

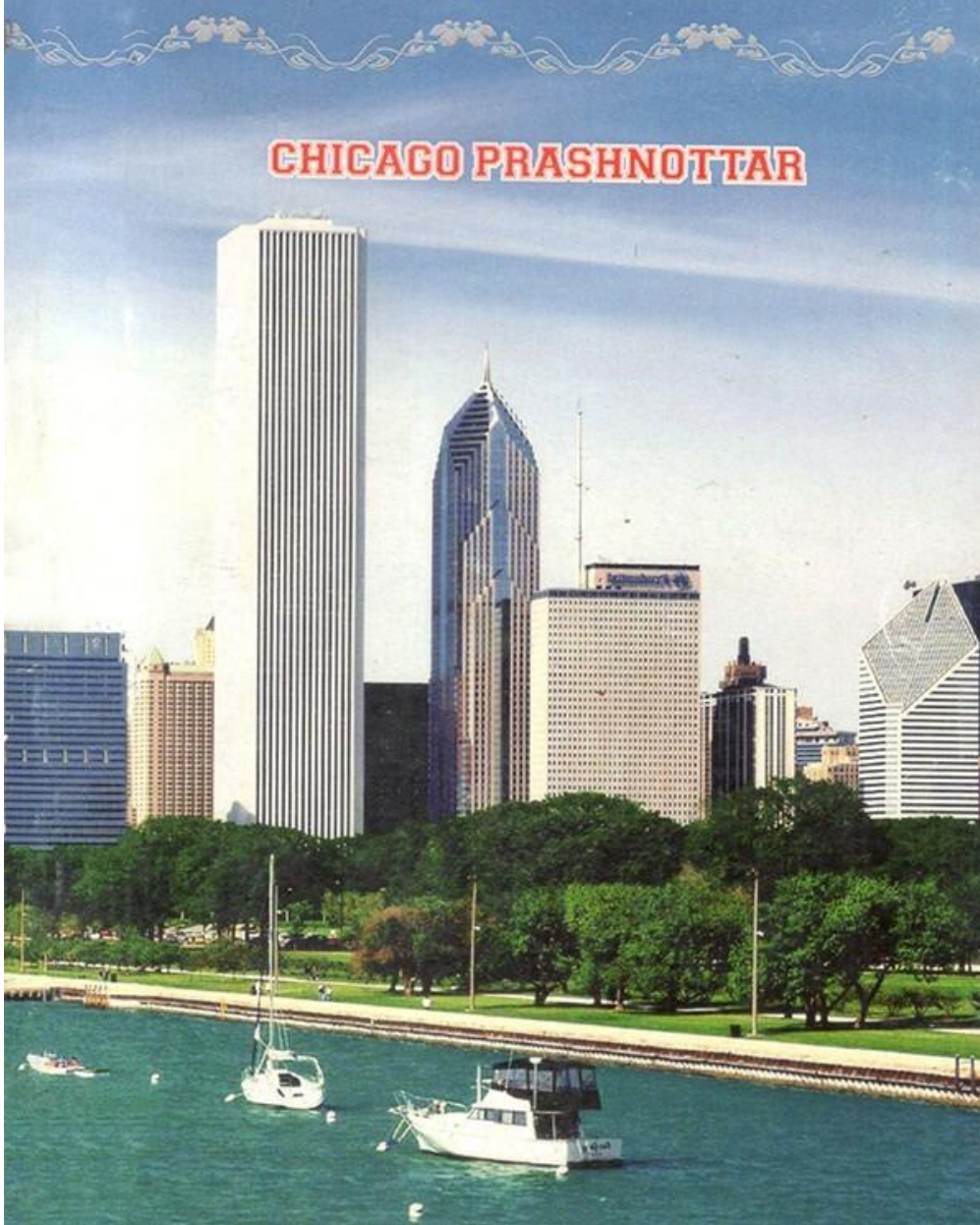
THE  
*Chicago-Prashnottar*

OR

Questions and Answers on Jainism for the Parliament of Religions held at  
Chicago U.S.A. in 1893

BY

**LATE MAHAMUNI SHRIMAT VIJAYANANDSURI**



**P. MUNI S. NIRVAANBHOOSHANVIJAY M.**

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## \* Golden Path Towards 'Nirvaan' \*

1. Vijayanandsuri a great name.  
He never expected any fame.  
Sthaanakavasis put a blame.  
He made Mohaniya- Kar ma, a lame.
2. He was an intelligent orator.  
He studied Sanskrit grammar.  
He became clever preacher.  
He was a real teacher.
3. People remember for works he did.  
Chicago Prashnottar was wonderful indeed.  
Ramchandrasuri loved his deeds.  
Punjab was fertilized by his seeds.
4. He was never in tension.  
He didn't lose attention.  
He never felt irritation.  
He took least medication.

5. His brilliant guru **Buddhivijayji**,  
He was the best **Tapasvi**.  
He wanted to sail the sansar – **sea**.  
For opening ‘Aagams’ he was like a master **key**.
6. He made 15,000 people **jains**,  
His Pravachan was like ‘Pushkaraavart **rain**’.  
Among Aachaaryas he was the **main**’,  
He had excellent - brilliant **brain**.
7. At **Gunjranwala** chanting arihant **Dhun**,  
He left this world **so soon**.  
He was cool like **moon**,  
He will achieve **‘Nirvaan boon’**.

**M. Nirvaanbhushan Vijay M.**

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BY

**LATE MAHAMUNI SHRIMAT VIJAYANANDSURI**

TRANSLATED & PUBLISHED

BY

SHRI ATMANAND JAIN PUSTAK PRACHARAK MANDAL, ROSHAN MOHALLA,  
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500 copies.

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book was originally published in 1905 with an introduction in Hindi by Lala Jaswant Rai Jaini of Lahore, and although the Hindi edition has met, in an ample measure, the needs of the Hindi knowing public interested in the religion of the Jains, it has proved to be of little use to English educated men – more specifically to the people of Chicago and other places in America interested in Jainism, at whose request and for whose benefit the book was written by the distinguished author on the occasion of the World's Parliament of religions at Chicago. Moreover, there is at present a growing desire among western scholars to know more of Jainism and its tenets, and to them the Hindi edition is of little use. In order to meet these requirements and to make known to the western world the eternal truths of Jainism which occupies a high place among the ancient religions of the world, we have ventured, with the permission of the publisher of the Hindi edition, to bring out this English translation of the book and trust that it will be favourably received by the public.

We are greatly indebted to Babu Kannoo Mal, M. A., for the considerable trouble he has taken in translating this book from Hindi and to Babu Chand Mal, B.A. LL.B., Agra, for the pains taken by him in correcting the proofs.

Our thanks are, in no little measure, due to Seth Chunnilal Pannalal Jeweller, Bombay, for the generous pecuniary help he has so kindly given us in bringing out this English edition of the book.

*Shri Atmanand Jain Pustak Pracharak Mandal. Roshan Mohalla, AGRA.*

## **A short account of the life of Shrimat Vijayanandsuri – popularly known as Shri Atmaramji**

Twenty-two years have gone by since the death of Shri Vijayanandsuri, the well-known Jain Sadhu of the Shwetambar sect. He was born in the village of Lahara, District Firozpur (Punjab) on the first of Chaitra Shukla in Vikram year 1893. He was a Brahma Kshotriya by caste. His father's name was Ganeshchandra and mother's, Rupdevi. He lost his father in early childhood and was brought up by his mother. He was given in charge of Seth Jodhmal of Jira (Punjab) for education in Vikram year 1903.

He studied Hindi and Arithmetic. At times he used to visit Sthanakvasi Sadhus of the place and began to study about religion. In Vikrama 1910, he was initiated as a Sthanakvasi Sadhu. His intellect was keen: he used to commit to memory 100 verses a day. He had learnt the Shastras from the Sthanakvasi Sadhus but he began to entertain doubts as regards the interpretation as given by them. Fortunately, he began to study Sanskrit Grammar and other philosophical and logical works with a Pandit.

He fearlessly gave up the Sthanakvasi doctrine and came to Ahmedabad in V. year 1932. He was initiated as a Shwetambar Sadhu by Buddhivijayji, a Jain Sadhu of the place. In the V. year 1943, he went to Palitana, Kathiawar, and stayed there for four months during the rainy season. Here he was given the title of 'Acharya' by the Sangha; and from that time, he was called by the name of Shri Vijayanandsuri.

Then he travelled on foot from Gujarat to the Punjab. During the travel he brought to light the hidden Jain Literature. The Jain Bhandars of different places of Rajputana were examined by him. He got many old important manuscripts fairly copied out.

For many years he lived in the Punjab. His fame spread through the different parts of the country. Many people of other sects came and discussed with him on matters of religion. He answered their arguments in a mild, courteous and dispassionate manner. His tone was inspiring, and the listeners were at times astonished at his peculiar tact of answering the questions. His ideas were liberal. He was serene and calm of disposition.

Many questions on Jainism were put to him by Dr. A. F. Rudolf Hoernele through Maganlal Dalpatram in the Vikram year 1945. Dr. Hoernele was greatly satisfied with the answers. He wrote to Maganlal in 1888, "Please convey to the latter (Muni Maharaj) the expression of my thanks for the great trouble he has taken to reply so promptly and so fully to my questions. His answers were satisfactory." In the introduction of the Upasakdasanga, which Dr. Hoernele has edited and translated, he writes, "For some of this information I am indebted to Muni Maharaj Atmaramji, Anandvijayji, the well-known and highly respected Sadhu of the Jain Community throughout India and author of (among others) two very useful works in Hindi."

In Vikram year 1949, he received an invitation from Chicago to attend the World's Parliament of Religions. On account of religious and personal restrictions he could not go, but he sent his representative, Mr. Virchand Raghavji Gandhi, B. A., to Chicago to represent Jainism at the Parliament.

He was the author of a number of works in Hindi. The important works are as follows: -

*Tatwanirnaya Prasad, Jaina Tatwadarsha, Agnantimir-bhasker, Samayktwa Shalyodhar, and Chicago-Prashnottar.*

Many Jain temples were built in the Punjab by his teaching. About 15000 persons were converted to Jainism by his strenuous efforts. Many Pathshalas and Libraries were established by him in the districts of the Punjab and in different other parts of the country.

Spending his life in doing good deeds, he passed away from this world in Vikram year 1953, Jyestha Shukla 8, in Gujranwala (Punjab). The event of his death was mysterious. At midnight he got up from bed and sat in the posture of *Padmasana*. He called his pupils before him and said to them 'Oh, Now I go, Arhan!'

'Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And departing leave behind us  
Foot prints on the sands of time.'

(Longfellow.)

बन्धु न नः स भगवानरयोऽपि न्नान्ये ?  
साक्षान्न दृष्टतर एकतमोऽपि चैषाम् ।  
श्रुत्वा वचः सुचरितं च पृथग्विशेष  
वीरं गुणातिशयलोलतया श्रिताःस्म ॥१॥  
( श्री हरिभद्रसूरि )

## Introduction

The following letter was received by Shri Shri Tapagachhacharya Nyayambhonidhi Shrimat Vijayananda Suri, popularly known as Shri Atmaramji, through the Jain Association of India, Bombay.

Worlds' Congress Auxiliary Committee on Religious Congress,

Rev. John Henry Barrows D. D.,

Chairman,

Chicago U. S. A. November 16<sup>th</sup> 1892.

2330 Michigan Ave.

Mr. Atmaramji,

Bombay,

India.

Please address me

William Pipe,

2330 Michigan Ave,

Chicago,

United States of America.

Dear Sir,

There will be mailed to you in the course of a week an appointment as a member of the Advisory Council of the Parliament of the Religions to be held in Chicago in 1893. In the meantime, the Chairman instructs me to ask you if you will kindly forward to me at your earliest convenience two photographs of yourself and a short sketch of your life. These are to be used in preparing the illustrated account of representatives of the great faiths of the world. Will you therefore give this matter your earnest consideration and forward to me as soon as possible what is requested? Some other pictures and explanatory literature that would illustrate any feature of Hinduism would be much appreciated. With fraternal greetings,

I am,

Faithfully and sincerely yours,

William Pipe.

A reply to this letter was sent by the Jains of Bombay through Mr. Vir Chand Raghavaji Gandhi B. A., M. R. A. S., in consultation with the Muniraj Atma Ramji. The purport of the reply was that the Muni Maharaj had received the letter and was highly pleased to hear of the undertaking about holding a Religious Parliament at Chicago. It was also stated that the Muni Raj regretted that owing to old age, religious restrictions and some other private reasons he was unable to personally attend the Parliament of religions in compliance with the invitation. As desired, two photos of the Muniraj and a short biographical account of him together with some other interesting photos were also sent, an acknowledgment for which was requested.

To this letter the following reply was received.

Chicago U. S. A. April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1893

Muni Atmaramji,

9, Bank Street Fort,

Presidency Mills Co. Ld.

Reverend Sir,

I am very much delighted to receive your acceptance of your appointment together with the photographs and the biography of your remarkable life. Is it not possible for you to attend the Parliament in person? It would give us great pleasure to meet you. At any rate, will you not be able to prepare a paper which will convey to the occidental mind, a clear account of the Jain Faith, which you so honourably represent? It will give us great pleasure and promote the ends of the Parliament if you are able to render this service.

I send you several copies of my second report. Hoping to hear from you soon and favorably, I remain with fraternal regards,

Yours cordially,

John Henry Barrows,

Chairman,

Committee on Religious Congress.

A reply to the above letter was sent through Shah Magan Lal Dalpat Ram, acknowledging the receipt of the letter and intimating that, in compliance with the wishes expressed therein, the Muni Maharaj had undertaken to write a contribution on the Jain Faith.

The following is the reply received.

Chicago U. S. A. June 12<sup>th</sup> 1893.

My dear Sir,

I am desired by the Rev. Dr. Barrows to make an immediate acknowledgment of your favour of May 13<sup>th</sup>. It is eminently to be desired that there should be present at the Parliament of Religions, a learned representative of the Jain community.

We are indeed sorry that there is no prospect of having the Muni Atmaramji with us and trust the community over which he presides will depute someone to represent. It is, I trust, needless for me to say that your delegate will be received by us in Chicago with every distinction, and during his stay here, will receive our hospitality in as great a measure as we are able to accord it. If you therefore decide to send a representative, will you kindly cable the fact to me? The paper which learned Muni is preparing, will indeed be very welcome and will be given a place in the programme in keeping with the high rank of its author. Although we here in Chicago are a long distance from you, the name of Muni Atmaramji is frequently alluded to in religious discussions. For the purpose of illustrating the volumes which are to record the proceedings of the Parliament of Religions, I am in want of a few pictures to illustrate the rites and ceremonies of the Jain Faith. May I ask you to procure these for me (at any expense) and send at your earliest convenience.

I am,

Very truly yours,

WILLIAM PIPE,

Private Secretary.

This letter was passed on by Muni Atma Ramji to the Jain Association, India, with the remarks that it would be well if the Jains at Bombay were to consider the matter of sending Vir Chand Raghavji Gandhi as a representative of Jain faith to the Parliament. He added that by his deputation as a delegate to the Parliament of the religions of the world he would be able to give publicity to the religion of the Jains to all those who did not know what Jainism and its tenets were, and that the course was calculated to disseminate the truths of Jainism far and wide. This opinion of the Muniraj was accepted by the gentlemen of Bombay, because they implicitly believed in his words and were convinced that the opinion expressed by Muniraj could never be against their scripture or prejudicial to them in any way, for they well knew that in the modern times there was none equal to him in the knowledge and scholarship of Jain religious literature. Having thus considered the matter, the Jain Association of Bombay requested Mr. Vir Chand Gandhi to go as their delegate to Chicago. On this occasion at the request of Mr. Vir Chand Gandhi as well as that of Chicago committee on Religious Congress the Muniraj wrote this work in the form of questions and answers on Jainism. I venture to publish the work for the benefit of my brethren. As the book was specially written for the Chicago Parliament and contained answers to the questions received from Chicago, it was aptly entitled the "Chicago Prashnottar, i. e., Questions and Answers on Jainism for the Chicago Parliament of religions. The name and learning of the author of the book being universally known, it is needless for me to dilate on the merits of his books. Nor can I do justice to the task, even if I were to attempt it. How can I be considered qualified enough to do full justice to the merits of the works of an author about whom occidental scholars and savants have expressed such a high opinion? The following is an extract in this connection from the English translation of *Upasakdasang Sutra* by Dr. A. F. Rodolph Hornell, Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

"In a third Appendix (No. III) I have put together some additional information, that I have been able to gather since publishing the several fasciculi. For some of this information, I am indebted to Muni Maharaj Atma Ramji, Anand Vijayji, the well-known and highly respected Sadhu of the Jain community throughout India, and author of (among others) two very useful works in Hindi, the *Jaina Tattvadarsha* mentioned in note 276 and the *Ajnana Timira Bhaskara*. I was placed in communication with him through the kindness of Mr. Magan Lal Dalpat Ram. My only regret is that I had not the advantage of his invaluable assistance from the very beginning of my work. For some useful suggestions and corrections, I am also indebted to Mr. Virchand R. Gandhi, the Honorary Secretary to the Jain Association of India."

On the 21<sup>st</sup> page of "The World's Parliament of Religions," published in London, there is a photo of the Muniji Maharaj bearing the following eulogy.

"No man has so peculiarly identified himself with the interests of the Jain Community as Muni Atmaramji. He is one of the noble bands sworn from the day of initiation to the end of life to work day and night for the high mission they have undertaken. He is the High priest of the Jain community and is recognised as the highest living authority on Jain Religion and literature by Oriental scholars."

The above has also appeared at page 3 of the treatise entitled "Eulogies to holy places." Dr. Hoernell has written certain eulogistic verses in Sanskrit on Muniji in the beginning of his publication on *Upasak Dasang Sutra*, the translation of which is given below: -

"(1) Thou art like the sun in dispelling the establish black clouds of ignorance; thou established the minds of others on the sea of nectar of good and noble instructions; thou cuttest asunder all knots of doubts; thou art beyond the eighteen blemishes condemned by

**105. Q. Many people make sacrifices to Parmeshvar in order to attain liberation *moksha*. Is it essential or not?**

A. Those who make sacrifices to Parmeshvara, by killing living beings, are greatly mis- taken because Parmeshvara is without passion, most merciful, always desireless. No work whatever pleases or displeases him. Thus, to kill living beings and make sacrifices for him is a great sin. This practice has been brought into existence by most ignorant persons. This would appear from the Jainamata-vriksa compiled by me.

**106. Q. What bearing has dharma on the progress of the country?**

A. The country is a progressive one in which on account of the spread of dharma such good actions are done as to follow the rules of law, to have union among themselves, to do good to others, to be kind to all living beings, to speak truth, not to cheat or defraud, to acquire knowledge always, to lead a contented life, to avoid committing theft, adultery, taking *abhaksha*, drinking prohibited things, practising superstitious rites. The progress of a country is impossible without dharma.

**107. Q. How should the king and the customs be followed?**

A. If the King gives legal orders they ought to be followed and the useful customs put in vogue by good persons must certainly be followed. The customs, the non-observance of which is liable to cause material and spiritual loss to us by the country city or community, ought to be followed.

**108. Q. What are the perfect attributes of dharma found among the different religions? What are the eventual objects of dharma.**

A. The perfect attributes of dharma are three in number, viz. (1) *Darshana* (belief), (2) *Jnana* (knowledge), (3) *Charitra* (action). *Darshana* means belief in *tatvas*. The *tatvas* are three viz. *deva*, *guru*, *dharma*. By the term *deva* is meant master. Master is one who is free from 18 *dushans* (defects), is possessed of 12 *gunas* (virtues), and is the preacher of true *dharma* in this world and is after giving up this body to become the Siddha. There is no God other than such God. To worship such a benevolent master for the purpose of purifying one's own soul, to publish His qualities in the world according to his ability to praise Him always are acts helpful to one's spiritual development. This is called *Shudha devatatva*. *Guru* (teacher) is one who observes 5 *maha-vratas* (highest vows), who is well-versed in sacred lore, has always uniformity of disposition, gets pure food i.e., free from any fault by means of begging, maintains thereby his body for the purpose of doing good, possesses many other such qualities and tells the people in the world what has been preached by the aforesaid masters.

This is *Gurutatva*. The aforesaid masters have shown to the people the path (Law) which leads to salvation. This is *dharma tatva*. What is contrary to those three is called (1) *Kudeva* (false Master), (2) *Ku-guru* (false teacher) (3) *Ku-dharma* (false law). One ought to believe in the truth of master, teacher, and law and wholly abandon *kudeva*, *Ku-guru*, and *ku-dharma*. Thus, one attains the first part (attribute) of dharma named *Darshan*. There are five divisions of *Jnana* (knowledge), i.e., (1) *Mati-jnana* (knowledge through senses), (2) *Sruti-jnana* (knowledge by means of education) (3) *Avadhi-jnana* (knowledge of forming matter to a certain extent) (4) *Man-prayay jnana* (knowledge of the mental thought of living beings born of pregnancy in 2 and half *dvipas*, (5) *Keval jnana* (per-fee knowledge). The objects



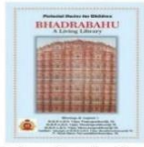
of these 5 kinds of knowledge are six *dravyas* and nine *tattvas*. This is 2<sup>nd</sup> part of dharma named *jnana*. The third part of dharma is *charitra*. It is divided into 140 parts by reason of the divisions of *charana sattari* and *karana sattari*. The divisions of *charana sattari* are (1) five *Mahavratas* (2) ten *Yati dharma* (3) seventeen *sanyam* (self-control) (4) ten *vaiya-vrityas* (services) (5) nine *brahmacharya gupti*, (6) three *jnana, darshan* and *charitra*, (7) twelve *tapas* (8) control of *krodh* (anger), etc. These are 70 in number. The 70 divisions of *karana sattari* are: -

- 1) 4 kinds of bodily purification.
- (2) 5 kinds of *sammiti*
- (3) 12 kinds of meditations
- (4) 12 kinds of *pratimas*
- (5) 5 kinds of control of senses
- (6) 25 *pratilekhna*
- (7) 3 *guptis*
- (8) 4 kinds of *abhighraha*

Thus, there are 140 divisions of *charitra* in all. This is third part of dharma.

\*\*\*\*\*

# 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.

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**Published: 2023**

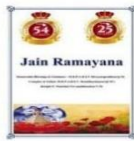


## **Golden Path Towards Nirvaan**

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**



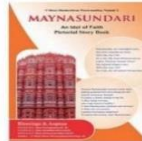
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**No. of Pages: 200**

**Published: 2023**



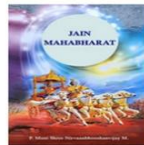
## **Maynasundari**

**(Multicolor Pictorial Story Book)**

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

**No. of Pages: 25**

**Published: 2023**

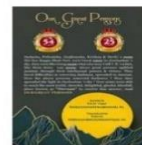


## **Jain Mahabharat**

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**

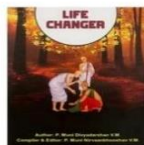


## **Our Great Persons**

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**

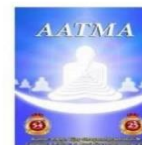


## **Life Changer**

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

**No. of Pages: 40**

**Published: 2023**

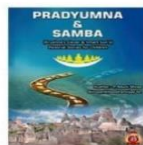


## **Aatma**

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**

**Published: 2023**



## **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**

## About the Compiler

The compiler puja Munishri Nirvaanbhooshanvijayji 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 Hembhushansuriswaraji 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 e.t.c. to study Jainism, who are facing language barriers.

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

