

ATTRACTIVE PREVIOUS BIRTHS (PART - 1)



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1. Bharat's previous birth

To understand how even the desire to see a sage shapes a fortunate future, one must look at Bharat's previous life.

This is the talk of Bharat who was the son of Dashrath and the younger brother of Ram, who renounced the kingdom of Ayodhya even after receiving it because his heart yearned for the touch of self-control.

Many lifetimes ago, Bharat's soul was born in **Rajgrihi**. He was the son of **Dhanshreshthi** and **Lakshmimata**. His name was **Bhushan**. He grew up not rolling on the blankets, but on riches. His father arranged his marriage to thirty-two maidens. He began to spend his time like Dogandukdev (a pleasure-seeking deity).

One day, surrounded by his thirty-two wives, he was sitting in a balcony. It was nighttime. He saw a light descending from the sky to the earth. In a nearby garden, a sage named Shridhar attained *Kevalgyan* (omniscience). The gods rushed to celebrate the event. This sight caught Bhushan's attention. A desire to see the sage arose in him. He immediately came out of the balcony of his house. He came down. While walking towards the garden, he was bitten by a snake. The snake's venom was deadly, and he collapsed immediately. He died with the desire to see the sage.

Here, the seed of his spiritual upliftment was sown. **Seeing a sage is truly a pilgrimage that purifies even a sinner.**

After spending a considerable time in auspicious realms, Bhushan's soul was reborn as the crown prince of a Chakravarti (emperor) in the Mahavideh region. The Chakravarti's name was **Achal**, and this crown prince's name was **Priyadarshan**.

As if the virtuous impressions of his past life had awakened, Priyadarshan had a strong desire to take initiation from a young age. He never left the company of ascetics and yearned for becoming an ascetic. He was bound by his father's wishes; that is why he was still in the worldly life. Despite his unwillingness, his father forcefully married him to three thousand maidens.

When married to so many maidens, his detachment will not last. This was his father's calculation, but Priyadarshan proved this calculation wrong. After marriage, he remained engrossed in sensual pleasures for sixty-four thousand years, but during this time he performed such intense penance that even his three thousand wives could not make him attached to worldly desires. Due to his intense non-renunciate karma, he could not take initiation, but he remained determined until his last breath to break the chains of attachment to women and his father.

With such reverence for the ascetic life, he died in the householder's stage of life and reached the fifth Devlok (heaven). From there, the same soul of Bhushan was reborn as Dasharatha's son.

In this life as Bharat, he fulfilled his age-old yearning for attaining spiritual conduct.

Source: Tri. Sh.Pu. (verse)

2. Shatrughn's previous birth

Ram's younger brother's name was Shatrughn. Ram's commander's name was Kritantvadan. Both were very dear and trustworthy to Ram. After Ram's return to Ayodhya, Shatrughn attacked on Mathura. He beheaded the king of Mathura, Madhuraja, whom even Lakshman did not dare to fight. After that, Ram made Shatrughn the king of Mathura.

No one could understand why Shatrughn had such an attachment to Mathura, and why Kritantvadan had such affection for Shatrughn.

The wise sages, **Deshbhushan** and **Kulabhushan**, clarified this mystery. When Lord Ram asked them this question, they explained: "Great man, Shatrughn's soul has been born in Mathura twice before, and once he was even the king of Mathura. That is why Shatrughn has such an attachment to the kingdom of Mathura.

This Kritantvadan's soul had taken initiation in the previous life along with Shatrughn, and due to the effect of that initiation, they were both reborn in the fifth celestial realm. Even there, they remained connected as friends for countless ages, and a strong bond of affection existed between them.

"Lord, please be merciful and tell us about our previous lives," Shatrughn pleaded. The sage agreed. "You were a priest named **Shridhar** in **Mathura**. Once, while you were passing beneath the royal palace, Lalita – the queen of the city – saw you. She became infatuated with your handsome appearance. She summoned you to the palace through a servant. She began to make amorous advances towards you. Before you could even think, the king arrived. This frightened the queen greatly.

To conceal her own misconduct, she had you crucified. 'Help! Help! This is a thief! A thief has come!' she screamed. The king rushed in. You were apprehended, and indeed, you were sentenced to death by hanging.

The royal servants were taking you to the execution ground. You made a resolution in your heart that if you survived, you would definitely take initiation.

Self-control certainly liberates the soul. The intention of self-control also liberates the soul. As soon as you resolved to practice self-control, your intense virtuous karma manifested. A sage named Kalyan arrived there. He revealed the truth and freed you.

As soon as you were freed from the calamity, you immediately accepted initiation. After performing severe penance, you were born in the Devlok. From there, after death, you were reborn in the same city of Mathura as the son of **King Chandraprabh**. Your name became **Achal**. You were the youngest son, so you became the most beloved of the king. You had eight elder brothers. They were ignited with such jealousy that they thought, "The father loves him the most, so he will be made the heir to the throne. We will get nothing."

Alas! They prepared to kill you. For this, they began to devise various schemes. When you received this news through the ministers, you had to leave the kingdom and flee alone.

Weeping and in distress, you ran into the forest. What are the bushes of the forest like? You had never walked through those bushes filled with sharp thorns. After walking a short distance, a sharp thorn pierced deep into your foot. You were trapped.

Since your virtuous karma was still active, a woodcutter named **Ank** was passing by. He skillfully removed the thorn and made you happy. You told Ank: "When you hear that Achal is seated on the throne of Mathura, come to me. I will surely repay your kindness."

You continued your exile. You once entered the city of **Kaushambi**. There, the city's king, **Indradutt**, was learning archery of the highest caliber from a master archer. You went there and demonstrated your archery skills. Indradutt was astonished. He immediately married his princess, Datta, to you and gave you a great deal of wealth.

Now your good fortune was becoming powerful. You gathered a vast army. You conquered many countries. After that, you attacked on Mathura. Your eight elder brothers came to fight against you. You defeated all eight brothers single-handedly and took them captive.

This news reached **King Chandraprabh**. His anger reached its peak. He sent a large army against you, along with his ministers and generals. The ministers recognized you immediately. They did not fight and conveyed the true news to your father, the king.

You were your father's favourite. So, he arranged a grand celebration for your entry into the city. He crowned you king and ordered your eight brothers to leave the country. At this time, you felt compassion. You pleaded and secured a pardon for your brothers.

You summoned **Ank** – the man who had helped you in your time of trouble. You made him the king of **Shravastinagri**. A close friendship developed between you two.

Finally, both of you attained detachment from worldly life. You both took initiation together from **Acharya Samudrasuri**. You followed the precepts diligently. One by one, both of you passed away and became friend deities in the fifth Devlok.

After dying there, you were reborn as Shatrughn, and your friend Ankraj became the commander Kritantvadan. You have had a connection with this city of Mathura in the forms of Shridhar Purohit and Achalraj, which continue to inspire you even now. The fact that you practiced self-control in your last two lifetimes has borne fruit, enabling you to conquer Mathura, a city you could never have hoped to defeat otherwise."

The sage stopped.

The inner emotions then surged.

Shatrughn and Kritantvadan's eyelids were wet with tears.

Source: Tri.Sh. Pu. (verse)

3. Vishalya's previous birth

Among Lakshman's sixteen thousand wives, the position of chief queen went to Vishalya. This Vishalya was such a pure and virtuous woman that whoever she touched would be relieved of even the greatest affliction. Indeed, if the water in which Vishalya had bathed was sprinkled on someone, their diseases, spells, and other ailments would instantly disappear. Even the magical powers that could not be eliminated by the science of mantras were neutralized by Vishalya's bathwater alone.

Wasn't it Vishalya who revived Lakshman? When Lakshman fell unconscious due to Ravan's '**Amogh Vijaya**' power, his death was certain if Vishalya hadn't been there. The 'Amogh Vijaya' power that had rendered Lakshman unconscious fled at Vishalya's touch. Even this power, which was empowered by celestial beings like Dharanendra, was defeated by Vishalya.

If the question arises as to how such immense power manifested in Vishalya's body, the answer is her intense penance. This was the intense effect of the penance she had performed in her previous birth.

In her previous life, this Vishalya was the daughter of a Chakravarti (emperor) named **Tribhuvananand**, and her name was **Anangsundari**. She was born in the city of Pundarik in the Mahavideh region. A Vidyadhar (celestial being) named **Punarvasu** was traveling through the sky when he saw Anangsundari. Upon seeing her, a fever of desire ignited in every part of his body.

Although Anangsundari was the daughter of an emperor, he did not fear even a little. Without even considering what the emperor would do to him if he was caught, Punarvasu abducted the girl. The girl was sitting on the rooftop at the time, so she was easily captured. Taking the girl with him, Punarvasu immediately jumped into his aircraft and fled through the sky.

The Chakravarti sent Vidyadhar kings after him to capture him. The emperor's Vidyadharas quickly surrounded Punarvasu in the sky. Punarvasu fought against all of them alone and continued trying to move forward by breaking their encirclement. During this battle, Anangsundari fell from the aircraft. No one noticed immediately. By the time they realized what had happened, the Vidyadharas from both sides had advanced considerably.

Finally, when Sundari herself could not be saved, the battle stopped. Everyone dispersed. A thorough search was conducted, but Anangsundari was nowhere to be found. Neither the Chakravarti nor Punarvasu could find her. The Chakravarti eventually gave up, but Punarvasu's attachment to Sundari remained unwavering.

Finally, Punarvasu took initiation. “Even if I don't find her in this life, may I become the husband of this same Anangsundari in the next life. May I become an emperor; the master of many beautiful maidens like her.” Monk Punarvasu made this vow. Alas! He squandered the extremely difficult penance he had performed for many years.

Meanwhile, Anangsundari had fallen into an unknown forest, landing on a vine-covered arbour. She survived, but her life became more tragic than death itself. A completely

desolate, unfamiliar forest. Not a trace of human presence anywhere. She was a delicate young woman. The very thought is terrifying.

She made a decision – “Now, only Dharma is my refuge. When the crisis has turned worse than death, I will not get entangled in distraction. I have to get absorbed in Dharma.” She accepted a fast. She began to perform penance with equanimity. The consequences of her past misdeeds manifested with even greater intensity. **While she was performing severe penance, this Anangsundari was swallowed whole by a python.**

Even after being caught in such a terrible situation, she maintained her meditative state.

Feeling great exhilaration towards the fast she had undertaken, she embraced death. She was reborn as Vishalya.

On the other hand, the soul of that monk Punarvasu died and was reborn as the son of King Dashrath. His name was Lakshman Vasudeva.

The bonds of attachment from their previous lives continued to bind them both here as well.

Yes! The inconceivable effect of Vishalya's bathwater lasted until her marriage, but not afterward. This effect was due to the ascetic practices of her previous life. It remained steadfast as long as she observed celibacy. The power of penance also yields results only along with celibacy, doesn't it?

- Source: Tri.Sh.Pu. (Verse)

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4. The previous birth of King Indra – The Lord of Vidyadharas

Ravan defeated Indra, the mighty king of the Vidyadharas.

After defeating him, he proposed that Indra would have to sweep the streets of his Lanka every day.

He said, "If you accept this condition, I will release you from the cage; otherwise, you will have to remain in the cage for the rest of your life."

With a helpless heart, Indra accepted Ravan's condition. He gained freedom from Ravan's prison. He became very sad because **for powerful men, humiliation is worse than death.** Imagine how cruel it was for the former lord of the Vidyadharas to have to sweep the streets of Lanka.

Once, a wise sage named 'Nirvansangam' met Indra. Indra asked him, "How did I lose the battle against Ravan? I was not inferior to him in strength or magical powers. So why, even after being freed from captivity, am I forced to live a life of humiliation?"

"The reason for this is the killing and imprisonment of ascetics that you committed in your previous life" the enlightened sage said.

"Lord, please tell me about my past life," Indra requested.

The sage said, "In your previous life, you were a Vidyadhar named **Taditprabh**, the king of **Chandravart city**. You arrived at the *swayamvar* (self-choice marriage ceremony) of a princess named **Ahilya**. Many Vidyadharas like you had gathered there. A Vidyadhar named **Anandmali**, who was the lord of **Suryavart city**, also came with you in your aircraft.

The princess placed the garland of marriage around Anandmali's neck, which greatly offended you. Why did she not choose you even though you were present? And why did she choose your friend? This was your jealous calculation.

Then you parted ways, but the knot of resentment towards Anandmali remained in your heart. After some time, King Anandmali took initiation with a sense of detachment. While wandering with his guru's *gachchh* (group), he progressed in his spiritual practice. He was granted permission to perform *aatapna* (penance under the sun)."

He was staying on a mountain called **Rathavart** with the group. There, he stood in the posture of Kayotsarga. Coincidentally, you also arrived there for recreation. Upon seeing Muni Anandmali, your knot of hatred seemed to explode. You remembered the events of Ahilya's *swayamvar*. You began to take revenge. You bound the revered sage tightly. After that, you beat him severely. Although the sage's body was wounded and bleeding, he did not waver from his equanimity. He neither retaliated nor even responded to you. He didn't even break his Kayotsarga.

His fellow disciple could not bear to see all this. His name was **Kalyan Ganivar**. He too was a repository of many spiritual powers. He released *Tejoleshya* (a powerful energy ray) upon you. At this time your wives were very frightened. Along with all of them, your chief queen, **Satyashri**, pleaded with Kalyangani, "Please grant me my husband back." Finally, the sage withdrew *Tejoleshya*. This saved you.

Because you bound and threatened the sage, you accumulated such a heavy karma that you were defeated in this battle. You were bound with chains in Ravan's cage. Even after that, you were made to perform menial tasks of the Harijans.

King Indra was filled with detachment. He immediately took initiation. Finally, after attaining omniscience, he became the recipient of liberation in that very life.

Source: Tri. Sh. Pu. Charitra

5. Ravan, Lakshman and Sita: The relation of previous births

Almost every conflict originates from a woman or from wealth, and the source of spiritual attainment for everyone is usually the guru. How could the life journeys of Ravan, Lakshman, and Sita be any different from this reality?

Just as a fierce conflict arose between Ravan and Lakshman in this life because of Sita, similar conflicts have occurred in many of their previous lives. Sita was always the cause of the conflict, and the conflict was between Ravan and Lakshman. The surprising thing here is that Lakshman was always fighting to protect Sita, and Ravan was fighting to obtain her.

Let's take a brief look at their fascinating life journeys and draw some inspiration from them. The life stories of these three, as found in the scriptures, are very extensive. We will describe some selected stories here.

In this same Bharatkshetra, countless years ago, there was a city called **Kshetrapur**. In it lived a Sreshthi (wealthy merchant) named **Sagaradutt**. His wife's name was **Ratnaprabha**, and his daughter's name was **Gunvati**. Gunvati is none other than the soul of Sita. Gunvati was truly virtuous. She was the very embodiment of humility and modesty.

When Gunvati became youth, her father arranged her engagement to a wealthy merchant's son named Dhandutt from the same city. On the other hand, Gunvati's mother, Ratnaprabha, was very greedy. There was a wealthy man named Shrikant in the same city. He was wealthier than Dhandutt, so she decided to give Gunvati to Shrikant.

This was Ratnaprabha's secret plan. The priest came to know about it. The priest's name was Yagyavalkya. This priest was formerly a friend of Dhandutt. He was enraged by the deceit and treachery being carried out secretly and informed Dhanadutt's younger brother about everything.

There was great brotherly love between **Dhandutt** and **Vasudutt**. The thought that Shrikant would take the girl whose marriage has been fixed to his elder brother was not acceptable to him under any circumstances.

Now he received definite information that before Gunvati's marriage to Dhandutt, Shrikant would secretly take her as his wife. This was all the girl's mother's game. Vasudutt decided that he would not let his elder brother's beloved fall into Shrikant's hands in any way. What does he think of himself?

Vasudutt was seething with rage. Burning with anger, he burst into Shrikant's house. He rained down powerful sword blows, sending Shrikant to the abode of Yama (the god of death). Shrikant had also retaliated. As he was dying, he delivered such a fierce blow that Vasudutt could not withstand it. He too followed Shrikant to the abode of Yama.

Both of them were reborn as deer in the Vindhya forest. Gunvati also died in her maidenhood. She was reborn as a doe in the same forest. There too, Shrikant and Vasudutt, in their deer forms, fought a fierce battle over Gunvati, who was now a doe. Both died. This

cycle continued for many lifetimes. He spent many incarnations as *tiryanch* (an animal) in this way.

After a long time, Shrikant was reborn as a prince in **a city called Mrinalkand**. His name was **Vajrakanth**. This son of **King Shambhu** became king in due course.

Meanwhile, the soul of Vasudutt was reborn as a priest named **Shribhuti** in the same city. He had a daughter. Her name was **Vegvati**. This Vegvati was none other than the soul of Gunvati.

Finding an auspicious opportunity, the priest Shribhuti adopted Jainism. He became a pure righteous shravak (follower of Jainism). Vegvati also received similar *sanskars* (virtuous upbringing). On one occasion, King Vajrakanth saw Vegvati. He was immediately overcome with lust. This was the *sanskars* from his previous life.

He asked Shribhuti for Vegvati's hand in marriage. But Shribhuti flatly refused this demand. When the king tried to tempt him with many offers to accept the proposal, he not only refused the temptations but also clearly stated that he would not give his daughter to a follower of falsity.

The king became very angry with Shribhuti. He beat Shribhuti severely, and due to the pain of the torture, he succumbed to death. After this, the king took Vegvati, weeping and wailing due to the separation from her father, to his palace, where he raped her.

Vegvati's suffering knew no bounds. Distressed, she cursed Vajrakanth, "Remember, O King, even though you have committed this wicked act today, in a future life, I myself will be the cause of your death."

Vegvati hated the king. This same Vegvati was born in Mithila city. She became the daughter of King Janak and became famous by the name of Sita.

That Shribhuti, after many lifetimes, was born as the son of King Dashrath. He was born as Lakshman, and that King Vajrakanth, after completing several other lifetimes, became Ravan.

Shrikanth and Vasudutt, who fought over Gunvati in a previous life, and then Vajrakanth and Shribhuti, who were rivals over Vegvati, here became Ravan and Lakshman, fighting fiercely over Sita. Ravan, cursed by Sita in a previous life, was ultimately killed in the same way Sita had cursed him.

Finally, it should be said that Dhandutt whose wife Sita became in the first birth of this series, that same Dhandutt, after being born as the merchant 'Padmaruchi' and going through a few other births, was born as Ram. Priest Yagyavalkya, a well-wisher of Dhandutt, was born here as Vibhishan. After all, Ram got Sita.

Source: Tri.Sh.Pu. (Verse)

6. The previous birth of Lav and Kush

Who doesn't know these virtuous souls, the sons of Lord Ramchandra and beloved of virtuous Sita? These souls, destined for liberation in that very lifetime, were named Anang Lavan, and Madanankush, yet they became famous by the names Lav and Kush.

On one hand, Lord Ramchandra's life seems to be constantly fraught with struggles, while on the other hand, not even a shadow of trouble is visible in the lives of his sons. This good fortune, that prosperity, and the subsequent unhindered spiritual upliftment were bestowed upon them due to the power of their act of giving to a worthy recipient.

This was their sixth life. In their first life, Lav and Kush were also real brothers. Their names were **Vasunand** and **Sunand**. These sons of the Brahmin **Vamdev** and his wife **Shamala** lived in the **city of Kakandi**. Once, a Jain monk, who was observing *maskhaman* (a month-long fast), came to their house for alms. The two brothers were overjoyed. With great respect, they offered alms to the monk. After that, they did rigorous penance of the monk's pure conduct and adhered to his excellent dharma. "We have been blessed to have the opportunity to offer alms to such a renunciate. We have become fortunate," their hearts were saying.

Due to this act of giving to a worthy recipient, the seed of enlightenment was sown in their souls. This led them to accumulate much auspicious karmas. After death, they were both reborn as a pair of twins. There, too, they experienced uninterrupted happiness. After completing their life as twins, they were born in the first heaven as Mitra Dev (friend deities).

In their fourth life, they were reborn in the city of Kakandi. They were born as sons of King Vamdev, and were named Shubhankar and Priyankar, respectively. When they grew up, they each received separate kingdoms from their father. They enjoyed the pleasures of kingship for a long time. At some point, they heard the teachings of a true guru, and both developed detachment. They both accepted asceticism together and practiced it with purity. Through this, they accumulated unprecedented virtue and eradicated their negative karma. Finally, after death, both monks were born in the Graiveyak, and from there, they were reborn as the sons of Sita Devi.

Source: Tri.Sh.Pu. (Verse)

7. Indrajit, Meghvanah, and Mandodari's previous births

Who doesn't know Ravan's valiant sons, Indrajit and Meghvanah, and their mother Mandodari? The affectionate bond between these three had continued from their previous lives and had even grown stronger in this one.

Blessed is Mandodari, whose purity was praised by the gods. Blessed are Indrajit and Meghvanah, who never desired the riches of the kingdom. As long as their father was alive, they remained loyal to his commands, and after his death, they embarked on the path of spiritual self-realization.

After Ravan's death, when Lord Ram wanted to entrust the kingdom of Lanka to Kumbhkarna, Indrajit, and Meghvanah, these noble men replied to Lord Ram, "O great one! We have no desire whatsoever for this unparalleled kingdom of Lanka. We now aspire only to the kingdom of liberation. There is only one means to attain the kingdom of liberation, that is initiation. We will accept initiation." This is what true heroism is!

The bravery that is not essential for slaying the enemy is essential for slaying the desire for worldly pleasures.

Winning in the game of weapons is material bravery, while winning in the game of self-control is spiritual bravery. Spiritual bravery is millions of times greater than material bravery.

The echoes of the drums that resounded during Ravan's last rites had not yet faded from their ears when this conversation began. While this conversation was going on, the news arrived, "The sage named Aprameya has attained *Kevalgyan* (omniscience). He is residing in a garden outside Lanka. The gods have gathered to celebrate his attainment of omniscience."

Upon hearing this, everyone set out from there to celebrate the festival of omniscience. Ram, Lakshman, and their followers, along with Kumbhkarna, Indrajit, Meghvanah, and Ravan's followers. Ravan's sixteen thousand queens also reached the discourse pavilion. The atmosphere of understanding between the two sides was very sensitive. On one side was the longing of separation, and on the other, the longing for victory.

At the end of the discourse, Indrajit and Meghvanah inquired about their past lives.

The solution given to them by the omniscient sage is presented here.

In this Bharatkshetra, the city of Kaushambi existed then, just as it does today. In this city, you both were born four lifetimes ago. You became real brothers. One was named Pratham and the other Pashchim. Although your names were Pratham and Pashchim, the similarity between you two was truly astonishing. Due to the rise of karmic sins, you were both born into a very poor family. Despite much hard work, that poverty did not go away. Desperate due to poverty and longing for happiness, you both went to a garden one day. There, you had the darshan of a Jain monk. You began to serve him.

Just as the fragrance of a ripe fruit cannot remain confined within its peel, but inevitably spreads outwards, similarly, the inherent potential hidden within the soul cannot remain hidden by the veil of poverty, but inevitably manifests itself in one's actions.

The potential hidden within you resonated within the monk's mind. Therefore, the monk gave you a religious discourse. Your hearts were moved by the monk's words. You understood the futility of worldly possessions. The longing for wealth that was smouldering in your hearts began to subside. It was replaced by the feeling of detachment. You both accepted restraint from the sage and became initiated monks.

Conquering your *kashayas* and drinking the nectar of forgiveness, you both practiced restraint filled with penance for millions of years. Once, on a certain occasion, you arrived in the city of Kaushambi; it was spring season. You saw King Nandighosh there enjoying like Indra with Queen Indramukhi.

Witnessing sensual pleasures is perhaps even more dangerous than indulging in them, because it can make even one who has renounced worldly desires become attached to them.

The sight of the king and queen's spring revelry seemed like a quagmire to the Paschim Muni. He got trapped in it, his detachment wavered, and he resolved that, by the power of the penance he had performed in this life, he would be born as the son of such a prosperous king in his next life.

The pain of the poverty he had endured in his worldly life flared up again, and it made this Muni thirsty for worldly pleasures.

When his brother, Pratham Muni, learned of this, he tried to reason with Paschim Muni, but he did not understand. At the Pratham Muni's request, the head of the *gachchh* and other senior monks also tried to guide him, but it had no effect.

Paschim Muni died with this resolve in mind and was reborn in the same city as the son of King Nandighosh. He became the son of Queen **Indramukhi**. In due course, he grew up and was crowned king at the appropriate time. His name was **Rativardhan**. Surrounded by many beautiful queens like celestial nymphs, he began to indulge in pleasures just like his father.

Meanwhile, Pratham Muni practiced unwavering self-control. After his death, he became a brilliant deity in the fifth Devlok. That deity saw King Rativardhan deeply engrossed in worldly pleasures. His heart melted. Where will this attachment to sensual pleasures lead my brother?

Driven by the karmic connection from their previous lives, this deity assumed the guise of a monk and to enlighten King Rativardhan, he arrived at his royal palace.

Rativardhan also welcomed the sage. As soon as he saw the sage, a sense of peace spread through his heart. This is called love! The king attained the knowledge of past lives. His previous birth began to unfold before his eyes. Now the deity, abandoning the guise of a sage, assumed his divine form. He enlightened the king, asking, "What will such intense attachment to worldly pleasures do to your soul? Now take a break from these worldly desires." He also revealed their past life connection.

The divine words had a profound effect on the king's mind. He repented, realizing that the vow he had made in his previous life was a great mistake.

He developed the faith that the joy found in the company of the Ratnatrayi (three jewels - right vision, right knowledge, and right conduct) is far greater than the pleasure derived from

beautiful women. Finally, the king renounced the world. He observed excellent conduct. After death, he was born in the fifth Devlok.

There, the love between Pratham and Pashchim Munis blossomed again. Upon the exhaustion of their lifespan, both died. They were born as real brothers in Vibuddhnagar in the Mahavideh region. Both became kings of different cities. In the end, both accepted initiation and joyfully practiced self-restraint. They died and in their fourth life, were born in the twelfth Achyut Devlok. There too, a bond of friendship was established between the two of you.

After dying in the twelfth heaven, the souls of the Pratham and Pashchim Munis have been born here as Indrajit and Meghvan, the sons of Ravan,.

Similarly, the soul of Queen Indramukhi has returned to you in this life in the form of your mother, Mandodari.

Everyone's eyes widened in astonishment. Tears streamed down Mandodari's face. A turmoil arose in the minds of Indrajit and Meghvan. They, along with Kumbhkarna, immediately stood up and requested to their Guru to give them *rajoharan* (monastic robes). The Guru granted *rajoharan* and initiated them.

These brave warriors, who had not even cared for their own lives on the battlefield, now became even more courageous, enduring hardships, adversities, and trials. These four were fortunate souls destined for liberation in that very life.

Indrajit and Meghvan attained spiritual merit during their six years of asceticism. In their sixth year of monastic life, they attained *Kevalgyan* through fasting on the Vindhya Mountains, and their *Nirvan* also occurred there. After their *Nirvan*, that land became known as **Meghrath Tirth**.

At the same time, Kumbhkarna also attained omniscience while crossing the Narmada River. The place of Kumbhkarna's *Nirvan* became famous as **Prishtharakshit Tirth**.

Source: Tri. Sh. Pu. (Verse)

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8. Previous birth of Shri Gautamswami

When a renunciant named 'Skandak' began climbing the steps of the *Samvasaran* (spiritual assembly hall), Lord Mahavir said to Shri Gautama Swamiji, "Gautam! Your friend is coming to the *Samvasaran*."

Astonishment spread everywhere, among the assembly and among the Ganadharas (chief disciples). Gautam Swami's astonishment knew no bounds because he did not recognize this renunciant Skandak at all. He was seeing him for the first time, yet the Lord was saying that he was his friend. An invisible world was hidden within the Lord's words. Everyone became eager to know it.

"Lord! How is this renunciant my friend?" Gautam Swami asked.

Lord Mahavir explained: "Your connection with this renunciant has been established for the past five lifetimes. You both have been fellow practitioners of the same religion, friends, and even husband and wife! Today you are a Ganadhar, and he is a renunciant. This is the unimaginable power of karma."

First life: Mangal Sheth

When I was Vasudev named Triprishth in my eighteenth life, you became my charioteer. After that, our reunion took place in this twenty-seventh life. In the intervening period, like me, you also wandered extensively in the world. This is the story of your last five incarnations during that time.

In the sixth life of the past, you were born as Mangal Shreshthi. There you attained *samyagdarshan* (right vision), as if you had set out towards *moksha* (salvation). What is the point of counting the lives before one attains right vision?

In the Pushpakalavati vijay of Mahavideh region, there is a country called Brahmavart. It is truly as vast as the universe. In this country, there was a city called '**Brahmaputra**'. The king's name was '**Brahmchandra**'. The king's chief queen, named **Brahmi**, gave birth to a son with thirty-two auspicious signs. She named him **Brahmdutt**. In due course, he became the crown prince.

In this same great city, you became a shreshthi (wealthy merchant) named 'Mangal'. Your status was like that of the city's chief merchant. Due to the fruition of your past good deeds, you received unimaginable wealth. Thirty-three crore gold coins were buried in the ground. Thirty-three crore gold coins were invested in trade and commerce, and thirty-three crore gold coins were kept as cash in your palace. Thus, you were the owner of ninety-nine crore gold coins. The wealth in the form of animals, fields, palaces, stables, ornaments, and cattle was even more than ninety-nine crore; which is not counted here.

Even though you became the owner of such immense wealth, an intense attachment to sensual pleasures did not arise in you. Your spiritual substance had now become very light

due to the reduction of karmic weight. How else could it be that with the rise of immense virtue, intense sensual attachment did not awaken?

Only when beginningless delusion is on the verge of breaking, the most powerful cause of sin can fail to tempt the soul.

This is a region where the separation of *kevalgyani* (omniscient beings) and *tirthankaras* never absent. On occasion, you heard the discourse of an enlightened *bhagvants*. With a heart overwhelmed with emotion, you accepted *samyakatva* (right belief) at that very moment. You also adopted the twelve vows.

In this same city lived a householder named Sudharma. Like you, he too had accepted right belief and the duties of a *shravak* from an enlightened *bhagvants*. In terms of religion and intellect, you both were of the same calibre, but the difference between your and his wealth was as vast as the distance between the two ends of a bow. **Both ends could break, but that gap could not be bridged. Similarly, you were very wealthy, and Sudharma was very poor. Yet, just as both ends remain equally balanced in a bow, you two were bound together by a religious bond.** You were also connected by mutual affection. You helped your poor co-religionist completely and helped him in progress as much as possible.

As time passed, you reached the later stages of life. Due to the fruition of some intense negative karma from the past, you fell into the clutches of an incurable disease. You consulted many expert doctors and tried effective medicines, but all were in vain. The disease did not subside; instead, as you continued taking the medicines, it began to become more aggressive. Finally, you stopped taking the medicines. You renounced material treatment. The teachings about the transience of life and the body now seemed true to you.

You decided to pursue spiritual treatment. You developed an intense longing for self-realization. You gathered your relatives, entrusted the entire family's responsibility to your eldest son, and expressed your desire to do *ansan* (fast unto death). The weeping of your wife and daughter, and the cowardly words of your relatives, could not deter you from doing so.

With the essence of a lion, you invited a guru. In the presence of all your relatives and the *sangh*, you accepted *ansan* at home. Your praise spread far and wide. Many *shravaks* in the city were inspired by your fast, and they too began to accept vows and rules according to their capacity.

The heat was scorching the earth. Days passed. The month of Jyeshtha arrived. The heat reached its peak. On one side, the mercury points in the thermometer was rising, and on the other hand, the points of auspicious thoughts in the thermometer of your mind was climbing higher and higher.

Just as a sudden storm rises during intense summer and disrupts the atmosphere, similarly, storms of evil thoughts suddenly began to rage in your mind. You became so thirsty that you could not bear the pain. Intense determination and option (thoughts of doubt and indecision) arose in your mind and shattered the atmosphere of equanimity and impulse that had settled there.

You began to have thoughts like, "Those beings are blessed, they are fortunate, who are born in water, live in water, drink water as they wish, and can obtain water whenever they desire.

It is not possible that these relatives will give me water, nor is it possible that I can ask them for water due to shame."

Your mental stream, deviated from auspicious meditation, became engrossed in non-abstinence and the approval of those who practice non-abstinence. At this very moment, you bound your lifespan. You bound the lifespan of an animal, and specifically, that of a fish. As the first consequence of dharma, you lost the path to good conduct. One who loses the path to good conduct inevitably loses the state of samadhi. You were born as a large-bodied fish in a large river.

- **Second life: Birth as a fish in a large river.**

The motion of karma is truly strange. As soon as there is a slight rise, it causes a fall. Yes, it just needs a few small triggers. You performed fasting by becoming "fearful of sin," but during this fasting, you became fearful of suffering. Your fear of suffering threw you into the abyss. Why else would this happen? Where was the birth of Mangalseth and where is the life of a fish swimming in the water? Where was the first spiritual state, radiant with right vision, and where is the self-state now, clouded again due to the fall from right vision?

It would be surprising if a soul fearful of sin did not abandon sin, and it would be surprising if a soul fearful of suffering did not abandon dharma.

The pain became unbearable because the fear of suffering had awakened. This fear of suffering corrupted you from your dharma of righteousness. If you had been vigilant and criticized your evil thoughts at that very moment, the situation would have been quite different. Now that even right belief is gone, what kind of discernment can there be?

You received the body of a strong and healthy fish, and you began to spend your time bumping around here and there in the vast expanse of water. You started eating the small fishes in the river. Whether you were hungry or not, you developed an addiction to hunting aquatic creatures. Besides this, you would happily leap and splash in the strong current of the water. **What darkness is worse than lack of discernment? Gautam! The life of an animal is bad precisely because not even a single ray of discernment is available there.**

Time passed. Once, you saw a fish in the river that resembled the form of a Jin idol. You were astonished. Standing right in front of it, you began to ponder. Your hunting habit subsided.

Oh! I have seen such a form somewhere before! I liked it very much! Seeing this form, I experience a deep feeling in my heart. Whose form could this be?

Your restless mind became completely engrossed in the search for distant memories. Because of this, you fainted. At that very moment, you attained knowledge of past lives.

The birth of Mangalseth, the attainment of salvation through him, the manifestation of the first right belief, followed by the extraordinary devotion to Jainism; the incurable disease experienced in the later part of the life, the *ansan* undertaken with firm detachment, and the subsequent evil thought due to fear of suffering... everything became vividly clear before the eyes of your intellect, as if you had witnessed these events just moments ago.

After this, you awoke from your unconscious state. Your remorse knew no bounds. Tears welled up in your eyes, and your heart was filled with anguish. What a terrible mistake I have made! I climbed to the peak only to jump into the abyss myself.

The form I am seeing is the form of a Jin idol. I have worshipped Jin idol thousands of times. Oh! I had even reached the stage of supreme right belief and *ansan*.

Due to a little craving for worldly pleasures and the cowardice of my mind in not conquering it, I lost everything. I lost my religion, and I lost my wealth. My virtues vanished, and my honour (reputation) was gone.

You were deeply affected by the pure results of self-reproach. After this, you resolved that whatever had happened, had happened. Now I must improve my future life journey. Even though I have rendered this human life fruitless by deviating from *sadhana* (spiritual practice), I must purify this animal life through spiritual practice and regain what I have lost.

It is my good fortune that today I have seen this fish in the form of a Jin idol, the sight of which is awakening true self-knowledge. There are many limitations in this life of aquatic creature. How much religious practice is possible here? Yet, I must certainly practice enough religion so that there is no suffering after this.

In the life of a fish, you then accepted the religion of *vitrag* (passionless) with supreme devotion. You attained right belief again. And gradually, you ascended higher. You also attained *deshvirati* (partial renunciation).

A pure desire for liberation arose in your mind. You gave up eating meat. You stopped eating small and large fish and other aquatic creatures. Gradually, you even stopped drinking water. You established the Arihant and his religion in your heart. You immersed your mind in the remembrance of the Navkar Mantra. Now your mind was not attracted to anything else. The curiosity that was possible in the simple way of life in the aquatic world had subsided. You desired to do *ansan*, and that is why you were making all these preparations.

Coincidentally, at that very time, many ships began to pass from the river. These ships were coming from the city of '**Brahmaputra**'. And your friend from your previous life, 'Sudharma', was also among them. Poor Sudharma was troubled after your death. Once, when a caravan announced its departure to another country, he joined them with the desire to earn money. The entire group of this caravan was on this ship.

Suddenly, a storm arose. The sky was covered with dust storms, and the directions became hazy. Strong gusts of wind surrounded the ships; all the vessels got trapped. They started colliding with each other. Finally, they broke apart and sank into the water. At that time, the river seemed more terrifying than the Vaitarani River of hell because of the cries of dying people. Who could save whom, and who could listen to whom? It was as if complete destruction had struck.

At this time, Sudharma also began to cry. Very frightened, he remembered the Navkar Mantra. He started reciting the Navkar Mantra in a loud voice. He was drowning in the water. Sudharma's voice reached your ears. You had attained the knowledge of past lives. So, you recognized Sudharma. Sympathy arose for your friend. With the intention of helping him, you ran towards him. You lifted Sudharma onto your back. After that, you left him on the riverbank and then went back into the depths of the river.

Seeing Sudharma's plight before your eyes, your mind became filled with detachment. You accepted *ansan*. You began to observe it with firm resolve. You were not afraid of the pain of hunger and thirst, or the suffering caused by other aquatic creatures. You observed the fast without any transgressions for fifteen days. Finally, you died, having acquired the lifespan in the Vaimanik Devlok.

• **Third life: 'Jyotirmali' deity in the first heaven.**

You were born in the first Devlok named 'Sudharm'. There your name was 'Jyotirmali'. The name of your celestial consort was Jyotirmati, and your lifespan was four *palyopamas*. You also received sufficient power and prosperity. After being born as a deity, you studied the '**Devpustak**' for the first time. After that, you bathed according to the customs of the Devlok. Wearing clothes and ornaments, you worshipped the eternal Jin idols present there with great devotion. After that, you began to enjoy yourself with your celestial consorts.

Meanwhile, Sudharma, whom you had carried to the shore on your back in the fish life, had now become very detached. He worshipped Jainism throughout his life. Finally, he attained death with pure thoughts and was also born in the first Devlok. This Sudharma Dev used his *avadhigyan* (clairvoyance) to see his loved ones and relatives from his previous life. You, Jyotirmali Dev, appeared before his eyes.

Once, a very wicked and pleasure-seeking deity abducted the queen of Saudharmendra and escaped by breaking through the iron defences of Indra Lok. He left the Devlok and disappeared into deep darkness. Indra's anger knew no bounds. He immediately formed a team of select deities and ordered them to capture this criminal deity and bring him back, also warning them to ensure that his queen is brought back in safety. You two (Mangal and Sudharma) were selected for Indra's team.

The deities ran. The wicked deity was ahead, and you all were behind him. That wicked deity troubled you for six months. At the end of six months, you were able to rescue Shachi (Indrani is identified by the word 'Shachi' in the scriptures) from his clutches. You captured that deity. Finally, you returned to Indra his Shachi safely. Indra banished that wicked deity from Devlok.

Meanwhile, intense sensual desires arose in the mind of Sudharma Dev. The acquaintance he had made while protecting Indrani wavered. After taking Indrani to Indra's palace, he went towards the brothel of the heaven. He abandoned his own divine consort. By associating with various divine consorts, he lost his right faith.

Seeing her husband's association with prostitutes, Sudharma's divine consort became very disturbed. The separation from her husband was painful, but his misconduct was causing her even more grief. She ran to Jyotirmali Dev and began to pray for protecting her husband from the path of sin.

He, too, with great compassion, enlightened Sudharma and made him give up his association with prostitutes. He brought him out of the brothel. **You had the potential to become a Ganadhar. There is no wonder that a sense of gratitude naturally manifested itself!**

Finally, after completing a lifespan) of four *palyopamas*, you attained death.

• Fourth life: Vegvan Vidyadhar.

In the same Mahavideh region and its Pushpakalavati Vijay, on its Vaitadhy mountain, you were born as a Vidyadhar prince. Your father was the king of a large city called '**Vegvati**'. His name was **Suveg**, and your name was **Vegvan**.

You grew up under the care of five foster mothers, and when you reached a marriageable age, you were married to princesses. You were enjoying unparalleled pleasures like a deity right here on earth.

Once, you developed a desire to attain Vidyas (magical powers). You reached a worldly pilgrimage site called **Vanshgulm**. You began practicing the Vidyas that had been passed down through your lineage. You didn't even take a single breath of air. You only consumed a handful of urad dal and three sips of water every day. You chanted mantras in this way for fifteen days.

After that, you continued your practice for another fifteen days. The only difference was that you ate rice instead of urad dal. In this way, one month was completed. The Vidyas were not yet attained. You did not get tired. In the second month, you started an even more rigorous penance. Only a handful of gram flour and a palmful of water every day.

When the time for attainment of the Vidyas approached, many difficulties also arose. You endured all of them. At the end of two months, you attained the Gauri and Gandhari Vidyas.

After that, you came to Bharatkshetra for a pilgrimage to Shatrunjay mountain. You considered your life blessed after completing the pilgrimage. Finally, you returned to your own home. Your father gave you a grand welcome and installed you as the crown prince.

Meanwhile, the lifespan of Sudharma, a deity from the first heaven, came to an end. He died. He was reborn in Mahavideh Kshetra. In the city of **Tarangini**, in the Vijay of Mahavideh, lived a merchant named **Dhandev**. He had a wife named **Dhanvati**. Sudharma entered Dhanvati's womb. On the night of conception, Dhanvati had a dream. A huge mountain of wealth came to her. When the time came, Dhanvati gave birth to a daughter. Dhandev named his daughter Dhanmala, because her mother had seen a mountain of wealth in her dream.

Nurtured by her mother and nannies, Dhanmala gradually grew into a young woman. Her father taught her all the arts befitting a woman. On one hand, she became skilled in the arts, and on the other hand, her body blossomed with youth. The man who could see her beauty and not be captivated was a saint only.

Once, you (Vegvan Vidyadhar), for some reason, were going towards the Vrittavaitadhy mountain. On the way, you came across the city of Tarangini. You saw Dhanmala playing in a window. As soon as you saw her, you became infatuated. Your past life's connection with Dhanmala intensified this flaw in your mind. From the sky, you entered the window where Dhanmala was sitting. Seeing a man, she became frightened. **Just as a goat trembles at the sight of a lion, she screamed loudly, but to no avail. You abducted the trembling Dhanmala.** Before any of the girl's relatives could retaliate, you disappeared into the sky. They were all earthly beings, and you were a Vidyadhar. Now, it became impossible for them to find you.

You brought Dhanmala to your city. You gave Dhanmala a place in your palace with great love, but she did not desire it. Furious with fear and anger, she didn't even look at your face. Scorning you, the woman gave up food and water.

Because of the excess of sensual pleasure, you also gave up food and water. This matter did not remain hidden from the minister of the kingdom. The minister's name was 'Dhisakha'. The minister met you in private and said, "Prince, I understand your sorrow, but remember that at the time of Lord Adinath, when the Vidyadharas were born, Dharanendra had written an order on Mount Vaitadhy that if any Vidyadhar rapes a married or unmarried girl, all the Vidyas of that Vidyadhar will inevitably be destroyed."

Therefore, O Prince! Be patient. Break your fast. I will now use such adverse Vidyas that the girl herself will come to you.

You accepted the minister's words. In the end, what the minister said came true. Not even two months had passed when Dhanmala became extremely devoted to you.

Because of all these events, your father, the king, became very sad. He handed over the reins of the kingdom to you and took initiation.

As king, you also ruled the people well for millions of years. Once, your beloved Dhanmala was sitting on the roof of your inner chambers. At that time, a Vidyadhar's aircraft passed by in the sky. That Vidyadhar was a pleasure-seeker and an adulterer. He knew that Dhanmala was the queen, yet he abducted her. Then he fled. You received the news of Dhanmala's abduction. It was as if the sky had fallen on your head. The ground slipped from beneath your feet. Despite inquiring everywhere, no news of Dhanmala was found. She was nowhere to be found.

Finally, you remembered Minister **Dhisakha**. You requested him to apply the Vidya again. The minister agreed to your request. He began Vidya sadhana in solitude. Due to the power of the sadhana, **Pragyapti Devi** appeared and said: "Your queen has now become a wicked woman. Forget the name of that unchaste woman who has become infatuated with other men!"

The minister conveyed the divine message to the king. Hearing it, you became extremely sorrowful. You asked the minister: "How could she, whom I nurtured with love day and night and cared for like the crown on my head, agree for such wicked conduct? I cannot understand."

"O King! Such is the nature of women. This is the word of Vitrag, which is never false, so now abandon your sorrow for your beloved and focus your mind on dharma."

What the minister said went down your throat like a bitter pill. You attained great detachment. The desire for initiation began to stir in your heart. As if to fulfil your wish, Acharya Keshi, along with a family of five hundred monks, arrived in your city.

You welcomed them with great enthusiasm and joy. You listened to the guru's discourse. Now your heart yearned for initiation. You became completely detached from the world. You pleaded with the Guru, "Bhagvant, please be merciful! Stay here for some time. I will entrust the kingdom to my son and organize the Ashtahnika festival. After that, I will come to your feet to accept your discipleship."

Gurudev accepted your request. Even though the townspeople had strong sympathy for you not renouncing the world, you firmly resolved to take initiation. You coronated the crown prince and then accepted initiation from the Guru. Minister Dhisakha also took initiation with you.

Serving the Guru's lotus feet became the mantra of your initiated life. On the other hand, you continuously practiced austerities like Chhath and Attham. **You had not yet attained the tremendous suppression of the knowledge-obscuring karma, but you practiced the yoga of 'Guru Seva' with such intensity that you secured the Ganadhar *namkarma* there.**

You died observing strict self-control. Minister Dhisakha, like you, also made his human life successful by observing excellent self-restraint. He also passed away.

• Fifth birth: Indra of the eighth heaven.

You had the capability to observe flawless self-restraint. The nature of the auspicious virtue you accumulated through this was not of an ordinary level. Due to the influence of that virtue, in your fifth birth, you were born as the Indra of the eighth heaven. Immense prosperity and splendour surrounded you.

The soul of Minister Dhisakha was also born with you in the 'Sahasrar' Devlok as your companion deity.

When Dhanmala heard about your acceptance of asceticism from people's mouths, she was also filled with remorse. She wept day and night for her immoral conduct.

"What a sinful woman I am! Unfortunate! **Those are the virtuous women who remain faithful to their husbands throughout their lives, even if their husbands are unfavourable to them. But I have hurt my beloved husband.** I have brought disgrace to both my in-laws and my father's side. What will become of me?"

She could not find peace. To escape the clutches of her adulterous lover, she took initiation. She became engrossed in serving her guruni. With the same intensity with which she had committed sins, she performed penance. Finally, Dhanmala also died and was born in the eighth Devlok as your obedient deity.

The karmic bond from a previous life is very strong. Love and hatred, both often transcend lifetimes and spread their vine further and further. The same happened here; a chain of affection was forged between the three of you. You could not find peace without being together. You went on pilgrimages together and celebrated Kalyanak festivals together. Besides this, you spent a lot of time listening to the teachings of the Tirthankara.

The Indra of the eighth heaven has a lifespan of many *Sagaropam*. You spent even that long period of time like the morning worship. It was the rise of immense virtue. **The time of the rise of virtue passes so quickly that one doesn't even realize it, while the time of the rise of sin does not pass quickly, like the night of a sick person.** Even if it is short, it feels very long. As soon as your lifespan was complete, you died.

• Sixth Incarnation: Shri Gautam Swami

You were born in Bharatkshetra of Jambudvip. In Bharatkshetra, there are twenty-five and a half Aryan countries. In the great kingdom of Magadh, which was among those countries, and in its village called Gobar, you were born as the son of a Brahmin named Vasubhuti. Your mother's name was Prithvi, and your name was Indrabhuti.

The events that followed in the flow of your life are before your eyes. Today you have become my first Ganadhar, and the series of sadhna from your previous lives is also a contributing factor.

The soul of Minister Dhisakha completed its lifespan in the eighth Devlok and attained death. It was born in the city of **Champa** in this same Bharatkshetra. The father's name was **Tilaksheth** and the mother's name was **Shilavati**. They had a virtuous son named '**Pingal**'. In due course, he grew up. When my Samvasaran was established in the city of Champa, he became imbued with detachment after hearing my discourse. He took initiation from me. He received excellent training and education and exists as a Shruti-kevali – Chaudahpurvadhar (a knower of the fourteen Purvas).

On the other hand, as soon as Dhanmala's lifespan was complete, she descended from the eighth heaven. She was born as a prince in a village called '**Susamvar**' in this same Bharatkshetra. Father's name was **Siddh**, the mother's name was **Samriddhi**, and the soul of Dhanmala was named **Skandak**.

When Prince Skandak grew up, he was influenced by the discourse of a Parivrajak (wandering non-Jain ascetic). Renouncing the world, he took initiation from the Parivrajak due to ignorance.

Shruti-kevali Pingal Muni, having received my command, arrived at Skandak's hermitage today. Influenced by the affection from their previous lives, he asked Skandak Rishi about the elements of living and non-living beings, but due to the lack of right knowledge, Skandak could not give any answer.

Where was the profound knowledge of the Shruti-kevali, and where was the mere semblance of knowledge possessed by someone with a deluded mind! At this time, Skandak became very anxious and eager to obtain a true understanding of the elements, and therefore, he is coming to me with Pingal Muni.

The Lord took rest.

The assembly's curiosity reached its peak and became intense.

Shri Gautam Swami went before Skandak Rishi, but even in his mind, indescribable emotions were swirling after hearing about the previous lives from the Lord's own lips. He respectfully greeted Shri Gautam Swami who was approaching him.

After going to the Lord and receiving the resolution of his doubts, Skandak developed a firm belief that the truth lies only in the self-discipline prescribed by the Jin. Abandoning the Parivrajak's initiation, he accepted the transcendental initiation from Lord Mahavir.

Reference: '*Indrabhuti Charitra*' composed by Pujya Trailokya Sagar Maharaj, based on the manuscript from the ancient library of Chanasma.

9. Mahasati Anjanasundari's previous birth

Anjanasundari was such a great and virtuous woman whose chastity was unjustly questioned, leading her husband, Pawananjay, to commit self-immolation.

There have been many virtuous women who committed suicide by fire to protect their own chastity, but Anjanasundari is the only one whose husband tried to commit suicide by fire for the sake of her chastity. From the moment of her marriage, she suffered the agony of separation from her husband for twenty-two years. After that, her mother-in-law, Ketumati, branded her a slut, and in her husband's absence, she was forced to leave the country alone on foot to endure exile. Even her father, Mahendraraj, did not give shelter to this weeping woman, and she had to wander from place to place in the forest. Finally, after the birth of Hanuman, she was reunited with her husband, Pawananjay.

The reason for this extraordinary series of misfortunes is hidden in Anjanasundari's previous life.

The king of **Kanakpur** city was named **Kanakarath**. He had two wives. The elder wife's name was **Kankodari**, and the younger wife's name was **Lakshmivati**. Lakshmivati was a devout *shravika* (female follower of Jainism), a true devotee of Jin. She built a private temple in her own residence, entirely of gold. She installed a jeweled idol of the Arihant in it and began performing worship three times a day. She celebrated festivals on auspicious days and had the idol adorned daily. As a result, this second queen began to receive immense praise.

She became the king's most favourite, and her respect in the royal palace increased. Her prestige also grew among the people. All of this was unbearable for the elder queen, Kankodari. She became intensely jealous of her co-wife. Burning with jealousy day and night, she grew increasingly unhappy.

The scriptures on ethics state that even a woman with ninety-eight virtues will inevitably possess two vices: jealousy and deceit.

Kankodari's jealousy now began to exceed all bounds. She resolved: "I will have to stop Lakshmivati's praises at any cost. For this purpose, I am prepared to do whatever I have to. If the king continues to be so infatuated with Lakshmivati, he won't even look at me in my old age. What should I do? I can't find a solution."

She spent many days like this, and then, in a moment of impurity, a wicked thought arose in her mind: "This Jain idol arrived, and only after that did Lakshmivati's influence increase, and my neglect began. If I destroy the idol, then there will be no bamboo, and no flute will play (the problem will be eliminated as the root cause is removed)."

This was the lowest level of wickedness. Even after falling so low, Kankodari was not satisfied; there was no hesitation, and a smile spread across her face.

She acted upon her sinful thought. She received the cooperation of her trustworthy maid in this wicked deed. In a secluded moment, Kankodari and her maid abducted the Jain idol from Lakshmivati's palace. After that, covering the idol in a basket, they both went outside the city. They reached a garbage dump outside the city. They threw the Jain idol into the garbage dump. At that moment, they walked away feeling proud, thinking, "Ah, my co-wife's rise will end from today." Little did Kankodari know that she had sealed her own downfall, a downfall as vast as a mountain. By desecrating this Jain idol, by throwing the Lord's idol into a pile of garbage, this sin would throw her into a pit of suffering in her future life.

Kankodari's maid did not stop her mistress's wicked deed; not only did she not stop her, but she even supported it.

They both quickly started returning to the city. At that moment, a voice shouted from a corner where no one could see them, "Hey, where are you going? What a terrible sin you are committing? Do you have any idea where you will go after you die? Stand still! Stand still!"

Kankodari trembled from head to toe. The same was true of her maid servant. Their bodies began to tremble continuously, like trees shaking during an earthquake.

Just then, a *Sadhvi* (nun) named **Jayshree** emerged from behind some nearby bushes. This nun, who had gone into the forest for some work, had witnessed Kankodari's heinous sin. With complete compassion, she shouted this reproach. Her heart ached at the thought of such a terrible sin, such an extreme of wickedness. "If I had the power, I would turn these sinful women back from the path of sin. I would instil repentance in their hearts. After that, I would make them confess their sins. I would also ensure the protection of the Jain idol."

Jayshree Sadhviji arrived there with these thoughts. First, she showered them with harsh words, like arrows. Later, when she realized that her influence has been built over both of them, she explained to them the terrible consequences of disrespecting the idol and told them that even if they didn't like religion, they should at least fear the consequences of their actions. Tears streamed down Kankodari's eyes. She was truly frightened after hearing about the consequences of sin. **Women and children definitely stop sinning after hearing about the consequences of sin, even if they don't refrain from sinning in any other way.** The maid servant was in the same state.

Following Sadhviji's instructions, the Jain idol was taken out of the pile of garbage. It was re-established in its proper place. Due to Sadhviji's teachings, both the women also criticized their own sins. After that, they accepted *Samyakatva* (right belief). They practiced devotion to the Jin for their entire lives.

Kanakodari died and was reborn as Anjanasundari. The maid became *Vasantatilaka*, Anjana's friend. She had kept the Jin's idol in the garbage for twenty-two minutes, as a consequence, she had to endure separation from her husband for twenty-two years. She had to accept exile and disgrace.

- Reference: Tri. Sh. Pu. Cha., 7th chapter

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10. Sati Sita's previous birth

Evil-minded people doubted the chastity of a great and virtuous woman like Sita, and fearing the doubts of these wicked people, Ram banished the great Sati. This is the most tragic episode in Sita's life. **The abduction of Sita by Ravan was a shocking event, but far more shocking for Sita was her abandonment by Ram himself.**

If one wants to know why this great Sati had to be crushed so cruelly in the mill of suffering, one must look at her previous life.

In the city of **Mrinalkund** in Bharatakshetra, there lived a priest named **Shribhuti**. **Saraswati** was his wife and **Vegvati** was his daughter. Once, Jain monks, who practiced severe penance and observed strict vows, arrived in this city. They stood under a tree in the garden, observing the Kayotsarga posture. No contact with the world, no greed, no expectations, no desire for power. The extraordinary conduct and detached life of the monk deeply impressed even those with false beliefs and atheists. Everyone started coming to pay homage to the monk. They began to respect and honour the monk.

At this time, Vegvati, the daughter of the priest Shribhuti, arrived there. Seeing the respect shown to the monk, she was consumed with jealousy. She had been instilled with hatred towards Jainism by her family members (relatives). She thought, "I must somehow humiliate the monk and glorify the Brahmin religion."

She approached the people and leveled a completely false accusation against the monk. "I saw this monk engaging in sexual activity with a prostitute. Why are you paying homage to such a lecherous ascetic?"

There was an uproar among the people. The ignorant people considered the completely innocent monk guilty. They stopped showing respect to the monk. The monk was truly detached. He was not overly concerned about his own honor or dishonor, but he was concerned about the reputation of the Jainism. Seeing that the Jain religion had been diminished because of himself, his heart was filled with sorrow.

Although the accusation was a personal one against a monk, the monk was a Jain monk, and ignorant people were not only criticizing the monk but also the entire Jain monastic order. This was considered a form of disrespect towards the Shasan (religious order). The revered monk took a vow that he would abstain from food and water until this disrespect towards the religion was resolved. He stood accepting *Kausagg*.

Influenced by the monk's self-control, the Shasandevi (guardian goddess of the religion) rushed to the scene. The goddess inflicted terrible pain on every part of Vegvati's body. She also took away her ability to speak. Vegvati became extremely frightened. "I have received the fruit of my terrible sin today itself. The monk is innocent, yet I have cast such an unworthy stigma upon him. This mistake of mine is unforgivable. The suffering arose because of the mistake. "

Remorse now awakened in her heart, and she went to the sage. She bowed at his feet and, weeping profusely so that everyone could hear, she begged forgiveness for her offense.

She publicly declared that the sage was innocent and that she had falsely slandered him. In this way, the disrespect towards the Shasan was removed. The sage was also pleased that the disrespect had been removed. He completed his *Kausagg*. Filled with immense affection for Vegvati, he preached the Dharma to her. The Dharma discourse had a beautiful effect on Vegvati; her hatred towards Jainism disappeared.

After death, Vegvati's soul became a deity in the first heaven. From there, she was reborn as the daughter of King Janak, whom people knew as 'Sita'.

- Reference book: Updeshprasad

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11. The previous birth of Kans

The reign of the twenty-fourth Tirthankar, Shri Neminath, was in existence at that time. King Bhojvrishni accepted Bhagavati Diksha (initiation), after which Ugrasen Kumar was coronated in Mathura. Ugrasen's chief queen was named Dharini.

In a forest near the city of Mathura, an ascetic was performing severe penance. He performed extremely rigorous penance without the goal of liberation, making his body as black as coal. He used to observe *Masakshaman* penance (a month-long fast). This ascetic had taken a vow to accept alms from only one house on the day of breaking the fast. He faithfully followed this vow. If for any reason he did not receive alms from one house, he would not go to another house for alms. He would return to the forest and begin another month-long fast without breaking the previous one.

Except for the day of breaking the fast, he never went to the city. He always lived in solitude, completing 30 days of fasting. Once, King Ugrasen arrived in this forest. Seeing the ascetic's severe penance, the king was deeply moved. He bowed his head at the ascetic's feet and requested him: Now, please come to my palace for *parana* (breaking the fast). O great sage! Blessed are your penance and your vow.

The ascetic accepted the king's request. To complete the *Masakshaman*, he went to the city of Mathura and arrived at the royal palace. However, no one there recognized the ascetic. Therefore, the ascetic received no respect from anyone. King Ugrasen had also forgotten about *parana*. After some time, when the ascetic saw no possibility of breaking his fast at the

palace, he returned without performing *parana*. He went back to the forest and began another month-long fast.

Many days passed. The king remembered his own request regarding *parana*. He also realized that the day for *parana* had passed. The king felt great remorse for his serious oversight. He went to the forest. He bowed down at the ascetic's feet and begged for forgiveness. Although a dark cloud of anger towards the king had spread in the ascetic's heart, he concealed it and showed kindness to the king. The king requested to give him opportunity of the *parana* of the second *Masakshaman*. The ascetic accepted it. The incident of the first time was repeated a second time. This was an unforgivable mistake on the king's part. Because he did not get alms, the ascetic returned to his solitary retreat. He began his third *Masakshaman*. Although his mind was constantly agitated by intense thoughts and conflicting desires.

Some time passed. The king realized his mistake. His heart melted with remorse. He set out to appease the ascetic. With tears streaming from his eyes, the king begged the ascetic for forgiveness. Yet, the ascetic's anger did not subside. The king's plea for forgiveness only further inflamed him. In a fit of rage, the ascetic's hair stood on end. At this time, the ascetic made a vow: "In this life, this king has twice pushed me into the jaws of death by not offering me alms. In the coming life, may I gain the strength through my penance to kill this king." The ascetic forgot that intense penance performed with intense desires leads to equally intense cycles of rebirth. This penance was worthless. Not even worth a penny.

He fasted and finally died. After death, he was born as the son of this very King Ugrasen, in the womb of Queen Dharini. Since his father's enemy was born as his son, Queen Dharini developed a strange craving to eat her husband's flesh. The queen herself understood the repulsive nature of her craving. She tried to pass the time without revealing her craving. On one hand, she couldn't reveal her craving due to shame. On the other hand, the craving in her mind refused to subside. The queen gradually wasted away. This made the king anxious. He persistently questioned the queen. Finally, the queen revealed her craving. The clever king consulted his minister. With his support, the queen's craving was fulfilled.

One dark night, the king placed rabbit meat on his own stomach. He applied a paste over it so that no one would suspect anything, and then went to the queen. He began to cut open his own stomach with his own hands and fed the meat to the queen. When the queen trembled at the thought of the king's death and refused, the king reassured her, "Even if I die, my queen, the lineage must continue. If a son is born, the family tradition will remain unbroken." Finally, the queen ate the meat. After feeding her the meat, the king immediately went into hiding. The night passed. Morning came. The queen had inquiries made, but when no news of the king was received, the queen concluded that the king had surely died. "How could he survive after having his stomach cut open? To prevent the people from hating her, he must have gone to the forest in his suffering state and breathed his last there. No, I cannot live either. I am a sinner and a murderer. What good is a son if I have to kill my husband to get him? Now, I have lost the right to live."

The queen resolved to perform self-immolation. The minister had anticipated this reaction. Keeping a close watch on the situation, the minister appeared there. He pleaded with the

queen not to harm herself. When the queen did not relent, he offered, "Just wait seven days. The king is alive, but his stomach has been injured, so he is in a very critical condition. The royal physician will treat him and save him somehow. If you do not meet the king after seven days, you can do whatever you want."

Hearing the minister's words, hope was born in the queen's heart. At the end of seven days, the king came out of hiding and appeared before the queen. The queen's joy knew no bounds. She was unaware of the secret.

On the fourteenth day of the bright half of the month of Poshvad, when the moon was in the *Mool* constellation, the queen gave birth to a son. The queen had become firmly convinced that this child would become her husband's enemy. Frightened by this, she placed the newborn baby in a bronze casket. She put the royal signet ring on his finger. She handed over the casket to her trustworthy maid. According to the queen's plan, the casket was thrown into the Yamuna River.

The king was unaware of all these arrangements made by the queen. After doing all this, the queen informed her husband, Ugrasen: "A stillborn son was born, so I got him disposed of."

Meanwhile, the casket containing the prince floated along the banks of the Yamuna River. The next morning, a merchant named Subhadra arrived at the riverbank to relieve himself. He picked up the bronze box. Out of curiosity, he opened it. He was childless. He was delighted to see the newborn baby. He took the baby along with the box. He came home. He entrusted the child to his wife. The merchant's wife also raised the child as her own son.

Since the baby was found in a bronze box, his adoptive parents named him 'Kans'.

- Reference: Trishashti Charitra, Chapter 8

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12. Ramchandrajji's Previous birth

Although the lineage of Ramchandrajji's past lives is long, we will discuss a few interesting matters from them here.

Many lifetimes ago, Ramchandrajji's soul was the son of a wealthy merchant named **Padmaruchi** in **Mahapur Nagar**. He was prosperous both in wealth and in virtue. His body developed beautifully as he grew into a young man. One day, he rode out of the city on a magnificent horse. On the way, he witnessed a heart-wrenching sight. An old bull was stuck in the middle of the road. Foam was coming out of its mouth, and its body was trembling with forced breathing, as if its end was near.

The compassionate Padmaruchi felt pity for the bull. He stopped his horse and went to the bull. He repeatedly recited the Navkar Mantra in a sweet voice. The bull was ignorant of the meaning of the Navkar Mantra, but the effect of the Navkar Mantra is truly miraculous. The bull died, and due to the effect of hearing the Navkar Mantra, it was reborn as the prince of the king of Mahapur Nagar. He was named '**Vrishabhadhvaj**'. The king had this only one child, therefore, what shortcomings could there be in his upbringing?

Meanwhile, Padmaruchi arranged for the cremation of the bull's carcass. He became engrossed in his own work and, as time passed, forgot about the incident.

Prince Vrishabhadhvaj gradually grew into a young man. One day, while strolling through the city, he arrived at the place where he had given up his life in his previous birth. It was there that he had ascended the ladder of spiritual progress by listening to the Navkar Mantra. Upon seeing that place, that environment, that land, the prince was bewildered. His mind became agitated. He fainted and fell to the ground. Finally, the knowledge of his past life manifested. His previous birth as a bull, his death while hearing the Navkar Mantra from the merchant's son—everything came alive before his eyes.

The prince was startled upon knowing all this. He formally accepted Jainism. Now, a strong desire arose in his heart to find Padmaruchi, the one who had recited the Navkar Mantra to him. How to find him? Finding Padmaruchi in this city with its millions of inhabitants was not easy. The prince built a magnificent Jain temple outside the city. He consecrated a beautiful idol of Yugadidev in it. In the ornate pavilion outside the temple, he installed a carved panel depicting his own previous life: the old bull... the bull receiving the Navkar mantra from the merchant's son... and finally, the bull's rebirth as a prince – the sculptors created a lifelike image. After that, the prince stationed a guard outside the temple. He instructed the guard to inform him if anyone, upon seeing the panel, exclaimed, "This is an event from my own life!"

Much time passed. The Jain devotee Padmaruchi came to this Jin temple for worship. He offered his prayers. He was delighted to see the new temple and the idol. Coming outside, he admired the beauty of the temple. His gaze fell upon the carved panel. Seeing the events depicted in the picture, he exclaimed, "This is my own life story! How did this carving come to be here?"

The guard overheard this and immediately sent information to the prince, detaining Padmaruchi within the temple complex. Prince Vrishabhadhvaj immediately came there and bowed to Padmaruchi. Seeing his benefactor, the prince's eyes welled up with tears. He said, "O great one! I am indebted to you. Today I have attained human life and the joys of kingship. Where was that old bull's life of suffering, and where is the prosperous life of a prince! To find you, I built this temple and installed this image panel in it. Today, I feel blessed to have seen you. Please be kind and accept my kingdom! Free me from this debt!"

"No, Prince! The kingdom has come to you through your own merit. You yourself should rule it. We will be true spiritual companions and maintain a benevolent friendship."

Heartfelt affection arose between the two, and their friendship lasted a lifetime. They practiced Dharma together. From there, they died. After completing many births of virtuous lives, the soul of Padmaruchi was born as Ramchandra, the son of Dasharath. And Prince Vrishabhadhvaj was born as Sugriva, the younger brother (son) of Vali.

- Reference: *Tri. Pu. Charitra, 7th Chapter*

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13. Draupadi's previous birth

Three Brahmins lived in Champanagari. The three were own brothers. They were wealthy, young, and intelligent. Thus, they were very happy. They possessed even more unity than happiness. There was mutual love and a strong sense of belonging. After all, the seeds of happiness sprout in the soil of unity. Where there is no unity, even with countless means of happiness, true happiness cannot be experienced. The three brothers were living a very happy life thanks to their unity. Even after separating their households, they made a rule that the families of all three brothers would eat together in one place. On the first day, all three families would eat at the eldest brother's house. On the second and third days, they would eat at the younger brothers' houses, respectively. This cycle continued without interruption.

The names of the three brothers were **Somdev**, **Sombhuti**, and **Somdutt**, respectively. Their wives' names were **Nagshri**, **Bhutshri**, and **Yakshshri**.

Once, it was Nagshri's turn to host the meal. She prepared the meal with great enthusiasm. She made many dishes, all delicious and wholesome. She prepared the vegetable dish with particular care. Nagshri believed that if the vegetable dish was tasty, the entire meal would be considered satisfying. So she seasoned the cucumber dish with a variety of spices. Then she tasted it. As soon as she put a piece in her mouth, she had to spit it out. It was so bitter. What happened was, the spices were very flavorful, but the cucumber itself turned out to be poisonous. How could it be fit for consumption now?

She had made a large pot full of the vegetable dish, and knowing it was all bitter and poisonous, Nagshri became very sad. She prepared a new vegetable dish, but she couldn't bring herself to throw away the old, poisonous one. She thought she would give this poisonous vegetable dish to some beggar or ascetic. She didn't consider that if the vegetable dish was capable of killing her family, wouldn't it also be capable of killing an ascetic? Don't they have lives too?

Alas, the extreme greed had blinded her eyes of conscience. She didn't see any harm if a beggar's life is endangered. Acharya Dharmaghoshuriji had arrived in the gardens of **Champanagari** today. It was the day of *parana* of the month-long fast of Dharmaruchi, a

disciple of this Acharya. Muni Dharmaruchi, while roaming for alms, reached the house of Nagshri. He entered, saying "Dharmalabh" (May you receive religious merit).

Nagshri was delighted, thinking she would give the poisonous cucumber vegetable dish to this monk. This foolish woman was not at all afraid of the wickedness of her sinful thoughts. The Muni considered this woman's wickedness as the height of emotion. He accepted the entire vegetable. He returned to his Guru. The Guru, merely by the smell, determined that the vegetable was poisonous and said, "Son, you will have to endure some hardship in going back for alms, but you must bear that hardship, because this alms is poisonous. Discard this vegetable and the other alms you received with it."

"*Tahatti Bhagvant* (So be it, Venerable One)," said Muni Dharmaruchi. He went to bury the vegetable. As soon as a drop of it fell, a swarm of ants appeared, attracted by the smell of ghee. They all sniffed the scent and died instantly.

Muni Dharmaruchi's heart trembled from head to toe upon seeing the dying ants. "Oh! If even a single drop of this vegetable is causing the death of so many creatures, how much violence will be committed if I discard the entire vegetable?" His heart cried out. "It would be better if I consume this vegetable myself and end my own life, rather than letting thousands of creatures die."

This is the ultimate compassion of a Jain monk's heart. This is the brightest stream of friendship towards all living beings! Such a vow of friendship is impossible to find in other religions. Muni Dharmaruchi ate the poisonous vegetable himself, disregarding.

He followed in this manner his Guru's instruction to bury it. Before that, he performed the last worship, including taking the four vows of refuge. He died a short time later and was reborn in the fifth *Anuttara* called *Sarvartha-Siddhiviman*.

A long time passed, but Muni Dharmaruchi did not return, so the Guru asked other monks to search for him. When the news of his death was received from the monks, Acharya Dharmaghoshsuriji was deeply saddened.

The Acharya used his *Avadhidgyan* (clairvoyance) and learned that it was Nagshri who had caused the monk's death. With the intention of preventing sinful souls like Nagshri from daring to commit such acts of violence against ascetics again, the Guru instructed his disciples: "Go to the main intersections of the city and announce that Nagshri had intentionally offered poisonous vegetables, thus causing the death of the monk."

Would this instruction of the Guru be considered a rejection of the principle of karma? Absolutely not. This instruction does not reject the law of karma, but rather promotes the protection of the religious order. **The Guru knew that Muni Dharmaruchi would never have faced such an ordeal without the fruition of his own negative karma. Death never occurs without the end of one's life karma.** Nagshri was merely the instrumental cause. Even so, Nagshri was declared the murderer of the ascetic. Was it wrong for Acharya Dharmaghoshsuriji to declare Nagshri, who offered the poisonous cucumber, as the murderer of the ascetic and to have this announced everywhere? No. His action was indeed correct because Jain philosophy accepts the material cause just as the instrumental cause. The instrumental cause should be given its due importance and the material cause should also be given its due importance.

If it were said that Muni Dharmaruchi died because of his karma, and that Nagshri was not to blame, then this statement would amount to condoning the murder of a saint, not

an explanation based on the principle of karma. Or, if it were said that this was merely a personal matter between Nagshri and Muni Dharmaruchi, that too would be an unintended endorsement of the saint's murder.

The disciples, following the instructions of their revered Acharya, spread the word everywhere that Nagshri was the killer of a monk. This aroused anger among the people towards Nagshri. The husband and family of Nagshri threw her out of the house without giving her a single coin. People threw stones at her and beat her. Yet, she showed no remorse for her sinful act. She wandered aimlessly, becoming a wretched beggar. Finally, afflicted with sixteen major diseases like shortness of breath and coughing, she succumbed to death. She went to the sixth hell. From there, she was reborn as a fish. After dying there, she went to the seventh hell. She was born twice in each of the seven hells. After that, she wandered as a single-sensed beings for an infinite period.

Now, her karma had weakened somewhat, so she was born into a human life. She became the daughter of Sagardutt, a wealthy merchant in Champanagari. She was named as Sukumalika. She grew up to be extremely beautiful, sweet-spoken, and humble. A merchant named Jindutt asked for Sukumalika's hand in marriage for his son, Sagar. Sagardutt put a condition: "I will only give my daughter in marriage if your son is willing to become a *gharjamai* (son-in-law who live in in-laws' house). What groom would accept such a strange condition? Jindutt also disliked the condition, but Sagar had become extremely infatuated with Sukumalika's beauty, so he agreed to become a *gharjamai*. The two were married. **During the marriage ceremony, as their hands were joined, Sagar experienced such a terrible burning sensation as if he had shaken hands with fire.**

Night fell. With just one touch of Sukumalika's body, Sagar developed a high fever and a burning sensation in his limbs. Sukumalika was *agnikanya* (a fire-maiden). How could Sagar have known this? He had married her, captivated by her beauty. On the very first night, the contact with Sukumalika caused him such pain that he became averse to the marriage. Leaving his sleeping wife, he fled alone. He returned to his own house. Without telling his parents, he went to the roof and fell asleep.

In the morning, Jindutt and Sagardutt tried to persuade him, but he was not at all willing to accept Sukumalika. Sukumalika began to spend her days weeping and in great sorrow. The karma she had accumulated by causing the death of a monk in Nagshri's life was still taking its revenge.

Sagardutt was experiencing great anxiety and sorrow. He could not bear to see his daughter's suffering. Once, he brought a beggar to his house, after thoroughly cleaning him, dressing him in fine clothes, and adorning him like a prince. He arranged for him to marry Sukumalika. That beggar, too, was frightened by the contact with Sukumalika on the very first night. His body felt as if it were burning like embers. In the middle of the night, he left everyone sleeping and ran away.

Sukumalika wept profusely, but now even her father could do nothing. Who would be willing to spend their life with a fire-maiden?

As time passed, she came into contact with Sadhviji (a female ascetic). She attained detachment. With the consent of her parents, she took initiation. In her ascetic life, she performed severe penances such as *chhath, attham*, etc. (fasting for two/three days at a time). She practiced humility and served others. Once, this Sadhvi had a desire that I should go to the garden like the revered monks and bask in the sun. She herself sought permission from

her *guruni*. The *guruni* refused to grant permission because in Jainism, permission to bask in the open air in this manner is given only to learned monks, not to a *Sadhvi*.

This *Sadhvi* dared to go against her *guruni*'s command. The same inauspicious karmic bond, which had tainted her soul as a result of killing a monk in her previous birth as *Nagshri*, was now creating a powerful storm of obstacles in the spiritual development of *Sukumalikashriji*, who was diligently observing the vows of asceticism. *Sadhvi* transgressed the boundaries of discipline. She stepped over the limits and went completely alone. In the garden, she first began to endure the harsh sun, and then, due to a small incident, she fell into the abyss of downfall.

The guru's command and the scriptures' command! They are very powerful. Accepting both of them opens the path of spiritual practice (sadhna) for the soul, and violating both throws the sadhak (practitioner) onto the path of downfall.

In this garden, a prostitute came with her five lovers. All five men were frequenters of prostitutes. They began to serve the prostitute. They were trying to obtain a place in the prostitute's heart. This scene caught *Sukumalika*'s attention. Her heart was already wounded by the constant neglect she had suffered from men in her previous life. The ointment of renunciation that had been applied to that wound was absorbed in an instant. Past memories began to stir again. *Sadhvi* fell from grace. She fell deeply. She made a vow, "May I be born in my next life as the respected wife of five men, due to the effect of the self-restraint and penance I have practiced in this life!"

The penance and self-restraint that were capable of leading her to liberation now compelled *Sukumalika* to be born as a woman, and that too, as a wife shared among five husbands.

By selling her dharma for wealth and worldly desires, *Sukumalika* pushed her liberation countless miles away.

Finally, she died. She was born in the first heaven. Even there, she had to be a goddess. After dying there, she was born as *Draupadi*, the daughter of King *Drupad*.

Source : 'Pandavcharitram' by P. Devavi Gani

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14. Jatayu's previous birth

Whenever the story of the Ramyana is recalled, the memory of Jatayu inevitably comes to mind. It wasn't for the protection of Sita that Ram sacrificed his life, but Jatayu sacrificed his own life for her. He is one of the finest characters in the Ramyana, who, without being motivated by any self-interest or relationship, fights to protect Sita and ultimately sacrifices his life.

There was no expectation of reward, nor any fear of death. Such a magnificent example of loyalty and devotion to a master is rare. As long as the story of the Ramyana remains immortal, the glory of Jatayu will also resonate.

If you want to know why such a virtuous soul had to be born in the form of a bird, then we must look at his previous life. Let's take a look.

In his previous life, Jatayu's soul was a king named '**Dandak**'. This king, the ruler of '**Kumbhkarakatnagar**', had a minister named **Palak**. The king married a princess named **Purandaryasha**. She was the daughter of **King Jitshatru of Shravasti**. The crown prince of Shravasti was named Skandak. **Skandak** was valiant and discerning. He was a devout follower of Lord Munisuvrataswami and a knower of truth.

Once, Palak, the minister of King Dandak, came to Shravasti for some state business. He arrived at the royal court. Then a discussion on philosophical matters ensued. Which religion is the true one? Is the belief in past lives true or false? Do elements like the soul and liberation truly exist? Discussions continued on such issues. Many royal ministers and religious leaders were present. Everyone tried to prove that the principles of their own religion were true. Palak also joined in. Palak was a follower of atheism, so he presented the tenets of atheism.

Prince Skandak was also present there. How could a devotee of Jainism like him remain silent! He listened to the principles of each religion. He found imperfections in every doctrine.

He refuted every argument, highlighting the imperfections within them. He accomplished this by presenting such compelling arguments that no one could counter him.

At this time, the minister Palak tried to refute Skandak's arguments, but he failed. Palak's knowledge and abilities paled in comparison to Skandak's intelligence, talent, and logical reasoning. He was defeated. Skandak emerged victorious. Everyone began praising prince Skandak Kumar. Palak accepted his defeat, but he harboured a deep resentment and vowed to take revenge for his humiliation when the opportunity arose.

In truth, where had he actually been insulted? The reality was that Palak considered his defeat humiliating. Palak returned with a deep wound of hatred towards prince Skandak in his heart.

As time passed, prince Skandak embraced asceticism. He became a disciple of Lord Munisuvrataswami. Along with Skandak, 500 other princes also took initiation. They all

became disciples of Skandak Muni. For a long time, Skandak Muni studied under Ganadhar Bhagavant. His intellectual capacity was exceptional, and therefore he became a master of the eleven *Angasutras*. Seeing his merit, Ganadhar Bhagavant gave him the post of Acharya. He became famous as Acharya Skandaksurishwarji Maharaj.

Once, Acharya Skandaksuriji desired to enlighten his brother-in-law, King Dandak. For this, he would have to go to Kumbhkarakatanagar. To go there, he would have to travel separately from the Lord. Skandaksuriji was ready to do all this. He went to the Lord and sought permission to travel independently to Kumbhkarakatanagar.

The Acharyadev had the ability to travel independently, but going to Kumbhkarakatanagar involved harm to his material and spiritual well-being, so the Lord did not give permission. He said, "Son, if you go there, you will face the danger of losing your life."

Even though Skandaksuri understood that the Lord's words prohibited the journey, he, harbouring an intense desire to travel, asked another question: "Lord, even if a life-threatening calamity befalls me, will I become a worshipper or a transgressor?"

"Son, your 500 disciples will become worshippers, but you will become a transgressor," the Lord replied. Now, Skandaksuri should have stopped, understanding the Lord's words, but he lacked that discernment. Even if five hundred become worshippers, if one's own soul becomes a transgressor, then such acts of helping others are worthless. **First, self-welfare, then the welfare of others; Jainism does not permit harming one's own soul to save others.** These Suriji forgot this principle and said, "Lord, even if I become a transgressor, will at least five hundred not become worshippers?"

The Lord then remained silent. Interpreting the Lord's silence as permission, Skandaksuriji set out on travelling. 500 disciples were with him.

Indeed, it must be assumed that Skandaksuriji's soul was under the strong influence of delusive karma at this time; otherwise, he would not have disregarded the Lord's words.

The Lord's silence was also a great act of kindness towards Skandaksuriji, because if the Lord had not remained silent, the Acharyadev might have developed a strong aversion towards the words of Jin. In this way, he would have accumulated even stronger negative karma. Those who have reached the point of preparing to violate the command should not be given preaching, even this sometimes becomes a favor bestowed upon them. When preached, they tend to disobey more, and when not preached, they stop disobeying any more.

Skandaksuriji and his five hundred disciples proceeded towards Kumbhkarakatanagar. Before the arrival of the revered Acharya, the news reached King Dandak. The king was overjoyed. Purandar Yasha's joy knew no bounds. Palak also received this news. He was not happy; the wound of hatred in his heart began to fester again. The desire for revenge was awakened.

Palak thought, "Now this Skandak is living a life of asceticism, therefore he is unarmed and helpless. This is my chance to take revenge for the insult he inflicted upon me earlier. I will devise such a scheme that will completely destroy Skandaksuri and his family."

Palak's mind began to concoct merciless plans for the murder of the saint. Palak's soul was inherently evil, so he felt no hesitation in carrying out such wicked deeds.

Palak devised a wicked plan. According to this plan, he went at night to the garden outside the city where Skandaksuriji was likely to take shelter. He dug pits in various places in the garden and planted terrible weapons in them, capable of destroying King Dandak's entire

army. He filled the pits and leveled the ground again. He had all this work done by trustworthy soldiers. He had it done in the dark and silenced the soldiers who did the work by giving them many gold coins.

No one even suspected Palak's conspiracy. Now this sinner, reached to the king. King Dandak was at that time discussing the arrival of Acharya Skandaksuriji in his court. He was busy discussing how grandly they should welcome the Acharya Bhagavant the following day. The people were also eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Acharya Bhagavan. Palak listened to all this. After everyone dispersed, he approached the king alone and whispered in his ear: "Lord, there is news that Acharya Skandaksuri is coming." "You just found out? Where was your attention? We just discussed the welcome for the Acharya Bhagavan," the king said.

"Not like that, but..."

"Then what do you want to say?"

"Sir! It's a situation of 'Ram on the lips, a dagger in the side.'" "Meaning?" the king asked, showing his curiosity.

"You think that Skandaksuriji is your brother-in-law and also a religious teacher, but the reality is something else. He has taken initiation, but now he has become weary of the strict conduct of self-restraint. He wants to abandon self-restraint and regain his kingdom. There is no honor in returning to his father's house, so he has come here. He has a secret plan to wage war against you, defeat you, and seize your kingdom."

"Impossible, impossible," the king said.

"Will you believe it if you get proof?"

"What proof do you have?"

"The 500 disciples he has are not monks. Each one is a skilled warrior. They have buried many weapons in the garden outside the city. To avoid doubt in the mind of anyone, they will arrive disguised as ascetics and then, through an unexpected attack, seize your kingdom. That is their plan. O King, come with me to the garden, come alone, and I will show you the weapons they have buried.

The king was astonished. He felt the earth trembling beneath his feet. He went to the garden with Palak. Palak dug one or two pits there. Terrifying weapons emerged from within. The king was shocked. Palak's warnings seemed to be coming true.

So what should be done now? the king asked.

Destroying the enemy is the duty of a Kshatriya (warrior). That is what political science dictates. The enemy should be eliminated before he attacks you.

Should you uphold the duty of a Kshatriya or surrender due to familial ties, you decide this yourself.

Palak had completely manipulated the king.

"The first is the duty of a Kshatriya. Everything else is secondary." The thoughtless king said.

The king didn't even consider that the evidence found should be verified first. Only then should the evidence be considered true and justice delivered based on it. The short-sighted king placed blind faith in his minister.

Palak: "So what will you do now?"

King: "Go, I entrust you with the responsibility of facing this calamity."

Palak: "O King, are you giving me this responsibility after careful consideration?"

King: "Completely."

Palak: "Then I should also receive complete authority to carry out this task. The administration should cooperate with me. Even if some enemy of mine complains to you, your faith must remain steadfast."

King: "It will be so, do not worry, my entire army will be present to assist you. I order that the army obey your commands as if they were royal decrees."

The king was completely ruined. Palak's joy knew no bounds. He had huge mills prepared. Mills in which hundreds of people could be crushed. He decided that Skandaksuriji and his 500 disciples would be ground in these monstrous mills, like food grains.

The foolish king returned to the royal palace. He fell asleep completely carefree. He had placed complete trust in Palak.

The inauspicious dawn of the next day arrived.

Skandaksuriji arrived in Kumbhkarakata. He reached the garden. Neither the king nor the people came. No drums were beaten, nor were any arches erected. Here, only a profound, silent peace, concealing a dark future, prevailed.

Without making any special arrangements, the revered Suriji settled down. The monks became busy with their own ascetic practices. Just then, Minister Palak arrived with the four-fold army. There were thousands of soldiers, but they stood outside the garden, fortifying the area in all four directions.

It was expected that the king and the people would come to pay their respects, but everything was the opposite. Only Minister Palak was present in the garden. There were many men behind him, but they did not seem civilized. They were all executioners.

Palak approached Suriji.

Skandaksuriji raised his hand and said, "Dharmalabh" (May you attain righteousness).

"That's all, keep aside the deception. I know, you're here to seize the kingdom of Dandak. That's why you've brought these five hundred assassins." Palak made a direct accusation. No courtesy, no greetings, no questions.

Acharyadev was startled from head to toe. He exercised great self-control and said, "O great one! What are you saying? Who are these assassins, and whose kingdom is to be seized? It seems you've fallen for the words of some wicked people?"

Palak: "Enough is enough! First, the theft, and now this brazenness! This will not continue anymore!"

Suriji: "But tell us, what is our crime?"

Palak: "You've buried such terrible weapons here, and then you ask about the crime? It's King Dandak's good fortune that he learned of your treachery. Otherwise, what would have happened to the king?"

Now, Skandaksuriji understood that this was all a conspiracy. The minister himself was at the root of it. He had misled the innocent king. Suriji remained silent.

Palak: "How could you remain silent? Get ready! We have received orders to crush you and your disciples like food grains. Beware, if even one monk escapes..."

Lord's words echoed in Skandaksuriji's ears. "Son, if you go there, a life-threatening calamity will befall you."

Skandaksuri thought, "I have truly made a mistake. By not accepting the Jin's words, I have put my entire *sadhana* to the test. But now? It's impossible for the Jina's words to prove false. A life-threatening ordeal awaits, and it is certain that it will ultimately destroy us. That's it! Now, only refuge in the Lord, fasting, and auspicious meditation remain. With their help, we must attain *samadhi*."

Suriji looked questioningly at his five hundred disciples. They were all standing around their gurudev. A wonderful radiance bloomed on the faces of the five hundred ascetics. They immediately said: "Lord, do not worry about us. The test of the teachings you have given us has arrived today. This ordeal is the test given by the ascetic life. How can we fail?"

We will face this ordeal with fortitude. Please guide us in such a way that as our bodies break down, all karmic bonds also break with them. May the end of our lives also be the end of our worldly existence. May our souls become the masters of the abode of liberation.

Hearing the disciples' words burning with spiritual fervor, a bright glow appeared on Skandaksuriji's face.

Meanwhile, Palak brought into the garden the gigantic mill that would crush people. He stationed armed soldiers around the mill. He filled the garden with thousands of armed soldiers.

Then he began to grind the ascetics. One after another, five hundred ascetics were crushed. Rivers of blood flowed. Pieces of flesh flew. Clouds of bones thundered. It was as if the seventh hell had manifested itself on this earth. Yet, the heart of this great sinner did not tremble.

On the other hand, Skandaksuriji was immersed in divine knowledge. He showered the rain of auspicious guidance. One after another, the ascetics, absorbed in his virtuous words, accepted *ansan* and fell into the grinding machine. Limbs were broken. Fountains of blood gushed forth. Bodies were ripped apart, their bones were broken, but the rhythm of liberation, self-restraint, and the teachings of the Jin did not fade from the minds of these devotees of liberation. It grew stronger and stronger, so strong that it broke the attachment to the body, granted pure meditation, bestowed the path of annihilation of karma, and ultimately offered the gift of *Kevalgyan*. Not a single disciple remained. All five hundred disciples attained this great benefit.

When four hundred and ninety-nine disciples had attained *nirvaan* and only two souls remained—one, the young disciple Balmunirup, and the other, Acharya Skandaksuri—the mountain of unwavering resolve of the Acharyadev, which had remained steadfast until then, wavered. Affection for the young monk arose in him. He said to the executioner: "O great one, you have crushed those four hundred and ninety-nine in front of me. Now do not crush this young monk before my eyes, because I have great affection for him. I cannot bear to see him being crushed... Therefore, crush me first. After that, do whatever you deem fit."

The cruel Palak let out a mocking laugh and said, "Well, I will do exactly what you disapprove of, because I want to inflict as much suffering on you as possible."

Skandaksuriji was deeply hurt. His resolve trembled at its very root. His equanimity crumbled, but then the young monk said, "Lord, if you die first, who will guide me to liberation? Please, send me to liberation as well." And so it happened. The young monk was crushed first. He attained liberation.

After that, Skandaksuriji accepted *ansan* (fasting unto death). He reaffirmed his great vows. He performed the final worship, uttered "Arihant," and fell into the mill.

"Alas, his mental state deteriorated at the time of his death. He harboured hatred towards Palak. The hatred, which had not subsided, continued to grow. The fire of anger also ignited against King Dandak and his entire kingdom.

Suriji made a vow: "Based on the intense self-discipline I practiced in this life, in my next life, I will become the one who burns Palak, Dandak who permitted the killing of the monks, and his entire city to ashes." He then passed away and was reborn as a deity in the Agnikumar *yoni*.

The enmity from the previous birth awakened. He arrived above Kumbharkantanagar. He continuously rained down fire, and everything was burned to ashes. Palak died. Dandak also died. All the city dwellers perished.

Only one survived, Purandaryasha. She had witnessed the terrifying form of the world before her own eyes, and this instilled in her a sense of detachment. The guardian deity saved her from the fiery calamity and brought her to the *samvasaran* of Lord Munisuvrata Swami. There, Purandaryasha accepted initiation.

Palak, after being burned, went to the seventh hell. King Dandak also died and spent thousands of lifetimes in hell and as an animal. King Dandak's city was destroyed by divine wrath, and the desolate forest that formed there became known as "**Dandakaranya**" over time. After thousands of lifetimes, Dandak's soul was reborn as a hawk in the same Dandakaranya. From birth, he was afflicted with a terrible disease called *Gandh*.

The unimaginable negative karma he had accumulated by having five hundred monks killed was now beginning to diminish, yet that same negative karma caused Dandak to experience thousands of miserable lives and afflicted him with an incurable disease in this life as well.

A sage named Sugupt arrived in this Dandakaranya forest from somewhere. Ram, Lakshman, and Sita were then spending their exile in Dandakaranya. They listened to Sage Sugupt's discourse. Sita asked the great sage, "Bhagvant, why is this hawk so distressed?" The hawk was also sitting near Sita and listening to the discourse. At this time, Sage Sugupt narrated the story of King Dandak's birth. After that, he recounted Dandak's journey through various lives, including his current life as a hawk. The hawk listened intently to the story of its own past lives. It immediately attained the knowledge of its past existences. Its entire journey through various lives, as described by the sage, became imprinted on its mind.

Now, the hawk's soul experiences immense remorse for its past misdeeds. Tears are streaming down its face. Seeing the hawk's mental state, the wise sage bestowed upon it *deshvirati dharma* along with right faith. Accepting this, and considering himself blessed, the hawk approached the sage's feet. He bowed his head and touched his feet. Due to the effect of touching the sage's feet, the vulture's incurable disease was cured. His wings became resplendent like gold. A matted lock of hair, like a garland of jewels, formed on his head. Because of this, Ram named him 'Jatayu'. He lived with Ram. When Ravan abducted Sita, he fought against Ravan until the very end and finally died. After death, the soul of Jatayu was born in the Vaimanik Devlok.

- Source : Tri. Sh. Pu, 7th chapter

15. Devaki's previous birth

Krishna Vasudev's mother's name was Devaki. Although Devaki was the mother of seven sons, she could not hold a single one of her children in her lap, feed them, shower them with affection, or even breastfeed them. What greater mental anguish could there be for a mother?

Until a woman becomes a mother, the separation from her husband seems unbearable, and after she becomes a mother, the separation from her son becomes unbearable. If one wants to know the reason why Devaki, despite having seven sons, had to endure the separation from all of them, one would have to go through her past lives.

In her previous life, Devaki was the wife of a wealthy merchant. She also had many co-wives. Each co-wife had brought ornaments given by her father from her parental home. How could it be that each of their fathers was equally wealthy and therefore each received the same number of ornaments? Some had fewer ornaments, while others had more. As is common everywhere, the co-wives began to envy each other. Devaki had fewer ornaments. She began to burn with jealousy towards her co-wife who wore more ornaments.

One co-wife possessed seven precious gems. Devaki's soul, tormented by jealousy and greed, stole all seven gems. A great quarrel ensued with the co-wife. Even when accused, she persistently lied, claiming she hadn't stolen the gems. There was much conflict. Finally, she returned one gem. The remaining six gems were never given back. Through deception and falsehood, she kept the six gems for herself. At this time, Devaki's soul accumulated a lot of negative karma.

In her next life, when Devaki was married to Vasudev, this karma manifested. The woman whose gems she had stolen was reborn in this life as the wife of a wealthy merchant in a certain city. Her name was Sulasa, and she was afflicted with such a misfortune that she always gave birth to stillborn baby. To be freed from this misfortune, she worshipped the Harinaigameshi deity. The deity appeared before her and granted her the boon of having living sons.

Meanwhile, Devaki began giving birth to sons one after another. Vasudev was bound by his own promise, so he handed over each son to Kans. As soon as a son was born, he had to be handed over to Kans. Kans had kept Devaki and Vasudev under strict surveillance, so there was no other option.

See the strangeness of fate: Sulasa also gave birth to sons at the same time that Devaki gave birth. The deity Harinaigameshi would take the fortunate sons from Devaki as they were being taken to Kans and place them with Sulasa, and similarly, he would place Sulasa's stillborn sons in the hands of Kans's servants. All this happened through such divine illusion that no one even suspected the secret. Neither Kans, nor his servants, nor Devaki and Vasudev.

Kans would experience a false sense of satisfaction by brutally smashing the dead infants against a strong rock.

These sons of Devaki must be considered truly fortunate, for they reached the jaws of death and yet returned to enjoy life; otherwise when a cruel man like Kans vowed to kill them, who could save them?

Krishna was born as Devaki's seventh child, who was destined to become Vasudev. Yakshadev was ready to protect him from the moment of his birth. Even so, he had to be handed over to Nand and Yashoda immediately after birth. Thus, Devaki could not raise even a single son. The seven jewels stolen by her co-wife became so painful for Devaki.

Devaki's first six sons, who had reached Sulasa, took initiation from Lord Neminath in their prime youth. Finally, all six brothers, the monks, arrived at Shri Shatrunjay Giriraj. They performed *Padapopgaman ansan*. They destroyed all their karmas and attained the bliss of liberation.

- *Source: Trishashti Sh. Pu. Charitra - 8th Chapter.*

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16. Krishna and Balram's previous birth

Here we present the story of Krishna Vasudev, who is destined to become an Arihant in the coming *Chovishi* in Bharatkshetra, who has attained *Kshayik Samyaktva* in his birth as Krishnavasudev, who has acquired the Arihant Namakarma (karma that leads to becoming an Arihant), and was the ninth Vasudev of this *Avsarpini*, yet, he was born in a prison and died in complete solitude in a forest. His entire life, except for the beginning and the end, was filled with wealth and honor, but the beginning and the end were marked by animosity and misfortune – such was his destiny.

Krishna Vasudev's previous birth is worth examining because it reveals the power of karmic consequences. The supremacy of the power of karma is clearly demonstrated here.

In **Hastinapur** lived a Seth (wealthy merchant) named **Hastinag**. He had two sons, the elder named Lalit and the younger named Gangdutt. When Lalit was conceived in Hastinag's wife's womb, the woman developed an intense longing to see the face of her child. As is common with every woman, even before the child's birth, affection was manifested in her. But a completely opposite event unfolded for Gangdutt. When Gangdutt was conceived, for some unknown reason, his mother developed hatred and contempt for him. She was ready to have an abortion, but the Seth did not allow it.

There were no inauspicious dreams or cravings during pregnancy, yet for some unseen reason, the mother was unwilling to give birth to Gangdutt. When she could not prevent Gangdutt's birth, she decided that she would not let the child live. As soon as the child was born, she gave him to her maid servant and ordered her to throw him into the gutter.

As the maid-servant was taking the child away, she met the child's father on the way. The mother did not want her child to live, but the child's good karma wanted to give him a chance to live. It was as if this good karma itself had brought his father there. How else could he have arrived at that critical moment?

As soon as the maid saw the Seth, she became frightened. Seeing the maid trembling, the Seth became suspicious. Something was definitely amiss, he opened his third eye and, in an authoritative tone, scolded the maid, saying, "Beware, don't take another step! Tell me the truth, what's going on? What are you carrying?"

The frightened maid confessed the truth. Crying, she begged the Seth for forgiveness and pleaded with him not to punish her. The Seth agreed. He took the child from the maid and placed him in the home of a relative or trusted friend. His upbringing began there. He ensured that the child remained completely unknown. The Seth visited there every day, fed his son, and found contentment. His elder son, Lalit, also visited his younger brother every day, taking care of him and showing him affection. However, his mother was kept completely unaware of this entire truth.

In due course, the child was named Gangdutt. Gangdutt grew older and began to speak and understand. At this time, Lalit requested his father, "Let's feed my younger brother at home at least once."

"But your mother is like death itself for your younger brother. She still hasn't given up her hatred for him. If she sees him, she will torment Gangdutt."

"Don't worry, Father! I will put up a curtain that no one can see through. We'll seat Gangdutt behind the curtain, you sit in front, I'll sit next to you, and we'll eat together. We'll feed my brother."

The Seth agreed to Lalit's suggestion. When it was time for the meal, they secretly brought Gangdutt. For the first time, the child saw his own home, albeit secretly, and his joy knew no bounds. The meal proceeded according to the plan. Due to the curtain, the Sethani (Seth's wife) initially didn't smell anything, but karma had written something else. Suddenly, a storm arose. The curtain was torn to shreds. It was no longer possible to hide Gangdutt. Lalit was with the Seth. Seeing the same love the Seth had for Lalit being shown to this other child, Sethani trembled. She suspected that this must be the same child she had ordered to be thrown away. Was he still alive?

Enmity filled the Sethani's eyes, hatred her heart, and a tremor ran through her body. She turned red with rage. Without thinking, she ran. She picked up Gangdutt. She beat the child with a stick, just as one would beat clothes while washing them. Even amidst the Seth and Lalit's strong resistance, the woman went out of order. She continued beating the child. She didn't stop even then. She ran and threw Gangdutt into the ditch behind the house. The Seth and Lalit ran after the Sethani. They were panting with anger and fear. They immediately pulled the child out of the ditch.

Fortunately, fate was strong, and the child was still alive. Seeing the child alive brought solace to the Seth. He punished the Sethani and sternly warned her, "Beware! If you even touch Gangdutt again..." After that, he bathed Gangdutt and dressed him in beautiful clothes.

The Seth's mind was restless. He couldn't understand how all this was happening. Just then, a wise sage arrived for alms. Lalit and the Seth offered him alms. They respectfully bowed and requested, "Bhagwant! How can a mother, even a real mother, harbour such hatred towards this child, a hatred that even an enemy wouldn't have? Please, tell us!"

The Mahatma took his seat. Through the power of his knowledge, he could see before him the potential and bright future of the beings, and he seized this opportunity to enlighten them. The Mahatma said, "Gentlemen! The reason we feel hatred or attraction towards other beings is often due to karmic debts from past lives with those beings. The same is true here."

In a village, there lived two sons of a farmer. They were both skilled in driving bullock carts, and they earned their livelihood by doing so. One evening, the two brothers were returning to the village in their respective bullock carts. Their carts were speeding along a narrow, unpaved road. A female snake suddenly darted out in front of them. The elder brother's cart was ahead. He felt compassion for the snake. He said, "Brother, if we continue on this path, the snake will be crushed. Let's turn our carts towards the nearby field." But the younger brother thought, "I won't change my path. Let the snake be crushed under the wheels of my cart. If that happens, I will enjoy hearing the sound of the snake's bones being crushed."

With such cruel intentions, he drove forward. He ran the wheel over the snake. The snake died. As she died, she developed enmity towards this younger brother. She died with this feeling of vengeance.

This snake was reborn as their mother. The elder brother was reborn here as the elder brother Lalit, and the younger brother who crushed the snake was reborn as Gangdutt.

Everyone was listening to the Guru's words with rapt attention. The connection between the events of their past lives and the relationships in this life, which were now causing them such distress, was becoming clear to them.

Seth and Lalit were completely immersed in the stream of renunciation. They immediately took initiation. After flawlessly observing self-restraint, they both ultimately started *ansan* (fasted unto death). They attained death and were reborn in the seventh heaven.

As time passed, Gangdutt also took initiation. He performed severe penance. Finally, he fasted unto death. Alas, he faltered at the very end. In his final moments, he made a vow: 'In exchange for my self-restraint and penance, may I attain universal affection in my next life.' This soul, saddened by the lack of maternal affection in this life, thus sold his own dharma. A vow means dharma, and even by mistake one should not exchange dharma for worldly pleasures.

Those who make such an exchange certainly attain happiness, but this happiness inevitably leads to a bad destiny.

Gangdutt Muni attained death and reached Devlok.

The soul of Lalit Muni, after leaving the celestial realm, was born in the womb of Vasudev's wife, Rohini. When this child was conceived, Rohini saw four great dreams. After the child was born, he was named Balbhadra.

The soul of Gangdutt Muni, after completing his life as a deity, was born as the seventh son of Vasudev's wife, Devaki. Devaki then saw seven great dreams. This son was named 'Krishna'.

- Reference: *Tri. Sh. Pu., 8th chapter.*

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17. The previous births of the five Pandavas

Who doesn't know the life story of the five Pandavas, a tale interwoven with strange and wonderful misfortunes and fortunes? Sometimes exile, sometimes coronation; sometimes defeat, sometimes victory; sometimes gambling, sometimes performing the rituals of the Sangh of Shatrunjay; sometimes the stigma of banishment, sometimes the good fortune of the twelfth restoration of Shatrunjay... The Pandavas' lives, constantly passing through such conflicting circumstances, seemed astonishing even to themselves. Therefore, they developed a desire to have their past lives investigated. This wish was fulfilled by the religious teacher, **Shri Dharmaghoshsuriji**. Once, this revered guru arrived in the garden of **Pandumathuranagri**. The five Pandavas welcomed him and listened to his discourse. Finally, Yudhishthir asked about his own past life and that of his four brothers. The revered guru revealed the truth about their previous lives.

In their previous life, the five Pandavas were five sons of a Seth. The five brothers were engaged in the same business. They earned their livelihood through farming. They didn't have much wealth, and what little they had was also lost. Due to their misdeeds, they became trapped in the mire of poverty. Seeing a sorrowful world before their eyes, the five brothers became detached from the world. Due to the rise of their virtue, a sage named Yashodhar arrived there. After hearing the sage's discourse, the five brothers took initiation. **They had strong bodies and minds filled with detachment, so they readily embraced the path of asceticism. They performed penance until their bodies became emaciated, reduced to mere skin and bones.**

The eldest brother, Muni Surati, performed the extremely rigorous penance called Kanakavali. The second brother, Muni Shantanu, performed the even more difficult Ratnavali penance. The third brother, Devmuni, also performed the arduous Muktavali penance. The fourth brother, Muni Sumati, performed the *Sinhnishkridit* penance, and the fifth brother, Muni Subhadra, continuously observed the *Vardhaman* penance for 100 periods without interruption.

They performed all these penances with the goal of liberation. Due to the effect of the severe penance performed with pure self-restraint, the five sages attained different spiritual powers. Finally, the five sages fasted unto death. They relinquished their lives in a state of samadhi and were reborn in the fifth Anuttar Viman, called 'Sarvarth Siddha.'

They had performed ansan. The scriptures state that a self-restrained person who observes ansan in the end and attains death while observing self-restraint along with ansan, usually becomes an Ahamindra in the Devlok, otherwise takes birth as Indra. At the very least, they become the lord of *viman* or a companion of Indra. But they do not attain a lower status than that.

These five souls, immersed in the experience of bliss for thirty-three Sagaropamas, attained death. They were born as the sons of King Pandu of Hastinapur. They were named Yudhishtir, Bhim, Arjun, Nakul, and Sahdev, respectively.

Upon hearing about their previous lives from the holy lips of the Guru, the five Pandavas became imbued with detachment. **They coronated Draupadi's sixth son as the king of Pandumathura.** This son was named Pandusen. It is well-known that Draupadi had five sons. The history of Parikshit, the grandson of the Pandavas and son of Abhimanyu, becoming the ruler of Hastinapur is also very famous. The story of this son named Pandusen has not gained much popularity. This story can be found in the 'Pandava Charitra' composed by Pandit Devavijay Ganivar. According to him, Pandusena and Parikshit were not different individuals, but rather two different names for the same person.

After anointing their son as king, the five Pandavas embraced self-restraint. The five Pandavas, after taking initiation, first became *Shrutakevalis* (those who have attained perfect knowledge through scripture), then performed fasting on Shatrunjay Tirth, attained *Keval Gyan* (omniscience) along with twenty crore monks, and became the masters of liberation.

- Source: Pandava Charitram,
Author: Pandit Devavijay Gani

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18. Nal - Damayanti's previous birth

Every morning, the fourfold Sangh remembers the great Sati Damayanti in the *Bharhesar* prayer, who had to endure the pain of separation from her husband for twelve years, experience the hardships of exile in the forest, and struggle against the troubles created by gods and humans, yet, she remained unwavering in her chastity and right faith.

The reason for these ups and downs in Damayanti's life lies in the good and bad deeds of her previous lives. We are examining them here.

King Nal and the great Sati Damayanti were also connected by marriage in their previous lives. They enjoyed the pleasures of royalty. King Nal's soul was reborn as a king named

Mamman in a city. His chief queen's name was **Veermati**. Veermati was none other than the soul of Damayanti.

Both Mamman and Veermati lived a life akin to atheism in the first half of their lives. They indulged in sensual pleasures and were also hunters. They were addicted to vices and were drunkards. Once, while searching for prey, they went into the forest. A *sarth* (caravan of merchants) was passing by. A Jain monk was part of the caravan. The king's eyes fell on this monk. As soon as King Mamman saw the sage, he became overwhelmed with fear. He thought, "This sage has brought me bad luck. My hunting trip will surely be unsuccessful because of this."

Believing such baseless assumptions to be true, the king got the sage arrested. He brought the sage with him to the city. Now his anger had subsided a little. So King Mamman asked the sage, "O sage! Where have you come from? Why have you come? Where are you going?"

The sage replied in a gentle voice, "O King, I have come from **Champagari**. I am a Jain monk. Traveling on foot is our way of life. I have to go to Sammetshikhar pilgrimage site from here. That is why I set out with the caravan, but you are stopping me in the middle of my journey."

In the sage's words, the king saw complete humility and simplicity. Therefore, both the king and Queen Veermati felt remorse for their wrongdoing. They apologized and released the sage. The sage also recognized the spiritual potential of the king and queen. He preached to them about *Samyakatva* (right faith) and the duties of a *Shravak* (follower of Jainism), which proved effective for the king and queen. Both attained enlightenment.

After this, the sage was respectfully bid farewell.

In the latter part of their lives, they worshipped the Jain Shasan with devotion. Queen Veermati once travelled to Ashtapad and offered a jewel tilak to all twenty-four Jin idols there. Finally, both attained death peacefully through meditation.

In his next life, King Mamman became King Nal. Veermati became Damayanti. Due to the consequences of the misdeed of imprisoning the sage for twelve 'gadi' (i.e., 1 gadi = 24 minutes) in their previous life, Nal and Damayanti lost their kingdom. They were exiled to the forest. They had to endure separation from each other for twelve years.

Due to the virtuous deeds performed in the latter part of their previous life, they attained the kingdom, reunited with their relatives and worshipped the true religion. The natural tilak on Damayanti's forehead, which shone like the sun in the dark night, was the result of offering tilak to the Jins that she had done in her previous life.

- Reference: Pandava Charitram

(Composed by Devavijay Gani)

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19. Rukmini's previous birth

Krishna had thirty-two thousand queens, many of whom were especially dear to him. These queens held the status of chief queens. Rukmini was among Krishna's chief queens. Rukmini once gave birth to a son with a radiant body. The child's body was so luminous that its brilliance illuminated the palace walls.

This son, whose body radiated light everywhere, became very dear to Krishna. Krishna named him Pradyumna.

Unfortunately, a vengeful soul from Pradyumna's previous life had now been born as Dhumketu Dev. He hatched a plot to destroy the newborn child. Rukmini had not yet even left her room after giving birth when Dhumketu, disguised as Rukmini, abducted Pradyumna from Krishna.

Meanwhile, the real Rukmini was longing to see her newborn son, so she forgot her physical pain and came to Krishna. "Where is my son?" she asked!

"But you just took him!"

No, I didn't even come!

So he has definitely come to play a trick. Krishna had searched everywhere, but still, there was no information of Pradyumna. Finally, Rukmini, having lost all patience, fainted and fell. She was somehow revived with cooling treatments. Upon regaining consciousness, she began to lament bitterly, reproaching Krishna and making the already distressed Krishna even more miserable.

Days, months, and years passed, but there was still no news of Pradyumna. The anguish, lamentation, and torment that Rukmini experienced during this time cannot be described.

Finally, what the omnipresent Supreme Being, Shri Simandhar Swami, had predicted came true. In the days immediately following Pradyumna's abduction, Narad Muni came to Krishna's royal court. He could not bear to see the indescribable anguish of Krishna and, even more so, of Krishna's wife Rukmini. His compassionate heart was moved, and he became very eager to offer reassurance and a solution to the problem. Therefore, Naradji said to Krishna Vasudev, "remain calm, I am going to the Mahavideh region, there I will go to the present Tirthankar, Shri Simandhar Swami, and bring back information about your missing son from the Lord."

Naradji's words brought solace to Krishna's heart. Rukmini breathed a sigh of relief. Narad returned from the Lord and said: "Wait for sixteen years. Your prince is safe, but it is not that you will get him now."

The Lord has said that a sinful act of Rukmini's past life has come to fruition, which will prevent her from even seeing her son's face for sixteen years."

Krishna asked, "What sin could Rukmini have committed in her previous life?"

"I have also heard this from the Lord's own lips. Listen", Naradji said.

In this Bharatkshetra, there was a village called **Lakshmigram**. This village was located in the **Magadh** country. In this village lived a priest named **Somdev**. His beloved's name was **Lakshmivati**.

Once, Lakshmivati went to a garden with her husband, Somdev, to play. There, a peahen had laid several eggs. The peahen constantly hovered around them, repeatedly tending to her eggs.

This scene caught Lakshmivati's attention. She was very fond of the peahen's eggs. She took the peahen's eggs with her hands coloured with *kumkum*. At this time, the peahen had gone somewhere nearby and was therefore absent. Lakshmivati put the eggs back in their original place in the tree, but now they were covered with vermillion. This changed their color and smell.

The peahen came to incubate her eggs but could not recognize them. Because the color and smell had changed, she considered her own eggs to be foreign and did not incubate them."

Thus, sixteen 'gadi' (i.e., 1 gadi = 24 minutes) passed. After that, it rained. The rainwater washed away the vermillion from the eggs, and their original color became visible again. The peahen recognized her own eggs, so she resumed incubating them. As time passed, the peacock was born.

The newborn peacock became very dear to Lakshmivati. Leaving peahen crying and distressed, she took it to her own house. She put it in a cage. She nurtured it with love. Meanwhile, the peahen kept wandering near Lakshmivati's house, calling out for her child.

Finally, due to the advice of kind people, Lakshmivati released the child peacock. She returned it to its mother. By separating the peahen from her child for sixteen hours, Lakshmivati bound a great inauspicious karma. Lakshmivati died and is now gracing the position of your chief queen, Rukmini.

Krishna and Rukmini's breath seemed to stop, and then they let out a long sigh. The people's astonishment knew no bounds. In the end, the words of the wandering Lord proved true. After sixteen years, Krishna and Rukmini were reunited with Pradyumna Kumar.

At the end of his life, this Pradyumna Kumar, along with his brother Shambmuni, attained liberation at the peak of Shri Shatrunjay Giriraj, known as the 'Bhadva mountain'. He had taken initiation from Shri Neminath Prabhu. When he attained liberation at Shatrunjay, eight and a half crore monks also attained liberation along with him.

Do not forget, that day was the thirteenth day of the bright half of the month of Phalgun.

- Reference: Trishashti Shalaka Purush Charitra, 8th Chapter

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We pay homage to author /compiler etc. of:

- Tri. Sh. Pu. Charitra
- Updeshpasad
- Pandavcharitram
- Pandav-Mhakavyam
- Paoom- chariyam
- Jain Ramayana
- Jain Mahabharat
- Safar Purva Janmo Ka
- Jain Baal Mahabharat
- Lok Prakash etc. for source
- 64 Prakaari Pooja
- Vastupaal Charitra
- Shree Shatrunjay Mahatmyam
- Prabandh Chintamani
- Parishista Parva
- Janak- Katha Parimal
- Updes- Saptatikaa
- Shree Uttraadyayan-Sutra's Vrutti

Some Books Edited / translated / written by P. Panyas Shree Nirvaanbhooshan V. Gani M.

1.

Enlightening Stories



No. of pgs.: 140

Published:2025

2.

Children's Stories



No. of pgs.: 36

Published:2025

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'.

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'.

3.

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



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4.

Miracles of Navkar



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5.

Lord Mahavir – A Life Sketch

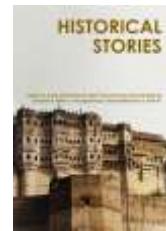


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6.

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

7.

Shri Haribhadrasuriji

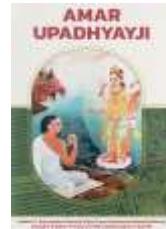


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Books



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 having a better life.

No. of Pages: 16

Published: 2023



Golden Path Towards Nirvaan

This booklet explains many key terms like 'Dharma', 'Karma', 'Sar', 'Samyak Darsan', 'gad', '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

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Maynasundari

(Multicolor Pictorial Story Book)

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No. of Pages: 25

Published: 2023



Chicago Prashnottar

This book includes Questions and Answers on Jainism for the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago -U.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.

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Published: 2023



Jain Mahabharat

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

No. of Pages: 165

Published: 2024

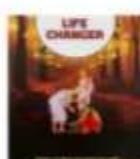


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Coming Soon

About the Compiler

The compiler Pujya Panyas Shree Nirvaanbhooshanjayji 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 Hembhushansuriswaraji Maharaja**, to make his English powerful.

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

We hope this story which is written in simple & lucid language, would help children, teen agers 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

