

Bharateshwar Bahubali

Part-4



P. Panyas Shree
Nirvaanbhooshan V. Gani M.



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Book Actual Price: Rs. 300/-

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Publication year: 2026-V.S. 2083

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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

Guide: H.H.P.A.D.S.V. Purnachandra S.M.

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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1. King Dasharnbhadra

Those who renounce the arrogance born of material prosperity attain the supreme wealth of Liberation, just as King Dasharnbhadra did.

In this Bharat region, within the city of Dasharnpur, King Dasharnbhadra reigned. The true adornment of kings lies in the benevolent protection and nurturing of their subjects; crowns, bracelets, and turbans are merely the ornaments of actors. The King worshipped the Jin three times a day. It is said:

Worship of the Jineshwar performed at dawn destroys the sins committed during the preceding night; worship performed at noon eradicates the sins accumulated over one's entire lifetime; and worship performed at dusk destroys the sins of seven past lives.

One day, Lord Vir Prabhu—accompanied by his retinue of disciples—arrived at the Dasharn Mountain, situated near the city of Dasharnpur. There, celestial beings (Devas) constructed a Samavasaran (divine assembly hall) spanning one Yojan in magnitude. It featured three concentric ramparts fashioned from silver, gold, and precious gems; it radiated a brilliance akin to a row of monkey-head lamps; and it was intersected by four main thoroughfares. Seated within this Samavasaran, the Lord—speaking simultaneously from his four faces—delivered a spiritual discourse to the twelve assemblies (Parshadas), comprising sixty-four Indras and other celestial beings. His divine speech was endowed with thirty-four miraculous attributes and thirty-five inherent qualities. At that moment, the royal gardener informed the King of Lord Vir's arrival. The King bestowed a reward upon the gardener; then, rising from his seat and advancing seven or eight paces toward the Lord, he offered his praises in the following manner:

"O benefactor of the world, who has conquered and subdued the passions of existence! O abode of the wealth of welfare! O Omniscient Jin, who is extolled and revered among the ranks of the omniscients! Glory be to you!"

"O Manifestation of Knowledge—complete in all its facets and utterly devoid of any blemish or impurity! O Ocean of Compassion! O Lord, who has cast aside all pride! "Ferry me across this ocean of worldly existence."

Today—by constantly recalling the multitude of Your virtues, by offering You hymns of praise, and by beholding the vision of Your divine countenance—O Lord! May I today be liberated from the darkness of ignorance.

Having offered this prayer, the King resolved: "Tomorrow morning, I shall go to pay homage to the Lord with such grandeur and pomp as no one has ever displayed before."

To announce the arrival of Lord Vira to the populace, the King ordered the royal drums to be beaten throughout the city. The King adorned the entire city with banners, festive arches, and beautiful garlands of welcome; furthermore, he filled the entire firmament with fragrance by burning incense made of aromatic substances such as agaru and camphor.

At dawn, fully adorned in his royal regalia and mounted upon a magnificently decorated elephant, the King set forth. Accompanying him were eighteen thousand elephants, eighty-four hundred thousand horses, twenty-one thousand chariots, ninety-one crore soldiers, sixteen thousand musical instruments, five hundred grand ceremonial umbrellas, sixty-nine thousand royal attendants, and five hundred queens seated upon palanquins; likewise, his vassals and ministers—resplendent in every manner of jewelry and adornment—joined the procession. At every turn, songs were being sung and dances performed. The citizens, too—each adorned according to their own means and status—joined the procession. Bestowing gifts of gold, silver, and garments upon the supplicants, and surrounded by a multitude of men, the King—with such magnificent pomp and regarding the entire world as mere straw in his pride—set forth to pay homage to the Lord. In due course, the King arrived near the Dasharna Mountain. Thereupon, leaving his vehicles behind, and observing the five prescribed rituals of approach, the King circumambulated the Lord three times and took his seat at an appropriate spot. At that moment, filled with elation, the King reflected within his mind that "The manner in which I have paid homage to the Lord—endowed with such complete splendor—is a feat that no Indra or Chakravarti has ever accomplished." Perceiving King Dasharnbhadra's arrogance through his Avadhi-Gyan (clairvoyant knowledge), Saudharmendra reflected: "Alas! This King is noble; however, the pride he displays is not right, for arrogance is never considered a virtue in this world." It has been said:

"With the flood of simplicity as your ally, uproot the tree of arrogance—that noxious growth which extends the branches of vice while undermining the very roots of virtue."

"Just as clouds obscure the sun, so does arrogance shroud virtuous conduct. Just as a serpent destroys the life of living beings, so does arrogance destroy humility. Just as an elephant tramples a cluster of white lotuses in a lake, so does arrogance destroy one's reputation. Arrogance—much like a favor bestowed by a base individual—brings ruin upon all three classes of humanity."

"Alas! His devotion and fervor in worshipping the Lord—who is revered by the entire universe—are truly unparalleled. Yet, this arrogance is now sullyng his character."

"Neither all the Devas nor all the Indras combined—even when marshaling their entire divine splendor simultaneously—possess the capacity to fully and comprehensively worship the virtuous Jineshwar Lords."

Thereupon, in order to humble King Dasharnbhadra's pride, Shakra utilized his divine powers to manifest—right there in the sky—an illusory host of sixty-four thousand elephants. Shakra created five hundred and twelve faces upon each individual elephant, and upon each of these faces, he fashioned eight tusks. Upon every single tusk, he created eight step-wells; within each step-well, he fashioned eight lotuses; and upon the central pericarp of each lotus, Shakra constructed a magnificent throne for himself to sit upon and upon that throne, Indra sat accompanied by his chief queen. Upon each lotus, one hundred thousand petals were created, and on every single petal, thirty-two gods and goddesses began to perform thirty-two distinct plays. Thus, Indra accomplished all of this through the power of his divine energy.

First: the number of tusks on a single elephant—4,096; the number of step-wells on a single elephant—32,768; the number of lotuses on a single elephant—262,144; the number of thrones for Indra's seating within the pericarp of the lotuses on a single elephant—262,144; the number of lotus petals on a single elephant—26,214,400,000; and the number of sets of thirty-two plays performed on a single elephant—838,860,800,000. The total number of elephants was sixty-four thousand; since each elephant possessed five hundred faces, the total number of faces across all elephants amounted to three crore twenty-seven lakh sixty-eight thousand (32,768,000). With eight tusks per elephant face, the total number of tusks across all elephants was twenty-six crore twenty-one lakh forty-four thousand (262,144,000). With eight step-wells per tusk, the total number of step-wells across all elephants was two hundred and nine crore seventy-one lakh fifty-two thousand (2,097,152,000). With eight lotuses per step-well, the total number of lotuses across all elephants was sixteen hundred seventy-seven crore seventy-two lakh sixteen thousand (16,777,216,000). With one hundred thousand petals per lotus, the total number of petals across all elephants was sixteen hundred lakh crore seventyseven lakh crore seventytwo thousand crore and one hundred sixty crore . With thirty-two plays performed on each petal, the total number of plays across all elephants was five thousand three hundred sixtyeight kota-koti seventy lakh crore nine thousand crore one hundred thirty crore. The total number of pericarps across all elephants was sixteen hundred lakh crore seventy-seven lakh crore seventy-two thousand crore one hundred sixty crore. The total number of Jin palaces situated upon all the elephants was sixteen hundred seventy-seven lakh crore seventy-two thousand crore one hundred sixty crore. The number of Indras upon all the elephants stands at sixteen hundred and seventy-seven crore, seventy-two lakh, and sixteen thousand. Since each Indra possesses eight principal queens, the total number of principal queens accompanying all the elephants amounts to thirteen thousand crore, four hundred and twenty-one crore, seventy-seven lakh, and twenty-eight thousand. The total number of forms assumed by all these elephants is 53,687,092,200,000,000. Endowed with such magnificent forms, Saudharmendra—accompanied by the melodious resonance of divine drums and while witnessing dramatic performances imbued with the virtues of Lord Shri Vir Prabhu—descended from the heavens, circumambulated the Lord three times, and paid him

homage. The King, beholding Saudharmendra endowed with such extraordinary divine splendor, was struck with profound astonishment.

Subsequently, when Indra desired to dismount from the elephant, the elephant—intent on ensuring its master’s comfortable descent—lowered its two front legs in such a manner that they sank into the earth as if it were soft mud. Thereupon, Indra dismounted from the elephant and bowed down before the Lord. The very spot where the elephant had embedded its legs became renowned throughout the world as a sacred pilgrimage site known as Gajagrapadak. Beholding the resplendent Indra, endowed with such divine glory, the King reflected within his mind:

"Oh! What a magnificent form Indra possesses! Oh! What extraordinary divine power is his! Oh! What a vast retinue of queens surrounds him! Oh! What profound devotion and what immense power he commands! There is a unique distinction in all his actions.

Compared to Indra’s divine magnificence, my own worldly opulence is but a mere atom. I have, in truth, harbored pride in vain. No one possesses the capacity to worship the Lord Jineshvara in His absolute fullness. This devotion of Shakra (Indra) toward the Lord Jineshvara is indeed supreme. Therefore, what further relevance does this worldly kingdom and its wealth hold for me now? If I do not embrace ascetic initiation at this very moment, my defeat—in every conceivable sense—is inevitable. Only if I embrace initiation here, then consider it as I attained victory over Indra."

Reflecting in this manner, the wise King Dasharnbhadra performed the Panch-mushti Loch (the plucking out of hair in five handfuls) right there on the spot. Renouncing such magnificent royal opulence—including elephants, horses, and his inner quarters—he embraced the path of asceticism in the presence of the Lord. Then, beholding Dasharnbhadra in the guise of a monk, Shakra bowed down with deep devotion and said:

"O you who are adorned with the wealth of self-restraint! O true ascetic, Dasharnbhadra! You are truly blessed, for you have fulfilled your arduous vow."

Thus, having bowed repeatedly to Lord Shri Vir Prabhu and paid his respects to the ascetic Dasharnbhadra, Indra—his mind overflowing with faith—returned to the celestial realm.

In this manner, the ascetic Dasharnbhadra annihilated his karmas and attained liberation.

The Story of the Royal Sage Dasharnbhadra Concludes.



2. Prasannachandra, the Royal Sage

A person who, through the cultivation of pure contemplation, attenuates their karmic bonds attains Keval Gyan (Absolute Knowledge) in an instant—just like the Royal Sage Prasannachandra.

In the city of Potanpur, there lived a king named Somchandra. His wife's name was Dharini, and his son's name was Prasannachandra. Once, while grooming the King's hair, the Queen noticed a white hair; placing it in the King's hand, she remarked that a white hair is an indication of old age. Upon hearing this, the King exclaimed, "Alas! My ancestors had installed their sons upon the throne and embraced asceticism before the onset of old age. Yet I—even with old age upon me—have not yet awakened to dispassion. I am, without a doubt, a lowly man." It is said:

The lowest among men do not acknowledge the arrival of old age until white hairs actually appear. Men of average wisdom recognize the onset of old age the moment white hairs emerge. But truly blessed are those men who attain dispassion before old age ever arrives.

For those who—out of a sense of honor and spiritual earnestness—uphold their family's spiritual traditions unbroken until the very end of their lives, even their death becomes a celebration.

The wise, even while in the bloom of youth, carry within their minds the mindset of one already vanquished by old age. The dull-witted, however, are vanquished by old age only when it actually overtakes them in their twilight years.

Having spoken thus—and casting aside his kingdom as if it were a mere blade of grass—the King, at that very moment, installed his son Prasannachandra upon the throne, despite the boy's tender age. As Somchandra set out for the forest, his wife Dharini—disregarding the King's attempts to dissuade her—followed him, accompanied by her nursemaid. Upon reaching the forest, Somchandra embraced the ascetic vows of the hermits. His vow was like his wealth. It is said that:

For him, a hut was a palace; lamps lit with Ingudi fruit oil were lamps of rubies. Faith alone constituted his supreme inner sanctum, while birds and deer were the sole objects of his affection. Qualities such as inner peace (Shama) and self-restraint (Dama)—worthy of being mastered through every ascetic posture—formed his flourishing army; through them, he vanquished his internal enemies. At all times, he meditated upon noble souls and contemplated the six virtues. The ascetic initiation of the Royal Sage Somchandra was akin to a kingdom.

Having conceived prior to embracing the ascetic vow, Dharini gave birth to a son. However, she herself succumbed to death due to complications arising from childbirth. Gazing upon the infant—clad in garments of tree bark—the ascetics

declared: "O Child! Since your attire, even in infancy, consists of bark (valkala), let your name be Valkalachiri." Even after ascending to the celestial realm, Queen Dharini—perceiving through her Avadhi-Gyan (clairvoyant knowledge) that her son was still a tender infant—would assume the form of a buffalo, descend to that place, and, driven by maternal attachment, nurse him with her milk. For it is said:

An impassioned soul binds karmic matter unto itself, whereas a dispassionate soul eradicates it. O Mankind! This, in essence, is the teaching of the Jinas regarding the nature of bondage and liberation.

A nursemaid attended to the upbringing and nourishment of the child, while Dharini—in her transformed guise—provided him with mother's milk. The sage, his father, would invariably seat his son upon his own lap. Thus, nourished by the grains and produce of the forest, the boy eventually blossomed into youth. Yet, the young prince remained utterly unacquainted with even the slightest nuances of worldly conduct or social etiquette.

One day, King Prasannachandra heard from someone that his brother, Valkalachiri, was residing in the presence of their father. Without that brother, he had felt a profound sense of emptiness within himself. Consequently, although he dispatched a messenger to the forest to summon the youth, the father did not send his son to King Prasannachandra. Thereupon, King Prasannachandra reflected: "He will not come to me without some stratagem." Realizing this—and ensuring that no one else would become aware of the plan—he summoned a courtesan, a veritable mine of cunning stratagems. It is said that:

A courtesan is the mysterious weapon of illusion (Maya); she is a field wherein the vine of wickedness flourishes, and she is adept at ensnaring and subjugating naive souls.

Subsequently, the King summoned the courtesan—who was skilled in deceit and trickery—and said to her: "My brother resides in the forest, utterly ignorant of worldly ways. He refuses to come here, no matter what. You must devise a way to ensure that he comes to this place." Upon hearing this, the courtesan replied: "Witness the ingenuity of my intellect! I shall ensure that your brother, Vakalachiri, comes here of his own accord and with great contentment." Then, carrying food items such as modakas (sweet dumplings) and Simhakesariya sweets, and having donned the garb of an ascetic sage, the courtesan—filled with delight—proceeded toward the forest of Sinhpot. There, spotting Vakalachiri—a Kshatriya celibate who had worn matted locks since birth and was returning from the forest laden with fruits such as Bilva and Amla—the courtesans stepped forward to intercept him. Upon seeing the courtesans, Vakalachiri thought to himself, "These ascetics appear to be newcomers to this forest." He offered them his salutations and inquired: "Who are you? Where is your hermitage located? And where are you bound?" They replied: "We are dispassionate sages (Vitaragi Munis), devoted to the pursuit of the highest spiritual endeavors. We

have traveled here from the Potan hermitage specifically to behold you and to offer you our reverence." It is said:

By honoring guests, ascetics cause their own spiritual austerities (Tapas) to flourish; and this augmentation of ascetic power is the very means by which the bliss of both Heaven and Liberation (Moksha) is attained.

Vakalachiri responded: "I have gathered these fruits from the forest; please accept them. I shall return to fetch many more for you. By offering these fruits to you today, I shall consider my life truly fulfilled." The courtesans said, "Our desires will not be fulfilled by such tasteless fruits as yours. Our desires will only be satisfied by eating the fruits found at Potan Ashram." He asked, "What are the fruits of Potan Ashram like?" In response, they showed him exquisite delicacies—such as modaks—prepared with ghee and sugar. Upon tasting these food items, Valkalchiri, who had grown weary of his usual diet of bark-fruits and Bilva (wood apple), was utterly captivated. Then, touching their bodies, Valkalchiri exclaimed, "Oh! How have your limbs become so soft and delightful? And how did these two charming, altar-like mounds appear upon your chest?" The courtesans, disguised as female ascetics, replied, "Whoever partakes of such fruits at Potan Ashram develops these two soft and delightful, altar-like mounds." Valkalchiri then reached out and touched those two "fruits"—the altar-like mounds—with his hands, and experienced a sensation of supreme bliss. He then asked, "How might I, too, obtain such delicious fruits and the opportunity to touch these altar-like ones?" The courtesans replied, "If you abandon this forest, accompany us to Potan Ashram, and enter into a bond of friendship with us, all your desires shall be fulfilled." Entranced by the touch of their bodies and having discovered the exquisite sweetness of fruits like custard apples and grapes, he completely forgot the simple pleasure he once derived from the fruits of the forest. He then said, "Wait here for just a moment; I shall go and secretly conceal my ascetic tools, and then return to you." Having hidden his ascetic tools, Valkalchiri returned to the courtesans.

Meanwhile, just at that moment, upon sighting the arrival of the Royal Sage Somchandra, the courtesans—terrified of incurring a curse—scattered and fled in different directions. Left alone, Valkalchiri set off in pursuit of them, hoping to find them again. Wandering aimlessly through the forest like a fawn, Valkalchiri eventually encountered a traveler passing by in a chariot; addressing him, he said, "I offer you my salutations." The traveler asked him, "Where are you going?" The sage replied, "O sir! I am on my way to the Potan Tapovan (ascetic grove)." The charioteer said, "I, too, am headed to that very place. Come along with me." As he was boarding the chariot, the sage—upon seeing the charioteer's wife—addressed her, saying, "O sir! I offer you my salutations." Hearing this, the couple thought to themselves, "He was born and raised within an ascetic hermitage; therefore, he does not even understand the distinction between a man and a woman." Later, as they traveled along the road, Valkalchiri observed the charioteer striking the chariot's oxen with a whip; he asked, "Why are you causing pain to these 'deer' by striking them with a whip?"

The charioteer replied, "These oxen have committed certain deeds in the past; thus, as the karmic consequence of those actions, they are now enduring this suffering." Captivated by the sage's simple nature, the charioteer offered the Valkalchiri some sweet treats (modaks). Having eaten the sweets, the sage reflected, "Ah! I have realized that, solely by the grace of my own good fortune, these delicious fruits have appeared before me at this very moment." Continuing his journey, the charioteer encountered a thief on the road; having subdued the thief and seized his stolen wealth, he eventually arrived at the Potan Ashram. The sage asked, "Where is the Potan Ashram?" The charioteer replied, "This is the Potan Ashram; you may reside here in peace and comfort." Having said this, the charioteer departed and headed toward his own home. Subsequently, visiting every shop and every house along his way—and offering his salutations to everyone he encountered, whether man or woman, with the words, "I offer you my salutations"—the sage eventually wandered into the quarter inhabited by courtesans. There, upon seeing a certain courtesan, he addressed her: "O sir! I offer you my salutations." The courtesan thought to herself, "This sage is a soul of immense merit and possesses a truly innocent nature. If this sage were to touch my body, I would consider my life fulfilled and blessed." Harboring this thought, she led him into her home and proceeded to bathe him, seeking the spiritual purification that would come from the physical contact involved in attending to his person. Believing firmly that she was thereby accruing a vast store of spiritual merit, the courtesan willingly endured the scratches and marks inflicted upon her body by the sage's fingernails. Then realizing that the ascetic possessed a body of extreme delicacy, the courtesan arranged for his marriage to her own daughter. The ascetic reflected, "I have never witnessed such hospitality anywhere before." As the wedding shehnai (ceremonial music) played within the courtesan's home, the Valkalchiri found the touch of the courtesan's daughter's hand to be a source of supreme bliss.

Meanwhile, the courtesans who had been dispatched earlier arrived that very day and reported to King Prasannachandra: "We had successfully lured the young prince away from the hermitage through persuasion, but just as we were leaving, the sage Somchandra arrived. Terrified of incurring his curse, we all fled the scene. Valkalchiri also fled, but we subsequently lost track of him. What is to be done now? Since we had shown him the fruits from the Potan hermitage, it seems likely that he would have made his way here." Hearing this, the distressed King reflected: "What I have done was ill-advised. He has been separated from his father, and I have failed to find him as well. What can be done now? It is a case of 'scorched hands, yet no chickpeas gained'—all my efforts were in vain." Overcome with grief, the King abandoned all royal duties and sank into deep anguish.

Meanwhile, upon observing a wedding ceremony taking place at a certain courtesan's home, a bystander informed the King. The King then dispatched the very same courtesan he had sent on the earlier mission; upon her return, he learned that it was indeed his own brother who was being wed. The King summoned the courtesan and

said, "Tell me! How did you come to give your daughter in marriage to my brother?" The courtesan replied:

"O King! He came to my home entirely of his own accord; I gave my daughter to him only upon the advice of an astrologer. All of this has transpired solely by the decree of fate."

"Therefore, O Lord of Men! I beg you to forgive all the offenses I have committed. Please cast a benevolent and merciful gaze upon me." Thereupon, beholding his brother there alongside his wife, the King said to his ministers, "What is to be done? My brother has married a maiden born into a lowly lineage." Upon hearing this, the minister replied, "There is absolutely no fault in this; kings frequently marry maidens born into a lowly lineage." It has been said:

"Nectar may be extracted even from poison; gold can be recovered from refuse; knowledge may be acquired even from men of humble standing; and a wife may be taken even from a lowly lineage."

Subsequently, the King seated his brother—along with his wife—upon the royal state elephant and, amidst grand festivities and acts of munificent charity, escorted them into his palace. He then allotted them a palace of their own to reside in and bestowed upon them a wealth of riches. The King would partake of his meals in the company of his brother.

By placing him under the guidance of those skilled in worldly affairs, the King, within a few days, transformed his brother into a man of refined social grace and practical wisdom.

With the King's earnest persuasion, he (Valkalachiri) mastered the arts of writing, mathematics, statecraft, and poetry, thereby becoming proficient in all the fine arts. One day, the Prince intervened to secure the release of a charioteer who had been unjustly imprisoned for some transgression. For—

Upon Valkalachiri's brow resided Lakshmi (Fortune); within his eyes dwelt Gauri (Divine Grace); upon the tip of his tongue resided Saraswati (Wisdom); and within his heart dwelt Compassion.

The King subsequently arranged for the Prince to marry several other maidens and formally invested him with the title of Crown Prince. Thus, Valkalachiri became the most cherished and beloved confidant of his brother, King Prasannachandra.

Meanwhile, elsewhere, the royal sage Somchandra—finding no trace of the young Prince—began to shed a ceaseless stream of sorrowful tears. King Prasannachandra, by revealing the whereabouts of Valkalachiri, dispelled the royal sage Somchandra's grief. Upon receiving the news regarding Valkalachiri, the royal sage Somchandra finally broke his fast. As King Prasannachandra conversed with his brother, he remained oblivious to the passage of time.

After twelve years had elapsed, King Prasannachandra's son—having climbed down from his father's lap—came over to play in the lap of Valkalachiri. Upon seeing the playful child, Valkalachiri was reminded of his own childhood, and he began to reflect: "I am a wretch. For my mother died at the very moment of my birth, and during my youth, I abandoned my aged father. How, then, can I ever repay the debt I owe to the father who raised me? Shame upon me! I am a cruel man, capable only of feigned affection; despite living a life of comfort, I failed to care for my father. Thus, I am indeed a wretch." It is said:

"Just as a sugarcane field, a bamboo grove, a banana tree, or a poisonous tree is destroyed once it bears fruit, so too is a noble lineage destroyed by a wayward son."

"For animals, affection toward their mother lasts only as long as they are suckling; for base men, affection endures only as long as they receive material support from their mother; for men of middling character, affection lasts only as long as the mother performs household chores; but for men of noble character, the mother remains a sacred shrine for the entirety of her life."

Having pondered these thoughts for a long time, and now eager to reunite with his father, Valkalachiri spoke to Prasannachandra: "Brother, I have not gone to bow at Father's feet even once. From this day forward, I shall not take any food without first paying my respects at Father's feet. Therefore, please grant me permission to go to him." Thereupon, King Prasannachandra—accompanied by Valkalachiri—set out for the forest to pay homage to their father, the ascetic. As they journeyed through the forest, Valkalachiri spoke to his brother, saying: "Look—these Bilva, Ingudi, and other saplings that we are passing along the path were planted by me long ago and they offer only fruits to passing travelers." Conversing in this manner, the two of them reached their father; bowing reverently at his feet, they were filled with immense joy. Sage Somchandra honored them by seating both of them upon his lap. At that moment, Sage Somchandra washed the lotus-like feet of his two sons with tears of pure bliss. Thereafter, Valkalachiri entered the hut—constructed from tree leaves—where he had previously concealed his ascetic paraphernalia and vessels, intending to inspect them. There, he began to carefully wipe clean—using the upper garment draped over his shoulders—the dust-covered ascetic implements and vessels that lay there from before. He then began to ponder: "I have, at some point in the past, wiped clean the vessels of a monk just like this." As he engaged in this deep contemplation, the knowledge of past lives (Jatismaran Gyan) awakened within him, and he beheld his previous existence: "In a former life, under the guidance of a Guru, I had embraced the path of asceticism—the conduct prescribed by the Lord Jineshwar—and had observed it with absolute purity. However, upon the completion of that life's span, I ascended to the Devlok. Subsequently, having descended from there and by the influence of karmic forces, I was born as a prince; yet, I failed to attain the Jain Dharma."

"This kingdom and this life are as fickle and transient as the flapping ear of an elephant. For all this time, I have been foolishly deluded by the Antaray Karma (obstruction-causing karma). Even though asceticism lay close to me, I failed to recognize it."

"This world—devoid of true substance and unfathomably deep—is the source of manifold sufferings. Elephants, horses, wives, wealth, and all such possessions are inherently perishable."

Meditating upon the true nature of this insubstantial world through the practice of the twelve reflections (Bhavanas), Valkalchiri, in the span of a single moment, annihilated all his Ghati Karmas (destructive karmas) and attained Keval Gyan. Thereupon, deities descended to bestow upon him the attire of an ascetic. Seated upon a golden lotus crafted by the deities, Valkalchiri delivered a religious discourse to Somchandra and Prasannachandra, speaking thus:

"Within this vast cycle of existence (Mahabhav), this world is a cremation ground, which is full of the ghosts of delusion. It is feared by the enemies of attachment and hatred. It is the abode of the terrible Vetaal (vee) called anger. The demon of greed is wreaking havoc, and the senses behave like ghosts. Where passion is wreaking havoc. In it resides the great vulture of falsehood and the jackal of illusion. It contains the great thorn of pride. It has the vampire in the form of Kamdev. It is rife with old age, disease, death, and birth. How can beings play with confidence in such a terrifying world? It is extremely lamentable.

On the contrary, the rule of the omniscient is the path to the city of nirvana, the self-realization of the Self and fearlessness.

Those who always practice the Dharma established by Jineshwara attain supreme happiness through the momentary destruction of all karmas.

Hearing such words of dharma, desiring to attain salvation, both the sage and the king were filled with the fragrance of Jainism.

At that time, Sri Vir Prabhu arrived at the beautiful garden of Potanpur. Then, Valkalchiri Swayambuddha Kevali, along with his brother and father, went to pay obeisance to Sri Vir Prabhu. The Kevali Bhagwant went to the Kevali's assembly. The Lord placed Somchandra Rishi with the theologians to absorb the knowledge. At that time, Sri Vir Prabhu preached the Dharma in this manner:

Life is unstable like the wind, strength is perishable like the rainbow, youth is like the light of lightning, wealth is fickle like the gurgling of a river flowing from the mountain. O noble ones, knowing that affection is fickle like an elephant's ear and the body is afflicted with diseases, always practice the great and unshakable Dharma.

King Prasannachandra became enlightened after listening to the religious sermons and with his heart filled with the worthlessness of the world, he came home and having installed his son—despite the latter's young age—upon the throne, he renounced

worldly life and embraced the path of asceticism under the guidance of Lord Vir Prabhu. Wandering in the company of the Supreme Soul—Lord Jineshwar, the master of the wealth of Keval Gyan which resides within the lotus of the universe—the Royal Sage Prasannachandra gradually became a Das-Purvadhari (one who possesses the knowledge of ten Purvas). With the Lord's permission, he began practicing Kayotsarg in solitary, rugged locations—such as mountain peaks and caves—with the specific intent of eradicating his karmic bonds.

On one occasion, while traversing a forest path near the city of Rajgrih, the Royal Sage—his mind fully concentrated and absorbed in the meditation of the Supreme Soul—stood in the posture of Kayotsarg. At that very moment, Lord Vir Prabhu arrived in the vicinity of Mount Vaibharagiri. Upon hearing this news, King Shrenik set out to pay his obeisance to the Lord. On the way, spotting the Royal Sage Prasannachandra—whose mind was deeply immersed in meditation—King Shrenik paid him homage and, offering words of praise, continued on his journey. Upon reaching the Samavasaran (the divine assembly hall), he performed three circumambulations around the Lord and took his seat at the designated place. Then, with folded hands, King Shrenik asked Lord Prabhu: "While traveling here, I paid my respects to the Royal Sage Prasannachandra, whose mind was fully absorbed in meditation. Had his life force expired at that precise moment, where would his soul have proceeded?" The Lord replied, "He would have descended to the seventh hell." Hearing this, the King was perplexed; he pondered: "How could the Lord predict such a dire destiny for such an exalted ascetic? I have evidently failed to grasp the true import of the Lord's words." Reasoning thus, the King posed the question once more: "O Lord! If that ascetic were to meet his end now, to which hellish realm would he proceed?" The Lord replied, "To the sixth hell." Subsequently, as King Shrenik continued to pose further inquiries, the Lord sequentially described the Royal Sage's spiritual trajectory, tracing it all the way up to the Sarvarthsiddhi Viman (the highest celestial realm). At that juncture—unaware of inner states of mind that the Lord had perceived within the Royal Sage—King Shrenik spoke up: "O Lord! How is it that you have provided such contradictory and enigmatic answers?" Before the Lord could offer a reply, King Shrenik heard the sound of the Dev Dundubhi (divine celestial drum) from that direction. He then asked the Lord again, "O Lord! Where is this Dev Dundubhi being played?" The Lord replied, "Prasannachandra Muni has attained Kevalgyan; therefore, the celestial beings are celebrating his Kevali Mahotsav (festival of enlightenment) there." Shrenik asked, "O Lord! Why did You speak in such an ambiguous manner?" The Lord replied, "Whatever I have spoken is the truth. The mental dispositions (Parinam) of living beings are inherently volatile."

"When you paid homage to that Muni, his mental dispositions were inauspicious. Subsequently, your servant Sumukh—who was walking ahead of you—paid homage to the Muni and remarked, 'Blessed is this Muni, who has renounced such a prosperous kingdom to embrace asceticism.' Even after hearing this, the Muni's mental dispositions remained pure. Then, your servant Durmukh—who was following

behind—saw the Muni and exclaimed, 'Alas! This hypocrite has taken vows and stands here idly. He shall incur grave sin, for he has placed his son upon the throne while the boy is still in his infancy, only to embrace asceticism himself. What merit could possibly accrue to him? At this moment, the King of Champa, along with enemy kings such as Dadivahana, has besieged his city from all sides. In a mere instant, they will slay his son and seize his kingdom.'

"Upon hearing these words from Durmukh, the Royal Sage Prasannachandra was shaken from his meditation and engaged in a mental battle against those enemies. When you first inquired about his destiny, I stated that his destination was the Seventh Hell. When you asked a second time, he was still engaged in that mental battle; having exhausted all his weapons, he had slain every enemy save for one remaining adversary. Then, intending to strike down that final foe using the iron helmet he imagined to be upon his head—and consumed by rage—the Royal Sage Prasannachandra raised his hand to his head. It was then, upon touching his shaven scalp, that he reflected: 'Why have I engaged in this futile battle? I am a Sadhu (ascetic); I have renounced all worldly attachments!' For the minds of sages remain equipoised towards all—be they sons, friends, or foes. As it has been said:

Sages maintain an equal state of mind regarding enemies, friends, grass, sons, gold, stones, gems, soil, the material world, and even liberation.

While reflecting in this manner, and driven by increasingly pure spiritual resolves, you were expiating the inauspicious karmas associated with the seventh hell and similar realms; simultaneously, you were earning the merit to attain every celestial abode, ranging from the Saudharma realm up to the Sarvarthasiddhi Viman. It was at this juncture that you posed your question for the second time. By this time, that ascetic had also attained Keval Gyan. Upon hearing this, King Shrenik paid his obeisance to the Lord and, after reverently bowing to the Kevali Prasannachandra, departed for his royal palace. Subsequently, after enlightening worthy souls for a great span of time, and upon the completion of his lifespan, the Royal Sage Prasannachandra attained liberation.

The Story of the Royal Sage Shri Prasannachandra Concludes.



3. Shri Yashobhadrasuri

Any noble soul who enlightens other noble souls with speech as sweet as nectar attains heaven and other forms of bliss, just like Shri Yashobhadrasuri.

Shri Shayyambhavasuri—a master of the Fourteen Purvas—traveled across the face of the earth, wandering through every village and city to enlighten noble souls, until he arrived at the city of Patalipur. At that time, a Brahmin named Yashobhadra approached the Guru there. It was there that he heard the teachings of Dharma in the following manner:

"Calm this heart—ensnared in hundreds of nets of desire—and restore it to a state of tranquility; and maintain unwavering faith in our words which are the abode of infinite bliss.

In this insubstantial world—replete with ailments and suffering—there is absolutely no true happiness. Yet, despite knowing this, the soul does not practice the Dharma expounded by the Lord Jineshwar.

"Life is unstable, worldly prosperity is fickle, and youth is fleeting. Even while witnessing all of this firsthand, the soul continues to deceive itself".

Having heard such religious discourses, the Brahmin Yashobhadra embraced the path of asceticism under the guidance of Shri Shayyambhavasuri. Serving his Guru with pure and unblemished humility, he acquired spiritual knowledge at his feet. Progressing systematically in his studies, he mastered the Fourteen Purvas—comprehending both the Sutras and their underlying meanings. Having consecrated Muni Yashobhadra to the rank of Acharya and performing spiritual duties with the highest propriety, Shri Shayyambhavasuri ascended to the celestial realms.

On one occasion, Shri Yashobhadrasuri traveled southward to the city of Pratishtanpur. Residing there were two Brahmins of immense worldly stature: Bhadrabahu and Varah. Many people were flocking to Shri Yashobhadrasuri to listen to his teachings on Dharma. The revered Acharya then delivered his discourse in the following manner:

Who, having forsaken the grandeur of a Chakravarti, would desire a life of servitude? Who, having abandoned the finest gems, would choose to gather mere pieces of stone?

With the passage of time, even the suffering of beings in the hellish realms eventually dissipates; what, then, is there to say of the human beings? Therefore, this suffering shall not afflict you for long; so, O Soul, do not be distressed!

Life is as fleeting as a drop of water; wealth is as fickle as a restless wave; and love is as ephemeral as a dream. Having realized this truth, O Soul, do whatever you deem right.

The agony experienced by a creature being pierced by a needle heated in fire is immense; yet, the suffering endured by a soul while confined within the womb is eight times greater than that.

Having listened to such religious teachings and attained a sense of detachment, Bhadrabahu and Varah returned home and began to reflect: "Why should we squander our lives in vain? All worldly pleasures are impermanent. Just as sweet water poured upon barren land is wasted, so too are the anointments of camphor, musk, and similar substances wasted upon this physical body." As it has been said:

"Wealth is as restless as the waves of the sea; youth is but a guest for three or four days; and the span of life is as transient as the clouds of autumn. Of what use, then, is this material wealth? Therefore, practice the eternal path of righteousness."

"The body is rife with sin; human nature is flighty; and fortune herself is fickle. Worldly pleasures are akin to a great disease; women with eyes like lotuses are comparable to serpents; dwelling within a home is like being ensnared in a net; and even the happiness derived from one's kinsfolk is unstable. Therefore, O wise ones, remain vigilant regarding the true nature of this insubstantial world."

Having reflected in this manner, both brothers sought their mother's permission and subsequently received initiation under the guidance of Shri Yashobhadrasuri. Studying diligently under guidance of Yashobhadrasuri, they both became profound masters of the Dvadashangi (the Twelve Angas). In due course, Yashobhadrasuri installed Shri Bhadrabahu Swami as Acharya. Thereafter, Shri Yashobhadrasuri undertook pilgrimages to sacred sites such as Shri Shatrunjay and devoted himself to the practice of pure conduct. As the end of his life approached, he performed the prescribed spiritual observances in the presence of his Guru; subsequently, as his life force gradually ebbed away, Shri Yashobhadrasuri entrusted the responsibility of the Gachchha (monastic lineage) to Bhadrabahu Swami and ascended to the heavenly realm.

The story of Yashobhadra Suri concludes.



Jambuswami, Vankchul, Gajsukumar, Avantisukumar,
Dhanyakumar, Elachiputra, Chilatiputra and Yugbahu Muni.

4. Jambukumar

How many souls, in their childhood itself, adopt religion respectfully with renunciation and go to the palace of salvation with determination like Jambukumar.

A village named Sugram in Magadhadesh was shining as the ornament of the earth. There was a wife named Revati of a familyman named Rashtrakuta. Both of them had two sons named Bhavdatt and Bhavdev. Gradually both of them became engaged in religion and work.

One day, Bhavdatt, who was filled with renunciation, took initiation from Susthitisuri. Bhavdatt, studying scriptures with his guru, became a Geetatha. One day, while wandering, he came to the garden of Sugram village. With folded hands, he said to his guru, "O Lord! I wish to have my worldly relatives pay obeisance to me. Please give me your orders." After receiving his guru's permission, Bhavdatt went to Sugram village.

Meanwhile, Bhavdev, who was married to Nagila, did not recognize Bhavdatt. Then, Bhavdatt went to his guru, and the sages laughed at him. At that moment, Bhavdatt, energized, returned to enlighten his brother. He vowed to have his brother initiated. With this thought in mind, Bhavdatt set off to Bhavdev for receiving obeisance. When he arrived, the ceremony of adorning Nagila with jewelry was underway, and Nagila was already half adorned with jewelry. Seeing his brother approaching, Bhavdev stood up, bowed to him with devotion, and offered Bhavdatt pure food and water. Then, as he left, Bhavdatt invited Bhavdev along for some of the way, telling him, "You are blessed because you have such devotion for the saints," and delighting him with such words, he placed a vessel filled with ghee in Bhavdatt's hand. Sending all his other relatives back home, Bhavdatt approached his Guru, talking with Bhavdatt about childhood pastimes. Bowing to his Guru, Bhavdatt said, "O Lord! This is my brother Bhavdatt. I have brought him to you. He is eager to receive initiation, so please initiate him." At his brother's request, Bhavdatt, endowed with a sense of righteousness, received initiation.

After paying obeisance to his guru, accompanied by a sage and his brother, Bhavdatt left for Vihar to another place. Just as an elephant remembers its female elephant, Bhavdatt, exercising restraint in the words of his brother, remembered Nagila. Over time, Bhavdatt performed intense penance and ascended to heaven.

After his brother ascended to heaven, one day, Bhavdev left the sleeping sages and departed at night, remembering Nagila. It is said that:

A man infatuated with women and wealth binds karmas; a man with a mind free of impurities and free from attachment and hatred attains happiness.

There are two clay balls, wet and dry. When both are thrown against a wall, the wet clay ball sticks.

Now walking ahead, Bhavdatt reached to a Devkul (temple complex) along the border of Sugram village and stayed there. At that time, a woman arrived there accompanied by an elderly Shravika. That woman was Nagila. Bhavdev asked the elderly Shravika, "How is Nagila?" Hearing this, Nagila—who was standing right beside her—recognized him. Upon recognizing Bhavdev, she asked him, "Are you Nagila's husband?" Bhavdev replied, "I am indeed her husband. However, my elder brother, through deceit and coercion—and against my own wishes—forced me to take monastic initiation under a Guru. I have observed the vows of asceticism for twelve years, all the while keeping the memory of Nagila alive in my heart. Is Nagila still alive, or has she passed away?"

Bhavdev was still speaking in this manner when, by a sudden twist of fate, the son of the elderly Shravika who happened to be Nagila's close friend arrived on the scene. The boy, having been coached beforehand, spoke aloud to his mother in a voice loud enough for Bhavdev Muni to clearly hear: "Mother! I have been invited to a nearby village today to partake in a meal; furthermore, I am to receive a Dakshina (honorarium) there. It is time for me to leave, so please come home quickly. I shall first vomit the milk I have just consumed back into the vessel; then, I will go to the village, take the meal, collect my Dakshina, return here, and finally drink that same milk again." Hearing this, Bhavdev laughed and remarked, "How could this boy possibly consume such repulsive food that has already been vomited out?" Upon hearing this, Nagila stepped forward and said, "I am Nagila—your wife. Why, then, are you attempting to consume me once again—me, whom you have already vomited out?"

"Which ignorant fool would desire to re-embrace a woman he has renounced—much like the food that has already been vomited out? This woman is merely the source of infinite suffering."

"Oh, you deluded soul! You came here yearning for me, imagining me like newly-wed women. But look at me now: I am utterly ravaged by the infirmities of old age. Behold the utter futility and transience of this worldly existence!"

Capable of defiling even the purest of objects, this body—even when rendered helpless under the sway of old age—is still the object of a living being's futile attachment.

This woman's body is filled with filth, phlegm, fat, and bones, and is bound together by nerves. She is akin to a mere sack of skin; she appears alluring only from the outside.

Cultivate within your heart a deep sense of the body's impurity. Why do you embrace this woman—the very cause of spiritual downfall—while forsaking this initiation, which serves as a vessel-like vehicle to rescue living beings drowning in the ocean of

worldly existence? I, for my part, have vowed before my Guru to observe the vow of moral purity for the remainder of my life; for indeed, moral purity is the true ornament of women. It has been said:

Moral purity elevates the lineage of human beings; it is the supreme ornament, imperishable, a disciplinarian of the mind, the bestower of a noble destiny, the destroyer of spiritual degradation, it is of vast and profound nature, the enhancer of pure renown, the gateway to liberation, and akin to the wish-fulfilling Kalpavriksha tree. Therefore, go immediately—without delay—to your Guru, and with a pure mind, observe the path of righteous conduct.

Enlightened and gladdened by the words of his wife, Nagila, Bhavdev began to offer beautiful praises to the virtuous path of the ascetic life.

Having sought forgiveness for his transgressions, Bhavdev approached his Guru, formally confessed and repented for his impure thoughts, and thereafter—having steadfastly observed the path of righteous conduct for a long period—he was reborn as a deity in the Saudharma Devlok.

Upon departing from the Devlok, the soul of Bhavdatt incarnated within the womb of Yashodhara—the wife of the Chakravarti Vajradatta—in the city of Pundarikini, located in the Pushkalavati region of Mahavideh. Upon the birth of the son, he was given the name Sagardatt. In due course, upon reaching young adulthood, his father arranged his marriage to a thousand maidens. Indulging in worldly pleasures in the company of these maidens Sagardatt remained oblivious to the precious time that was slipping away in vain.

One day, while standing atop his seven-storied white palace, Sagardatt observed clouds—roaring and flashing with lightning—filling the skies in every direction. Moments later, witnessing those clouds being scattered by a fierce gale, he began to contemplate the supreme truth of impermanence—the transient nature that underlies all existence.

If even the body of the Lord Arihant—which is as enduring as a thunderbolt—is subject to impermanence, then what significance can the bodies of these frail beings—fragile as a banana tree—possibly hold?

"Alas! This world is indeed impermanent!" Reflecting thus, and having attained spiritual awakening, Sagardatt approached his Guru with profound sincerity and formally embraced restraint.

Meanwhile, in the same region, in the city of Vitshoka, the soul of Bhavdev departed from the Devlok and took birth in the womb of Vanmala, the wife of King Padmarath. Upon his birth, the child was given the name Shivkumar. As he grew up in due course and attained the bloom of youth, his father arranged his marriage to several maidens of delicate beauty.

One day, while standing atop the palace with his wives, Shivkumar spotted the ascetic Sagardatt collecting alms at the home of a wealthy merchant. At that moment, witnessing the spontaneous shower of flowers rained down upon the ascetic by celestial beings, Shivkumar was filled with profound joy. Subsequently, after the ascetic had concluded his parana at his place of lodging, Shivkumar went there to listen to the discourse on Dharma. During the course of his sermon, the ascetic recounted the tale of Shivkumar's previous life. Upon hearing this, his mind filled with a deep sense of detachment from worldly affairs, Shivkumar paid his obeisance to the ascetic; he then returned home and earnestly sought permission from his parents to embrace initiation. His parents replied, "If you were to embrace initiation, it would surely be the death of us. You are known for your compassion; surely, no one would kill their own parents!" The son replied, "All that you have said is true. However, across infinite lifetimes, living beings have formed infinite mutual relationships. Consequently, I have given birth to you thousands of times, and you, in turn, have given birth to me thousands of times. It has been said:

This soul has served as a parent thousands of times and as a child or spouse hundreds of times in relation to others. Therefore, who is truly a father, and who is truly a son?"

The father replied, "It is not appropriate for you to speak in this manner. You are the sole support for both of us." Having thus persuaded Shivkumar with these words, he agreed to remain at home; there, he began observing two consecutive fasts daily, breaking his fasts only with Ayambil. While living at home, Shivkumar—steadfast in his religious duties and adhering strictly to the conduct of a Shravak—continued his spiritual practices. At the end of twelve years, having undertaken Anashan (fast unto death) as his lifespan drew to a close, he attained the state of Bhav Charitra and was reborn in the Brahmlok as Vidyunmali Dev.

Meanwhile, when Lord Shri Vir Prabhu arrived in the city of Rajgrih, Vidyunmali Dev came to pay homage to him. Upon beholding Vidyunmali Dev—who shone with a radiance surpassing that of all other deities—King Shrenik was struck with awe. He bowed before the Lord and inquired, "What form of penance did this Dev perform in his previous life to attain such a magnificent and beautiful form?" The Lord then recounted the details of his previous life. Shrenik then asked further, "What will be his destiny after he descends from the Devlok?" The Lord replied, "Seven days from this day, in this same city, this Dev will be born as Jambu kumar—the son of Rishabhhatt. Subsequently, in due course, he will attain Keval Gyan and ultimately attain Moksha (liberation). After him, there will be no further Kevalis." Hearing this, Vidyunmali Dev's four wives bowed before the Lord and asked, "What will be our destiny?" The Lord replied, "All four of you will be born as the daughters of wealthy merchants and will become his wives." Upon hearing these words from Lord Shri Vir Prabhu, Vidyunmali Dev and his beloved wives performed a dance of joy in the Lord's presence. Thereafter, elated Vidyunmali and his wives paid homage to the Lord and ascended to the Devlok.

Meanwhile, one day, Dharini—the wife of Rishabhdatt—had gone to Mount Vaibhargiri to pay her respects to Sudharma Swami Ganadhar, who was residing there. Upon hearing the discourse delivered by Sudharma Swami—specifically the insights he shared regarding the Jambu tree—Dharini asked at the conclusion of the discourse: "O Lord! Will I be blessed with a son, or not?" Sudharma Swami replied: "O virtuous lady! It is not appropriate for ascetics to offer Savadya preaching. Nevertheless, considering the immense spiritual merit to be gained, ascetics preach Nirvadya. Therefore, observe one hundred and eight Ayambils; through this, you shall conceive a son, as foreshadowed by the dream of the Jambu " Hearing these words, Dharini returned home and, in accordance with her Guru's instructions, undertook the Ayambil penance.

At that very moment, the soul of the celestial being Vidyunmali descended from heaven and entered the womb of Dharini, as informed by the dream of the Jambu. In due course, Dharini gave birth to a son. Since his conception had been heralded by the dream of a Jambu tree, his parents named him Jambukumar.

Elsewhere, Padmavati—the wife of the merchant Samudrashreshti—gave birth to a daughter named Samudrashri. Kamalmala—the wife of the merchant Samudradatt—gave birth to a daughter named Padmashri. Vijayshri—the wife of the merchant Sagardatt—gave birth to a daughter named Padmsena. Jayashri—the wife of the merchant Kuberadatt—gave birth to a daughter named Kanaksena. These four daughters were, in fact, the former wives of the Vidyunmali Dev; having descended from the Devlok, they were thus reborn on earth. Kamalavati—the wife of Kubersena—gave birth to a daughter named Nabhsena. Sushena—the wife of the merchant Shramandatta—gave birth to a daughter named Kanakshri. Veermati—the wife of the merchant Vasushen—gave birth to a daughter named Kamalavati. Jayasena—the wife of Vasupalit—gave birth to a daughter named Jayashri. All eight of these maidens harbored a desire to marry Jambukumar. Jambukumar's father believed that the parents of these maidens would arrange for their daughters' marriage to Jambukumar. Consequently, Jambukumar's marriage to the eight maidens was finalized. On that very day, Sudharma Swami arrived at a garden situated just outside the city. Jambukumar, too, went there to listen to the religious discourse. There, Sudharma Swami Ganadhar delivered a sermon as follows:

"Were it not for the turbulent waves of accumulating vast wealth—characterized by the twin processes of gain and loss—it would be far easier for people to swim across this Sansar (the ocean of this worldly existence).

Just as water evaporates from clouds, the lifespan of human beings is constantly diminishing; moreover, wealth is as fleeting and transient as a flash of lightning.

In this world, a discerning individual who is steadfast about life, wealth, and the physical body, should strive to acquire the 'Three Jewels', which possess enduring stability.

A householder should support the enlightened ones by providing them with shelter, medicine, scriptures, and clothing; through such acts, the householder reaps the spiritual rewards of revering and cultivating knowledge.

By contributing to the propagation and glorification of the Lord's Tirth (spiritual order)—through acts such as Swami-vatsalya, supporting Jain temples, undertaking pilgrimages, and performing worship—a householder acquires the merit of Samyaktva (Right Faith).

A householder should strive to acquire Charitra (right conduct) through devotion to virtuous ascetics who are worthy of spiritual conduct, diligently performing essential religious rituals (such as Pratikraman), and through penance.

Upon the arrival of the appropriate time, an ascetic upholds Gyan (Right Knowledge) through study; Darshan (Right Faith) through the eradication of doubts and skepticism; and Charitra (Right Conduct) through the strict observance of both fundamental and supplementary spiritual virtues.

Through the diligent practice of these 'Three Jewels'—a householder can attain the eternal state over a period of time, while an ascetic can attain it swiftly."

Those beings who are afflicted by the 'planet' of delusion and remain under the sway of spiritual negligence—being utterly without refuge—wander aimlessly within the wilderness of worldly existence.

Upon hearing such religious discourses, Jambukumar felt a strong desire to embrace ascetic initiation. However, since the Guru would not grant him restraint without the permission of his parents, Jambukumar—eager to undertake the vows of chastity—set out for his home. On the way, he observed that the city of Rajgrih had been besieged by enemies, and saw royal guards stationed on the city's ramparts hurling stones using siege engines. Realizing that a grave obstacle had arisen in his path, he returned to the Guru, formally accepted the vows of chastity, and only then proceeded to his home. Upon reaching his home, he addressed his parents: "O Mother and Father! Please grant me your permission; I wish to embrace initiation." His parents replied, "You are our only son. Without you, who would support us? What would become of us, left utterly destitute? Please, fulfill this cherished wish of ours just once: marry these eight maidens." Yielding to the earnest pleas of his parents, Jambukumar replied, "Respecting the words of you, my revered parents, I shall marry these maidens. However, if I succeed in spiritually awakening them, I shall then embrace initiation; but if I fail to awaken them, I shall remain a householder and continue to live within the worldly realm." Subsequently, Jambukumar conveyed this stipulation—that he intended to embrace asceticism—to the maidens' fathers and other kinsmen. Upon hearing this, those wealthy merchants spoke to their respective daughters, explaining that Jambukumar intended to spiritually awaken all of them immediately after the wedding ceremony, and thereafter embrace the ascetic path. Thereupon, the maidens approached Jambukumar and declared, "In our hearts, we have already accepted you

alone as our husband. If, in this life, you choose to become our husband, that is well and good; but if not, then we, too, shall seek refuge in the path of restraint. If, through our words and stories, we succeed in binding you to the worldly life then you are our husband; otherwise, we will also embrace restraint with you. Then, on the wedding day, mounted on an elephant, holding a parasol over his head and fanning himself with a fan, Jambukumar solemnly married the eight daughters in their in-laws' homes, and returned to his palace with the ninety-nine crore gold coins given by their fathers-in-law.

The next day, Jambukumar, accompanied by his eight wives, remained on the seventh floor of the palace at dusk to address them.

Here, in the city of Jaipur, on the Vindhya Mountains, the Vindhya king had an elder son named Prabhav. One day, his father gave the kingdom to his younger son, Saprabhav. This angered Prabhav, who went to Palli and became the master of five hundred thieves. He began stealing with them. Prabhav possessed two skills: Avasvapini Nidra and Talodghatini. Hearing the story of Jambukumar's marriage, Prabhav entered the house of Rishabhdatt Shresthi at night to plunder his wealth. Opening locks with the Talodghatini Vidya and putting people to sleep with the Avasvapini Vidya, Prabhav, along with five hundred thieves, went to Jambukumar to plunder the house. Seeing Jambukumar instructing the eight girls, adorned with beautiful ornaments, through stories, Prabhav released the Avasvapini Nidra on him. Then all the wives, except Jambukumar, fell asleep. Meanwhile, Prabhav, surrounded by thieves, stood still like a picture while plundering the ornaments. Then, feeling sad, Prabhav said, "O Jambukumar! Give me the Stambhini Vidya (mystic art) that you possess, and acquire these two Talodghatini and Avasvapini Vidyas that I possess." Upon hearing this, Jambukumar replied, "What would I do with these two arts? My intention is to enlighten these eight maidens, renounce this vast wealth, and take initiation into the ascetic life at dawn." Prabhav asked, "Having attained such exquisite worldly pleasures, why would you abandon them?" Jambukumar replied, "For human beings, these worldly pleasures are akin to a mere drop of honey." Prabhav inquired, "O Jambukumar! What is this 'drop of honey' of which you speak?" Jambukumar then said:

"Once, a destitute man named Bhim set out for a foreign land in the company of a merchant caravan leader, seeking to earn his fortune. On the journey, the caravan was ambushed and looted by bandits; the destitute man managed to escape the fray and fled onward. As he proceeded further, he spotted an elephant charging directly toward him; terrified and disoriented by fear, he fled from that spot as well. Seeing the elephant still in hot pursuit, he attempted to leap into a well. As he fell into the well, he managed to grasp a branch of a banyan tree—which grew at the well's edge and hung down into the shaft—and there he remained, suspended in mid-air. Within the well, an enormous python lay with its jaws agape, while four venomous serpents lurked in the four corners. The very banyan branch to which the destitute man clung was being gnawed away by a white mouse and a black mouse. Bees from a nearby

hive swarmed out to sting him repeatedly. Meanwhile, the elephant above continued to shake the banyan tree violently with its trunk. Witnessing this entire terrifying spectacle, the man was overwhelmed with anguish. Yet, at that very moment, a single drop of honey fell from the beehive into his mouth; savoring that solitary drop, the destitute man felt a fleeting sense of pleasure." For it is truly said:

"The multitude of worldly pleasures and sensual objects holds sway only over the ignoble man, never over the virtuous soul. One may bind a mosquito with a thread, but never an elephant."

"As long as delusion resides within the heart, these worldly objects bestow happiness upon living beings. For those who have realized the ultimate truth, where is there any room for sensual objects, worldly pleasures, or material attachments—even in the realm of their mental thoughts? In other words, there is absolutely none.

Meanwhile, a Vidyadhar (celestial being) passing through the sky saw the man in such distress; moved by compassion, he spoke to him: "O highly fortunate soul! Take hold of my hand and come out." The wretched man, caught between pain and pleasure, replied: "Wait just a moment! The drop of honey falling into my mouth is exquisitely sweet." Despite the Vidyadhar's repeated pleas, the poor man refused to climb out of the well; so captivated was he by the fleeting pleasure of that single drop of honey that he perceived his otherwise agonizing situation as blissful. Witnessing this, the Vidyadhar departed for his own abode—leaving the wretched man to suffer in even greater misery. Having recounted this tale, Jambukumar addressed Prabhav: "O Prabhav! Thus, you see that I am not immersed in the illusory pleasures of this transient world."

The allegorical interpretation of this story is as follows: The wretched man represents the sansari jiva—the soul entangled in the cycle of worldly existence. This world is akin to a terrifying forest; the elephant symbolizes Death; the well represents the human birth; and the python symbolizes the Hell. The four serpents represent the four Kashayas (passions/vices). The banyan tree symbolizes one's lifespan; the two mice—one black and one white—represent the dark and bright lunar fortnights (the passage of time). The honeybees symbolize various ailments and afflictions; the honey represents the fleeting pleasures derived from sensual objects and worldly enjoyments; and the Vidyadhar represents the Guru (spiritual guide). Any living being who manages to extricate themselves from this illusory and transient world is destined for Moksha (liberation). Other beings—much like the man trapped in that wretched situation—are condemned to suffer the torments of Hell and similar realms of misery. Upon hearing this, Prabhav spoke: "O Jambukumar! Why are you renouncing your deeply affectionate parents, your wife, and your kinsfolk to embrace initiation?" Jambukumar replied, "Listen to a tale regarding the futility of this worldly existence."

In the city of Mathura, while indulging in sensual pleasures with a certain man, a courtesan named Kubersena gave birth to twins—a boy and a girl. At the end of the eleventh day, Akka (elder sister) said to her, "Children are not raised in our houses;

therefore, you must abandon this pair of twins." Upon hearing this, Kubersena placed two rings—inscribed with the names 'Kuberdatt' and 'Kuberdatta'—upon the hands of the two infants. After nursing them, she placed both the son and the daughter into a box and set it adrift in the Yamuna River. Subsequently, the box, as it floated down the river, was retrieved by two wealthy merchants residing in the city of Suryapur. One of the merchants adopted the girl, while the other adopted the boy. In accordance with the names inscribed on the rings, the children were named Kuberdatt and Kuberdatta. Later, after consulting with one another, the two merchants arranged for the marriage of the young couple. Some time after the wedding, while playing together in a temple, Kuberdatta noticed the rings they wore since their infancy. A suspicion arose in her mind that they must, in fact, be siblings. She then revealed her realization regarding their sibling relationship to Kuberdatt as well. Consequently, when they separately questioned their respective adoptive parents, they were told, "We found you both inside a box floating in the Yamuna River." Upon hearing this, Kuberdatta became deeply dispassionate toward worldly life and embraced initiation. Kuberdatt, however, traveled to the prosperous city of Mathura to engage in trade. There, he took Kubersena as his wife, and in due course, she gave birth to a son.

Eventually, the ascetic Kuberdatta attained Avadhi-gyan (clairvoyant knowledge). Then, having sought permission from her Guruni (spiritual teacher), Kuberdatta Sadhvi proceeded to the Upashraya situated near Kubersena's home in order to spiritually awaken Kubersena. Subsequently, with the intention of enlightening both the mother and the brother, Sadhvi Kuberdatta addressed the infant lying in the cradle, saying, "You are a brother; you are a son," and so forth. Hearing these seemingly contradictory words from the Sadhvi, Kuberdatt approached her and asked, "Why are you uttering such contradictory statements?" In response, the Sadhvi displayed a distinctive signet ring she possessed and explained, "This courtesan is your mother as well as mine, and I am your sister. Therefore, I was enumerating the eighteen different types of familial relationships that exist between you and this son of yours." Upon hearing this—filled with shame regarding his past conduct and reproaching his own soul—Kuberdatt distributed his wealth across the seven fields of religious merit and received initiation into the ascetic order from his Guru. Thereafter, having performed intense penance, Kuberdatt ascended to the Devlok at the end of his life. Kubersena, too—reflecting upon the misdeeds she had committed and becoming detached from this worldly existence—renounced the specific religious customs of her lineage, strictly observed the duties of Shravaka, and attained the Devlok. Having listened to this narrative recounted by Jambukumar, Prabhav spoke once again: "How can a person who has no son attain an auspicious destiny? You, too, are without a son; therefore, how can you hope to attain an auspicious destiny?" It has been said:

"He who has no son attains no spiritual progress, nor does he ascend to the Devlok; for human beings attain heaven only after beholding the face of a son."

Hearing this, Jambukumar replied:

"Thousands of celibate youths have attained the Devlok without perpetuating their family lineage—that is to say, even without having a son."

"Conversely, many living beings descend into a wretched state of existence despite having sons. In this regard, listen to the following story:

There existed a city named Tamalini, which was as magnificent as the Devlok. In that city lived a wealthy merchant named Maheshwardatt. He regularly performed ritual baths, sacrificial rites, and Shraddh ceremonies for his ancestors. He had a wife named Nagila, who was of immoral character.

One day, on the day of his father's Shraddh, the merchant slaughtered a buffalo calf and sat down with his son to eat the meat. At that very moment, a wandering ascetic arrived at the scene; observing the merchant eating the meat, he departed while reciting the following verse:

"He is nurturing an enemy in the form of his son who sits upon his lap. Alas! What a bewildering illusion of attachment this is!"

Hearing this, Maheshwardatt was astonished; he rose, approached the ascetic, and asked, "O Sadhu! Why do you utter such inappropriate words?" When the merchant further inquired about the nature of his relationships, the ascetic replied: "The man with whom your wife Nagila indulged in sensual pleasures in your absence, whom you had killed in the past regarding him as an enemy, that same man, having died, has now been reborn from Nagila's womb in the form of your son. Your father, Samudradatt, was reborn in the form of this buffalo calf. For your father's Shraddh ceremony, you brought that very calf, slaughtered it, and consumed its flesh. Furthermore, the female dog—which you struck with a stick while she was scavenging for the meat—was none other than your mother, Amba. It was to reveal these truths that I recited that verse." Hearing this, the merchant said, "How can I place my faith in what you have said?" The ascetic then replied:

"This female dog has attained Jati-smaran Gyan—the knowledge of past lives. Take her inside your home; she will reveal to you the wealth that she had accumulated and hidden away during her previous life."

Having spoken thus, the ascetic departed. The merchant then acted exactly as the ascetic had instructed, and the female dog indeed revealed the hidden treasure to him. Witnessing this, the merchant Maheshwardatt—now convinced that the ritual of Pindaan (offerings to ancestors) was a source of spiritual harm—embraced the Jain faith as said by the ascetic. Thus, upon hearing this first tale narrated by Jambukumar and enlightened by its narrative, Prabhav—along with five hundred thieves—became imbued with a spirit of detachment.

At that moment, Samudrashri spoke to Jambukumar: "O Lord! O Husband! O Beloved! O Dearest! Like the farmer named Bak, do not cast aside the pleasures you have already attained, only to become an object of regret. Listen to his story.

In times past, in a village named Susim, there lived a farmer named Bak. Once, during the rainy season, after sowing kangu, kodo, chickpeas, barantika, chavale, and moong in his field, the farmer traveled to the Malavdesh to visit his daughter's home for some work. There, his daughter served him a meal consisting of sweet delicacies made with jaggery. The father then asked, 'How are these sweet dishes prepared?' In response, his daughter's relatives recounted the entire process—from the digging of wells to the planting of wheat and sugarcane. Hearing this, the farmer took some wheat seeds, hurriedly returned to his own home, and began uprooting the crops he had previously sown. His relatives asked him, 'Why are you uprooting these crops that have already ripened?' The farmer, Bak, replied, 'All of you, remain silent! From now on, wheat and similar crops shall be cultivated in this field. We shall feast on delicious meals prepared from that wheat; everyone's stomachs have been upset from constantly eating chavale and similar coarse grains.' Although his relatives tried to dissuade him with arguments such as, 'You should not uproot the crops in this manner,' the farmer Bak ignored their pleas. He uprooted all the chickpeas and other grains he had earlier sown and set about digging a well. Yet, despite digging a very deep well, not even a drop of water emerged. Just as the farmer Bak ended up in misery—having consumed the wheat seeds he had brought back and being left without even the chavale (black-eyed peas) he had discarded—so too will you end up in misery here, deprived of the worldly pleasures of this life. Therefore do not renounce these worldly pleasures like the company of women that have come your way."

Upon hearing this, Jambukumar spoke to Samudrashri in unequivocal terms: "I am not like that crow—greedy for flesh etc.—that I would invite misery upon myself. Listen to this tale."

On the Vindhyaachal mountain, a certain intoxicated elephant—the leader of a herd—was parched with thirst. He went to the River Reva to drink water. Suddenly, his foot slipped on the riverbank, and the elephant tumbled down from a height as towering as a mountain peak. At that very moment, his lifespan came to an end, and he died. Wild jackals came and went, feasting upon his flesh. The jackals gnawed a large opening into the elephant's anal orifice. Entering through this opening, crows fed on the flesh within and lived in contentment. One particular crow entered deep into the elephant's carcass and, while feeding on the flesh, took up permanent residence inside the remains. Eventually, under the scorching sun, the elephant's carcass dried out completely, yet the crow remained trapped inside. When the monsoon season arrived and the rains began, the river's currents caused the elephant's dried-out carcass to swell up and become waterlogged. It was then that the crow finally emerged through the opening. Seeing water stretching out in every direction, the crow would take flight and circle around, only to return and perch once again upon the elephant's carcass; he was unable to cross that vast expanse of water—that 'ocean.' A few days later, the elephant's carcass sank beneath the waves; unable to cross the water, the crow, too, drowned and perished. Having narrated this story, Jambukumar spoke to his wife:

"Just as that crow, clinging with attachment to the elephant's body, ultimately drowned and died in the ocean, so too shall I ensure that I do not drown in this 'ocean' of worldly delusion by becoming attached to your physical form."

Thus, Jambukumar recounted this second tale.

Now, Jambukumar's second wife, Padmashri, spoke up: "like a monkey, you will be corrupted by both alike. Listen to a tale regarding this matter.

King Arikesari, the ruler of the city of Hastinapur, ventured into the forest accompanied by many other kings. Wandering from one grove to another, the King took shelter in a vine-covered bower when the rains began, and thereafter continued on his journey. Further ahead, in a forest situated near a lake, the King was filled with delight upon beholding a woman who resembled a celestial maiden. Adorning that woman with exquisite garments and jewelry, the King brought her to the city amidst great festivities. The King elevated that maiden to the status of his Chief Queen. Just as Indra, the King of the Gods, enjoys the pleasures of life in the company of Indrani, so too did this King begin to enjoy the pleasures of the world in the company of that maiden.

One day, while the King was seated in the art gallery within his palace, a street performer—who traveled from village to village and city to city entertaining the populace by making a monkey dance—arrived at the palace. At that moment, the monkey, upon seeing the woman seated in the King's lap, felt no inclination to dance. The performer then beat the monkey severely; yet, the monkey—with its gaze fixed upon the lotus-like face of the King's wife—began to weep bitterly. Observing the performer's bewilderment and distress, and seeing the monkey weeping and refusing to dance, the King's wife spoke: "O Monkey! I had warned you, yet out of greed you paid no heed; now, do not weep. For—

Wise men live solely in the present moment. They do not grieve over the time gone by—that is, the past—nor do they harbor anxiety regarding the future."

"O Monkey! Now, cast aside your sorrow and dance. For a living being reaps exactly the fruit that corresponds to the actions it has performed."

Enlightened by these words, the monkey began to entertain the King with a marvelous dance performance. The King then bestowed wealth upon the monkey's master and made him happy. Then he asked the Queen: "Who is this monkey, and why was he weeping?" The Queen replied: "O Lord! In times past, within the Padmadraha (Lotus Pond) of the Nandanvan, there lived a pair of monkeys—a male and a female—who shared a deep mutual affection.

One day, during the summer season, suffering from the scorching heat, the monkey couple leaped into the water. Upon entering the water, they were transformed into a beautiful human couple—a man and a woman. The male then spoke: 'O Beloved! In this human form, earning a livelihood through agriculture and similar tasks entails

great hardship. In the animal form, one suffers from the extremes of cold and heat. Therefore, it would be best if we could attain godhood, for in that realm, one enjoys every pleasure the heart desires.' Hearing this, the male suggested: 'Let us leap back into the water; by doing so, we shall both become deities.' Upon hearing this, the female replied: 'For my part, this human form I have attained is quite sufficient. One should not succumb to excessive greed.' As it has been said:

'O Living Being! Greed is the root of all sins; attachment to sensual pleasures is the root of all diseases; and emotional attachment is the root of all sorrows. Therefore, renounce these three and attain true happiness.'

However, despite the female's dissuasion, the male leaped back into the water. Consequently, he reverted to his original form—that of a monkey. Even after leaping into the water repeatedly thereafter, his monkey form remained unchanged. The female monkey—who had transformed into a woman—is the one you encountered in the forest; indeed, I am she. As for the male monkey, he fell into the clutches of this street performer. Upon seeing me now, he was weeping in remorse, lamenting the consequences of his past actions. I, too, had recognized him. Subsequently, the woman lived a life of happiness, steadfastly adhering to the path of righteousness for a long time. The monkey, however, remained in a state of misery for a prolonged period. O Master! In this manner—having already attained the worldly pleasures of conjugal life—if you now cast them aside to yearn solely for the bliss of Moksha (Liberation), you too shall end up in misery, just like that monkey. Therefore, do not abandon these wives of yours—for they are akin to celestial maidens!" Thus did Padmashri narrate the tale of the monkey.

Upon hearing this story of hers, Jambukumar said: "The charcoal-maker remained unsatisfied despite having indulged in numerous pleasures; I am not like him. Listen to his story.

In the city of Chandrapur, a charcoal-maker named Chandra went into the forest during the summer season to produce charcoal, taking a supply of water with him. While he was engaged in making charcoal, his drinking water ran out during the night; consequently, he suffered from extreme thirst, and his palate went completely dry. While sleeping at night and tormented by thirst, in his imagination, he drank up all the water contained in various reservoirs—stepwells, ordinary wells, ponds, rivers, and deep lakes—and eventually came to a well situated in a desolate desert. Overcome by excruciating thirst, the charcoal-maker—standing at the edge of the well—lowered a bundle of grass into it; yet, even after drawing up a mere drop of water and licking it with his tongue, he found no satisfaction. Just as all living beings remain unsatisfied despite experiencing various pleasures—such as suckling at the breast, indulging in conjugal pleasures with a spouse, or adorning themselves with fine garments and jewelry—so too am I unsatisfied with worldly pleasures."

Then, Jambukumar's third wife, Padmasena, spoke: "O Lord! You, who aspire to attain liberation, must not—by renouncing the worldly prosperity you have acquired

in this life—end up utterly deprived on both counts, much like the jackal in this story. Listen to his story.

In a forest, a jackal came across a piece of meat. Carrying it with him, he went to the bank of a river. As he was about to eat the meat, he spotted a fish swimming in the river; seized by greed, he wanted to catch the fish instead. So, he set the piece of meat down on the ground; but by the time the jackal rushed forward to catch the fish, the fish had already slipped back into the water—and meanwhile, an eagle snatched up the piece of meat and flew away into the sky. Consequently, the jackal, deprived of both objects, began to feel deep remorse in his heart. In this very manner, you—who abandon the wealth of this world to covet the wealth of the next—will end up deprived of both like that jackal. Having heard this tale, Jambukumar spoke to Padmasena: "I shall not become afflicted by attachment like the Vidyadhar named Vidyunmali. You, too, must not become ensnared by attachment as Vidyunmali did. In this regard, listen to a story:"

There was a city named Gagan-vallabhapur, which was like a jewel adorning the northern range of the Vaitadhya Mountain. Residing there were two Vidyadhar brothers named Meghrath and Vidyunmali. One day, both of them traveled to Vasantapur to master the Matangi Vidya (a specific mystical discipline). This Matangi Vidya could not be mastered without entering into marriage; it could only be attained through service rendered by a woman of the Chandal (outcaste) community. Upon learning this, they disguised themselves as Chandals and proceeded to the Chandal locality. There, they began to serve the Chandals. Eventually, the Chandals asked them, "Where have you two come from, and who exactly are you?" Hearing this, the brothers replied, "We are the sons of a Mleccha (barbarian) king; having been expelled from our home by our father, we have come here from Saketapur." They subsequently pleased the Chandals to such an extent that the latter gave their two daughters in marriage to the brothers. Meghrath—who remained steadfast in his vow of celibacy—successfully mastered the Matangi Vidya within a year, accepting only the necessary services from his wife. Vidyunmali, however, fell under the sway of his wife, became deeply engrossed in sensual pleasures, and his wife subsequently became pregnant. Meghrath then asked him, "Brother! Have you succeeded in mastering the Vidya, or have you not?" At that moment, Vidyunmali revealed the truth to Meghrath. Hearing this, Meghrath exclaimed, "O foolish one! Why have you defiled your soul by engaging in intimacy with a Mleccha woman?" To this, Vidyunmali replied:

"O virtuous one! O embodiment of noble qualities! O enchanting one! Please forgive my transgression just this once.

Then, Vidyunmali spoke again: "O Brother! You, who are so devoted to me out of love—please come to meet me after one year has passed. For now, grant me your forgiveness. During this one-year period, I shall conquer Kamdev and dedicate myself to the pursuit of true spiritual knowledge." Driven by his deep affection for his

brother, Meghrath returned to that spot one year later. Once again, observing that his brother's wife—the Chandalini woman—was visibly pregnant, Meghrath inquired: "Why does this woman appear to be in a state of pregnancy?" Upon hearing this, Vidyunmali hung his head in shame and, seeking yet another opportunity to master his spiritual studies, requested a further extension of one year from Meghrath. Three years later, when Meghrath returned, he found his brother still immersed in the same state of delusion. Seeing his brother thus entangled within the confines of a Mleccha family, Meghrath turned back and returned to his own home. Freeing himself from all attachment and desire, Meghrath swiftly attained complete mastery of spiritual knowledge. As for Vidyunmali, remaining within that Mleccha household, he was gradually reduced to the status of a servant by the Chandalini woman. With absolute impunity, she began to issue him commands to perform the most menial and degrading tasks. Living in such a foul-smelling and squalid environment, Vidyunmali suffered greatly; and upon his death, he was reborn into the torments of hell. Thus, I resolve that I shall not allow myself to become immersed in the cycle of worldly existence as Vidyunmali did. In the same spirit, you too must not allow yourself to become attached to the pleasures of this world.

Now, Jambukumar's fourth wife, Kanaksena, spoke up: "Heed my words, and do not become greedy like the conch-blower. Listen to his story:

In times past, in a village called Shaligaon, there lived a householder named Kankut. Kankut was employed to guard the fields belonging to a certain family. Living in the fields, he would blow a conch shell every day to scare away the creatures that came to feed on the crops.

On one occasion, Kankut with a conch in hand—went to guard the village fields during the night. During the night, thieves, having stolen a large herd of cows belonging to someone, approached the vicinity of that field while driving the cattle along. At that very moment, the watchman of the field sounded a conch shell. Hearing the sound of the conch, the thieves—fearing that the city guards were approaching from behind—abandoned the cows right there and fled away in fear. The next morning, upon discovering the cows that the thieves had abandoned, the watchman—rejoicing at having recovered the herd—began to sound the conch shell regularly inside his own home.

Once again, the thieves returned to the spot. Hearing the sound of the conch just as before, they began to wonder: "Who is it that sounds this conch shell day after day?" Upon conducting a thorough search, the thieves discovered the identity of the man who played the conch. Exclaiming, "It was he who deceived us that time!" the thieves rushed in, bound the conch-blower tightly, and beat him so savagely with punches and kicks that he collapsed unconscious. His conch shell fell and shattered, and the thieves looted all his wealth. Thus, my dear! If, out of greed, you desire wealth beyond your means, you too—much like the conch-blower—will end up in misery. Hearing this

tale, Jambukumar said to his wife: "I am no fool, unlike that monkey. Listen now to the story of that monkey."

On the Vindhyachal mountain—teeming with various wild animals—a certain monkey lived a blissful life, frolicking happily in the company of his female companions. Then, another, more powerful monkey arrived and, without any fear, began to frolic with the first monkey's female companions. The female monkeys accepted this newcomer as their new husband and began to frolic with him instead. They no longer held their original husband in any regard—treating him as if he were utterly worthless, like a mere blade of grass. The female monkeys gathered nearby and remarked, "This monkey has grown old now. It is only fitting that we abandon him." With this thought in mind, all the female monkeys lived in the protection and company of the younger male. For it is said:

Birds abandon a tree devoid of fruit; cranes forsake a dried-up pond; bumblebees desert a withered flower; deer flee a scorched forest; a courtesan abandons a penniless man; and a servant forsakes a corrupt king. All living beings act solely out of self-interest; no one is truly dear to anyone else.

Witnessing all this, the old monkey engaged in battle with the young one. However, with the assistance of the female monkeys, the young monkey succeeded in driving the old one away. As he fled, tormented by thirst and searching for water, the monkey mistook a pool of lac resin for water and dipped his face into it, causing his mouth to become stuck. Just then, seeing the young monkey and the females pursuing him, he thrust his two front legs into the resin in an attempt to pull his mouth free; consequently, those two legs also became trapped. Next, in an effort to extricate his mouth and front legs, he placed his two other legs into the resin, and they, too, became ensnared. Thus, with his entire body trapped in the lac resin, and enduring the agony in all his limbs, the monkey met his death. Had that monkey pulled his mouth free before plunging his legs into the resin, he would not have perished. Therefore, by desiring wives such as you, I do not wish to drown myself in the pleasures of this world—pleasures which are akin to that sticky lac resin.

Now, Jambukumar's fifth wife, Nabhsena, spoke: "Excessive greed will lead you to ridicule and ruin, much like the woman named Buddhi. Listen to her story:

In the village of Nandigram, there lived two elderly women named Siddhi and Buddhi. Just outside the village lived a Yaksha named Bholik who used to give whatever one desired.

The elderly woman named Siddhi would worship that Yaksha daily with beautiful flowers and other offerings; so pleased was the Yaksha with her devotion that he began giving her two gold coins (dinars) every day. Consequently, Siddhi abandoned her wooden utensils and began dining from vessels of gold; in due course, she built herself a grand palace. Observing Siddhi who had become immensely wealthy through

the Yaksha's grace, Buddhi approached her in private and, with affectionate curiosity, asked:

"We two have always been the inheritors of a poverty passed down through our family lineage; from where, then, have you acquired this ocean of wealth, much like a goddess of the waters?"

Upon hearing this, Siddhi replied, "I have worshipped a Bholik Yaksha, who grants me two gold coins every single day." Hearing this account, Buddhi was filled with devotion and she too began to worship the Yaksha. Pleased with her devotion, the Yaksha appeared and asked, "O Buddhi! What is it that you desire?" Buddhi replied, "Grant me double of what you give to Siddhi." Thus, the Yaksha began giving four gold coins to Buddhi. When Siddhi learned that the Yaksha was giving four coins to Buddhi, she, in turn, asked the Yaksha for double the amount that Buddhi was receiving. Upon learning this, Buddhi, too, demanded double of what Siddhi was receiving. Observing this escalating rivalry, Siddhi reflected: "To compete with me, Buddhi constantly asks the Yaksha for double of whatever I receive. Therefore, I shall devise a plan to ensure that she reaps the true consequences of her rivalry with me." Then, in secret, Siddhi made a request to the Yaksha: "Put out one of my eyes." Subsequently, Buddhi approached the Yaksha and demanded, "Grant me double of whatever you have given to Siddhi." Thereupon, the Yaksha put out both of Buddhi's eyes, rendering her completely blind. It has been said:

"Those who become angry without any provocation are countless; those who become angry when there is a valid cause are numerous; but those who, even when faced with a valid cause for anger, remain unperturbed—such people number no more than five or six in this entire world."

In this world, there exists no household, royal dynasty, or divine lineage where two or three wicked men, prone to anger without cause, are not seen.

Through envy, a person suffers from spiritual blindness and subjugation in this life, and in the afterlife, faces the torments of hell and immense suffering.

"O Master! If you continue to desire ever-increasing material wealth in this manner, you, too, will eventually fall into ruin."

Upon hearing this tale, Jambukumar replied, "O Beloved! I shall not be like that noble-bred horse that wanders from place to place. Listen, my dear, to the story behind this."

In the city of Vasantpur, there reigned a just and righteous king named Jitshatru. One day, the King asked, "Is there anyone in my kingdom who possesses the expertise to evaluate horses?" Thereupon, men skilled in identifying horses of superior breeds selected a magnificent horse from among many and presented it, declaring, "The kingdom in which this horse resides is destined to flourish in every respect. Other kings shall bow down to its ruler, and no enemy shall ever be able to defeat him." The

King then set that particular horse apart from the rest and reflected, "It would be best to entrust this horse to Jindas for its care and upbringing." For Jindas was a man of great compassion and devoid of greed. Having thus resolved, the King handed the horse over to Jindas for its care and nurturing. Jindas, in turn, constructed a square enclosure upon a choice plot of land to keep the horse given by the king. He began to tend to the horse with great care, providing it with the finest fodder and water. As the horse grew and matured, the King's wealth—specifically his herds of horses, elephants, and other assets—began to increase. Every morning, Jindas Shreshthi would mount the horse, ride it to a nearby lake to let it drink, and then on his way back, he would circumambulate the temple of Shri Rishabhdev Swami three times, pay obeisance to Adinath, and return home. Thus, the horse would never go anywhere except the lake, the temple, and Jindas's house. He knew no other routes.

An enemy king, knowing that the horse was the reason for the growth of King Jitshatru's kingdom, said in his court, "Is there anyone in this assembly who can bring King Jitshatru's horse here? I will give five villages to the one who brings it here." Hearing this, a servant, gaining the king's favor, disguised himself as a deceitful Shravak and went to the city of Vasantpur. In the city, the deceitful Shravak would worship the Lord in the Jain temples, worship the deities, and worship the saints. Seeing him doing this, Jindas Shreshthi, recognizing him as an excellent Shravak, took him to his home for a meal. Then, at night, Jindas held a religious discussion with him and kept him with him.

One day, Jindas Shreshthi went to another village for some work. The deceitful Shravak was overjoyed and mounted the horse and headed towards his city. The horse never went anywhere except the lake, the Jain temple, and Jindas's house. Seeing the horse repeatedly going to the lake, the Jain temple, and Jindas's house, the deceitful Shravak became upset and released the horse in the morning. The deceitful Shravak ran to his place and told the king about the horse. The horse, not knowing any other path except the three, went to Jindas Shreshthi's house. In the morning, the servants saw the horse coming on its own. Upon learning the full account of the horse's abduction, the King said to Jindas Shreshthi. Subsequently, the King and Jindas accorded exceptional honor to that horse, and the horse lived a life of contentment. In this same manner, I too remain utterly unacquainted with any path other than the three paths of Gyan (Right Knowledge), Darshan (Right Faith), and Charitra (Right Conduct).

Now, the sixth wife, Kanakshri, spoke:

"Once, two brothers set out from the city of Hempur to travel to a distant land. While journeying along the path, they came across a burrow with five distinct openings. Upon digging at one of these openings, water gushed forth. Quenching their thirst with the water, both brothers felt delighted. Then, the elder brother said to the younger: 'Let us dig at a second opening and see what lies within.' From that opening, wealth emerged; similarly, from the third opening came silver, and from the fourth,

gold. Observing his younger brother preparing to dig at the fifth opening, the elder brother spoke: 'One should not harbor excessive greed.' For it has been said:

'Greed is the very root of the poisonous tree of delusion; it is like the sage Agastya, who drank up the vast ocean of good deeds; it is equivalent to the Arani wood that kindles the fire of anger; it is like a cloud that obscures the sun of one's glory; it serves as the playground for discord; it is like Rahu, eclipsing the moon of wisdom; it is the ocean into which the river of calamity flows; and it is like an elephant that tramples and destroys the vine of one's reputation. Therefore, conquer greed.'

Even when one attains immense gain (Labh), greed (Lobh) remains unconquerable. For how can 'Lobh'—which possesses an extra syllable—ever be vanquished by 'Labh'—which possesses one syllable less? In other words, the word Lobh (greed) contains one extra syllable compared to the word Labh (gain); hence, it is exceedingly difficult to conquer greed."

The elder brother insisted, "Let us leave one opening just as it is." Yet, despite the elder brother's prohibition—driven by an insatiable desire for greater gain—the younger brother proceeded to dig at the fifth opening. Just as he did so, the elder brother turned around and sat down at a certain spot. Upon completely excavating the fifth peak, a Drishtivish serpent—one whose mere gaze is venomous—emerged from it. That serpent instantly reduced the younger brother to ashes. O Beloved! Thus, driven by excessive greed and seeking the bliss of liberation, do not be like that younger brother.

Hearing this, Jambukumar replied, "O Beloved! I shall not be like the Shuknikar bird. Listen now to its story.

In a certain village, people installed mechanical reed devices to guard their fields. One day, a Shuknikar bird landed upon one of these devices. As the reed mechanism rotated, the bird was lowered downwards. Fearing a fall, the bird tightened its grip on the device with its legs; in doing so, it began to believe that it had become ensnared within the mechanism. Yet, in reality, it was not bound at all. Nevertheless, convinced that it was trapped, the bird did not fly away.

O Beloved! I am not like that bird. Rather, I shall use the sword of spiritual wisdom to sever the net of delusion, and then, of my own free will, I shall fly away. In this regard, listen also to another story.

On the Vindhyachal Mountain, there lay a pond filled with water. In that pond lived a tortoise, along with his sons, daughters, grandsons, and other kin. One night, as the layer of algae covering the water's surface momentarily parted, the tortoise looked up at the sky and was overjoyed to behold the full moon. Seeing this, the tortoise resolved, 'I must show this full moon to my family.' Accordingly, he dived beneath the water to reach his kin. However, by the time the tortoise brought his family back to the surface, the layer of algae had once again closed over the water. Consequently, though he searched frantically—casting his restless eyes here and there in search of

the full moon—the tortoise could not catch a glimpse of the moon. Similarly, O beloved! I too, after attaining the Jain religion, the embodiment of restraint, a guru, and the appropriate materials, will not renounce it.

Now the eighth wife, Jayashree, said, "Why are you deceiving me like Nagshree? I will tell you her story. Listen to it.

King Kelipriya ruled in the city of Padmapur. He listened to new stories from the people in turn. One day, it was a Brahmin's turn to tell a story. The Brahmin was foolish. So he thought, 'What story should I tell the king? If I don't tell him a new story, the wicked king will throw me in prison.' The Brahmin's daughter, seeing her father dark-faced and worried, said to him, 'Don't worry. I will tell the king the story.' Then the girl went to the king and said, 'O King! Today, I will tell you the story in place of my father.' Hearing this, the king said, 'You tell me the story.' The girl said, "A Brahmin named Nagsharma lives in this town. His wife's name is Somshree and his daughter's name is Nagshree. Her parents engaged their daughter to a prominent Brahmin. They then went to the village to buy wedding items. While the girl was alone at home, her husband, an elderly Brahmin, arrived. She recognized her would-be husband and fed him. Then, she put him to sleep on a soft bed and thought, 'This earth is vast. Before marriage, one should not even touch husband's hand.' Thinking this, the girl lay beside him under the bed, unperturbed. Suddenly, her husband fell on her in his sleep. He died out of fear of embarrassment. Then, the Brahmin's daughter reflected: "I am a sinner; I have killed him. What shall I do if people find out?" Thereupon, she cut her husband—the Brahmin—into small pieces, dug a pit in the ground, and put the pieces into it. She then filled the pit with soil, plastered over it with cow-dung, and, having perfumed the spot with fragrant flowers and incense, stood guard over it until her parents returned from the village, bringing with them the supplies for the wedding ceremony.

Having spoken thus, the maiden fell silent. The King then asked, "What happened next? Tell me." The maiden replied, "O King! It is time for me to return home; therefore, I shall depart now." The King asked, "How shall I ever see that maiden again?" The maiden replied, "I am that very woman who has enacted this drama of the world before your eyes." The King asked, "O Maiden! Is what you have said the truth?" She replied, "If the stories you previously heard from the villagers are true, then this story, too, is true." Having spoken thus, the maiden departed for her own abode.

Now, Jayashri said to Jambukumar, "Just as that Nagshri deceived the King, why are you, too, deceiving us by spinning these tales?"

Hearing this, Jambukumar replied, "I am not attached to worldly pleasures and sensual delights as Lalitang was. His story is as follows; listen to it now:

In the city of Kandarpakosh, a King named Shatayudha reigned. His wife was named Lilavati. One day, adorned with all her ornaments, Lilavati was seated at a lattice

window. At that moment, she caught sight of a man named Lalitang—who appeared as the very incarnation of Kamdev (the God of Love)—riding upon a horse. Upon seeing him, Lilavati was pierced by the arrows of desire. At that moment, upon beholding Lilavati, Lalitang too was struck and wounded by the arrows of lust. However, reflecting that attaining the King's wife was an exceedingly rare and difficult feat, he returned to his own home. Meanwhile, the King's wife, tormented by the arrows of desire, began to writhe and thrash about like one possessed by a spirit. Observing this, her maidservant discerned the true intent of her mistress's heart and declared, "I shall bring him here to you." Through inquiries, the maidservant discovered that the man was Lalitang, the son of the wealthy merchant Samudrapriya. Approaching him, she spoke to him privately and in confidence: "My mistress desires to share the pleasures of intimacy with you." He replied, "I, too, have long harbored a desire to enjoy such pleasures with her. Simply let me know when the opportunity arises, and I shall come." The maidservant then reported back to her mistress: "The King rarely ventures out of the palace; therefore, finding a suitable opportunity seems all but impossible." Nevertheless, one day, seizing a rare moment, the maidservant brought Lalitang—who was adorned in fine garments and jewelry—into the presence of her mistress. Yet, at that very instant, the King unexpectedly arrived. Terrified, the Queen hurriedly had the maidservant conceal Lalitang within a filthy drain known as the Sanchara, sending him a message: "Remain absolutely silent, for the King has arrived. If the King were to discover that you are here, he would surely have you hanged and executed." Upon hearing this, Lalitang—cramping his limbs to fit—remained hidden within that foul-smelling drain. Later, taking pity on Lalitang as he lay there, the Queen provided him with food. Lalitang was forced to eat within that very drain, and there, too, he was compelled to relieve himself. Thus, tormented by the stench and misery of his surroundings, Lalitang became utterly wretched as he wistfully recalled the comforts and joys of his own home. Then, during the monsoon season, when heavy rains caused the drain to overflow, Lalitang was swept away by the rushing waters and carried out of the city into a large, open drainage canal. When he fell, Dhatri (a nursemaid) found him and brought him home unconscious. She washed Lalitang's body with pure water and nursed him back to health. When his relatives asked him, "Where have you been all this time?" Lalitang said shyly, "I don't know." Now, if Lalitang ever leaves the house and the queen sees him walking on the road and calls him, he might go there. But I don't desire the company of such an impure woman, often filled with sensual pleasures. If I fall into the sensual pleasures of such a woman, I will go to hell."

The moral of this story is that a soul, like a well, leaves the womb and returns there, addicted to sensual pleasures. Jambukumar said to Jayashree, "O beloved! I do not desire the pleasures of that Lalitang."

Hearing this, Jayashree said, "O my lord! Don't be as daring as Masahas bird. Listen to his story."

A lion was sleeping in a mountain cave. Entering the open mouth of the sleeping lion, a bird named Masahas began to eat the pieces of flesh between the lion's teeth by scraping them with its beak and loudly shouting, "Don't dare." Meanwhile, a man said, "You are saying, 'Don't dare,' but you are gaining courage by eating the flesh from the lion's mouth. Therefore, you appear foolish, because you do not act on your words."

Thus, O my beloved! Do not dare to give up direct happiness and take initiation like the Masahas bird. Just as that lion, upon awakening, will take the life of that Masahas, in the same way the restraint adopted like a lion will take away your life.

Upon hearing this, Jambukumar said to Jayashri, "Like the priest Somsharma, I shall forsake bad company and cultivate good company instead. Listen attentively to this story."

In the city of Kshitipratishthit, King Jitshatru reigned. He had a royal priest named Somsharma. This priest had three friends, named Nityamitra, Parvamitra, and Pranamamitra. He treated his first friend, Nityamitra—being a childhood companion—as his equal; he would invite his second friend only during festivals and special occasions; and he would merely offer salutations to his third friend whenever they happened to cross paths on the road.

One day, the King became enraged with the priest. Consequently, the priest went to the home of his first friend, Nityamitra, and said, "The King is furious with me; what should I do?" Nityamitra replied, "If the King is indeed angry with you, his royal officials will surely come here first in search of you. Therefore, it is not prudent for you to remain here; you must go elsewhere." The priest then went to the home of his second friend, Parvamitra, and conveyed the same message to him. Upon hearing this, that friend also said to him, "If you stay here, and the King discovers it, he will have both of us—along with our entire families—crushed in an oil press. Therefore, you must go and hide yourself somewhere else." Finally, the priest went to the home of his third friend, Pranamamitra, and recounted how his other two friends had refused to shelter him in their homes. Hearing this, Pranamamitra said, "Do not be afraid. If the two of us stand united and remain together, what harm can the King possibly do? We shall simply leave this kingdom and migrate to another." Thereupon, the two of them departed for a different kingdom. In that new land, through the companionship of Pranamamitra, the priest became highly respected and lived a life of great happiness. The moral of this story is as follows:

A king is like the results of one's actions, one's soul is like a priest, a constant friend is like one's body, one's relatives are like a family friend, and religion is like a friend of one's heart. Because only religion accompanies a soul in its next life. Jambukumar said to his wife, Jayashree:

"I will abandon my relatives and body and devote myself to the worship of religion, for only this religion bestows the desired Lakshmi in the next life.

For this reason, I will embrace the religion of restraint, the wealth of liberation, which bestows the happiness of liberation."

Then, with Jambukumar's words, like the nectar of emotion, Prabhav with all thieves, and his eight wives, were moved to detachment. All eight maidens said:

"O Lord! We have been deceived by these objects of pleasure that initially bring pleasure and ultimately bring sorrow." Having uncontrol over the senses is the path to disaster, and conquering the senses is the path to prosperity. Therefore, O travelers! Follow the path that pleases you.

What will a king do if he becomes angry with someone whose hands, feet, and tongue are well controlled, and whose senses are suppressed?

You have saved us from sinking into deep darkness through the relationship of marriage; the company of virtuous people is for welfare.

We too are dependent on the path on which you are situated. You are the guide who will take us to the city of salvation.

Then Prabhav also thought, "Woe to us! Because we are engaged in snatching away the wealth of others. I have committed theft and through the indulgence in gambling and similar vices, I have accumulated a vast store of sin; I know not what fate awaits me as a result. It is said that:

Stemming from the plant of a sin like theft, a soul has to suffer imprisonment, execution and similar afflictions in this world and endure the torments of hell for a prolonged period in the world hereafter.

Only a soul like Jambukumar could possibly renounce the wealth that includes such a delicate physique and a wife. Therefore, whatever path he chooses to embrace, I too must take refuge in that very path. Having reflected in this manner, Prabhav addressed Jambukumar:

"O Jambukumar, the man of great essence! Captivated by your virtues, I too—after consulting with my kith and kin—shall certainly follow in your footsteps." Thus did Prabhav declare in a loud, clear voice.

At that very moment, the Guardian Goddess (Shasan Devi) released all the thieves from their bonds. Thereupon, their hearts imbued with the spirit of renunciation, Prabhav and his companions spoke to Jambukumar: "We shall inform our families and return at dawn to receive initiation alongside you." Hearing this, Jambukumar replied: "O Prabhav! The minds of living beings are inherently fickle; for it is said:

In a single moment, this mind becomes attached; in the next, it is detached. In one moment, it flares with anger; in the next, it is filled with forgiveness. Driven solely by the capricious interplay of delusion and passion, the soul becomes as restless and unsteady as a monkey."

"If deities become pleased with us quickly if we meditate upon their stone idols, then what need is there to speak of the responsiveness of living, conscious beings?"

"Intoxicants, sensual pleasures, kashaay (passions), slumber, and idle gossip—these five forms of spiritual negligence—are the very forces that cast living beings down into the abyss of this cycle of worldly existence. Therefore, one must never yield to negligence. You must remain steadfast and honor the words you have just spoken."

"As you have commanded, so shall I do." Having spoken thus, Prabhav returned to his place. Then, perceiving that Jambukumar, along with his wives, desired to embrace initiation, his parents-in-law and his own parents also resolved to follow in his footsteps. Thereafter, adorned in exquisite garments and ornaments, Jambukumar—having worshipped the Jineshwar in accordance with the prescribed rites and having distributed his wealth across the seven meritorious fields—mounted a horse and, accompanied by all his wives and parents, proceeded to Shri Sudharma Swami to receive initiation.

Meanwhile, Prabhav, having informed his own family, also arrived there to embrace initiation, accompanied by five hundred thieves. Then, Jambukumar circumambulated the Fifth Ganadhar, Shri Sudharma Swami, three times in reverence; bowing down before him, he submitted the following humble plea:

"O Munishwar (sovereign of ascetics)! O the leader of the universe! O deliverer from the cycle of existence! Through the vessel of ascetic conduct, please ferry me—along with my entire family—across this ocean of worldly existence."

Thereupon, Shri Sudharma Swami—the foremost among the Ganadhars—initiated Jambukumar, along with his family and kinsmen, bestowing the vows upon them with his own lotus-like hands.

Having initiated five hundred and twenty-seven Shravaks, Shri Sudharma Swami delivered the following religious discourse: "Some souls embrace restraint with the courage of a lion, yet observe it with the frailty of a jackal. Some souls embrace restraint with the timidity of a jackal, and observe it with that same timidity. Some souls embrace restraint with the timidity of a jackal, yet observe it with the valor of a lion. And finally, some souls—heroic and valiant like a lion—embrace restraint and observe it with that very same leonine fortitude. Therefore, you must all observe this restraint—which manifests in these four distinct modes—without the slightest transgression, so that you may swiftly attain the state of liberation. Do not yield to spiritual negligence; for it is precisely this negligence that causes even those who have embraced asceticism to continue wandering endlessly within the cycle of worldly existence. As it has been said:

Even those endowed with the fourteen Purvas (ancient scriptures), a Aharaka body (a subtle body for spiritual inquiry), Manah-paryaya-gyan (telepathic knowledge), and who have ascended the Upasham-shreni (the ladder of pacification)—if overcome by

spiritual negligence—continue to wander through the cycle of transmigration across the four states of existence.

Upon hearing this, Jambuswami became even more intensely dedicated to the practice of asceticism. There, the sages offered this eulogy to Jambu Swami:

"Having renounced ninety-nine crores of gold coins and his eight wives—being the foremost among sages and the last among the Kevalis—may Jambuswami attain supreme bliss."

Accompanied by his disciples, including Jambuswami —much like the master of a herd of elephants—Shri Sudharma Swami continued his spiritual wandering and arrived at a garden situated just outside the city of Champa. At that time, a multitude of people gathered there to pay homage to his lotus-feet and to listen to the discourse on Dharma. Observing the crowds streaming forth to offer their salutations, Konik—the son of King Shrenik—also arrived at the site to pay his respects to Shri Sudharma Swami. Accompanied by Konik, the entire congregation (Sangha) circumambulated Shri Sudharma Swami three times in reverence and then sat there to listen to the religious discourse. Shri Sudharma Swami then delivered the sermon in following way:

"In this world, the attainment of a human birth, a noble lineage, physical beauty, a disease-free body, a long life, a sharp intellect, the opportunity to hear the Dharma, the capacity to grasp it, faith in it, and the practice of spiritual renunciation—each of these becomes progressively more rare and difficult to attain."

"Just as it is arduous to obtain silk from worms, gold from a mine, the moon from the ocean, a red lotus from the mud, or a blue lotus from cow-dung—even so, is the attainment of a human birth."

Having resolved to embrace the path of a Shravak and having witnessed the extraordinary caliber of disciples led by Shri Jambuswami, Konik—at the conclusion of the sermon—addressed Shri Sudharma Swami with a question:

"O Shri Sudharma Swami! Like Surdwip among the islands, moon among the celestial bodies, Mount Meru among the mountains, rice among the grains, Kalpavriksha among the trees, Kshir-sagar among the oceans, Champak among the flowers, gold among the metals,; and the divine elixir among the nectars—who is that extraordinary disciple among your students who shines with such distinction?"

Upon hearing this, Ganadhar Shri Sudharmaswami named Shri Jambuswami and recounted to Konik the complete history of his asceticism in his previous lives, explaining that it was through the penance performed in those past existences that this sage had attained such spiritual wealth. Delighted by hearing this account, Konik departed for Champapuri. The people, too—having embraced the Jain faith and paid their obeisance to the Guru—returned to their respective homes. Shri Jambuswami undertook the study of the Dwadashangi (the twelve-limbed canon) under the

guidance of Sudharmaswami. In the tenth year following the Nirvana of Lord Shri Vir Prabhu, Sudharmaswami bestowed the title of Acharya upon Jambuswami; subsequently, in the twentieth year after Lord Shri Vir Prabhu's Nirvana—having entrusted the entire burden of the Gacch (spiritual lineage) to the capable shoulders of Shri Jambuswami—Shri Sudharmaswami attained Moksha (liberation). Thereafter, having attained Keval Gyan and enlightened numerous worthy souls, he conferred the title of Acharya upon Shri Prabhavswami and entrusted the responsibility of the Gacch to him. Finally, sixty-four years after the Nirvana of Lord Shri Vir, having completely annihilated all his karmas, Shri Jambuswami entered the abode of liberation.

With the Nirvana of Jambuswami, the continuity of the following ten spiritual things came to an end: (1) Manah-paryav Gyan (knowledge of the thoughts of others), (2) Paramavadhi Gyan (supreme clairvoyance), (3) Pulak Labdhi (the attainment of extraordinary spiritual purity), (4) Aharak Labdhi (the attainment of the subtle body), (5) Upsham Shreni (the ladder of karmic suppression), (6) Kshapak Shreni (the ladder of karmic annihilation), (7) Jin-Kalpa (the path of the solitary ascetic), (8) the three types of Charitra (conduct)—Parihar Vishuddha, Sukshma Samparaya, and Yathakhyat (9) Keval Gyan (omniscience), and (10) Moksha (liberation).

Offering the shade of the profound and expansive Agamas (scriptures) and the sweet fruits of his sublime teachings, and thereby dispelling the scorching heat of worldly existence for worthy souls, Jambuswami shone forth—much like a second Jambu tree itself.

The Story of Shri Jambuswami Concludes.



5. Vankchul Kumar

A soul that is fearful of worldly existence (the cycle of birth and death) does not abandon a vow once undertaken, even when faced with adversity, much like Vankchul Kumar.

Situated like a jewel upon the brow of the earth, within Virat region, lay a city named Pedhalpur. While ruling over his entire kingdom, King Shrichul was blessed with a son and a daughter, named Pushpchul and Pushpchula, respectively. Upon reaching the age of youth, Pushpchul became addicted to gambling. He engaged in theft and used deceitful stratagems to swindle the people. Consequently, the people dubbed him "Vankchul" (the crooked one). Eventually, deeming him an unjust and wicked individual, his father expelled him from their home. It has been wisely said:

Enmity, fire, disease, discord, and addiction—these five, if allowed to grow unchecked, become the root causes of immense calamity.

Gambling is the abode of all misfortunes; only those of clouded intellect engage in it. Gambling sullies the reputation of one's lineage and earns a person the notoriety of being a wretch.

It was due to gambling that King Nal was stripped of his kingdom, separated from his wife, and deprived of all his wealth and prosperity; and not only him, but even the mighty-armed Pandavas were forced into exile in the forest.

Accompanied by his wife and sister, Vankchul traveled to a palli (a settlement) where the women of Bhil tribe used to dance and play dramas. When the chieftain of that palli passed away, Vankchul became the master of that palli. Surrounded by a large band of thieves, Vankchul would venture out to commit robberies in every village and city within the region.

Once, while wandering on his spiritual journey, Gyantungacharya arrived at that settlement while it was raining during the monsoon season. Upon beholding him, Vankchul—the chieftain of the settlement—told him, "You may stay here only if you refrain from delivering religious sermons to anyone." The Guru replied, "I shall not preach to anyone here." Thus, Shri Gyantungsuri—who was diligent in self-study, scriptural learning, intense asceticism, and the observance of virtuous conduct—stayed in the house provided by Vankchul. The Chaturmas (four-month monsoon retreat) concluded amidst self-study and scriptural learning. The Guru announced, "Now we shall commence our journey." Upon hearing this, Vankchul, accompanied by his family, went to escort the Guru for a short distance along the path. As Vankchul crossed the village boundary, the Guru asked him, "O Vankchul! To whom does this boundary belong?" Vankchul replied, "This land is not of mine." Then the Guru said, "O noble soul! Throughout our stay in your village, we remained constantly engrossed in self-study and scriptural learning. To this day, we have not delivered a sermon to anyone. Now, you should undertake a specific religious vow (Abhigraha). Such vows bring happiness to the soul; for it has been said:

“A vow (Niyam) is a bond—unfettered by chains—that secures all forms of wealth; it brings prosperity under one's control, it is a protective mantra without any syllable (akshar) that protects one from evils, spirits, and ghosts.”

Hearing this, Vankchul said, "O Revered One! Please bestow a vow upon me." The Guru replied, "Renounce the consumption of fruits of unknown origin and the flesh of crows. Renounce even the thought of another man's wife—even if you feel attracted to a king's wife. And, when about to strike someone, take seven steps back before delivering the blow. Undertake these four vows." Accepting these four vows as instructed by the Guru, Vankchul paid his obeisance and returned home.

One day, while returning from a plundering raid in a certain village, Vankchul lost his way. He wandered aimlessly three times through that dense and terrifying forest.

Spotting some luscious-looking fruits, his companions said, "Look! There are fruits here; let us eat them." Upon seeing the fruits, Vankchul asked his companions, "What is the name of these fruits?"

The servants replied, "We do not know the name of these fruits." Upon hearing this, Vankchul declared, "I have taken a vow not to consume any unknown fruit." Hearing this, the servants remarked, "We have taken no such vow; therefore, we shall eat them." Vankchul admonished them, saying, "One should not eat unknown fruits." Yet, despite Vankchul's warnings, the servants proceeded to eat those beautiful fruits. Consequently, they died shortly thereafter. Observing this, Vankchul realized, "These are poisonous fruits—the very kind my Guru forbade me from eating." Thereafter, Vankchul entered his settlement alone under the cover of night and proceeded to his home at midnight. Upon reaching his house, Vankchul reflected: "Had I not undertaken this vow, I, too, would surely have met my death today." For it is said:

"The pure-hearted soul who embraces a vow and remains steadfast in it—that soul is destined to attain every form of prosperity."

One day, Vankchul traveled to a neighboring village. Meanwhile, a troupe of dancers belonging to Vankchul's adversary king began performing a play. The dancers then went to Vankchul's house to invite him. Vankchul's sister, Pushpchula, reasoned: "It would be unwise if these people were to discover that Vankchul has gone to another village." Pondering this, she donned her brother's attire, went to the venue, and took her seat. After watching the dance performance and offering a donation, she returned home and, still clad in her male disguise, lay down to sleep beside her brother's wife.

Meanwhile, Vankchul returned home from the neighboring village. Upon seeing his wife lying on the bed beside another man, Vankchul—his eyes blazing with rage—drew his sword, intending to slay them both. However, just as he was about to strike, the memory of his vow flashed through his mind; he recoiled seven steps backward, hesitating for a moment. In that instant, the sound of his sword clanging against the wall startled Pushpchula awake, and she cried out, "My brother Vankchul, May you live a long life, " and stood to her feet. Then, Vankchul respectfully bowed to his sister, Pushpchula, and inquired about the reason for her disguise in male attire. In response, Pushpchula recounted the entire episode involving the encounter with the hostile actors. Upon hearing this, Vankchul was filled with joy and began to extol the vow prescribed by his Guru, exclaiming, "Oh! That Guru was truly a man of profound wisdom!"

One day, having witnessed a financial dispute between a father and son at a merchant's home, and observing a courtesan at her own residence infatuated with a leper, Vankchul broke through the wall of a king's inner palace chambers during the night to gain entry; however, he was apprehended by the Queen. The Queen then said to Vankchul, "Come, enjoy the pleasures of the senses with me, and I shall bestow upon you a wealth of precious gems." Hearing this, and mindful of the vow his Guru had enjoined upon him, Vankchul replied, "You are as a mother to me." Stripped of

her amorous desire toward him, the Queen then cried out in alarm, "Where has this man come from?" Hearing her cries, the royal guards seized Vankchul, bound him, and brought him before the King the following morning. When the King questioned him, Vankchul refrained from disclosing the events he had experienced during the night. However, the King—who had secretly hidden behind the wall that very night and witnessed the entire sequence of events—was so impressed by Vankchul's virtues that he appointed him as his feudal lord. Although the King was fully aware of the Queen's true nature, he chose not to expose it publicly; because one should never reveal the private affairs of one's own household to anyone. As it is said:

One's private thoughts, one's secret deeds, misdeeds committed within one's home, instances where one has been deceived by another, and insults one has suffered at the hands of others—a wise person never reveals any of these things.

Guided by the King's counsel, Vankchul renounced his life of thievery and embarked upon the path of righteousness. One day, acting upon the King's command, he set out to conquer an enemy that was deemed virtually unconquerable. Having defeated such an enemy, and wounded by the adversary's blows, Vankchul returned to his city and sought medical treatment from physicians. Due to the lingering pain and trauma of those injuries, Vankchul developed other ailments as well. Despite extensive treatment, he failed to recover; instead, his body began to waste away day by day, and he developed an aversion to his prescribed diet. Consequently, in an effort to cure Vankchul's illness, the King issued a public proclamation via drumbeat: "Whosoever can cure Vankchul of his disease and save his life shall be rewarded with whatever he desires—be it royal honors, or anything else." Thereupon, a physician arrived and prescribed a remedy consisting of medicine mixed with crow's flesh. Upon hearing the physician recommend crow's flesh as a cure, Vankchul replied, "I have taken a solemn vow never to consume crow's flesh; therefore, I cannot eat it." Wishing to counsel and guide Vankchul, the King then dispatched a royal envoy to summon a Shravak named Jindas—a man renowned as a true companion in matters of righteousness and spiritual duty—for it is said that the counsel of a true well-wisher is rarely disregarded. Jindas arrived close to Vankchul and inquired, "O Brother! O Vankchul! Is there Samadhi in your body (is your mind at peace)?" Hearing this, Vankchul replied, "O Brother! You are most welcome. My mind remains at peace, though my body has been ravaged by disease. For it is truly said:

This body is subject to disease; this life is subject to the dictates of Karma; yet the performance of spiritual disciplines lies entirely within your own power. Therefore, O Friend, do whatever you deem right and proper."

Desiring to test the depth of Vankchul's resolve, Jindas then suggested, "To restore your body to health, you should consume the medicine mixed with crow's flesh."

Upon hearing this, Vankchul—a man preeminent among the virtuous and foremost among the courageous—responded to Jindas with a tone of reproach: "Just as the wind scatters the clouds, so too diseases ravage the body; therefore, what steadfast man—

facing the imminent approach of death—would ever violate the vows he has undertaken?

Upon hearing this, and in praise of Vankchul, Jindas spoke: "O friend! I shall tell you what is right and proper; listen to it well. The soul is utterly solitary; all states of existence are immutable. Therefore, do not harbor futile attachments regarding the body, family, youth, wealth, worldly existence, life itself, or unwholesome deeds."

Having heard this and having embraced the four refuges, with a virtuous intellect—Vankchul remained steadfast in devotion to the Namaskar Mahamantra; thus, attaining death through the most noble rites of the final hour, he ascended to the twelfth Achyut Devlok.

The Story of Shri Vankchul Concludes.



6. Gajsukumal

The soul that endures life-threatening tribulations attains liberation, just like the ascetic Gajsukumal Muni.

It is impossible to narrate the story of Gajsukumal Muni without recounting the stories of Sulsa, Nag Shreshthi, and his brother Krishna. Therefore, their connections are described first.

In the city of Bhaddilpur resided Nag Shreshthi. His wife's name was Sulsa. Of the seven children Kans had demanded from Vasudev, a celestial being secretly placed six sons into the home of Sulsa, the wife of Nag Shrivak. Sulsa raised these six sons of Devaki in succession and arranged for each of them to be married to thirty-two maidens. These six sons, too, attained spiritual awakening and received initiation under Lord Neminath. All of them became Charam Shariris (souls in their final incarnation) and masters of the Dwadashangi (the twelve Angas). These six ascetics traveled to the city of Dwarka in the company of Lord Neminath.

One day, following the breaking of a six-day fast (Chhatth), the six ascetic brothers formed three pairs of two and went into the city of Dwarka to collect alms. The first pair of ascetics went to the home of Lord Krishna to seek alms; at that time, Devaki paid them homage and offered them Modaks (sweet dumplings). After that pair of ascetics had departed, the second pair arrived. Devaki offered Modaks to them as well. Subsequently, when the third pair of ascetics—who bore a striking resemblance to the ascetics who had arrived earlier—came seeking alms, Devaki was astonished. After offering Modaks to this pair as well, she asked them, "Why do you two keep returning here repeatedly to seek alms? Have you lost your way? Or are you unable to find alms elsewhere in the city? Or is it merely an illusion on my part?" To this, the pair of

ascetics replied, "We have not lost our way; we are six brothers who are of similar size and appearance. We are the sons of Nag Shresthi, a resident of Bhaddilpur, and his wife, Sulsa, a Shravika. We six brothers have taken initiation from Lord Neminath. Two sages came separately to your house to collect food. Hearing this, Devaki began to think that these six sages resemble Krishna. There is not even a slight difference between them and Krishna.

Earlier, Atimuktak Muni had said that I will have eight sons, so are these sages my sons? Filled with such doubt, Devaki went to Lord Neminath the next day to clear her doubts. By the time Devaki had bowed to the Lord and spoken, Lord Neminath, who knows emotions, said, "These six sons are yours. The six sons, Shatrusen and others, are alive and grew up in Sulsa's house."

Hearing this, Devaki, with milk flowing from her breasts, bowed to the six sages. Then Devaki said to Lord Neminath, "O my lord! I have not raised a single son, and therefore I am deeply saddened." Hearing this, Lord Neminath said, "O Devaki! Why are you sad? This is the result of your deeds from your previous life. In your previous life, you stole seven gems from your co-wife. Through illusion, you returned one gem to that co-wife. This is why you were separated from your six sons."

After paying obeisance to the Lord, Devaki went to her home and stood before Krishna, condemning her deeds from her previous life. Seeing her mother sad, Krishna asked, "O mother! What is your sorrow?" Devaki replied, "O son! This life of mine is fruitless. Because in childhood, Yashoda raised you, and Sulsa raised your elder brothers. My desire to nurture a child has remained unfulfilled.

Therefore, O Son! To bring my wish to fruition, I want a son. The joy of raising and nurturing children is a delight rare even for the gods."

Hearing this, Krishna spoke to his mother, Devaki: "O Mother! Do not grieve. I shall worship the deity Harinaigameshi and thereby fulfill your heart's desire." Thereupon, Krishna worshipped the deity Harinaigameshi; the deity manifested before him and declared: "Devaki shall indeed bear an eighth son; however, upon attaining the bloom of youth, that son shall renounce the world and embrace the ascetic path."

Subsequently, after the passage of some time, a celestial being of great spiritual wealth descended from the heavens and, heralded by auspicious dreams, took conception within Devaki's womb. In due course, Devaki gave birth to a son. Vasudeva then celebrated the child's birth with great festivity and bestowed upon him the name Gajsukumal. Thereafter, under Devaki's loving care—nourished at her breast and cradled in her arms—the boy began to grow. Bringing delight to the eyes of his mother and brothers, gradually learning to speak, and radiating a charming innocence, Gajsukumal grew into young manhood. Then, in obedience to his father's command, Gajsukumal—now in the prime of his youth—married to Prabhavati, the daughter of King Druma. Subsequently, his parents compelled Gajsukumal to enter into a second marriage with Soma, the daughter of the Brahmin Somsharma. On the same day, Lord

Neminath arrived at the royal gardens situated just outside the city. King Samudravijay and Krishna, accompanied by their entire family, proceeded to Lord Neminath to listen to his sacred discourse on Dharma. There, the Lord delivered his teachings in the following manner:

"Just as an elephant without tusks, a horse without speed, a night without the moon, a flower without fragrance, a lake without water, a tree without shade, a meal without salt, a son without virtue, an ascetic without moral discipline, or a temple without a presiding deity—none of these appear graceful or complete; even so, manhood without Dharma possesses no true grace or dignity."

A Chakravarti (Universal Emperor) renounces his vast material opulence (Riddhi) in a single auspicious moment; however, a foolish man doesn't relinquish even such meager possessions as his begging bowl and stick.

Having heard such religious instruction, and with a mind imbued with the spirit of detachment, Gajsukumal sought permission from his parents and, together with his wife, embraced initiation.

Thereafter, having undertaken the vows of self-restraint—and with his mind still steeped in detachment—Gajsukumal continuously practiced severe austerities, such as the Chhatth (six-day fast) and Attham (eight-day fast) and standing outside the city in the posture of Kayotsarg, he remained deeply absorbed in meditation and fully immersed in the Supreme Soul.

One evening, having sought the Lord's permission, ascetic Gajsukumal was standing in the posture of Pratima (absolute motionless meditation) in the cremation ground. Upon seeing him, Somsharma Brahmin thought to himself, "This sinner married my daughter and then immediately embraced initiation!" Thereupon, Somsharma—that most despicable among Brahmins—was consumed by rage; he placed the mouth of an earthen pot upon Gajsukumal's head and filled it with burning embers fetched from a funeral pyre. Through the intense heat of those embers, all of Gajsukumal's karmic fuel was reduced to ashes; in that very instant, he attained Keval Gyan and ascended to Moksha.

Later, when Krishna arrived to pay homage to the Lord, he did not see his brother Gajsukumal there; he asked the Lord, "Where is my brother?" The Lord replied, "Through the Brahmin, he has attained Nirvana." Upon hearing these words from the Lord, Krishna fainted. Having regained his composure, Krishna asked the Lord once more, "How did he attain Keval Gyan?" The Lord replied, "With the assistance of that Brahmin. The Brahmin placed a vessel filled with burning embers upon his head, thereby bringing about the eradication of Gajsukumal's karmas. Had that Brahmin not aided him in that moment, the dissolution of his karmas would have occurred only after a very long time and through immense suffering. Earlier today, as you were traveling along the path, a Brahmin was lifting bricks one by one to construct Devkulika. Upon seeing him, you, too, picked up a brick and placed it there. Inspired

by you, your entire family brought and laid many bricks, thereby enabling the completion of that Brahmin's temple. With your assistance, the Brahmin finished the task of lifting the bricks in a mere instant. In the same manner, all of Muni Gajsukumal's karmas were eradicated through the assistance of that Brahmin. Therefore, do not harbor any anger toward him.

Upon hearing this, Krishna asked, "Lord! What is the name of that Brahmin?" The Lord replied, "Today, as you enter the city through its main gate, the Brahmin who meets his death due to bursting of his stomach at the very sight of you, is the one who served as Gajsukumal's helper." Thereafter, Krishna performed the funeral rites for Muni Gajsukumal. Through his religious discourse, the Lord alleviated Krishna's grief. Then, bowing down to the Lord, Krishna departed from that place. On the way, he encountered the Brahmin, who was returning from the forest; upon seeing Krishna approaching from the opposite direction, the Brahmin died as his stomach burst open. Seeing the Brahmin dead, Krishna recognized him; he then tied the Brahmin's feet together with a rope and dragged his body through the city streets. Subsequently, Krishna had the royal drums beaten to issue a proclamation: "Whoever takes the life of an ascetic shall meet with a fate identical to that of this Brahmin." Finally, Lord Neminath delivered a discourse on the impermanence of existence, thereby dispelling Devaki's grief.

The Story of Shri Gajsukumal Concludes.



7. Avantisukumal

Any creature who endures the terrible sufferings inflicted by tigers and humans attains the desired position like Avantisukumal.

One day, while preaching to the living beings on earth, Shri Suhastisuri wandered to pay obeisance to the Supreme God of the Gods Shri Veerprabhu, and arrived in the city of Avanti. A Shreshthi (merchant) named Bhadra lived in that city. His wife was Bhadraa. While performing religious duties, one day they were blessed with a son as informed in a dream. The father celebrated the birth. In turn, the father named the son Avantisukumal. The parents initiated the son into the study of religious scriptures. In his youth, the father married Avantisukumal to thirty-two daughters, like the celestial princesses of thirty-two Shreshthis.

One day, with Bhadra Shreshthi's permission, Shri Suhastisuri stayed in the shelter provided by him. One evening, the Acharya began to reverently study the Nalini-Gulm chapter in a sweet voice. At that time, Avantisukumal, the son of Bhadra Shreshthi, was listening to the study while playing with his thirty-two wives at home.

Listening to the study being done by the guru, Avantisukumal thought, "I have seen the form of this Nalini-Gulm Viman (celestial abode) somewhere." Engrossed in this mental conflict, Avantisukumal, attained Jatismaran Gyan (knowledge of his past life). In previous life, I was a god in the Nalini-Gulm Viman. The difference between the pleasures of the Nalini-Gulm Viman and the pleasures here is like the difference between Mount Meru and mustard seeds. Therefore, it would be best if I attained the pleasures there, because it is said that:

Even if a well-educated human being possessed a hundred tongues, he would be unable to describe—even over the course of a hundred years—the bliss experienced by the deities in the Devlok.

Reflecting upon this, Avantisukumal approached his Guru, bowed to him with deep devotion, and spoke: "O Revered One! Have you just arrived here from the Nalini-Gulm Viman? For it appears, O Worshipful One, that you are describing the very nature of that realm." The Guru replied, "We have not traveled there ourselves; rather, we were engaged in the study of the scriptures, contemplating the nature of the Nalini-Gulm Viman as described therein. The deities residing in that Nalini-Gulm Viman are indeed supremely blissful." Avantisukumal then said, "I, too, was born here only because my lifespan in that celestial abode had reached its end. Now, as the memory of the bliss of that abode returns to me, I find myself unable to endure life here. Compared to the celestial nymphs of that realm, these wives of mine now appear as grotesque, hideous figures. Therefore, I cannot bear to remain here for even a single moment. Please grant me initiation into the ascetic path, so that I may fulfill the true purpose of my life. To my eyes, these wives now resemble mere monkeys; therefore, I implore you to bestow upon me the vow of self-restraint." The Guru replied, "We are unable to grant initiation without first obtaining the consent of one's parents, relatives, and kinsfolk."

Upon hearing this—and consumed by an intense desire to return to the Nalini-Gulm Viman as swiftly as possible—Avantisukumal took the vows of asceticism upon himself. He bowed to the Guru, proceeded to the cremation ground, and entered into the meditative posture of Kayotsarg. There, a wild fox—who in a previous life had been Avantisukumal's wife—approached him. Upon seeing Avantisukumal standing motionless in Kayotsarg, the fox was seized by a fit of extreme rage; she viciously tore at his flesh, rending his body into pieces. At that very moment, Avantisukumal—while maintaining a state of pure, auspicious contemplation—passed away and ascended to the Nalini-Gulm Viman. The following morning, when Avantisukumal's parents and wives learned the tragic details of his demise, they were overwhelmed with grief. It was then that the supremely enlightened Guru arrived at the scene and said:

"This Avantisukumal has ascended to the Nalini-Gulm Viman. The pleasures of this world held no appeal for him; therefore, he embraced initiation and, having exhausted his karmas, departed for the Nalini-Gulm Viman." In accordance with the Guru's

guidance, at the very spot from where Avantisukumal had ascended to the heavens after exhausting his karmas, his parents erected a magnificent Jain temple named Mahakal and consecrated within it an idol of Lord Parshvanath. Subsequently, all of Avantisukumal's wives, inspired by a spirit of renunciation, also embraced initiation.

The Story of Avantisukumal Concludes.



8. Dhanykumar

A person who daily gives donation to a worthy deserving person, according to his capacity, with devotion, enjoys happiness like Dhanykumar.

Those who later repent after giving to a sage, like Dhanykumar, suffer on this earth, like Dhanykumar's elder brothers.

King Jitshatru ruled the city of Pratishtanpur, adorned with magnificent Jain temples. In a family lacking wealth, there was a child who was generous, humble, and compassionate. He tended the cattle of the villagers.

On a festive day, seeing people eager to eat delicious food like kheer in the garden, the boy left the animals in the forest and returned home and said to his mother, "O Mother! Today everyone is eating kheer. So, please give me kheer too." The mother said, "O son! Without money, where can I get kheer for you?" The son replied, "O Mother! Somehow, bring me kheer." Because it is said that a thief, a child, a Gandhi, a doctor, a Bhatt, a guest, a prostitute, a cunning, and a king do not understand the pain of others.

The weeping son repeatedly asked for kheer, but even his mother could not give it to him, causing him to cry. Seeing him weep, a neighbor living nearby, saddened by his sorrow, asked him the reason for his sorrow. The son's mother then shared with her neighbors about her son's desire to eat kheer. With a heavy heart, the neighbors gave him various ingredients for making kheer. The mother prepared kheer with sugar and served it to her son on his plate and subsequently she departed for another place to attend to some task.

Meanwhile, drawn by the merit accumulated in that home, an ascetic observing a Masakshaman (a month-long fast) arrived in the courtyard to seek alms on the day of his Parana (the breaking of the fast). Upon suddenly beholding the sage—an occurrence as unexpected as rain falling from a cloudless sky—the young boy, his heart swelling with joy and his body bristling with goosebumps, rose to his feet. Lifting a platter of Kheer (sweet rice pudding) with both hands, he bowed reverently to the sage and addressed him thus: "O Lord! This Kheer is Prasuk (ritually pure and

fit for consumption); therefore, bestow your grace upon me by accepting this offering, so that my life may be fulfilled." Recognizing the food to be pure, the sage extended his alms-bowl; feeling himself truly blessed, the boy then reverently offered the Kheer into the sage's vessel. Through this act of Supatra Dan (giving alms to a worthy recipient), the boy secured for himself a future life as a human being. Later, the mother returned home; observing that her son's platter was empty, she once again served him a portion of Kheer. The boy ate a considerable amount of it. Thereafter, the boy ventured into the forest. While searching for his livestock there, he bowed in reverence to a great sage he encountered and seated himself before him. The sage then delivered a discourse on Dharma (righteousness) in the following manner:

"Having attained this human life—a state of existence so arduous to acquire—noble souls ought to conduct themselves in such a way as to ensure the swift attainment of Moksha (liberation)."

"In this ephemeral world—which is rife with disease and suffering—there exists not even the slightest measure of true happiness. Yet, despite knowing this truth, living beings often fail to practice the Dharma expounded by the Jineswar ."

Having listened to this spiritual counsel from the sage, the boy—his heart filled with elation—passed away that very night due to severe indigestion. He was subsequently reborn in that same city, entering the womb of Shilvati—the wife of the wealthy merchant Dhansagar—as their fourth son, a birth heralded by an auspicious dream that surpassed those preceding the births of his three elder brothers. In due course, on an auspicious day when all the planets occupied exalted positions in the heavens, Shilvati gave birth to the child. The parents bestowed names upon their sons in the following sequence: (1) Dhandatt, and (2) Dhandev (3) Dhanchandra, and (4) Dhanya. The names of the wives of the first three sons were, respectively, Dhanshri, Dhandevi, and Dhanchandra. At the time of Dhanya's birth, while his umbilical cord was being buried in the ground, a treasure trove was unearthed from that spot; it was for this reason that he was given the name Dhanya.

As Dhanya gradually grew to maturity, the wealth within the merchant's household began to increase day by day. At the appropriate time, his parents entrusted Dhanya to a Arts teacher (Kalacharya) to learn all the arts, sciences, and religious disciplines. However, observing the excessive esteem with which their father treated Dhanya, the three elder brothers spoke to him, saying: "O Father! Why do you show greater respect to Dhanya—who was born from the same mother's womb—than you do to us?" Upon hearing this, the parents replied: "Dhanya is worthy of reverence because he is endowed with virtues. For it has been said:

"It is virtues that are revered everywhere, not the arrogance of lineage. People gather a flower that blooms in the forest, yet they cast away the impurities and grime of their own bodies."

The three sons retorted to their father: "Then put all four of us to the test." Consequently, the father gave each of the four sons a sum of thirty-two rupees individually and instructed them: "You all four engage in trade, and demonstrate to me the profit you can earn." Accepting this challenge, they all set out to conduct business. Dhanya purchased a goat and arranged for it to engage in a duel with the Prince's goat. A condition of one thousand gold coins was laid down: whoever's goat was defeated would pay the victor one thousand gold coins. When the duel between Dhanya's goat and the Prince's goat took place, it was Dhanya's goat that emerged victorious. Having thus won a thousand gold dinars, Dhanya returned home. The three elder brothers also returned home, having earned only a modest profit. When the parents once again heaped praise upon Dhanya, the three brothers spoke up the following day, saying: "You are praising him simply because he has earned wealth this one time today. As for us, in the past we had earned the vast wealth that you have forgotten; what, then, is to be done? Test us once again." Thereupon, the father separately gave each of his four sons sixty masas of gold. The three sons engaged in trade with due diligence, yet returned home without having earned any profit. However, the wise and supremely righteous Dhanya went to a marketplace and took up his position there to conduct business.

Meanwhile, in that same city, there lived Mahadhan Shreshthi—the foremost among misers—who had amassed his fortune through ceaseless toil and enterprise. He would not spend even a little wealth on religious or charitable causes, and he clothed his family—as well as himself—only in worn-out garments. He subsisted on a diet of grains mixed with millet, and in place of clarified butter (ghee), he consumed merely a drop of oil. He did not spend even a small sum during annual festivals or special occasions; instead of chewing the customary betel leaf (paan), he would chew on the leaves of the Gundi plant. The mere sight of another man spending money would trigger a splitting headache for him. Obsessively chanting "Wealth! Wealth!" he would not allow himself a single moment of rest.

On one occasion, the Shreshthi dug a pit inside his house and filled it to the brim with his riches. He then hollowed out the interior of a cot, gathered his precious gems, and packed them inside it. Driven by an obsessive attachment to his wealth, the Shreshthi would place this cot directly over the hidden pit and sleep upon it each night, standing guard over his treasure. This foolish Shreshthi remained utterly ignorant of the simple truth that acts of charity and giving actually cause wealth to multiply. As he lay in his final days—his body frail and withered with old age, standing at the very threshold of death—his sons began to lift him down from the cot. At that moment, the Shreshthi cried out, "Do not lift me down from this cot! It is only by sleeping upon this that I find true peace and tranquility." Hearing this, his sons asked, "Father, if you have any final wish, please let us know." Yet, blinded by his attachment, the Shreshthi did not reveal the secret of his hidden wealth; instead, he simply said, "There is no need for any other acts of charity or virtue. When I pass away, simply cremate my body along with this very cot." Thus spoke the avaricious Shreshthi. As it has been said:

This mine in the form of Trishna (insatiable craving) is deep and exceedingly difficult to fill; who, indeed, can ever fill it? For whatever object is cast into this mine in an attempt to fill it serves only to make the mine deeper still.

Miserly individuals, destined for the depths of hell, bury their wealth deep within the earth; conversely, those who aspire to the fruits of heaven and liberation construct magnificent Chaitya etc.

Rejoicing, the sons declared, "O Father! We shall do exactly as you have instructed." Thereafter, when the merchant passed away, unaware of the secret regarding the hidden gems, the sons carried the merchant—still resting upon his cot—to the cremation ground. Upon seeing the cot, the caretaker of the cremation ground demanded it for himself. When the sons refused to give the cot, a heated altercation ensued between them and the caretaker. Eventually, intimidated by the conflict, the sons yielded and handed the cot over to the caretaker. The caretaker then placed the cot at a crossroads with the intention of selling it. Spotting the cot having certain distinction, Dhanya purchased it. It is said that:

Wealth that is concealed by grass, vines, and other foliage or that lies buried beneath the earth and thus invisible to the naked eye, is perceived and discovered by wise men through the power of their intellect alone.

Subsequently, Dhanya took the cot home, extracted the gems hidden within it, and presented them to his father. The merchant, deeply impressed, bestowed immense honor upon Dhanya, causing Dhanya's renown to spread far and wide across all four directions. Consequently, Dhanya's three brothers became consumed by intense envy toward him and began making daily attempts to assassinate him. Sensing the malicious intent brewing in their husbands' minds, Dhanya's three sisters-in-law discreetly apprised their brother-in-law, Dhanya, of the impending danger. Upon hearing this, Dhanya asked, "I have committed no offense whatsoever against my three brothers; why, then, do they harbor such enmity toward me?" Then they replied. "O dear child! Such wicked men are indeed prone to committing such evil deeds. For it has been said:

Countless are those who harbor anger without any cause; countable are those whose anger is justified by a valid reason; but exceedingly rare in this world are those who, even when given ample cause, choose not to become angry."

Upon hearing all this, Dhanya resolved, "I shall no longer remain here. For my presence—which seems only to be a source of obstruction—causes distress to my brothers." As it is said:

"Great souls never inflict pain upon others; therefore, I must not stay here for even a single moment."

Having thus resolved, Dhanya secretly slipped out of his city under the cover of night—alone and without any assistance. Thereafter, Dhanya wandered through

various villages and towns. Observing his noble demeanor, a certain farmer invited Dhanya to share a meal. Just as Dhanya sat down to eat, the farmer's wife arrived bearing the food. The farmer said to his wife, "This guest is truly a blessed soul; therefore, serve him with food." For it is written:

"From whose home a guest departs unhonored, from that very person do the celestial gods and the ancestral spirits turn their faces away in displeasure."

The woman served Dhanya a bowl of kheer (sweet rice pudding). Later, while Dhanya was plowing the field, his plow struck against a buried vessel. When a pot filled with gold coins emerged from the earth, the farmer exclaimed, "O guest! Please accept this wealth. It has surfaced solely through the power of your good fortune; therefore, make use of it as you see fit." Thereupon, Dhanya—being of a generous and noble nature—bestowed the wealth upon the farmer, offered him his respectful salutations, and continued on his journey. Wandering further, Dhanya eventually reached the city of Rajgrih and sat in a garden located outside the city. This garden had previously been withered and barren; however, through the meritorious influence of Dhanya and the divine grace of the deities, it became laden with an abundance of flowers and fruits. Seeing his garden flourishing with blossoms and produce—a transformation brought about by Dhanya's presence—the gardener was filled with delight. The gardener took Dhanya to his home, offered him food and refreshments, and served him with great devotion.

King Shrenik of Rajgrih had a daughter named Somshri, while Shalibhadra had a younger sister named Subhadra. Kusumapal, too, had a daughter named Pushpvati. Since all three girls were born on the very same day, they became close companions. These young women would often converse among themselves, saying, "If all three of us were to share a single husband, we would never have to endure the pain of separation."

One day, Pushpvati remarked to her friends, "This man, Dhanya, appears to be a man of great virtue; therefore, it would be ideal if he were to become our husband." Upon hearing this, Somshri approached her father, King Shrenik, and declared, "Dhanya shall be my husband." Consequently, King Shrenik arranged for Somshri's marriage to Dhanya. Subsequently, Bhadra and the gardener also gave their daughters in marriage to Dhanya. Thereafter, the King bestowed upon Dhanya the ownership of numerous villages. By virtue of the immense merit he had accumulated in his past, Dhanya lived a life of great luxury and worldly indulgence.

On one occasion, while seated at a window enjoying the company of his wives, Dhanya caught sight of his parents walking along the royal thoroughfare, appearing utterly distressed and sorrowful. He summoned his parents through the gatekeeper, adorned them in exquisite garments and jewelry, and—accompanied by his wives—bowed down before them with deep reverence. After offering them a second salutation, he asked, "Where has the wealth we possessed in the past gone?" His parents replied, "After you left us, our wealth vanished as well. We heard that you had

eventually made your way here and had married the King's daughter and others; that is why we have come here." Dhanya then asked in return, "O Mother, where have my three brothers gone?" At that moment, his mother replied that they were standing outside out of shame. Dhanya summoned his brothers and respectfully assigned them to separate villages, for it is said:

Good men are naturally compassionate toward all, friend and foe.

Then Dhanya pleased the entire family with respect. The parents told Dhanya, "You are blessed." Unable to bear Dhanya's praise, the three brothers became jealous of him and ordered him to divide his household and wealth and live separately. Dhansagar Shresthi, thinking that his sons were the crown jewels of misfortune, told them, "Don't be jealous of Dhanya; everything is going well because of his good fortune." They repeatedly told their father, "Father! You always praise Dhanya; it's not right. When Dhanya left home earlier, he took with him all the precious jewels." That is why, due to the power of those gems, he has attained great wealth and been honored by the king. You are praising such a deceitful person. Today, I will not eat without a separate home. Hearing such words from his brothers, Dhanya again left his sleeping family and quietly departed at night for a distant land. Traveling through many lands, Dhanya reached the city of Kaushambi. There, king Shatanik ruled. In his treasury, he possessed a priceless gem, which no one was able to test. Then the king announced a proclamation in the city, stating that whoever could test this gem would be rewarded with a hundred elephants, five hundred horses, five hundred villages, along with his daughter, Saubhagya Manjari. Dhanya accepted the proclamation and went to the royal court. When Dhanya examined that gem, the entire assembly was struck with astonishment.

Thereupon, true to his earlier promise, the King bestowed upon Dhanya—amidst great festivities—his daughter and five hundred villages. Thus, the fame of Dhanya spread far and wide among the people as a truly virtuous man. To amass wealth, Dhanya dispatched his agents to numerous distant lands.

On one occasion, in keeping with social custom, Dhanya undertook the construction of a reservoir outside the city to enhance his public renown. Meanwhile, following Dhanya's departure from home, the entire fortune of the merchant Dhansagar had dwindled away; consequently, the merchant found himself in a state of profound distress due to his destitution. It is said:

Those who live in poverty have to face five afflictions: debt, misfortune, lethargy, hunger, and more children.

Dhansagar reflected: "A man cannot easily regain such prestige; previously, I enjoyed renown in this city solely due to the influence of Dhanya. How, then, can I now engage in petty trade?" Pondering this, and having consulted with his family, the merchant resolved to travel to a foreign land—accompanied by his kin—in order to earn a livelihood. The merchant sent Dhanya's two other wives back to their

respective paternal homes. Then, addressing Subhadra, the merchant said, "My daughter, you, too, should return to your father's house." Subhadra replied, "Father, your words are indeed appropriate; however, please listen to my plea with a focused mind and act upon it. For it is said:

While it is fitting for women to reside in their father's home during times of comfort and prosperity, they must never abandon their in-laws' home—whether in times of sorrow or joy.

A woman of poor character flees to her father's house at the first sign of hardship in her husband's home; a virtuous woman, however, forsakes the comforts of her father's house and remains steadfastly in her in-laws' home, even if she must endure suffering there."

Whether in times of joy or sorrow, amidst adversity, or even during a journey to a foreign land, a woman remains within her in-laws' home, steadfast like the very shadow of the body.

"Therefore, in joy or sorrow, I shall remain right here in my father-in-law's home." Delighted by these words from his daughter-in-law, the wealthy merchant Dhansar locked the doors of his home and, accompanied by his family, departed under the cover of night. Wandering from village to village, from city to city, and from land to land—earning his keep by working as a laborer—Dhansar eventually arrived at the city of Kaushambi. There, spotting a local man, the merchant inquired, "O sir! tell me how does a man who arrives in this city penniless manage to sustain himself?" The man replied, "O Merchant! The wealthy sustain themselves through trade. Those without wealth find sustenance by working as servants in the homes of others. And those who arrive here in utter poverty sustain themselves by digging at the reservoir commissioned by the benevolent King Dhanya, living off the wages earned from that labor.

For the work of digging the reservoir, men are paid two gold dinars, while women receive one gold mohar. Furthermore, those engaged in digging the reservoir are provided with a meal every evening. Upon hearing this, Dhansar Shreshthi, along with his family, proceeded to the reservoir and joined the other labourers in the task of digging. There, he sustained himself and his family by working at the site and living off the earnings derived from that labor.

One day, King Dhanya—seated upon a horse, shaded by a royal parasol held aloft, and flanked by a retinue of soldiers—came to inspect the reservoir. As he approached, bards sang his praises, chanting, "May you be blessed with a long life! May you attain victory!" At that moment, shouting "Victory! Victory!" in unison, all the labourers ceased their work to bow down and pay homage to King Dhanya. As his gaze swept across the crowd, King Dhanya spotted his own family amidst the labourers; beholding this sight, he thought to himself, "Alas! What strange turn has fate taken?"

"This is my mother; this is my father; these three are my brothers; these three are my sisters-in-law; and this—dearer to me than life itself—is my wife, Subhadra, whose father is the merchant Gobhadra and whose mother is Bhadraa. This is Shalibhadra's sister, who is currently carrying a load of earth upon her head."

Reflecting in this manner, Dhanya asked, "Where have you people come from?" Thereupon, concealing their true identities and origins, the servants gave a false reply. Hearing this, Dhanya thought to himself, "These people do not recognize me, for I have attained such a lofty royal status. These very kinsmen of mine have fallen into a state of utter misery." For it has been said:

"There are many those who feed thousands of people; there are many those capable of feeding lakhs of people; and then there are many those—so unfortunate—who cannot even feed themselves. All of this is simply the fruit of one's past meritorious deeds and the sinful deeds."

Subsequently, Dhanya summoned his own servants and instructed them, "Serve these people ghee with their meals, for their physical condition appears wretched. These strangers are truly deserving of compassion." Hearing this, the strangers spoke up, "O Master! It would be truly excellent if ghee were served to everyone." King Dhanya replied, "It shall be exactly as you have requested." Then, as they partook of the ghee, the servants began murmuring amongst themselves, "It is solely due to the influence of these strangers that we, too, have had the good fortune to eat ghee today." The very next day, Dhanya returned to the spot, summoned the merchant Dhansar, and addressed him in a gentle, melodious voice, "O Shreshthi! Your entire family appears to be in a state of extreme frailty." The merchant replied, "Alas, what can we do? Due to lack of buttermilk, the entire family has been afflicted with night blindness."

"This wretched condition of ours is merely the consequence of the karmas we performed in our previous lives." To this, Dhanya responded, "Many cows and buffaloes in my household yield an abundance of milk; therefore, send one of your daughters-in-law to my home—on a rotational basis—to fetch buttermilk." Hearing this, the merchant exclaimed, "Your kindness is truly immense!" Then, the merchant bowed to him repeatedly. Then, lamenting the capricious nature of fate, he returned to his home, surrounded by a large retinue. Upon reaching home, he said to his wife, "O beloved! A merchant—a truly pitiable soul—has arrived just outside the village to excavate a reservoir. He has four sons, and each of these four sons has a wife. Should any one of the wives come here, fill a large earthen jar and give her buttermilk. However, if the youngest daughter-in-law comes, fill a jar with buttermilk and give her grains, such as rice, as well. She is extremely frail. By giving to them, you too shall earn spiritual merit; for charity bestowed upon the destitute yields immense merit. As it has been said:

The gift of fearlessness and charity given to a worthy recipient lead living beings toward liberation; whereas the gift of compassion, appropriate charity, and charity

performed for the sake of renown bestow upon living beings the enjoyments of Dev, Chakravarti, and similar worldly pleasures."

Acting upon the instructions of her husband, Dhanya, she gave garments to Subhadra. Upon seeing his youngest daughter-in-law returning with the garments and carrying a large quantity of buttermilk, the merchant remarked, "This daughter-in-law is truly blessed by fortune." Hearing this, the three elder daughters-in-law, consumed by envy, spoke to the merchant: "Previously, you heaped praise upon our brother-in-law, Dhanya; consequently, he abandoned us and departed for a foreign land. Now, if you continue to praise her in this manner, she too will surely leave. During the day, she carries baskets of earth, and at night, she sleeps upon the bare ground—such is her good fortune!"

One day, upon seeing Subhadra arrive, Dhanya asked her, "Who are you, and from where have you come?" With her head bowed in modesty, Subhadra replied, "I am the sister of Shalibhadra and the daughter of the merchant Gobhadra. I was wedded to a man who bears the very same name as you. Due to discord within our household, my husband has departed for a foreign land." Hearing this, Dhanya exclaimed, "O Bhadra! If your husband has indeed gone abroad, then surely, without you, he must have passed away. Therefore, abandon your vow of marital fidelity and enjoy sensual pleasures with me." Covering both her ears, Subhadra—now filled with suspicion toward Dhanya—replied:

"Just as a Dhatura flower has only two possible fates—either it is offered upon the body of Lord Shankar, or it falls to the ground—similarly, women born into noble families have only two possible fates: either they accept the touch of their own husband's hand, or they perish, reduced to ashes in the fire."

"O Dhanya Kumar! You no longer appear to me as a noble man, but rather as a base one. For you desire me—a woman belonging to another; indeed, by indulging in carnal pleasures with another man's wife, a soul invites suffering in both this world and the next. As it has been said:

Even Ravana—whose prowess held the entire universe in thrall—met with the destruction of his lineage and was condemned to hell, all because of his lustful desire for another man's wife."

Dhanya Kumar replied, "O Bhadra! Do not be angry; listen to the true reason. I am neither a lecherous womanizer nor one who covets the possessions of others. I uttered these words solely to put you to the test." Upon hearing this, Subhadra said, "If you truly are my husband, then provide me with some specific sign of identification." Dhanya replied, "I am Dhanya, the son-in-law of King Shrenik of Rajgrih. Leaving behind my three wives and taking not even a single penny with me, I came here all alone. I had once given you a jeweled ring." As Dhanya spoke these words, Subhadra recognized him as her husband; feeling herself truly blessed, and overcome with modesty, she lowered her gaze. Thereafter, Dhanya had his wife's worn-out garments

replaced with exquisite attire and adorned her with fine jewelry, thereby establishing her as the mistress of his household.

Meanwhile, observing that his younger daughter-in-law, Subhadra, had not yet returned, the merchant asked his elder daughters-in-law, "Where has Subhadra gone? Go and check on her; it has been a long time." The eldest daughter-in-law replied, "Subhadra took the vessel of buttermilk and went to the home of the benevolent Dhanya. She is likely standing there like a maidservant. That master, Dhanya, is probably providing her with excellent food and refreshments. It appears she is standing there out of sheer greed." Subsequently, the eldest daughter-in-law went there, and upon seeing Subhadra adorned with divine ornaments, she hurried back and reported to her father-in-law: "I had warned you earlier that this Subhadra would do something untoward upon going there. Today, having gone there, she has become the wife of the benevolent Dhanya. Who can truly fathom the character of women?" For it is said:

"The leaping of a horse, the rumbling of clouds in the month of Magha, the character of women, the workings of destiny, and the extremes of drought or excessive rain—even the gods cannot foresee these things; then, how could mere mortals know?"

"The boundless ocean may be crossed, but the perverse character of women—who are inherently capricious by nature—can never be comprehended."

Hearing this, the merchant—struck as if by a thunderbolt—paused for a moment to reflect: "What has this daughter-in-law done? Shame upon her! She has brought disgrace upon both families." The merchant then recounted the details of his daughter-in-law's abduction to the other merchants. Upon hearing this, the merchants remarked, "We have never before witnessed this benevolent Dhanya engaging in any unrighteous conduct. Dhanya is renowned as a brother to all women who are not his own wife. We are unable to fathom the reason behind this contrary act he has now committed. He possesses a mysterious mind; nevertheless, we shall go and request him to release your daughter-in-law." Once the merchant had departed for his home, the other merchants approached the benevolent Dhanya and said to him thus:

"O Dhanya! You are the King's own son-in-law; you are supreme benevolent; it is not right for you to abduct another man's wife."

Hearing these words, Dhanya began to speak of other things. Convinced that he hadn't taken kindly to their words, the merchants went to their homes and contemplated, "This man used to be of good conduct, but now his nature has changed." It is said that:

Excessive wealth, royal honor, and birth in a noble family quickly lead a man to perversion.

Then Dhansar Shresthi(merchant) said to Dhanya, "Punish the one who is doing injustice here. Abandon that injustice and free my daughter-in-law." Hearing this, Dhanya said, "O servants! This old man is demanding his wife. Therefore, throw him

into the basement." The servants lifted the old man and threw him into the basement. Then Dhanya went there, bowed to his father, and said, "Please forgive my crime. I have behaved like a child. I am your own son." Hearing this, the Shresthi was delighted. Then Dhanya said, "Now speak softly." The father felt honored to be there, and the merchant forgot his wife and others. Then the merchant's wife came and said, "Oh, kind Dhanya! Why have you held my husband and daughter-in-law captive? What crime have they committed against you?" Then, putting his mother in the basement as before, Dhanya went inside and bowed down to her and asked for forgiveness. Similarly, Dhanya's brothers also came there to quarrel. They were also kept in the basement as before. Then his three sisters-in-law came to Dhanya's door, crying out, "This king is doing injustice. This kind Dhanya has held our three husbands captive. Now, to whom should we plead?" Then, the three of them remained at the door for an hour, and then went into the hut. In the morning, the three women went to King Shatanik's court to complain. "May you live long and achieve victory," they said, "we came to your city to seek employment. The kind-hearted Dhanya, a resident of your city, has first kidnapped our brother-in-law's wife, then our father-in-law, then our mother-in-law, and then our three husbands and imprisoned them. You are the king who protects our people. Our families have been kidnapped. How can we remain silent?" Dhanya didn't even reply. Hearing these words, the king sent his servants to Dhanya and requested him to release these women's families and not be unjust. Hearing this, Dhanya said, "O royal servant! I am not doing injustice. What harm would the king incur if I did something unjust?" Hearing this, the royal servant went to the king and said, "Dhanya is saying, 'If I do such injustice, what will the king do to me?'" The king, enraged, then sent all his soldiers to kill his son-in-law, Dhanya.

Knowing the king was angry, Dhanya immediately loaded his belongings onto bullock carts along with his wife and got ready. By the time the royal servants arrived to fight, the king's soldiers were defeated and fled. Hearing his soldiers were defeated, Shatanika came forward to fight. Meanwhile, the Chief Minister arrived and said, "O Lord! This is your son-in-law, so it is not appropriate for you to fight him. When Dhanya came here, you yourself reinforced him with soldiers and others. We will kill him by involving him in any difficult task. He can never do injustice. Why is he doing this now is unknown; there must surely be a reason for this. Thinking, "You should question these women," the ministers approached them and asked, "Who among you is his sister or sister-in-law?" They replied, "Our brother-in-law, named Dhanya, left the city and went away somewhere. We no longer know whether he is alive or dead." The secretaries asked, "Do you know any distinguishing marks on his body by which he might be recognized?" They replied, "On both of our brother-in-law's feet, there is the mark of a lotus, and on both of his hands, there are long lines inscribed." Upon hearing this, the secretaries said, "In that case, to verify the marks on Dhanya's body, his feet must be washed." Having decided this, the ministers sent the three women to Dhanya. Seeing his three sisters-in-law approaching to conduct this test, Dhanya asked, "Why have you come here? What is your purpose?" They replied, "You are our brother-in-law." Dhanya retorted, "Are you deluded, or are you speaking in a dream?"

The Dhanya you speak of is known to be the son-in-law of King Shrenik of the city of Rajgrih." The sisters-in-law persisted, "The distinguishing marks of our brother-in-law are visible on your feet; therefore, please allow us to wash your feet just this once." Dhanya replied, "Touching women who are not one's own brings sin. I do not even speak to other men's wives—let alone touch them!" Upon being spoken to in this manner by Dhanya, the three women, filled with sorrow, fell silent. Then the secretaries intervened, saying, "Do not grieve, you three; remain calm. O Dhanya! Do not cause distress to your three sisters-in-law, for doing so will incur sin." Heeding the secretaries' words, Dhanya cast aside his pretense and welcomed his three sisters-in-law into his palace. Then, casting aside his anger, Dhanya revealed his true identity to his entire family; he bowed before them with deep reverence and hosted a celebratory feast.

Subsequently, when Dhanya went to pay his respects to the King, the King offered him half of his seat and said, "O Dhanya! You are truly blessed. Why did you cause such distress to your sisters-in-law for such a long time?" Dhanya replied, "O King! Listen: these sisters-in-law sought to sow discord among the brothers. It is said that—

Brothers bound by affection do not suffer ruin unless a woman intervenes. Just as a key unlocks a lock in an instant, so too can a woman bring about a man's downfall in a single moment.

O King! It is through the words of women that brothers become estranged; for this very reason, I caused distress to my sisters-in-law."

Through such affectionate conversation, Dhanya pleased the King; thereafter, bowing respectfully to the King, Dhanya returned home. Upon arriving, Dhanya paid his respects to his father and other elders, and inquired about the events that had transpired at their home in his absence. Then Dhansar Shreshthi recounted, "After you departed, the King confiscated all our possessions. Whatever capital we had invested in trade across various lands was also lost. Plunged into poverty, we locked up our home and migrated here in search of a livelihood."

Subsequently, a deep friendship blossomed between Dhanya and King Shatanik. Through the exchange of witty anecdotes and wisdom, the King and Dhanya spent their time together, making the hours fly by as if they were mere moments. Later, the father addressed all his sons, saying, "Behold the fortune of Dhanya! He entrusted all his wealth to his elder brothers and, accompanied by his two wives and his parents, traveled to the city of Rajgrih. There, King Shrenik welcomed Dhanya with great pomp and ceremony, establishing him as a prominent citizen. In that city, Dhanya was wedded to the daughters of four distinguished merchants. To Dhanya's eight wives, there appeared to be absolutely no difference between Dhanya and Kuber."

Meanwhile, the three brothers, being prosperous with the villages etc. bestowed upon them, began to live happily. Eventually, when a famine struck, everyone left their villages and fled abroad. Dhanya's brothers also became destitute of wealth and pride

due to the famine. Impoverished by the lack of income in their villages, the three brothers, competing with Dhanya, set off for the Malwa country, despised by the people. Along the way, traveling from village to village with carts laden with grain for livelihood, they became filled with sorrow. Thus, the three unfortunate men, seeking profit, arrived in the city of Rajgrih with carts full of wheat for trade. While living at the crossroads, buying and selling, Dhanya rode a horse from the king's palace. Seeing Dhanya's prosperity and the plight of the three brothers, people exclaimed, "What kind of difference has fate made even among these four brothers?" It is said that:

Those born from the same mother's womb and under the same constellation do not have the same nature like the berries and thorns that grow on the Bor tree.

Hearing such words from the people, Dhanya, moved by compassion, dismounted from his horse and fell at the feet of his three brothers. At that time, all three remained silent out of extreme shame. Then, taking them to his house, Dhanya seated them on a high throne and said, "You may enjoy this wealth of mine as you wish. Because-

Even that immense wealth is not Lakshmi that cannot be enjoyed by one's own brothers. Even a crow is praised for nourishing other crows."

Those three brothers also said to Dhanya, "We will not stay in your house." Then Dhanya said, "You divide the wealth into four parts and give one part to me." Each of the four brothers received fourteen crore gold coins. The brothers accepted the wealth bestowed upon them by Dhanya. For it is said:

"In this world, there are but five or six individuals who refuse to accept wealth when it is offered to them. All other beings, without exception, harbor a desire for their own wealth or that of others."

Subsequently, just as the brothers were departing from there with their gold, the presiding deity of the place immobilized them at the doorway. Bewildered and humbled, they cast aside their arrogance, returned to Dhanya, and spoke: "We, who are devoid of good fortune, have now witnessed the magnitude of your destiny. We harbored envy toward you in vain. From this day forward, we shall never again harbor envy toward you." Hearing this, Dhanya replied: "Devote yourselves to meritorious acts—such as the worship of the deities—and enjoy your wealth with Samadhi (a tranquil and composed mind)." Thereafter, engaging in acts of worship and other virtuous deeds, the three brothers attained a state of Samadhi.

One day, while wandering on his spiritual journey, Dharmghosh Suri—a sage endowed with the four types of spiritual knowledge—arrived in that region. Accompanied by his family, Dhanya went to him to listen to his religious discourse. The Acharya, who possessed four forms of knowledge, delivered the following sermon:

"Protecting living beings, worshipping the Lord Jineswar, listening to the Agam with devotion, paying homage to ascetics, eradicating the 'eight forms of arrogance,' revering a Suguru (true spiritual preceptor), vanquishing deceit, subduing anger,

uprooting the tree of greed, purifying the heart, and taming the senses akin to wild horses, all these are the means to attain liberation."

At the conclusion of the sermon, Dhanya asked the revered Acharya: "O Lord! Due to what karmas have my elder brothers remained impoverished, despite engaging in trade? Why does wealth never remain within their household?" The Acharya replied: "In their previous lives, they gave away much in charity, yet they lacked true faith in the act of giving. Listen now to the account of their past lives:

In Lakshmipur, these three men were affectionate toward one another, yet they lived in poverty. Every day, enduring great hardship, they would venture into the forest to gather firewood, which they would then sell to sustain their families.

One day, carrying their packed meals, the three of them went into the forest to collect wood. At noon, as they sat down to eat, a serene-souled ascetic—who was observing the Parana (breaking of a fast) following a month-long penance—arrived at that spot. Upon seeing the ascetic approach, all three rose to their feet in delight; vying with one another—each exclaiming, "Accept food from me first! No, accept it from me first!"—they offered him a generous alms-offering. However, once the revered ascetic had departed, they began to feel remorse. "The ascetic who came here has taken our food for nothing," they lamented. "He was neither our brother nor a kinsman of our clan. Or perhaps, what fault lies with the ascetic? We were the fools who, without a moment's thought, handed over our food to him." Filled with such regret, they returned to their homes. On that day, due to the spiritual potency of the act of charity itself—having offered a small portion of their food to a worthy recipient—they subsequently experienced remorse. As a consequence of that virtue, they attained the state of Vyantar of lesser power; upon passing away from that life, they were reborn in this life as your three brothers. It is solely due to the influence of that act of charity that the Goddess of Wealth has merely granted them a fleeting glimpse of her presence. Whosoever offers alms to an ascetic and subsequently feels remorse fails to reap the full spiritual fruit of that charitable act. It has been said:

Those unfortunate souls who first offer alms to the ascetics and subsequently regrets, are akin to those who, having secured passage on a magnificent vehicle of spiritual discipline, foolishly leap overboard into the ocean.

Truly blessed are those beings who, by maintaining steadfast purity in their charitable intent, accumulate virtue. Conversely, those who succumb to remorse remain deprived of such fortune. As it has been said: " Kheer (sweet rice pudding) does not digest well in a dog's stomach."

Wise individuals should never harbor regret after having performed an act of charity; rather, one must nourish the tree of merit with the water of pure sentiment. Now, Shalibhadra's sister, Subhadra, spoke up: "O Lord! By what karmic deeds did I come to bear the burden of soil?" The Guru replied: "Listen to the account of your past life. In a previous existence, when Dhanya was a cowherd, the four of you were his

neighbors. When that cowherd asked for kheer (sweet rice pudding), the first woman gave milk, the second gave rice, the third gave sugar, and the fourth gave the finest clarified butter. By offering these items, those four women accumulated virtue. O Subhadra! Now listen to the specific karma you bound upon yourself at that time regarding the carrying of earth.

There was a certain maidservant—who was prone to quarreling and was at that moment carrying away cow dung—whom you scorned with these words: 'O maidservant! You shall carry burdens for the rest of your life!' Deeply hurt by such harsh words, the maidservant was filled with sorrow. However, moved by compassion, you gave alms to that cowherd when he fell upon hard times; it is because of this act that you were reborn as Shalibhadra's sister. Yet, because you had cursed that maidservant in your previous life—declaring that she would have to carry earth—you were destined to bear the burden of earth in this present life." Thus, having had his doubts dispelled, Dhanya—accompanied by his family—embraced the path of righteousness and returned to his home. Thereafter, attaining ever-increasing wealth day by day, he became a highly esteemed figure in the King's court. Enjoying worldly pleasures with his eight wives like the Dogunduk Dev, Dhanya lived a life of great happiness. Just as Dhanya took initiation, so too did he perform acts of penance and other virtues, and ultimately ascended to the Anuttar Viman (the highest celestial abode). The full details of these events are to be understood through the narrative of Shalibhadra.

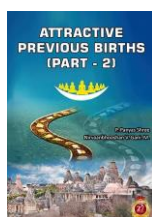
The Story of Dhanya Concludes.



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

1.

Attractive Previous Births- Part-2



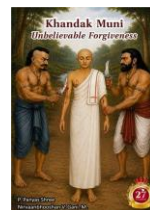
No. of pgs.: 81

Published:2026

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

2.

'Khandak Muni – Unbelievable Forgiveness



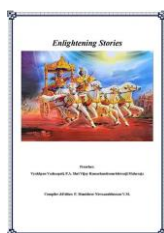
No. of pgs.: 18

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



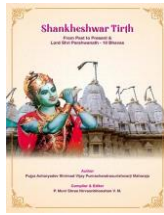
No. of pgs.: 36

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



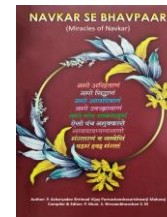
No. of pgs.: 72

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



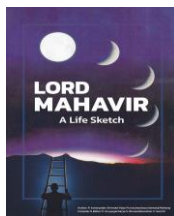
No. of pgs.: 64

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



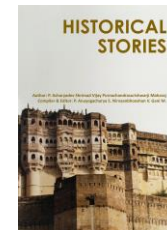
No. of pgs.: 54

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



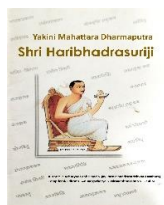
No. of pgs.: 64

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



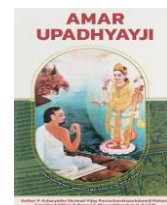
No. of pgs.: 54

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

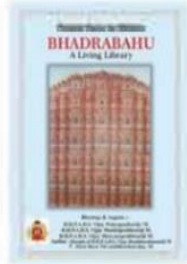


No. of pgs.: 72

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

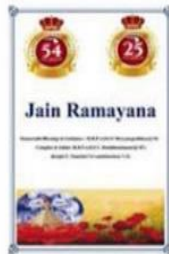


Golden Path Towards Nirvaan

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

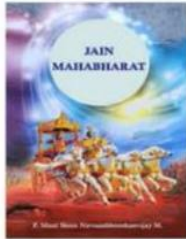


Our Great Persons

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

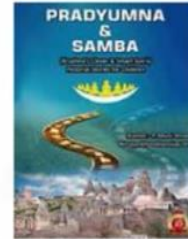


Jain Mahabharat

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

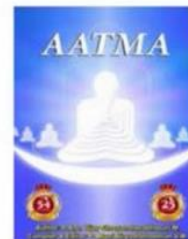


Life Changer

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

