter, having ritually swept the ground before him, he took his seat. Observing the entire ritual procedure performed by Dhaddhar Shravak, Aryarakshit emulated his actions precisely, offering salutations to everyone before taking his seat. The Acharya wondered to himself, "Who is this new Shravak?"— for he had seated himself without first offering salutations to Dhaddhar Shravak. The Guru then inquired, "Who is your spiritual teacher?" Aryarakshit replied, "This very Shravak is my guru, because it was from him that I learned all this knowledge. Then the guru asked, "Where have you come from?" Aryarakshit told his guru his entire story. Knowing him to be of noble birth, the guru proudly said, "You cannot learn Drishtivad without initiation." Then Aryarakshit, the son of Somdev, said, "Then grant me the discipline of self-control." The guru then deemed him worthy, initiated him, and proceeded to his spiritual path. Aryarakshit, studying under his guru, completed the study of the eleven limbs in a short time. He remained with the guru until he was taught Drishtivad . Then the guru said, "Son, if you wish to study Drishtivad further, go and study with Vajraswami." Aryarakshit then left for Mahapur and went to Bhadrugupta Acharya in Ujjaini. He bowed to his guru. The guru, recognizing him, said, "Son, you have abandoned Brahminhood and embraced Shramanahood." He did the best and the Guru said that I have grown old, so today I will fast. Then Bhadra Guptasuri, having fasted, said - You go to Vajra, study Drishtivad there. While studying under Vajra, you should stay in a separate shelter and do your grazing separately because whoever eats in Vajra's circle will fast with him. I will do as you said. Thus accepting the words of the Guru and after getting the Guru to do Niryamana, Aryarakshit left for Vajraswami to study Drishtivad .

Meanwhile Vajraswami saw a dream that a man came near me and drank a lot of milk from me, leaving only a little left.

In the morning Vajraswami explained the meaning of the dream to his disciples that an extraordinary disciple will arrive here— one who will acquire from me all but a small fraction of the knowledge contained in the Ten Purvas." At that very moment,

Aryarakshit suddenly entered the vasati (monastic quarters) saying Nisihi and paid his obeisance to Vajraswami. Vajraswami then inquired about the reason for his visit; Aryarakshit replied, "I have come to study the Drishtivad , having first informed and obtained the consent of Acharya Bhadrugupta." After completing the study of the first nine Purvas, while Aryarakshit was engaged in studying the intricate Yamaka section of the tenth Purva, a message arrived from his father: "O Son! We are desolate without you. Therefore, gladden our hearts by returning home." Upon receiving this message, Aryarakshit hastened his efforts to complete the study of that Purva as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile, his younger brother, Phalgurakshit, arrived and said to Aryarakshit, "If you harbor any affection for our parents, you must return home to bring joy to them, our relatives, and friends. Furthermore, several of our kinsmen are eager to embrace Diksha (initiation)." Hearing this, Aryarakshit replied, "O dear brother! Let us go there. If initiation appeals to you, then you, too, should embrace it." Phalgurakshit subsequently took initiation as well. Eager to resume his journey with his brother, Aryarakshit turned to Vajraswami and asked, "How much of the tenth Purva have I actually studied? And how much remains?" Vajraswami replied, "Of the vast ocean that is the tenth Purva, you have acquired knowledge equivalent to merely a single drop." Despite his diligent efforts, Aryarakshit was able to master only half of the tenth Purva; he could proceed no further in his studies. He then reflected: "When I first departed from the city, a friend of my father's presented me with nine and a half sugarcane stalks (Ikshu-dandas). It seems, therefore, that I am destined to master precisely nine and a half Purvas– and no more." Thereupon, Vajraswami formally consecrated him as an Acharya (spiritual preceptor) and granted him permission to commence his Vihar. Having attained the exalted rank of Suri, Aryarakshit– accompanied by his brother– paid his final respects to his Guru and set forth on his journey. Traveling in a gradual progression, they eventually arrived at the city of Dashapura.

After entering the city, Aryarakshit came and preached the Dharma. The king and all the people listened to the Dharma and thought that they had never heard such a Dharma before. As a result, the king became a Shravak, and Somdev was enlightened and took initiation. (The way he cultivated right conduct can be traced back to the character of Aryarakshit.)

On one occasion, Vajraswami went on a vihar towards the south. One day, Vajraswami suffered from a cough. At the request of the monks, he performed the Pachakkhan of Duvihar. Then, Vajraswami made a pill of Sunth and placed it on his ear. Engrossed in self-study, he forgot to take it. While applying the Muhapatti to his ear during Pratikraman, the pill fell down. Seeing this, Vajraswami thought, "Shame on me for having committed such a negligence." Seeing such negligence, I feel that my life is short, so I will fast unto death (ansan) and give up my body. At that time, when a twelve-year drought struck, Vajraswami sent all his disciples to other places.

Seeing the monks suffering from lack of alms during such a drought, Vajrasena said, "I will nourish you with food brought by the power of knowledge." It is said that:

One should maintain restraint in all ways, and restraint should protect the soul itself. Knowingly indulging in transgressions and then purifying oneself is not renunciation.

The monks pleaded with their guru, "One who does not properly inspect food is characterless; there is no doubt about it. Without character, all actions are meaningless.

We have repeatedly consumed and given up all these Pudgals (substances). So, what desire could those who possess true wisdom have of this rejected food?

Therefore, we wish to renounce this food." Having thus explained the situation to Vajrasena, five hundred disciples approached Shri Vajraswami. Vajraswami— a repository of boundless spiritual fortune and followed by disciples — left Vajrasena behind. Bestowing his grace upon Vajrasena, he entrusted him to the care of a young monk within the village— whom he had gently persuaded to stay— and then ascended the mountain himself, accompanied by the five hundred disciples. That disciple too— seeking to dispel his Guru's displeasure— renounced all four types of food while remaining at the foot of the mountain. Resting upon a rock slab, his body gradually melted away like a lump of butter, and he attained the Devlok . When the young monk's family arrived and beheld the deities gathering to pay homage to his mortal remains, they inquired of the Guru regarding the cause. Thereupon, utilizing his profound scriptural knowledge, Vajraswami recounted the entire story of the young monk. Subsequently, a deity of Mithyadrishti (perverted vision) arrived at that mountain, accompanied by a host of monks, with the intent of unsettling Vajraswami. Yet, despite the deity's attempts to waver his resolve, Vajraswami remained unshaken.

Thereafter, perceiving the deity's hostility, Vajraswami departed for another location; there, having performed Kayotsarg in honor of the presiding deity of the region, he attained the Devlok . All those disciples, too, ascended to the Devlok . Then, Indra himself arrived at that place, hailed it as a Tirtha (pilgrimage site), and paid his obeisance to them.

Meanwhile, Vajrasena and his disciple traveled to the city of Soparak and visited the home of a merchant named Jinadatt. The merchant and his wife paid their respectful homage to the visitors. Observing the merchant grinding a poisonous substance, the Guru inquired, "What is it that you are doing?" The merchant replied, "A severe famine has plagued this land for twelve years. I possess wealth, yet not even any grain is available anywhere. I have managed to procure this meager quantity of grain for a sum of one lakh rupees. I intend to mix poison into it and, after consuming it, end my life along with my entire family." The Guru said to him, " Tomorrow, numerous carts laden with grain shall arrive here, so do not take such a step." Upon hearing this, the merchant responded, ""If it becomes exactly as you say, then these four sons of mine shall receive initiation from you." Subsequently— in the morning when the famine

ended upon arrival of grain – the merchant, accompanied by his entire family, received initiation from Muni Vajrasena. These four sons– named Nagendra, Chandra, Vidyadhar, and Nivrutti– successively rose to become Acharyas (spiritual preceptors). It is said that:

"He who reverently bears his Guru's command upon his head, and thereby abides by the mandate of the Omniscient One, shall never again be born into this world."

Subsequently, four distinct branches (lineages) emerged from these four Acharyas, led by Nagendra. To this day, statues of these four figures can be seen within the Jin temple of Shri Rishabhdev Swami in the city of Soparak.

The Story of Shri Vajraswami Concludes.



4. Nandishen Muni

By practicing severe asceticism daily, a soul instantly destroys accumulated karmic impurities– just as Muni Nandishen did.

There was a city named Shripur, which was as magnificent as the Devlok itself. A Brahmin named Makhpriya resided there. One day, Makhpriya assigned a servant named Bhima to a specific task. The servant replied to Makhpriya, "I will undertake this task only if you give me the leftover provisions from the ritual; otherwise, I will not." Makhpriya agreed to these terms. Thereafter, Bhima would offer the food remaining after the sacrifice to wandering ascetics.

Through the merit acquired from this virtuous act, he ascended to the Devlok ; subsequently, upon completing his celestial lifespan, he was reborn in the city of Rajgrih as Nandishen, the son of King Shrenik.

Meanwhile, Makhpriya, having wandered through countless lifetimes, was eventually reborn in a forest within the womb of a female elephant. The herd's dominant male elephant– driven by the apprehension that no other male should ever usurp his position as leader– would kill any newborn calves immediately upon their birth. Witnessing her offspring being slaughtered by the herd's leader, a female elephant reflected: "The inthusiasim I feel to protect my progeny suggests that the child I am currently carrying will be exceptionally strong. Therefore, the moment he is born, I must whisk him away to a different location to ensure his safety." Harboring this thought, and employing a clever ruse, the female elephant– feigning the symptoms of a debilitating rheumatic ailment– began to trail slowly behind the rest of the herd.

Even animals possess deep affection for their offspring. Hence, it is said:

"O Hunter! Spare my udder, but take all the flesh you desire from the rest of my body, and then set me free so that I may depart. For my little ones have not yet learned to graze on grass, and they are surely waiting anxiously for my return."

To ensure that no other male elephant mated with this female, the male elephant began to keep a constant, moment-by-moment vigil over her. However, acting with deception, the female would walk very slowly and only rejoin him after a delay of two ghadis (unit of time). In this manner, the frequency of her meetings with him gradually diminished until she began to appear only once every two days; consequently, the male elephant concluded that she must be suffering from an ailment caused by an imbalance of Vayu (wind/air). He wondered, "What, then, can be done?" Thus, the leader of the herd trusted.

Once, sensing that the time for giving birth had arrived— and while the herd leader was away— the female elephant gathered bundles of grass upon her head and made her way to the hermitage of the ascetics. Beholding the female elephant, who approached with the humility of a suppliant seeking refuge, the sages said, "Daughter, dwell here without fear." While residing there, the female elephant gave birth that very day to a calf endowed with auspicious attributes. Leaving her offspring behind in the hermitage, she slowly made her way back to rejoin the herd. She would return periodically to nurse her calf. The young elephant was subsequently raised by the ascetics, who fed him grass and other sustenance; he would often join the ascetics' children in filling his trunk with water to irrigate the trees. For this reason, the ascetics bestowed upon him the name Sechanak (The Sprinkler). In due course, Sechanak grew into a powerful elephant.

On one occasion, Sechanak went to the river to drink water. There, he encountered his father— the leader of the herd— and, after killing him, Sechanak himself assumed the mantle of herd leadership. He then reflected: "My mother, through deceit, beguiled her husband in order to give birth to me and raise me within the sanctuary of the ascetics' hermitage. I must ensure that the ascetics residing there do not facilitate such deception ever again." Harboring these thoughts, the elephant proceeded to demolish the hermitage. Perceiving that "this arrogant elephant is destroying our hermitage," the ascetics went to King Shrenik and recounted the entire story of Sechanak. Consequently, King Shrenik mobilized his army and marched into the forest with the intent of subduing the elephant. No one was able to subdue that elephant whether through deception or by sheer force. Consequently, the King became despondent. Seeing his father distressed, Nandishen, filled with confidence and joy, stepped forward to subdue the elephant himself. Upon seeing Nandishen approach— and having attained Jati Smaran Gyan (knowledge of past lives) after a moment of inner turmoil— Sechanak the elephant recognized their bond from a previous existence and became calm. Nandishen brought the elephant under control and presented it to his father, King Shrenik. The King then designated Sechanak as his Patta-hasti (Royal

State Elephant) and, to express his delight, bestowed upon his son special gifts, including villages and estates.

Meanwhile, Vir Prabhu arrived at the city's royal gardens. Nandishen approached the Lord and asked, "O Lord! How is it that this elephant has developed such deep affection for me?" The Lord then recounted the story of their past lives. Subsequently, King Shrenik and other citizens gathered there to listen to the religious discourse. During the sermon, the Lord said:

"In this world, it is rare for human beings to attain a human birth, a noble lineage and family, physical beauty, a disease-free body, a long life, a sharp intellect, the opportunity to hear the Dharma, the capacity to grasp the Dharma, faith in the Dharma, and the practice of self-restraint."

Hearing these words from the Lord, Nandishen attained spiritual awakening and earnestly requested the Lord to grant him initiation. Then, the Lord said:

"O Child! You still have remaining very potent karmic consequences of worldly enjoyments that act as a veil of your character. Therefore, do not be overly eager to take initiation at this moment."

However, despite the Lord's admonition, Nandishen remained resolute in his desire to take initiation. At that moment, a celestial voice resounded from the heavens, declaring: "Do not take initiation just yet; the karmic consequences of your worldly enjoyments still remain unexhausted." Yet, undeterred even by this divine message, Nandishen proceeded to take initiation. Filled with spiritual joy, he dedicated himself to rigorous ascetic practices— such as the Chhath (two-day fast) and Attham (three-day fast)— and began wandering as an ascetic companion to the Lord. Diligently studying the Sutras and their deeper meanings, cultivating the twelve forms of spiritual contemplation (Bhavanas), and enduring the twenty-two types of physical and mental hardships (Parishahas), Nandishen successfully uprooted and cast aside the tree of karma. As it has been said:

Hunger, thirst, cold, heat, bite(dansh), achelak, arati, woman, conduct(charya), prohibition, bed, anger, killing, begging, lack of profit, disease, touch of grass, filth, hospitality, wisdom, ignorance and right conduct are the twenty-two types of parishahas.

To stop the desire for enjoyment arising from the rise of enjoyment karma, Nandishen started doing severe penance and started taking Atapana. It is said that those who take Atapana in summer, endure the cold by remaining naked in winter and control the senses in rainy season, only they are well-controlled and restrained.

The deity who prevented Nandishen from adopting Charitra tries every day to throw Nandishen Muni into the ocean of enjoyment. Then, to protect his character, Nandishen Muni climbed the mountain and wanted to jump. As he was about to fall, the deity caught him in his hands, placed him somewhere else, and said, "Why are you

trying to die in vain? You will not die without enjoying the fruits of worldly pleasures."

One day, while performing intense penance alone, Nandishen Muni mistakenly entered a prostitute's house for Gochari and uttered the word "dharmalabh." The prostitute said, "What benefit do I get from dharmalabh? I desire happiness through wealth. She is laughing at me." Thinking this, Nandishen Muni pulled a blade of grass with great pride. Then, due to the effect of his penance, twelve crore gems rained down from the sky. Saying, "May you attain happiness through this wealth," Nandishen Muni was about to leave. The prostitute said, "You have conquered extreme gentleness through arduous penance. O my beloved!" Enjoy the pleasures with me, or I will give up my life. Then sage Nandishen thought that the fruits of the pleasures said by the deity remained, so he accepted the prostitute and he undertook a solemn vow that he would take food each day only after delivering a religious discourse, spiritually awakening ten dissolute men, and initiating them into the monastic order. Having renounced his ascetic robes, Nandishen lived with the courtesan, indulging in worldly pleasures, yet faithfully continued his daily practice of spiritually awakening ten individuals and guiding them toward initiation.

Twelve years passed in this manner. One day, when the time for the meal had arrived, the tenth man— a goldsmith— remained unawakened despite his efforts. Having prepared the meal two or three times over, the courtesan finally spoke with a smile: "O Master! Arise and eat. Today, let you become the tenth man!" Upon hearing these words from the courtesan, he instantly cast her aside as if she were a mere blade of grass. He returned to his Guru, accepted right criticism (Samyak Alochana), and accepted initiation. Through the practice of intense asceticism and the subsequent eradication of his karmic bonds, Muni Nandishen attained the supreme bliss of liberation.

The Story of Shri Nandishen Muni Concluded.



5. The Second Nandishen

Any living being who, with a noble spirit, renders service to ascetics accumulates auspicious karma, just as Nandishen did.

In the village of Nandi— a jewel of the Magadh region— there lived a Brahmin named Somil. His wife was named Somila. The couple had a son whom they named Nandishen. While Nandishen was still in his childhood, his parents passed away and ascended to the heavenly realms. Perceiving his physical deformity as a manifestation of inauspicious karma, everyone from the earth to the heavens, even his own kith and kin abandoned him. Consequently, Nandishen took up residence at his maternal uncle's home, where he began performing menial chores, such as fetching fodder and water.

One day, observing his sorrowful nephew's unwavering humility and diligence, his uncle said to him, "Do not despair; I have seven daughters. I shall give one of them to you in marriage." Upon hearing this, Nandishen began to perform his household duties with even greater zeal and enthusiasm. However, when the eldest daughter discovered her father's secret intention to arrange her marriage to Nandishen, she declared to him, "If you give me to Nandishen, I would sooner take my own life." Hearing this, Nandishen became deeply distressed and consumed by anxiety. His uncle then reassured him, saying, "Do not grieve; I shall give you my second daughter instead." The second daughter, however, voiced the same objection to her father as the first; likewise, all the remaining daughters offered similar resistance, leaving Nandishen utterly despondent. Seeing his dejection, his uncle said, "I shall find you a bride from outside the family— the daughter of another man." Thereafter, no matter which maiden his uncle brought forth as a prospective bride, none of them— due to the manifestation of his misfortune and inauspicious karma— could bring themselves to desire him, either in their gaze or in their hearts. Overwhelmed by despair, Nandishen thought to himself, "Why should I remain here any longer? Such is the cruel manifestation of my karma that death is now best for me." With this thought, the despondent Nandishen, imbued with a spirit of renunciation, set out toward the city of Ratnapur. Even there, observing men and women engrossed in worldly pleasures, he reproached himself and wondered, "When shall I ever become as fortunate as they?" Subsequently, Nandishen entered a forest; there, just as he was contemplating ending his life by leaping to his death, a sage immersed in Kayotsarg (meditative posture of detachment) intervened and stopped him. Bowing reverently to the sage, Nandishen inquired about the true nature of his karmas. The sage replied:

"For the sick, a physician is a true friend; for those in power, flatterers serve as friends; for the sorrow-stricken, a sage is a friend; and for the destitute, virtuous qualities are their only friends."

Then, perceiving the state of Nandishen's mind through his divine insight, the sage spoke: "O deluded soul! Do not embrace death merely out of a sense of renunciation born of your physical ugliness; for by dying, no one can ever escape the consequences of the karmas performed in the past." It has been said:

"Even through hundreds or millions of recourses, the karmas one has performed cannot be annihilated. One is inevitably bound to experience the consequences—whether auspicious or inauspicious— of the deeds one has committed."

"Therefore, it is solely by practicing the Dharma (righteous path) as expounded by the Vitarag (the passionless, enlightened one) that an individual can eradicate the karmas accumulated in previous lives. Practice Dharma steadfastly throughout your entire life, for only then shall you attain happiness in your future lives." Inspired and awakened by this spiritual preaching, Nandishen approached the Guru and received initiation into the ascetic order.

Studying the scriptures with profound humility and diligence, Nandishen became Gitarth (attained mastery of the sacred texts). Thereafter, he undertook a solemn vow (Abhigraha): "I shall take of food only after I have completed the Vaiyavachcha (selfless service) of the young, the elderly, and the ailing ascetics." Observing—through his Avadhi-Gyan (clairvoyant knowledge)— Nandishen's unwavering and selfless devotion in serving the ascetics, Sakrendra once declared before his assembly: "Regarding selfless service, there is no one as steadfast and resolute as Nandishen. Even the gods themselves cannot sway him from his sacred vow." Hearing this assertion, a certain deity— skeptical of Indra's words— descended near the city of Ratnapur and assumed the guise of an ailing ascetic. The deity afflicted his own body with a severe case of dysentery. Concealing his first form, by the time he came to Nandishen's ashram, disguised as another monk, Nandishen had already brought alms, returned to the ashram, performed the Iriyavahi Pratikraman, and after crossing the Pachakkhan, was sitting down to eat. The visiting monk said to Nandishen, "O monk! You have taken a vow, then why are you sitting down to eat without performing the sage's Vaiyavachcha?" Nandishen asked the monk, "Where is the distressed monk?" The visiting monk replied, "He is outside the city. Please bring pure water for him. That monk is very thirsty." Then Nandishen went to the homes of the Shravakas, carrying a vessel to collect the clean water. Wherever Nandishen went, that deity polluted the sacred water. Unaware, Nandishen wandered through many houses until, through his own powers, he suddenly overcame the power of the deity and obtained pure water. He then, along with the visiting monk, approached the ailing monk in a garden outside the city. Seeing the monk suffering from diarrhea, he believed that by serving this sage, he would be honored, and proceeded to wash the monk with water. As Nandishen washed and cleaned the monk, the monk expelled foul-smelling feces. Nandishen then thought, "Alas! Despite being fortunate, this monk is suffering from such a disease. Therefore, whether king or pauper, saint or Shakrendra, he is not free from his karma."

Then, carrying the monk on his shoulders, Nandishen set off to take him to the dispensary. The distraught monk, spewing foul-smelling feces every few moments and speaking harsh words, was defiling Nandishen's body with the foul-smelling feces. Yet, Nandishen showed no resentment. When Nandishen began to walk faster, the monk said, "This way, I will die. You have taken a very noble vow, due to which you are acting in such a manner." Then, as Nandishen began to walk slowly, the ailing ascetic spoke up, saying, "If I were to die on the way, I would descend into Durgati (a wretched state of existence). I would not even be able to perform my final spiritual rites." Hearing this, Nandishen somehow managed to carry the ascetic back to the Upashraya (monastic shelter); there, he began to engage in self-reproach, pondering, "How can I restore this ascetic to health?" Observing Nandishen's steadfastness—unwavering as Mount Meru—in the service and care (Vaiyavachcha) of the ascetic, the deity revealed himself. The deity cleansed away the filth and waste, showered flowers upon Nandishen's head, and declared, "You are truly blessed! You are even greater than the description Indra gave of you." Thereafter, the deity paid homage to Muni Nandishen, sought his forgiveness, and returned to the Devlok .

After performing ascetic penance for twelve thousand years, Muni Nandishen once resolved to undertake a fast unto death (Anshan). At that time, a Chakravarti (Universal Emperor)—accompanied by his entire inner retinue—arrived to pay homage to Muni Nandishen, who was then observing Anshan. However, when the hair of the Chakravarti's chief queen (Stree-ratna) touched the Muni, he formed a specific aspiration (Niyana), thinking, "May I, too, become beloved of women." Ultimately—though he had formed this aspiration while mindful of his past karmic impurities—he had resolved: "By the power of this ascetic penance, may I become one who is cherished by women." Upon his passing from that life, his soul was reborn as a deity in the Mahashukra Devlok .

Meanwhile, in the city of Suryapur, Subhadra— the wife of Andhakavrishni— gave birth to nine sons named Samudravijaya, Akshobha, Stamita, Sagar, Himvan, Achal, Dharan, Puran, and Abichandra.

Subsequently, Nandishen's soul descended from the Devlok and was reborn as Subhadra's tenth son, named Vasudeva. Due to the fruition of his Saubhagya Karma (karma of good fortune), he married seventy-two thousand maidens. The detailed account of his life and deeds can be found within the biography of Neminath, as recorded in the Vasudevahindi.

The Story of Shri Nandishen Muni Concludes.



6. Sinhgiri

Since the story of Sinhgiri appears within the story of Vajraswami, it should be understood from that source.



7. Kritpunya Kumar (Kayvanna Seth)

A noble soul who constantly showers gifts and charity, much like Kritpunya, attains the wealth of happiness in both this world and the world hereafter.

The city known as Rajgrih— shining like an ornament upon the broad forehead of the maiden Earth, and resembling the city of the heavens— stood in magnificent splendor. King Shrenik reigned there. He was like the Sun in dispelling the darkness of his enemies, and he governed the Earth unceasingly along the path of righteousness. Residing in that city was an immensely wealthy Dhan Sarthvah named Dhaneshwar. He had a wife named Subhadra, a woman of great beauty who steadfastly upheld the virtues of moral purity.

Through the fruition of past virtues, a son named Kritpunya was born to this merchant in due course. As time passed, Kritpunya grew to manhood and became proficient in all the arts and sciences. His parents arranged Kritpunya's marriage to Dhanya, the daughter of the merchant Shridatt. However, living in company with ascetics, Kritpunya became detached and averse to worldly pleasures. Observing this, his parents grew anxious and thought: "If he were to embrace the ascetic path and take initiation, what would become of our situation?" Therefore, they decided: "Let us place him in the company of a courtesan. There, through his association with actors, libertines, and similar characters, he will surely come to adopt their ways." For it is said:

"If the roots of two trees— such as a mango tree and a neem tree— were to intertwine, even a mango can be ruined through association, becoming as bitter as a neem fruit. "

Thereupon, Dhaneshwar entrusted Kritpunya to a courtesan named Natavi. Under her corrupting influence, Kritpunya became infatuated with the courtesan and even forgot his parents. Becoming particularly enamored with a courtesan named Anangasena, Kritpunya would not leave her side for even a single moment. His parents, too, continued to send vast sums of money to fulfill his extravagant desires. Living in that environment, twelve years passed for him as swiftly as a mere instant.

Meanwhile, back home, both his parents suddenly passed away after being struck by a severe, acute fever. One day, the courtesan sent her maidservant to Kritpunya's house to fetch money. The maidservant arrived there; observing the house to be in a

dilapidated and desolate state, she approached Kritpunya's wife and spoke: "O benevolent lady! Your husband has sent me to you– to inquire after your well-being and to request that you send money immediately."

"Your husband, who resides with my mistress, has dispatched me here to collect money; therefore, please hand over the money. He himself is safe and sound, and he has asked for news regarding the welfare of his home and family." Kritpunya's wife– a virtuous woman named Dhanya, her face beaming with a gentle smile – replied:

"O friend! I accept this command of my husband with the utmost reverence, placing it upon my head. However, with fortune having turned against me, what tidings of 'well-being' can I possibly offer?"

"It was good of you to come here to collect the money, and I have indeed accepted my husband's command with the highest regard; through this act, I feel truly fulfilled today. Yet, alas! Due to my misfortune, both my mother-in-law and father-in-law have departed for the heavenly abode. Out of their boundless affection for their son, they kept sending money until the house was reduced to this very state of ruin. Now, I possess only a single piece of jewelry– a gift from my own father; please take it with you." Taking that ornament, the maidservant reached to Kritpunya. She presented the ornament to him, and recounted the dire state of their household affairs. Deeply distressed, Kritpunya handed the ornament to the courtesan and described to her the full extent of his family's misfortune. At that moment, Akka (the courtesan's mother) whispered furtively that Kritpunya should now be driven away from the premises by any means necessary. Acting upon Akka's orders, a maidservant began flinging dust etc. in his direction. Witnessing this, Anangasena– the courtesan herself– spoke to her mother: "This virtuous Kritpunya has resided here for many years, and we have both consumed a vast amount of his wealth. Why, then, is he being subjected to such humiliation now?" Akka replied, "It is the custom of our profession that a suitor is to be honored only as long as there is wealth in his home and he continues to give; otherwise, he is to be shown no respect." Hearing these words, Kritpunya reflected:

"How can those ordinary women– courtesans– whose thoughts, words, and actions are directed toward three different men, ever be a source of true happiness? Who would kiss the mouth of a courtesan – a mouth tainted by the remnants of meat, reeking of wine, and defiled by the kisses of countless paramours– like a plate of discarded, leftover food? A courtesan – who, out of greed for wealth, views even a leper as if he were the God of Love himself; who feigns affection while harboring no genuine love in her heart– is a woman who must be utterly abandoned."

Having endured the humiliation inflicted upon him by Akka, Kritpunya set out to return to his home. Upon approaching his residence – which now appeared dilapidated and crumbling– he reached the doorway. Seeing her husband arrive, his wife, Dhanya, was filled with joy; taking a water-filled pitcher in her hands, she stepped forward to welcome him and assist him in washing his hands and face. Kritpunya then washed his hands, feet, and face with the water she offered, and stepped inside the house and

upon the seat offered by his wife. Thereafter, his wife prepared the meal. Following this, Kritpunya bathed, worshipped the Jineshvar in the temple with exquisite flowers, praised him with hymns, and then took his meal. His wife, Dhanya, then recounted to her husband, Kritpunya, the entire history of their household. Upon hearing this, he reflected: "Alas! I am the foremost among the unfortunate, for I have brought no happiness to my parents. Of what use, then, is a son such as I?" It has been said:

What is the benefit of having a multitude of sons who merely cause grief and anguish? Far superior is a single son— the true lamp of the lineage— who brings peace and solace to the family. Only those who foster the growth of righteousness among their kinsmen and enhance their father's renown truly deserve the title of 'son'; others, who merely follow their own whims, are no better than enemies. A sugarcane field, a bamboo grove, a banana tree, and a poisonous tree— all meet their destruction once they bear fruit. In the same manner, a wicked son brings about the ruin of his lineage.

"I have cast my father into an unfathomable ocean of sorrow and have squandered the wealth that my father had accumulated over generations." Hearing this, his wife said: "Do not grieve. Whatever is destined to happen, happens." It has been said:

Wise men should not lament the loss of any possession; rather, they should focus their thoughts upon the future, while conducting themselves in accordance with the demands of the present moment. Karma alone reigns supreme; what power do even the most auspicious planets possess against it? For even though the sage Vashistha had selected an auspicious moment for his coronation, Rama was nonetheless compelled to depart for the forest.

Thus, upon hearing these words from his wife, Kritpunya regained his composure and casting aside his grief, he lived at home in a state of inner peace. In due course, while experiencing the joys of conjugal life with his wife, she conceived.

One day, Kritpunya confided in his wife, saying, "There is no sinner quite like me; for, owing to my birth, my parents suffered great sorrow and eventually met their demise. I have squandered our entire fortune. Now, without capital, it is impossible even to engage in trade." As the saying goes:

"Just as agriculture is impossible without seeds and water, so too can wealth not be amassed without initial capital."

His wife replied, "O my Lord! Do not despair.

Please accept these one thousand dinars that remain in my possession— a modest sum, perhaps, but to me, it feels like a fortune— and thereby do me a kindness.

I have one thousand gold dinars with me; use them to conduct your trade." Thus, on an auspicious day, having procured a small quantity of highly valuable merchandise, Kritpunya— intending to travel eastward— set out to join a large merchant caravan. That night, his wife settled him onto a bed within a temple shrine, and from there, she returned to her own home.

Meanwhile, in that same city, there lived an exceedingly wealthy merchant named Dhandev. His wife's name was Rupavati. As a result of their virtuous deeds, a son named Jindatt was born to them. In the course of time, after her husband passed away, Rupavati arranged for the marriage of Jindatt— who was well-versed in religious duties— to the four daughters of prominent merchants. While living a life of luxury and indulgence with his wives, Jindatt suddenly met his death one night. Thereupon, the elderly Rupavati summoned all her daughters-in-law and addressed them thus: "Your husband has died. If the King were to learn of this— and observing that you have borne no children— he would confiscate our entire wealth. Therefore, none of you must weep. We must secretly bury the corpse in the ground so that no one may ever know it. Until you bear a son by another husband, I, too, shall not weep." Thereupon, the daughters-in-law buried the bodies of their husbands in the earth, performed their ritual ablutions, and proceeded to the caravan encampment situated near the shrine. There, they discovered Kritpunya fast asleep. Gently rousing him from his slumber, they lifted him gently to their home and addressed him, saying, "O Husband! May you attain victory and glory for a long time to come!"

At that moment, the elderly Rupavati – gazing upon her four daughters-in-law— cast aside all inhibition; she embraced Kritpunya affectionately and spoke thus: "O Son! Forsaking the boundless maternal love of your mother, where did you go, and where have you been dwelling all these days? I— who am now destitute and burdened by a curse— am indeed your mother; harbor no doubt regarding this. O Son! No sooner had you been born than a wicked sinner abducted you."

Having spoken thus, the elderly woman continued:

"At this moment, I am overwhelmed with grief due to the calamity that has befallen your elder brother, yet I am filled with joy by virtue of your good fortune.

Just as rivers flow into the fathomless ocean, so too have these wives of your brother— along with immense wealth— come to stand before you.

O Son! From this day forth, do not venture elsewhere; remain here of your own free will. Enjoy the pleasures of worldly life in the company of these daughters-in-law." Upon hearing this, Kritpunya wondered to himself, "Is this merely a dream? Or— given the manner in which this elderly woman has welcomed me here— has the bliss of paradise itself manifested before me?"

Reflecting thus, Kritpunya replied, "O Mother! I had indeed forgotten all these matters; yet, now that I have arrived here, I know it is solely due to the fruition of my own meritorious deeds." Having spoken these words, he once again fell into deep contemplation:

"The union with wealth, and the union with beautiful women— these two unions have appeared before me from the heavens, much like a Swayamvara, why should I harbor any doubts or hesitation regarding these things?

"O Mother! Your command is as sublime as the command of the gods. I shall strive with all my might to uphold it, for it is the source of happiness in both this world and the hereafter."

In due course, all four daughters-in-law conceived and bore four sons; a grand celebration was held to mark their birth. Twelve years passed blissfully while Kritpunya resided there.

One day, the elderly woman remarked, "Since all four of you have now borne sons, the King will no longer have any claim to our wealth. Therefore, take this man back to the very place from which you brought him and leave him there." The daughters-in-law replied, "O Mother! How could we possibly abandon the very man who has been the source of our prosperity and good fortune?" The elderly woman countered, "Such is the nature of men: what if, one day, he were to seize our wealth by force? What would then become of our plight?" Thus, she compelled the four women to prepare themselves to take him back and abandon him there against his will. On the journey, the four women prepared four sweet modaks for him to eat, concealing a precious gem inside each one. They tied these four modaks securely into the garments of the sleeping Kritpunya; subsequently, the elderly woman had her maidservants carry him back and leave him at the exact spot from where he had originally been brought.

At that very moment, that same merchant caravan— having traveled through the eastern lands for twelve years— arrived back at that same location. Kritpunya's wife heard news of the caravan's arrival and hastened to the spot. Upon finding her husband asleep, she stood patiently by his side until he awoke; when he finally stirred, he was overjoyed to see his wife. Thereafter, accompanied by his wife, Kritpunya returned to his own home. With deep devotion, his wife provided him delicious food and drink, and told her husband about the birth of a son. The wife asked, "My lord, what have you brought?" He replied, "Due to the sins of my previous life, I have earned nothing." But out of shame, he said nothing. The husband placed the four modaks he had brought in a vessel.

One morning, the son returned from school for lunch. He took the modak given by his mother and went to school. Upon eating the modak, a unique stone emerged from within. Seeing the stone, the boy told the other students that this unique stone would be useful for cleaning Pattika (plate). He took the stone to a confectioner's house to clean his Pattika. While cleaning his Pattika, the stone suddenly fell from his hand into a vessel filled with water, causing the water to split. Seeing the water, the confectioner thought it was a very valuable Jalakant gem(water-dividing gem). Thinking that it would be better if I take this gem by giving this boy any food item, the confectioner gave him two delicious modaks and cheated him and took the stone. Then the son of Kritpunya was happy after eating those two modaks and after cleaning the Pattika with the other stone, he went to school. The confectioner kept that stone hidden.

One day, King Shrenik's elephant named Sechnak, while drinking water and bathing in the river Ganga, was stopped by a crocodile and could not come out. Despite many

efforts, the elephant was not able to come out of the water. Then King Shrenik along with his minister Abhaykumar came there. Even after the king tried a lot, the elephant did not come out. Then, when the king became sad, the wise Abhaykumar remarked that the crocodile had seized the elephant; he suggested that if a Jalakant Mani were cast into the water near the elephant, the crocodile would retreat into the depths. Consequently, the King ordered that the Jalakant Mani be fetched from the royal treasury. However, upon inspecting the treasury, Abhay kumar reported, "O Sovereign! The Jalakant Mani is not to be found in the treasury." Thereupon, a royal proclamation was issued throughout the city: "Whosoever brings forth a Jalakant Mani shall be rewarded with half the kingdom and the hand of my daughter." Acting upon the King's command, royal servants traversed the city, beating their drums at various public squares; in the course of their rounds, they arrived near the home of the confectioner. At that moment, the confectioner stepped forward and touched the royal drum. The royal officials then escorted the confectioner into the King's presence; the King was delighted by this turn of events and, accompanied by a large retinue, proceeded to the banks of the river. There, the confectioner brought the Jalakanta Mani and placed it into the water, whereupon the waters parted into two distinct halves. Consequently, the crocodile retreated into the depths, and the elephant was liberated. Witnessing this spectacle, a joyous symphony of drums, trumpets, mridangas, and various other musical instruments erupted, and the King was filled with elation. The King bestowed great honors upon the confectioner, who, in turn, was overjoyed. Thereafter– to the accompaniment of resounding music– the King (seated atop the royal elephant, Sechanak), along with Abhaykumar and the confectioner (both mounted on horses), returned to the royal palace, distributing various forms of alms to supplicants along the way. Within the palace, the King once again honored the confectioner, who then took his gem and returned to his own home.

Subsequently, the King summoned Abhaykumar privately and asked, "How can I possibly give my daughter, Manorama– who is worthy of a prince– in marriage to a mere confectioner?" Abhaykumar replied, "O Master! Do not be distressed. Through the exercise of my intellect, I shall ascertain the true owner of this gem. Thus, whatever outcome is most pleasing to your heart shall surely come out." He reasoned that a gem as rare and magnificent as the Jalakant Mani could not possibly be found in the home of a man of such humble caste– a confectioner– but must surely belong to one of the Shreshthis of Rajgrih. As it is said:

"Nectar resides within the Moon; boundless radiance resides within the Sun; the treasury of gems resides within the Ocean; and the grove of Kalpavrikshas (wish-fulfilling trees) resides upon Mount Meru. Planets are in the sky, the Airavat elephant is in heaven, sweetness is in the language of the gods, the Chakra gem is in the home of the Chakravarti; none of these things exist anywhere else on Earth.

Gems are found only on Mount Rohanachal or in the ocean, elephants are found only in Vindhya, nowhere else.

Similarly, the finest things and gems on Earth are found only with the king, the merchants, or the ministers' homes, nowhere else. Therefore, this gem belongs to any merchant, and you shall give your daughter along with half the kingdom to the one who owns it. Hearing this, the king was delighted. Abhaykumar sent his own men to call the confectioner, saying that he would give half his kingdom along with his daughter. They went there and said that the king was calling him and he would give half his kingdom along with his daughter. Hearing this, the confectioner and his relatives were delighted. Then the confectioner, dressed in fine clothes, came to the king's palace. Abhaykumar greeted him with respect and asked where he had obtained the gem. He replied, "This gem has been in my house since the time of my ancestors." Then Abhaykumar summoned his servants, whom he had previously trained, and ordered them to give him the daughter along with half the kingdom. Hearing this, the royal men, inspired by Abhaykumar, struck him with a stick so hard that he instantly became motionless and like a log. A moment later, recovering, Abhaykumar told the confectioner, "Tell me the truth, where did you get this gem? If you don't tell the truth, consider your death certain by the blows of the stick." Fearing death, the confectioner recounted the process of obtaining the gem, from beginning to end.

Fearing death, the confectioner told Abhaykumar the true story. Abhay believed it all, because the mountain of gold, Mount Meru, and the Kalpavriksha exists nowhere other than in the Devlok .

Thereupon, acting upon Abhaykumar's words, the King bestowed half of his kingdom— along with his daughter Manorama— upon Kritpunya. Next, in accordance with the King's command, Abhaykumar arranged for the confectioner to receive a village, along with a maiden born into a confectioner's lineage; for a word spoken by the King never goes in vain. Seating Kritpunya— accompanied by his wife Manorama— upon a magnificent elephant, Abhaykumar sent them home amidst the joyous accompaniment of musical instruments. The people then began to remark: "Just as Kamdev is graced by Rati or Priti, Indra by Shachi, Krishna by Lakshmi, and Shankar by Gauri, so too is Kritpunya now graced by Manorama." Thereafter, a bond of deep affection formed between Abhay kumar and Kritpunya— much like that which exists between the Moon and the Ocean, or between the Lotus and the Sun.

On one occasion, in a private moment, Kritpunya confided in Abhaykumar regarding the circumstances of his four wives and the four sons born of them. He said, "O Chief Minister!" Four wives, along with four sons, reside right here in this very city; yet, I know not the location of their home." Abhaykumar was astonished. "How is this possible?" he asked. "You do not recognize the very house where you lived for twelve years— the very house where your four sons were born? What manner of cleverness is this? Oh! Truly, your cleverness is extraordinary!" Hearing this, Kritpunya replied, "That elderly woman had carried me away to her home while I lay asleep, and returned me to this spot while I was still slumbering. For twelve long years, she kept me confined within that house, on the seventh floor." Abhaykumar then inquired, "Did the sons you had there recognize you, or did they not?" Kritpunya replied, "Those

sons would often tug at my mustache with their little hands, and frequently, sitting upon my lap, they would call out to me, 'Father! Father!'" Abhaykumar then asked, "Do you recognize those four wives of yours, or do you not?" Kritpunya affirmed, "Yes, I do recognize them." Abhaykumar then declared, "I shall reveal the whereabouts of those four wives, along with their sons."

Thereupon, Abhaykumar commissioned the construction of a grand palace featuring two entrances. Entering the palace through one door and exiting through another. Abhaykumar then installed a statue of a Yaksha resembling Kritpunya in the palace and announced that any woman who came with all her children, carrying five modaks each, bowed to the Yaksha, and exited through the other door would be blessed by their family. Those who did not, would die. Therefore, everyone should come on the coming Chaturdashi. Then, on the fourteenth day, Abhaykumar, along with Kritpunya, arrived and sat near the palace. All the women of the city, carrying their children and plates of modaks, entered the palace through one door, placed the modaks, bowed to the Yaksha, and then exited through the other.

The old woman, along with her four daughters-in-law and their four sons, came to the palace to pay their respects to the Yaksha. Kritpunya then said that this was the old woman. While the old woman and her daughters-in-law placed the plate of sweets and bowed to the Yaksha, the four sons approached him (Yaksha).

With eyes brimming with joy, the four sons began to climb onto the Yaksha's lap, calling out, "Father, Father." Some of them grabbed his moustache, some his hand, some his stomach, and some his head. Then Abhaykumar arrived and told Kritpunya, "These are your four sons and your four wives." Abhay sent his servants after them, and upon finding their address, they went to their homes. Through Abhaykumar's wisdom, Kritpunya received all four wives, sons, and wealth. And Anangsenā, the prostitute, also accepted Kritpunya, thus he got seven wives.

Once, the world's revered Lord Shri Vir Prabhu arrived at Vaibharagiri, enlightening the illustrious and majestic beings. At that time King Shrenik, Abhaykumar, Kritpunya, and their families went to pay homage to the Lord, the Lord delivered a discourse as follows:

"Religion bestows wealth upon those who desire it, fulfillment of desires upon those who seek it, good fortune upon those who yearn for it, sons upon those who wish for them, and a kingdom upon those who aspire to rule. Through myriad options, what is there that this religion does not grant to living beings? Indeed, it is this very religion that grants even the realms of heaven and the ultimate liberation— Moksha."

Upon the conclusion of the discourse, Kritpunya folded his hands and humbly asked the Lord: "O Lord! By virtue of which karmas accumulated in my previous life have I experienced alternating periods of prosperity and adversity in this present existence?" Lord Vir replied: "In a previous life, you were a cowherd named Gopal residing in the city of Shripur. One day, feeling despondent due to your wretched circumstances, you

observed that Kheer (sweet rice pudding) was being prepared in every household. You then turned to your mother and pleaded, 'Mother, give me some Kheer!' Weeping bitterly, your mother replied, 'O my son! There is absolutely nothing to eat in our home; how, then, can I possibly give you Kheer?'

'There is no grain in the house, no water, no lentils, no sugar; neither is there any rice nor salt. Of all these essentials, what exactly do we possess here that could be prepared as food?'

Subsequently, witnessing the mother and her child weeping in distress, the neighbors came forward and offered them rice, milk, sugar, and other ingredients. With these items, the mother prepared the Kheer. After serving a plate of the Kheer to her son, she stepped out due to some work at a neighbor's house.

Meanwhile – on the day of Parana of Maskshamana (a month-long fast)– two ascetic monks arrived there in search of alms. Upon beholding these two monks– frail of body yet rich in spiritual conduct– you were filled with profound reverence and thought to yourself:

'Today, my life has truly found its fulfillment; today is a day of supreme auspiciousness for me. This very hour, this very moment, is exquisitely beautiful, for today two noble ascetics have graced my home with their presence. By offering food to these revered monks, I shall attain the ultimate blessedness.'

Then, with a joyful heart, Gopal rose from his seat, bowed down to the sages, and spoke: "My fortune has truly blossomed by the touch of your feet upon this ground, O revered Sages; please accept this pure offering of food." Thereafter, having offered a portion of the Kheer (sweet rice pudding) to the sages, you thought to yourself: "What sustenance could they possibly derive from such a meager amount of kheer?" Consequently, you offered them a second portion, and in succession, a third portion as well; thus, you served the kheer to the sages on three separate occasions. Later, after both sages had departed, your mother served you the kheer once again. With the passage of time, Gopal passed away; that same soul was then reborn as you– Kritpunya. Because you made offerings to the sages in three portions, you have experienced intermittent periods of happiness throughout your life. Upon hearing the account of his past life, Kritpunya was filled with a sense of detachment (vairagya); entrusting the responsibilities of his household to his eldest son and having distributed his wealth across the seven fields of charity, he took initiation under the guidance of Lord Vir Prabhu and subsequently attained the blissful pleasures of the Devlok. From there, upon the completion of his celestial existence, he shall proceed to attain final liberation (Moksha).

The story of Shri Kritpunya, illustrating the virtue of making offerings to worthy recipients, concluded.



8. Sukoshal Muni

The soul that endures afflictions caused by creatures such as tigers and lions attains liberation, just like the great ascetic Sukoshal.

In times past, within the Ikshvaku dynasty of the city of Ayodhya, there reigned a King named Kirtidhar, who governed his kingdom with justice and righteousness. He had a wife named Sahdevi. In due course, a son named Sukoshal was born to them. As he grew up, he diligently studied the scriptures of Dharma (righteousness) and Karma (ethics).

Once, while wandering on his spiritual journey, Dharmasuri arrived in that region. The King went there to listen to his religious discourse, and the Guru delivered his sermon in the following manner:

"The person who, despite having attained birth in a noble land, a distinguished lineage, physical beauty, strength, longevity, intellect, and the rare privilege of human birth— yet fails to practice Dharma— is destined to drown in the ocean of worldly existence, just as a ship sinks in the depths of the sea.

One should practice Dharma while there is still time— before the infirmities of old age begin to inflict suffering, before physical ailments multiply within the body, and before the sensory faculties begin to deteriorate. The allure of worldly pleasures and sensual objects can only hold sway over the wicked men; it cannot subjugate the virtuous men. For just as a mosquito can be bound by a mere thread, an elephant cannot be bound in such a manner.

When a man is afflicted by old age, his body shrivels, his gait becomes sluggish, his teeth fall out, his vision dims, his physical appearance undergoes a drastic change, and saliva begins to drool from his mouth. His kith and kin cease to converse with him, his wife no longer attends to his needs, and even his own sons begin to neglect him. In essence, old age is an extremely sorrowful and agonizing state."

Human life is transient as the hues of the twilight sky, and ephemeral as a bubble upon the water and youth is as transient as a drop of water and as swift and impetuous as the current of a river. O sinful souls! Why, then, do you still fail to awaken?

Upon hearing such a religious discourse, King Kirtidhar, filled with a profound sense of spiritual detachment, installed his son Sukoshal upon the throne while the boy was still in his childhood, and subsequently embraced initiation. Muni Kirtidhar mastered the Sutras and their underlying meanings; having fully adopted the rigorous vows and conduct of a true ascetic, he set out on his spiritual wanderings. Driven by maternal affection, Sukoshal's mother had his row of teeth inlaid with gold. As Sukoshal grew

to manhood, whenever he would recall his father, his mother would invariably recount the alleged faults and shortcomings of her husband, Kirtidhar.

On one occasion, Muni Kirtidhar arrived in the city of Ayodhya to break his Chhath (six-day fast) and accept alms. Upon seeing her husband— now an ascetic— Sahdevi thought: "If my son sees his father, he will undoubtedly renounce the world and embrace initiation; therefore, I must have this ascetic expelled from the city." Consequently, ensuring that her son Sukoshal remained unaware of the plot, Sahdevi instructed her servants to humiliate her ascetic husband and forcibly drive him out of the city. Witnessing her master, Kirtidhar, being expelled from the city, Dhatri (nursemaid) revealed the entire incident to Sukoshal. Thereupon, Sukoshal went to Muni Kirtidhar, bowed reverently before him, and implored him to enter the city. Muni Kirtidhar replied, "I shall not enter the city at this time, for there is a likelihood that I would face spiritual tribulations and harassment there." Hearing this, and realizing the humiliation his mother had inflicted upon his ascetic father, Sukoshal renounced his kingdom— regarding it as no more significant than a blade of grass— and received initiation from his father. Thereafter, Sukoshal wandered alongside his father, and both ascetics engaged in intense and rigorous penance. Sahdevi, consumed by the anguish of separation from her husband and son, died while steeped in Aartdhyān (sorrowful contemplation) and was subsequently reborn as a tigress in the forest.

Once, while wandering on their spiritual journey, the two sages arrived at the place where the tigress resided. Upon seeing the tigress approaching them, Sage Kirtidhar suggested that they take a different path. However, mustering his courage, Sage Sukoshal chose to proceed along that very path while observing a vow of fasting; consequently, the tigress attacked and tore him apart. At that moment, through the power of supreme meditation, all his karmas were annihilated, and the sage attained Keval Gyan, ascending to liberation (Moksha) immediately thereafter. Meanwhile, upon beholding Sage Sukoshal's row of teeth, the tigress— who was at that moment in a state of bewilderment— attained Jati Smaran Gyan (knowledge of past lives). Through this knowledge, recognizing him as her own son, the tigress was overcome with remorse; condemning her own heinous act, she passed away and was reborn in the Sahasrar Devalok. Kirtidhar Muni, too, subsequently attained Keval Gyan and ascended to the abode of liberation.

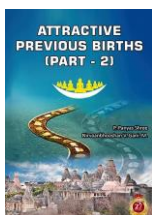
The Story of Sukoshal Muni Concludes.



Some Books Edited / Translated / Written By P. Panyas Shree Nirvaanbhooshan V. Gani M.

1.

Attractive Previous Births- Part-2



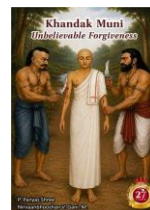
No. of pgs.: 81

Published:2026

This book is a collection of 30 previous births, explained in a lucid manner.

2.

'Khandak Muni – Unbelievable Forgiveness



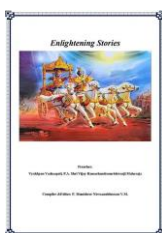
No. of pgs.: 18

Published:2026

To know the height of forgiveness, read 'Khandak Muni– Unbelievable Forgiveness

3.

Enlightening Stories



No. of pgs.: 140

This book is a collection of small stories, narrated by world's best preacher. This book will enlighten your whole life, family, nation, continent & world. How? To get this answer, read 'Enlightening Stories'.

4.

Children's Stories



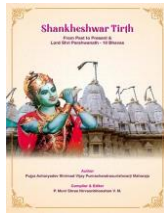
No. of pgs.: 36

Published:2025

This book will inspire children for adopting honesty, generosity, modesty, human values, etc., in their lives. How? To get this answer, read 'Children's Stories'.

5.

Shankheshwar Tirth From Past to Present & Lord Shri Parshwanath – 10 Bhavas



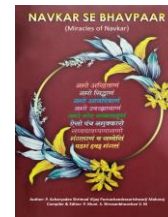
No. of pgs.: 72

Published:2025

How Krishna achieved magical idol of Lord Shri Parshwanath? Why the town was named 'Shankheshwar'? To get the answer and to know about past lives of Lord Shri Parshwanath, read this book.

6.

Miracles of Navkar



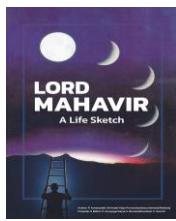
No. of pgs.: 64

Coming Soon

This book is a collection of 16 miraculous incidents. It will help readers to know the magical powers of 'Navkar', in their life also.

7.

Lord Mahavir – A Life Sketch



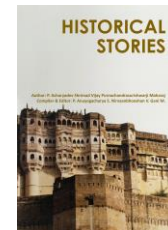
No. of pgs.: 54

Coming Soon

This book is a collection of the main events of 27 Bhavas of Lord Shri Mahavir swami. It will inspire new generation for adopting morality, honesty, human values and Jain religion in their lives.

8.

Historical Stories



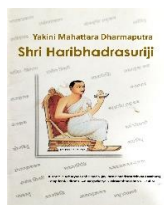
No. of pgs.: 64

Coming Soon

23 historical events are depicted in a very simple and lucid style, which will inspire new generation for adopting moral values.

9.

Shri Haribhadradasuriji



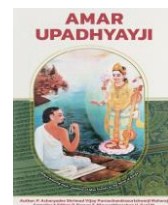
No. of pgs.: 54

Coming Soon

How a brahmin scholar, who hated Jainism, not only became devoted but also the top-most leader of Jainism? To know this, read 'Shri Haribhadradasuriji Maharaj'.

10.

Amar Upadhyayji

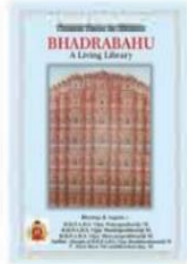


No. of pgs.: 72

Coming Soon

Read this book to know how to become 'World's Best Teacher'.

Books



Bhadrabahu

(Multicolor Pictorial Story Book)

This book is a collection of pictorial stories on Acharya Bhadrabahu, to educate children on Jain values and practices for self-development and leading a better life.

No. of Pages: 16

Published: 2023

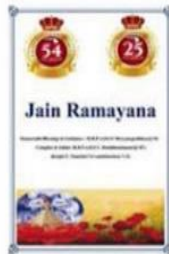


Golden Path Towards Nirvaan

This booklet explains many key terms like 'Dharma', 'Atma', 'Sin', 'Samyak Darshan', 'god', 'guru' etc., and their significance from the point of view of Jain religion.

No. of Pages: 56

Published: 2023



Jain Ramayan

(Multicolor Pictorial Story Book)

This book is a collection of small stories on different characters of the era of Lord Ram, from the perspective of Jainism. Reading this book will inculcate high moral and cultural values among the present generation.

No. of Pages: 200

Published: 2023



Maynasundari

(Multicolor Pictorial Story Book)

This story book gives knowledge of Jain values to children through interesting pictorial stories on a famous Jain character Maynasundari. Reading this book will cultivate and develop high moral values among kids and teenagers.

No. of Pages: 25

Published: 2023

Books



Chicago Prashnottar

This book Includes Questions and Answers on Jainism for the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago 7U.S.A. in 1893. It will help readers know the eternal truths of Jainism.

No. of Pages: 214

Published: 2018

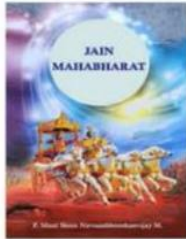


Our Great Persons

This book is a collection of small stories of great Jain persons in order to inspire new generation for adopting morality, human values, Jain religion and culture in their lives.

No. of Pages: 25

Published: 2023

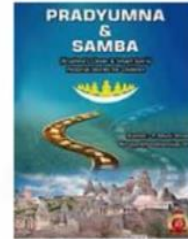


Jain Mahabharat

This book is a collection of small stories on different characters Kaurava and Pandavas, from the perspective of Jainism. Reading this book will inculcate high moral and cultural influencer for present generation.

No. of Pages: 165

Published : 2024



Pradyumna & Shamba

This book is all about Krishna's clever sons - Pradyumna & Shamba. Read this book to know more.

No. of Pages: 20

Published : 2024

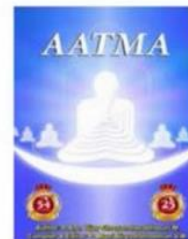


Life Changer

This book will change your life, how? To get this answer, read this book "Life Changer".

No. of Pages: 40

Published : 2024



Aatma

This book gives you knowledge in order to attain moksha (liberation), a human being must acquire self-knowledge (Atma Gyaan or Brahmajnana).

No. of Pages: 120

Coming Soon

About the Compiler

The compiler Puja **Panyas Shree Nirvaanbhooshanvijayji G. Maharaja**, before monkhood was studying in Jai-Hind college, (Mumbai), one of the top most college of India. Though staying in Walkeshwar, one of the richest areas of India, left all the comforts & luxuries, to achieve high level of spirituality. When he was a teen-ager boy, influenced by the western culture started hating, not only Indian cultures & traditions but Jain religion also. He often went to Jain upashray, just to listen & read Jain stories. This also, helped him to give up his dream of going to abroad. Stories became a turning point in his life. After becoming monk, once he was suggested by his preacher, Guru **H.H.P.A.D. Shrimadvijay Hembhushansurisaraji Maharaja**, to make his English powerful.

He was too obedient to follow each & every order of his Guru. Hence, he was given responsibility of giving 'pravachans' to children & teen-agers, during sanskar-shreni in just one year after attaining monkhood. Due to the grace of Guru-Bhagawants, he achieved mastery in English also. He gave many 'pravachans' created several poems e.t.c. in English also. He became able of compiling books & translating pravachan in English. He also helped his Guru M. in translating case papers of sammet-shikharji, Antarikshji e.t.c. He has a mastery of converting hearts of children, teen agers & young stars too. We have also experienced in our life. He brought us, near to Jainism.

We hope this story which is written in simple & lucid language, would help children, teen agers etc. to study Jainism, who are facing language barriers.

Ketanbhai (C.A.), Hemang (C.A.)
Sagar (C.A.), Jinal (C.A.)
Arham. Aarya, Vinaybhai
Devangbhai

