DIWAKAR CHITRA KATHA

Mahavir Seva Trust Presentation

Bhagavan Parshvanaath

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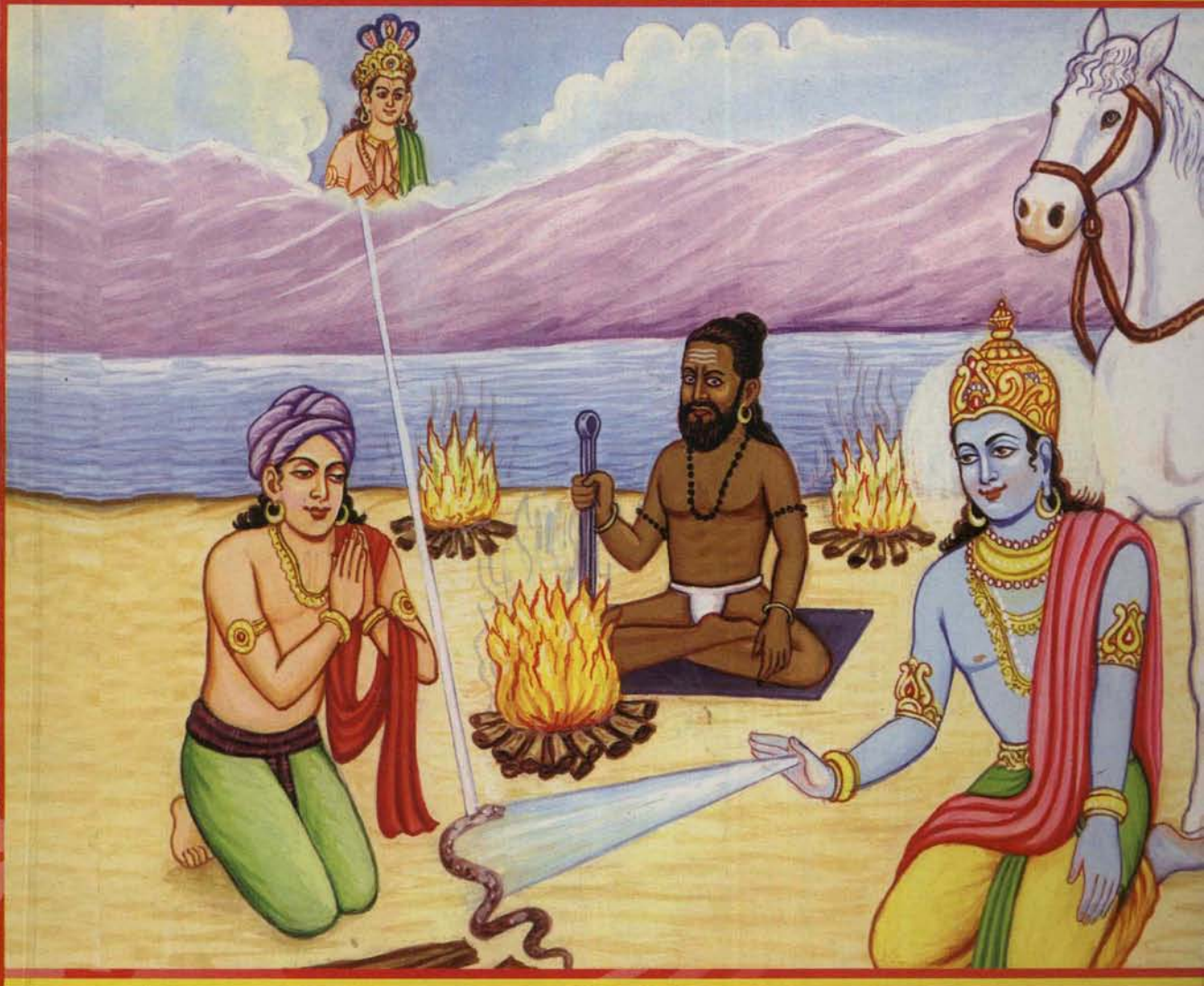

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Bhagavan Parshva Naath

In Jain religion among the twenty four Tirthankars, the first and the last were Bhagavan Risabhadeva and Bhagavan Mahavir respectively. The twenty third Tirthankar was Bhagavan Parshva Naath.

There is no doubt that Bhagavan Parshva Naath was a historical personage. His historicity is accepted by all historians. He was born about three thousand years back in Varanasi (Kashi), the famous religious city in eastern India.

Of the twenty four Tirthankars, Parshva Naath is the most popular Tirthankar specially recognized for his miraculous influence even today. To his name no other Tirthankar has a larger number of old and new temples, Stotras (panegyrics), Stutis (prayers), mantras and devotional songs than those devoted to Bhagavan Parshva Naath. Among men, women, young and old the name of Bhagavan Parshva Naath is as pious and blissful as that of Ganesh, the giver of wealth and power; Hanuman, the remover of troubles; and Shiva, the instantly benevolent.

This is the reason that one of his names is Chintamani (the wish-fulfilling gem) Parshva Naath. Besides Jains, thousands of non-Jains also worship and adore Bhagavan Parshva Naath.

It is said that before attaining enlightenment the Buddha had accepted the four dimensional religion of Bhagavan Parshva Naath. Chaturyam Samvar Dharma finds frequent mention in Buddhist scriptures. There is another belief that yogis like Gorakhnaath and Siddhanaath also worshipped Bhagavan Parshva Naath.

The name of Prabhu Parshva Naath is extremely glorious and potent as panacea for everything.

This book contains the story of the compassionate and beneficent life of Bhagavan Parshva Naath including his nine earlier births. It teaches us that one who forgives is great. Forgiveness makes a soul pure and pious.

—Srichand Surana 'Saras

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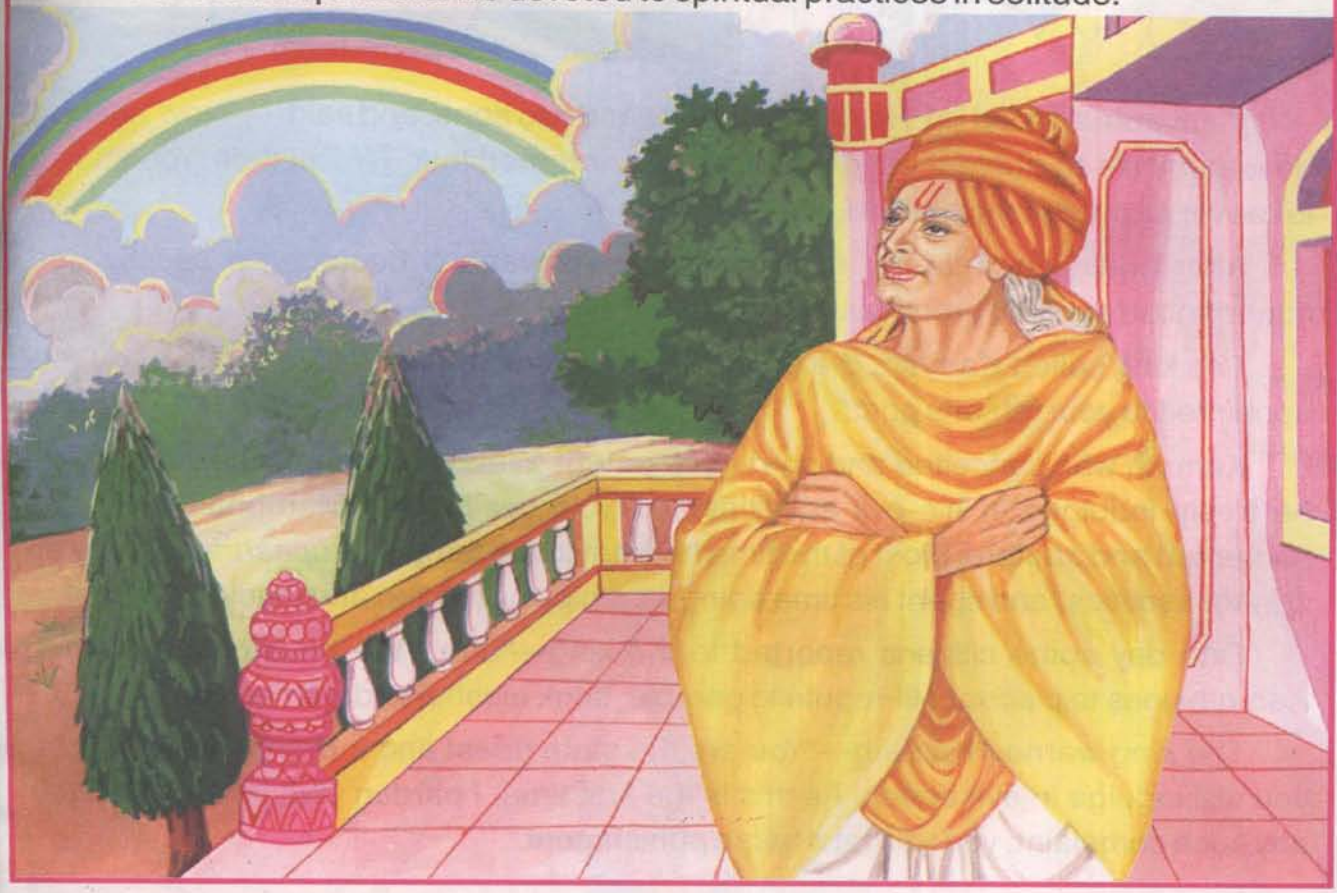
BHAGAVAN PARSHVA NAATH : THE PROPHET OF FORGIVENESS

Kamath and Marubhuti

This is a story from the very remote past. There was a city called Potanpur. King Arvind ruled there. Vishvabhuti was his priest.

Vishvabhuti was a scholar of politics and religion. By nature he was contented, kind and simple. One cloudy evening Vishvabhuti was sitting in his home-garden. He saw a rainbow in the sky. For a long time Vishvabhuti observed the fading and reappearing colours of the rainbow. He thought — 'Human life is just like a rainbow. Every moment its colours keep changing. Sometimes happiness, sometimes misery; joy one moment and sadness next moment. How unstable is life ? There is no way to know what will happen the next moment.'

Then he thought about his own life — 'I have grown old. How long can I continue to shoulder responsibilities of the state and the family ? Why not get free of these burdens and lead a peaceful life devoted to spiritual practices in solitude.'



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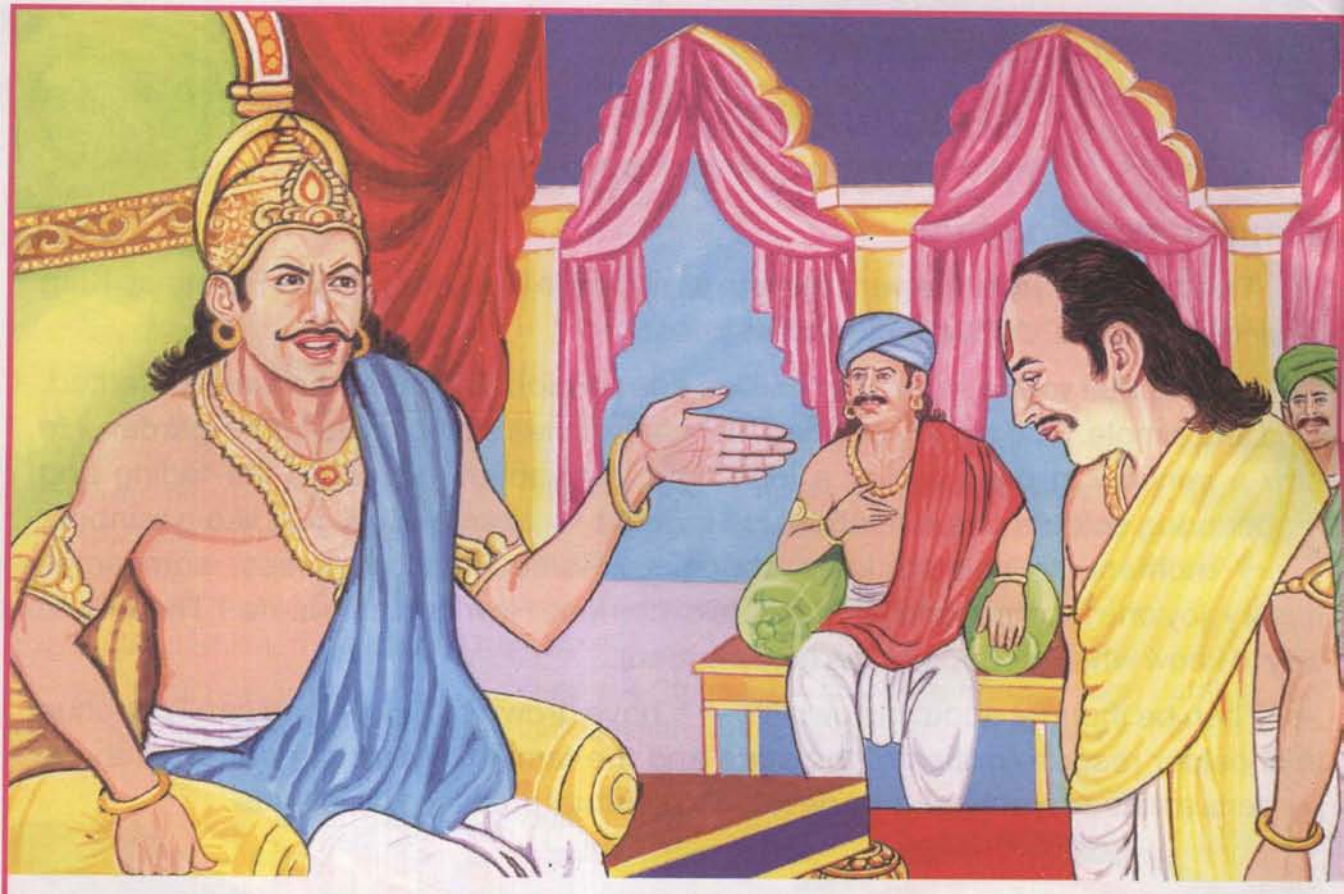

Vishvabhuti stood up. He called his wife and two sons, and said — "Now I want to devote my life to austerities, chanting and doing meditation in solitude. You should takeover all the responsibilities of the family."

After getting permission from the king, Vishvabhuti became an ascetic and commenced spiritual practices.

The king called Kamath, the elder son of Vishvabhuti, and said— "Now you are appointed to your father's post."

Kamath was conceited and corrupt by nature. When he became the state priest he freely indulged in his evil activities. His younger brother Marubhuti was very contented and austere. Most of the time he went to the temple or *upashraya* (place of stay for ascetics) and spent his time doing worship, meditation and studies.

One day some citizens reported to the king—"Sire ! We have observed that Kamath goes to places of ill-repute to gamble, drink alcohol and womanize."

The king warned Kamath—"You are the state priest and a Brahmin as well but you still indulge in evil deeds. As this is the first time, I pardon you. In future if I get any such complaint, you will get a harsh punishment."

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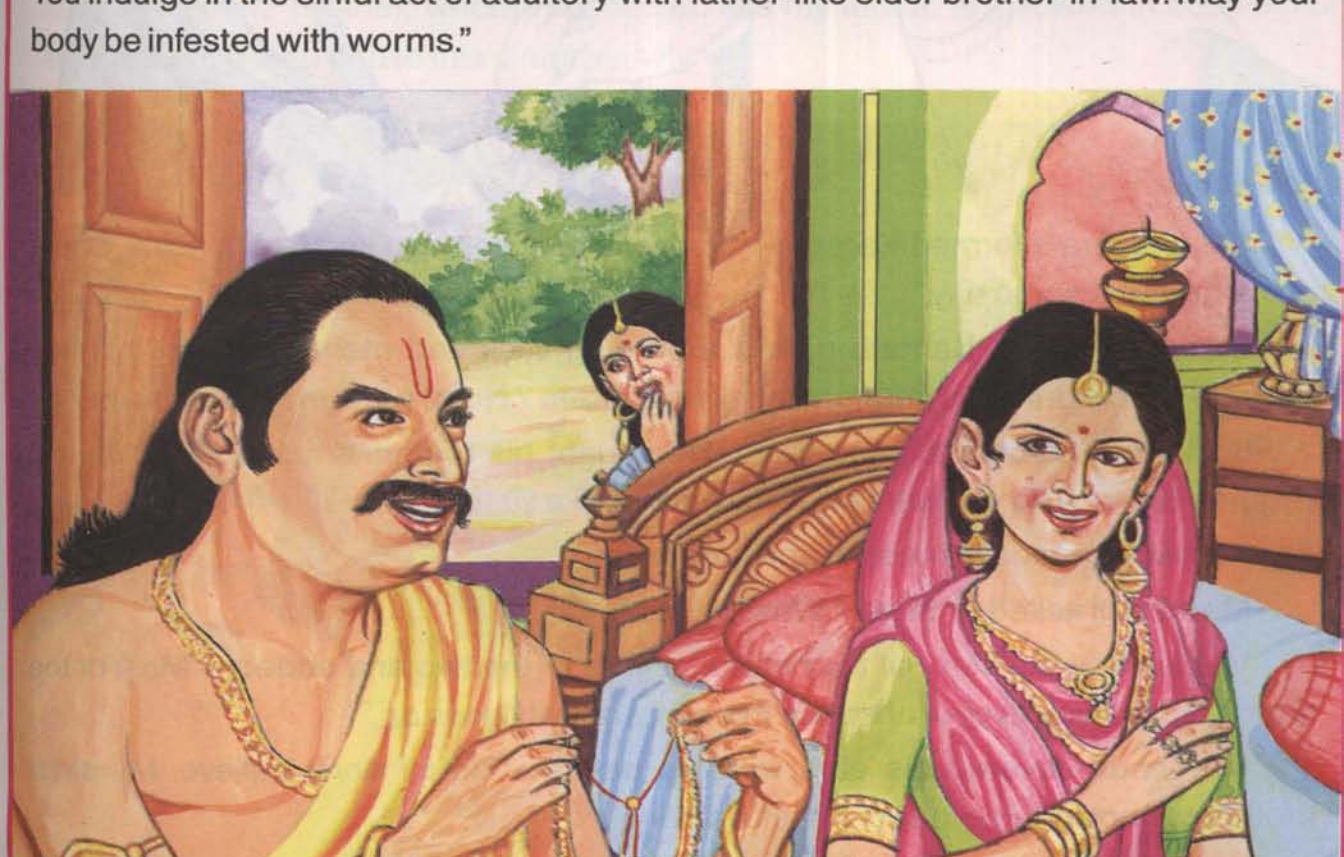
But Kamath failed to improve himself. One day he started drinking at home and got intoxicated. Like mad he entered the room of his younger brother's wife Vasundhara. "Vasundhara ! See, what I have brought for you", he put a gold necklace on her neck and grabbed her hand."

Vasundhara was stunned—"Brother-in-law ! This is a sin you are committing. I am the wife of your younger brother. I am like your daughter."

Intoxicated Kamath said—"O beautiful one ! Your husband is impotent. That is why he always remains in the temple. Come, enjoy pleasures of life with me." And he also put a gold bracelet on her wrist.

Vasundhara yielded to the temptation. Now Kamath boldly indulged in the sinful activity.

When Kamath's wife saw all this she scolded Vasundhara—"O wretched sinner! You indulge in the sinful act of adultery with father-like elder brother-in-law. May your body be infested with worms."



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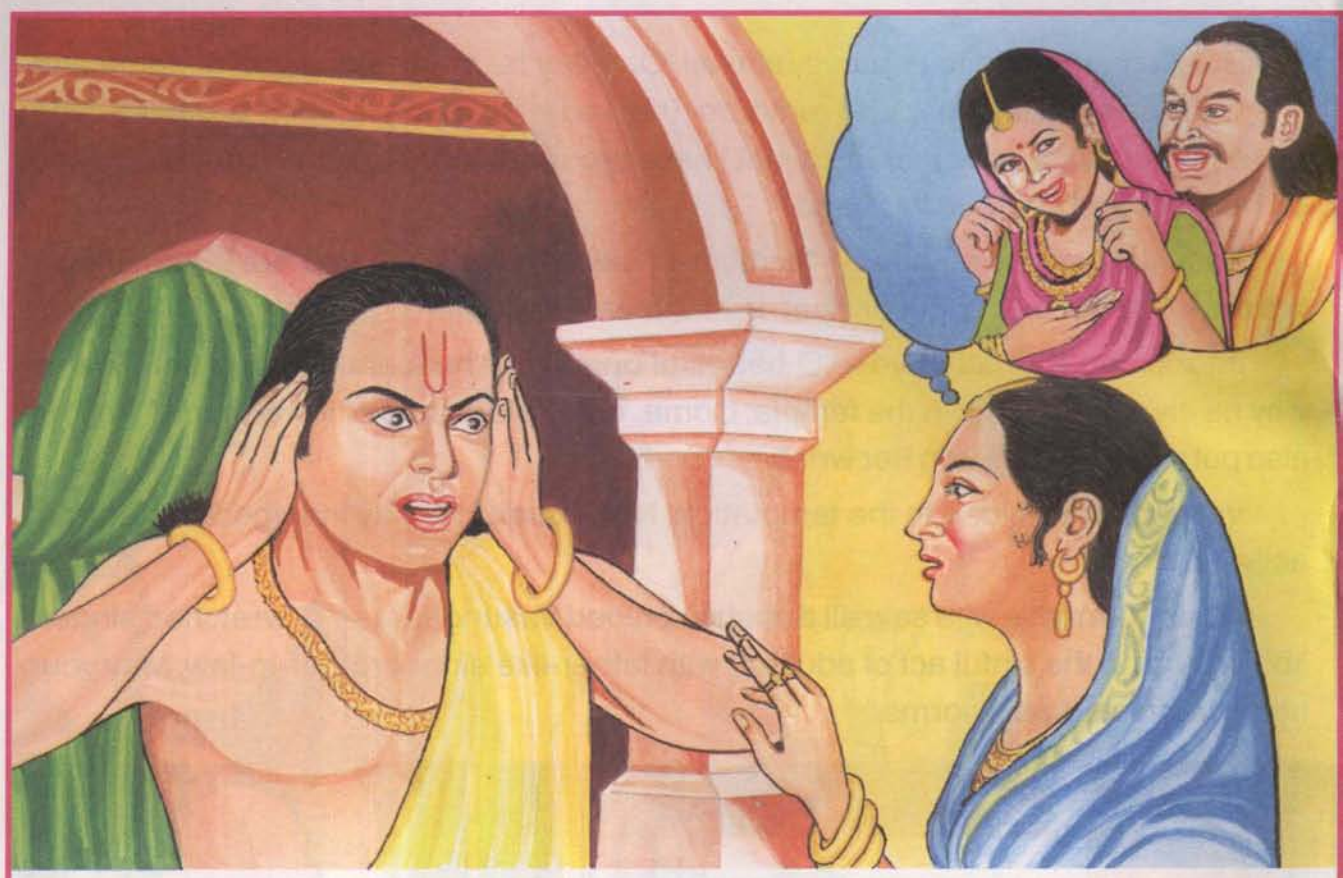

Vasundhara informed Kamath—"Your wife has come to know of our sins. She is going to kill me some day."

Mad with anger, Kamath picked a burning stick and rushed towards his wife Varuna—"How dare you interfere in my enjoyment ? Now I will burn you to ashes."

Just then Marubhuti came there. He caught his brother's hand—"Pardon me, Brother! But why do you want to kill my mother-like sister-in-law ?"

Kamath stopped at the spot and grumbled.

Marubhuti asked—"Sister ! What is the matter ?"

Varuna told the story of the hateful activity of the two and added—"Most of the time you are away. In your absence this sinful activity goes on."

Marubhuti covered his ears with his palms—"No ! I don't believe. My elder brother cannot indulge in such hateful act."

When Varuna insisted Marubhuti said—"I don't believe in hearsay. I will come to some conclusion only when I see something with my own eyes."

Varuna—"Alright, if you don't believe wait and see with your own eyes."

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One day Marubhuti said to his wife—"I have to visit some other city to perform some ritual. I will be out for five days."

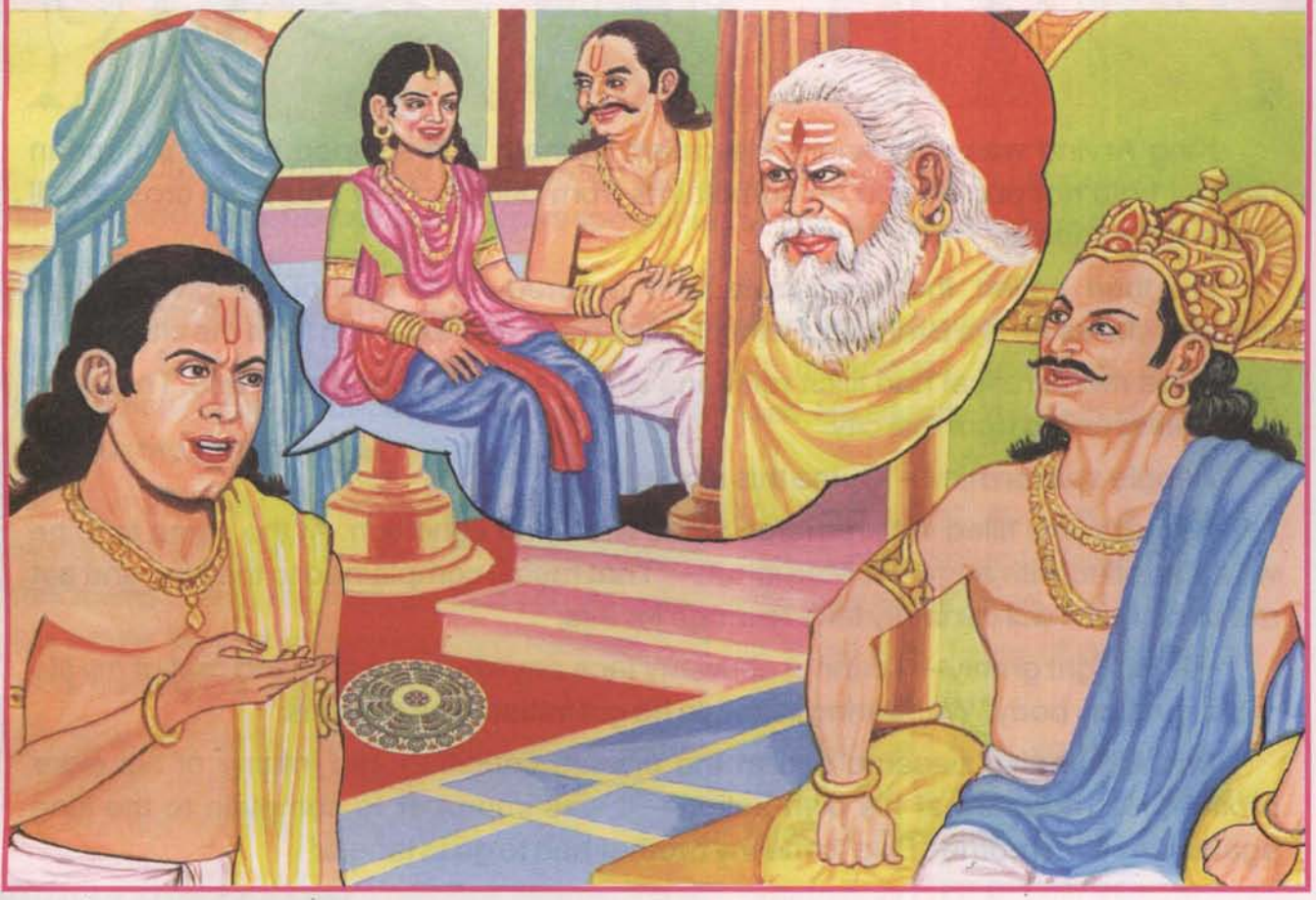
He went out of the city and disguised himself as a monk. In the evening he came to Kamath's house and called—"In course of my pilgrimage I have arrived here. I need a place for my overnight stay."

Kamath—"Monk ! You may spend the night in the courtyard."

Marubhuti stayed in the courtyard. Knowing that her husband was away, Vasundhara and Kamath openly engaged in lustful activities.

Marubhuti stealthily witnessed everything. He closed his eyes in disgust. He thought—'Whom to complain when sin is fostered in my own house ?'

In the end when he could not contain himself, he approached the king and said—"My elder brother, whom I respected like my father, is involved in such sinful acts. Please put an end to this sinful activity."



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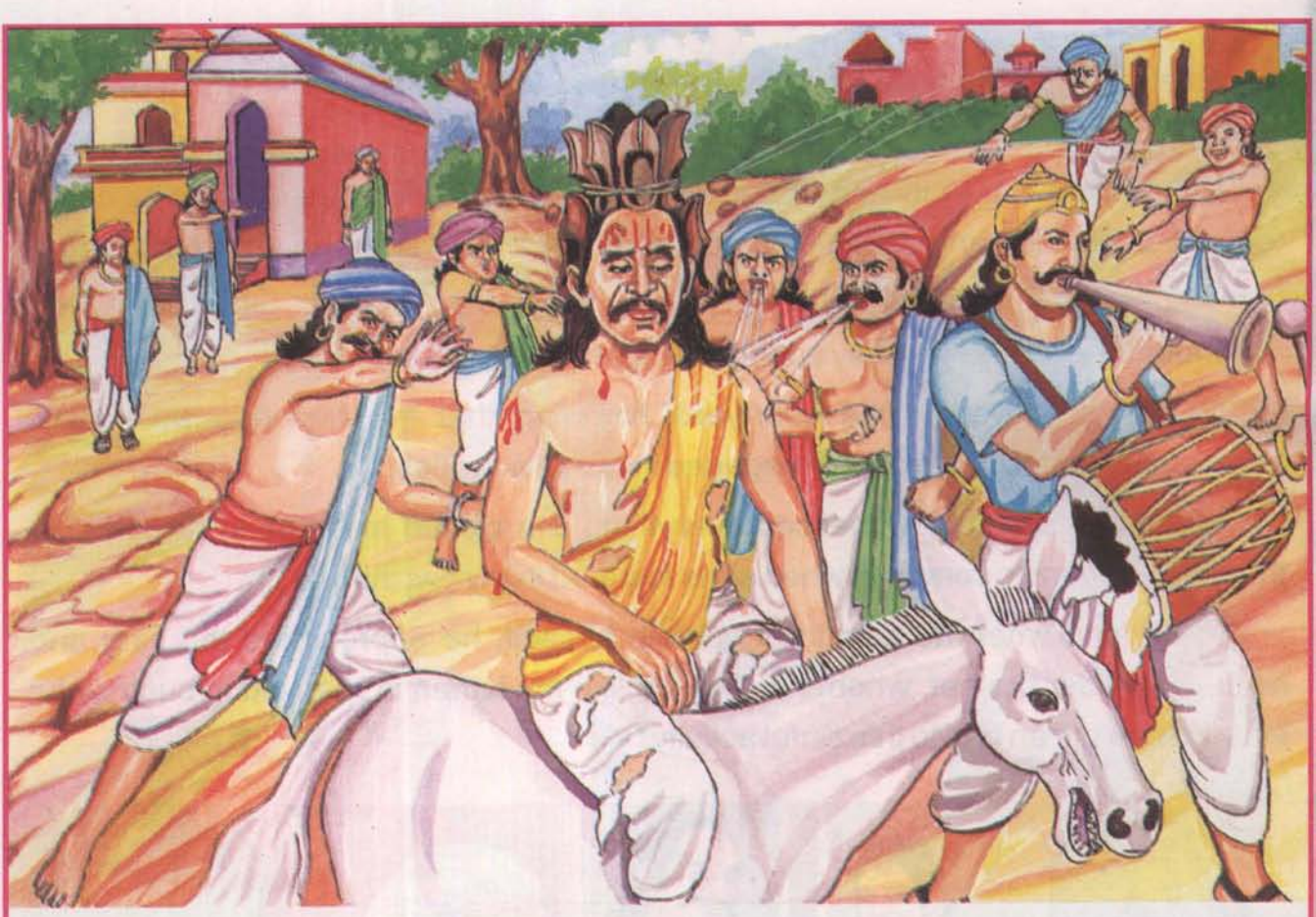

King Arvind was very angry. He called Kamath and scolded him—"You mean rascal ! I did not punish you on complaints from people. Now you have crossed all limits of meanness."

He than called the magistrate and ordered—"He cannot be given death punishment as he is a Brahmin. Paint his face black and exile him from the city."

"This mean rascal had illicit relations with his younger brother's wife. Therefore he is being exiled from this city."

People spat on him—"Curse this sinner !"

Kamath was filled with remorse at his wretched condition. At the same time he was also filled with anger for Marubhuti—'That rascal complained to the king and got me punished. I will certainly take revenge for this.'

He thought grimly—'I cannot show my face anywhere. I will spend rest of my life mortifying my body." Wandering in jungle he got initiated as a hermit.'

Marubhuti also became sad at the pitiable condition and infamy of his elder brother. He repented at his own action—'It was improper to complain to the king against my own brother. Due to me my brother had to go to jungle.'

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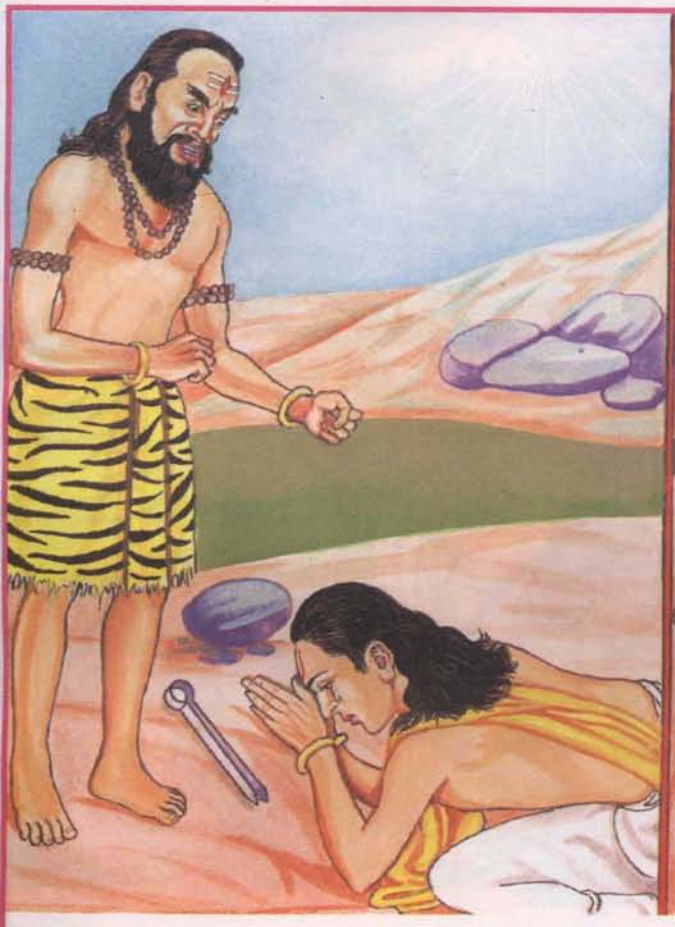

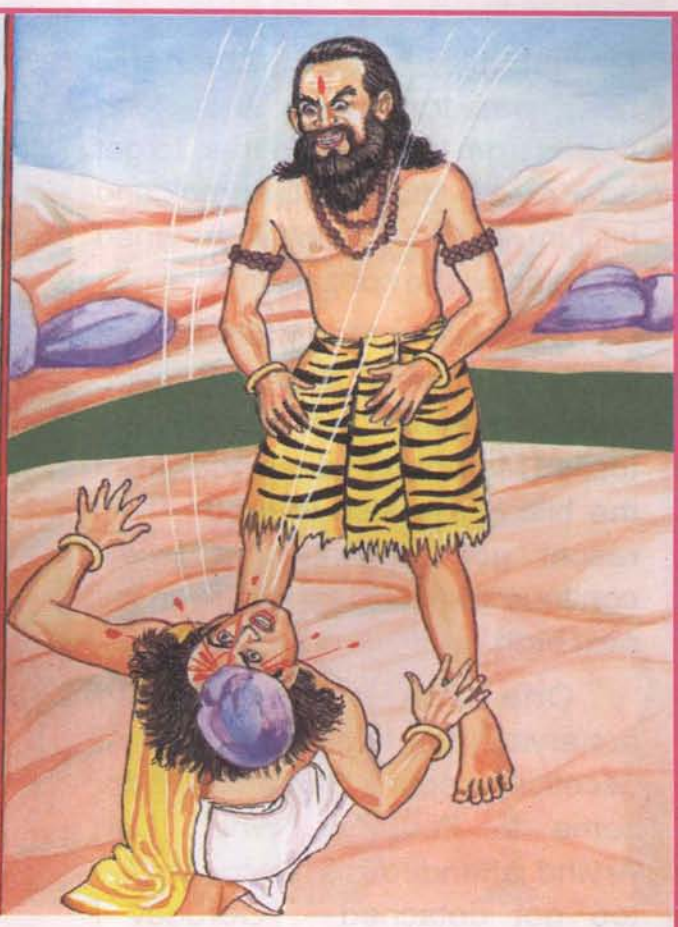

One day Marubhuti was very worried about his brother—'Now I should go to my brother and seek his pardon. I am responsible for this sad state of my brother. My fault is greater than his.'

Marubhuti revealed his thoughts before the king. The king advised—"Don't even see the face of that rogue now. Act of such meanness deserved harsher punishment." But Marubhuti could not contain himself. He silently left for the jungle to seek his brother's pardon.

Kamath was doing harsh penance standing facing the sun on a hilltop. Marubhuti shouted as soon as he saw Kamath—"Brother ! Brother ! Please forgive me. It was due to my mistake that you were forced to endure so much pain." Joining his palms Marubhuti approached Kamath and fell at his feet. Tears of repentance were flowing from his eyes.

Seeing Marubhuti, Kamath's anger flared up—"Rascal ! First you cause me injury and now you come to apply ointment. You fraud ! You hypocrite ! You are my enemy not brother." Mad with anger, Kamath lifted a rock and dropped it on

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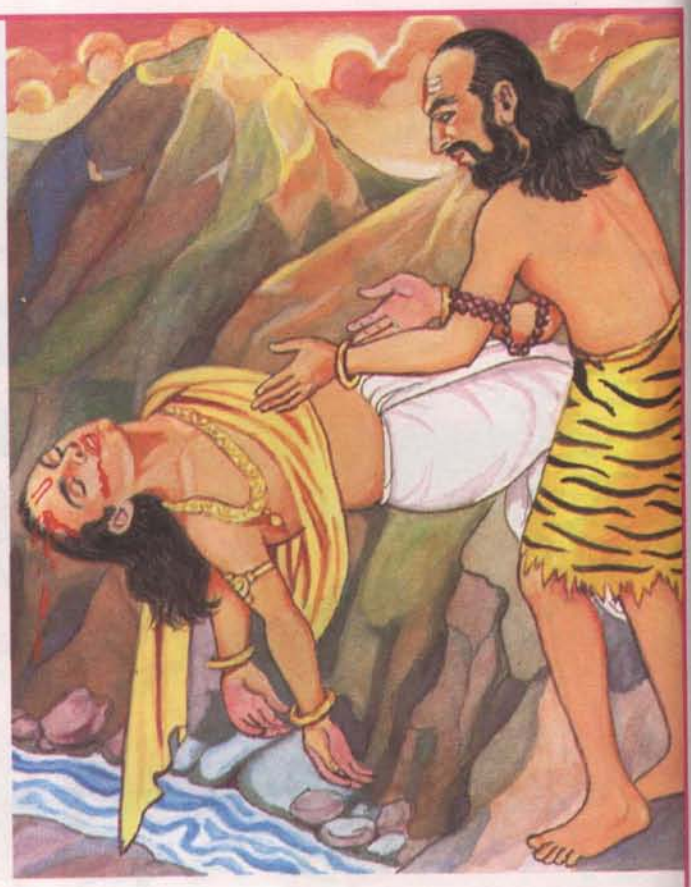
Marubhuti's head. Marubhuti's head was torn open and blood flowed from it. When he tried to get up, Kamath lifted another rock and hit him again. Marubhuti moaned and died on the spot.



Even killing Marubhuti did not pacify Kamath's anger. Burning with vengeance he kicked and tossed Marubhuti's dead body from the hilltop. He also wished—'This rascal got me insulted. I will continue taking revenge even in my next birth.'

One day an enlightened acharya (head of a group of ascetics) named Samantabhadra came to Potanpur. When king Arvind attended his discourse he too got detached— "Gurudev ! Please show me the path of spiritual uplift."

On hearing the sermon of the acharya the king handed over his kingdom to his son and got initiated. After learning scriptures he commenced austerities.

One day ascetic Arvind thought—'I should make my life worthwhile by doing pilgrimage of Ashtapad.'

The ascetic said to a caravan chief named Saagardatt—"Gentleman! Worship at Ashtapad is meritorious for human life."

The merchant asked—"Revered one! Image of which deity is installed there and who got the image installed ?"

The ascetic told him about the importance of Ashtapad pilgrimage center—"The image of the first Tirthankar Bhagavan Risabhadeva is installed there. Indra, the king of gods, too goes there for worship. Emperor Bharat, Bhagavan Risabhadeva's son, got gem studded images of twenty four Tirthankar's installed there. A person who dose worship at that great pilgrimage center never has a bad destiny. Worship at that place leads to freedom from miseries and finally to liberation."

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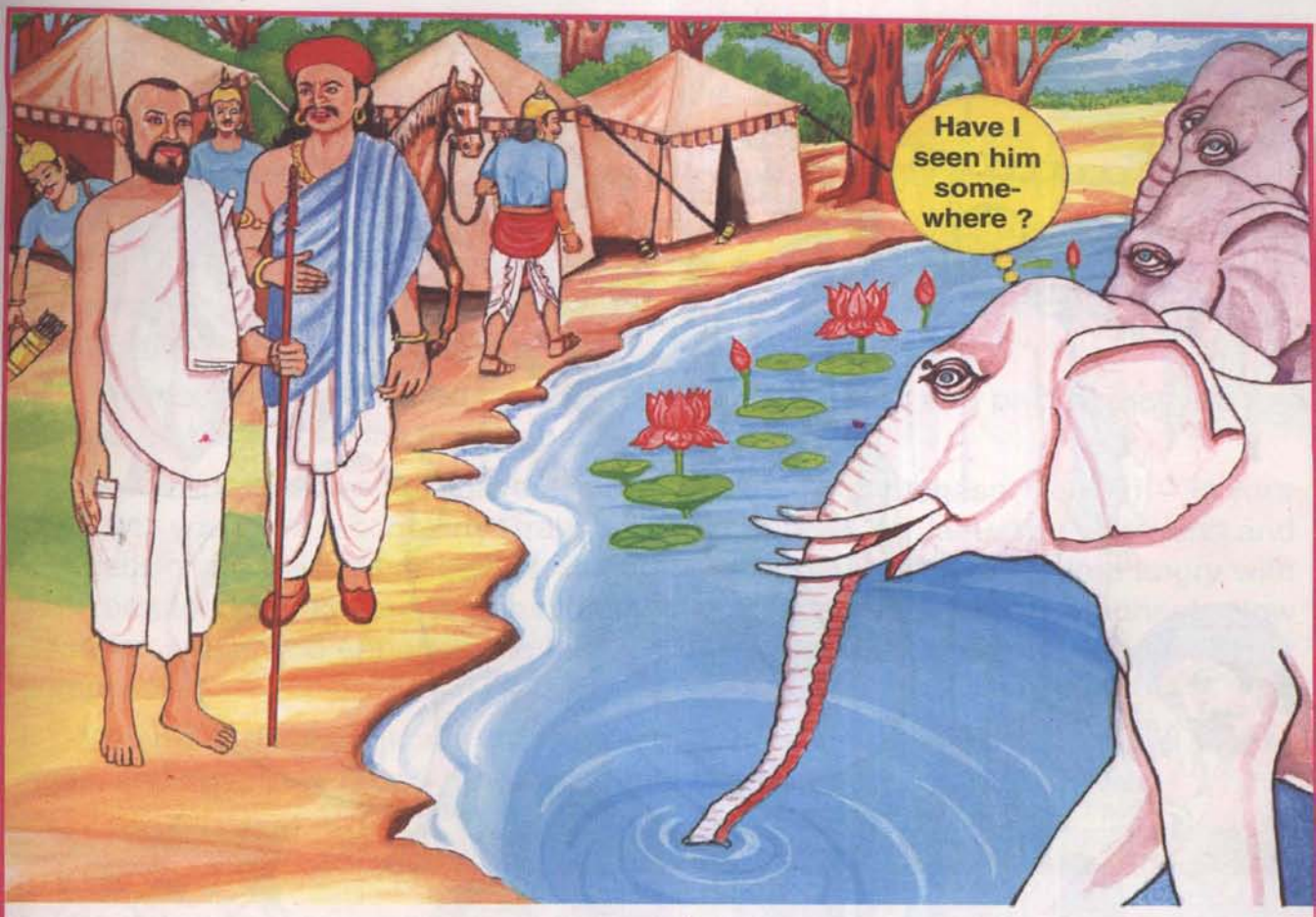

Hearing about the glory of the pilgrimage, merchant Saagar said—"Revered one ! I wish to go for this pilgrimage. Kindly honour me with your company."

With the caravan ascetic Arvind arrived in a fearful forest. The merchant said—"Revered one ! Here is a large and beautiful lake. See, there are dense trees as well. We may camp and rest here for a few days."

One day a herd of elephants came to the lake for drinking water. The king elephant saw the activity in the camp from a distance. He thought—'I am sure some king has made a camp to trap elephants.'

The king of the herd got angry—'Before these evil humans set trap to catch us, we should destroy them.'

He trumpeted loudly. All elephants became alert and rushed towards the camp. Angry elephants uprooted trees with their trunks, kicked rocks and attacked the camp. The pilgrims staying in the tents ran helter-skelter shrieking with fear.

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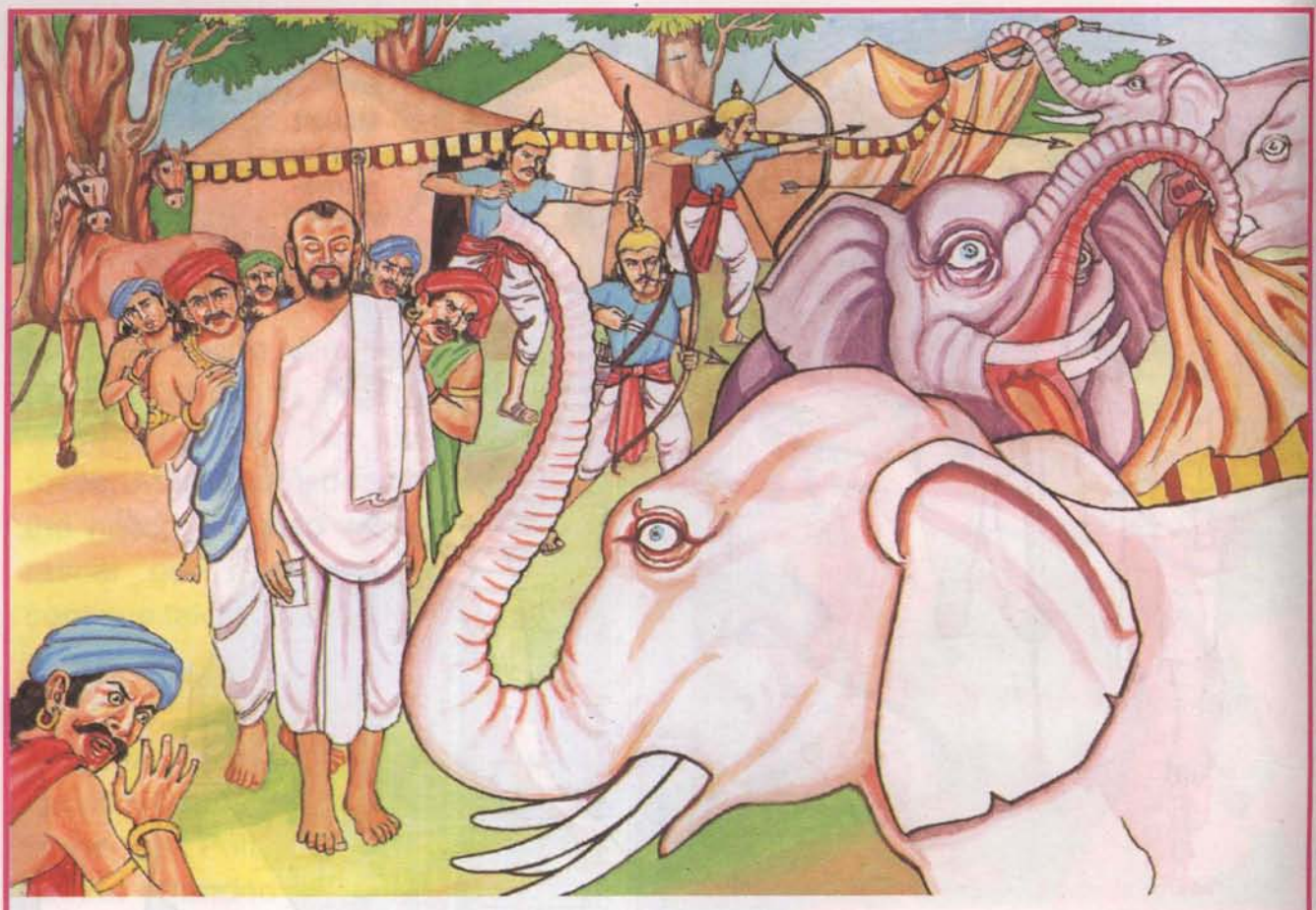

The guards attacked with arrows but failed to stop the rushing herd. It was a scene resembling an earthquake.

Ascetic Arvind thought—'Why this devastation ?'

In order to protect the pilgrims, he got up, went in the direction of the approaching herd and stood in meditation.

The terrified pilgrims gathered behind the ascetic. The aura of the power of the ascetic's austerities acted as a shield confronting the elephants.

Raising their trunks and trumpeting in anger, the elephants stopped in their tracks. The king elephant came ahead and ordered—"Why have you stopped ? Move forward. Make them run. Kill them."

But no elephant stepped ahead. The moment the king elephant saw ascetic Arvind standing in front, he also stood stone still. He trumpeted, waved his trunk and lifted his legs. But he also failed to take even one forward step. He ordered the herd—"Stop destruction and be calm." He thought—'Who is this hermit ? Why is he stopping us ?'

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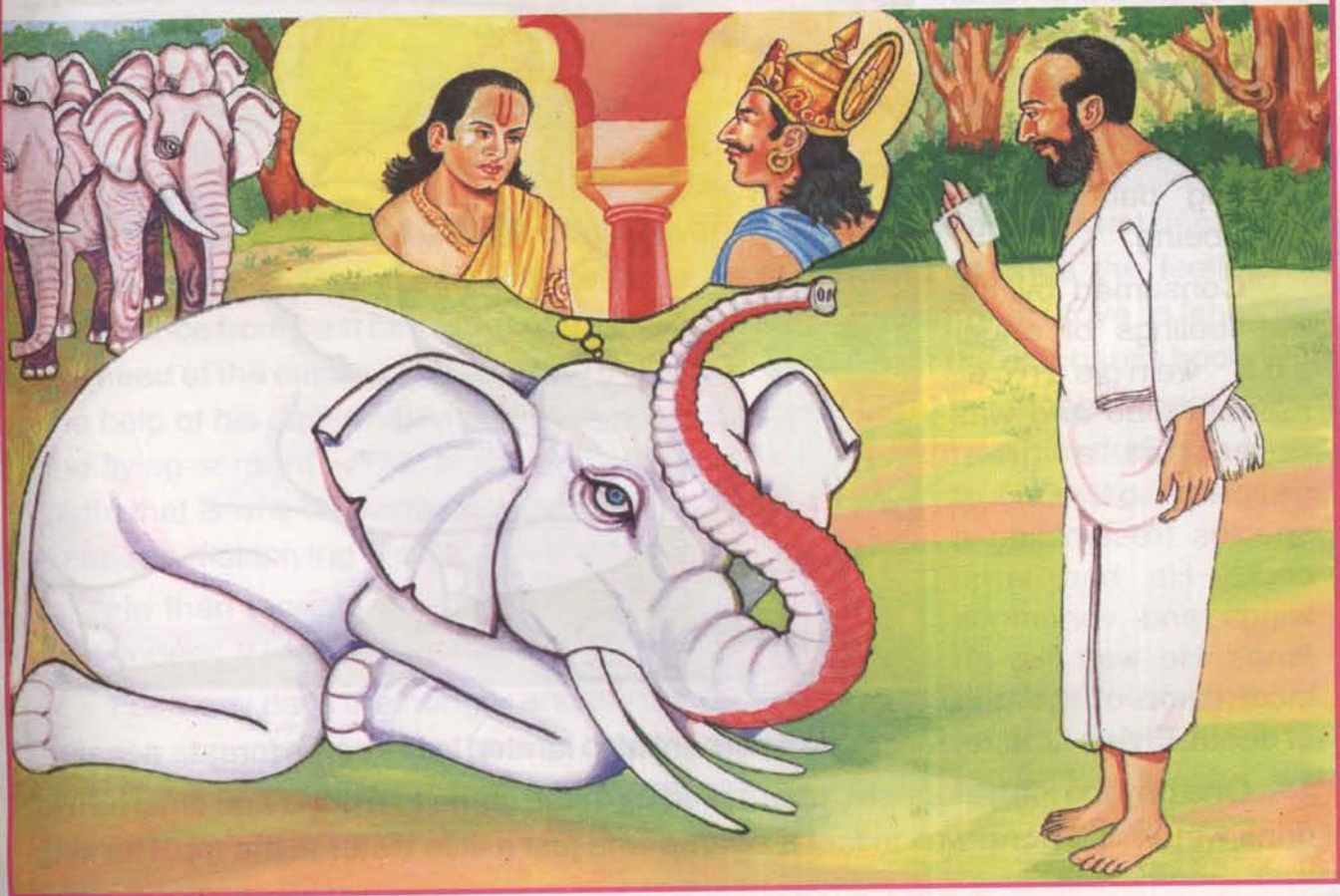
Just then, concluding his meditation, the ascetic raised his hand—"O king elephant ! Calm down. Learn to forgive. Recognize me. Recognize yourself. In your past birth you were Marubhuti and I am king Arvind. Recall our past relationship."

At these words from the ascetic, the king elephant was lost in deep thoughts. He attained *jati-smaran-jnana* (memories of the past birth). Memories of past birth surfaced like a movie—'Oh ! I am Marubhuti. This is my benefactor king Arvind. All these pilgrims are headed towards Ashtapad to pay homage.'

The king elephant bowed his head, bent his front legs and paid homage to the ascetic. He then raised the trunk to beg pardon.

The enlightened ascetic gave him the sermon of forgiveness. He said—"In your past birth you were a scholarly Brahmin and a Shravak (a Jain). You were kind and compassionate towards all beings. But at the time of death you became angry with your brother Kamath. As a consequence you were born as an elephant. Now abandon anger and enhance the feelings of forgiveness, tolerance, kindness and compassion."

When the elephant knew of his past birth he sought forgiveness of the ascetic again and again. He raised his head to beg the merchant's pardon as well—"I have



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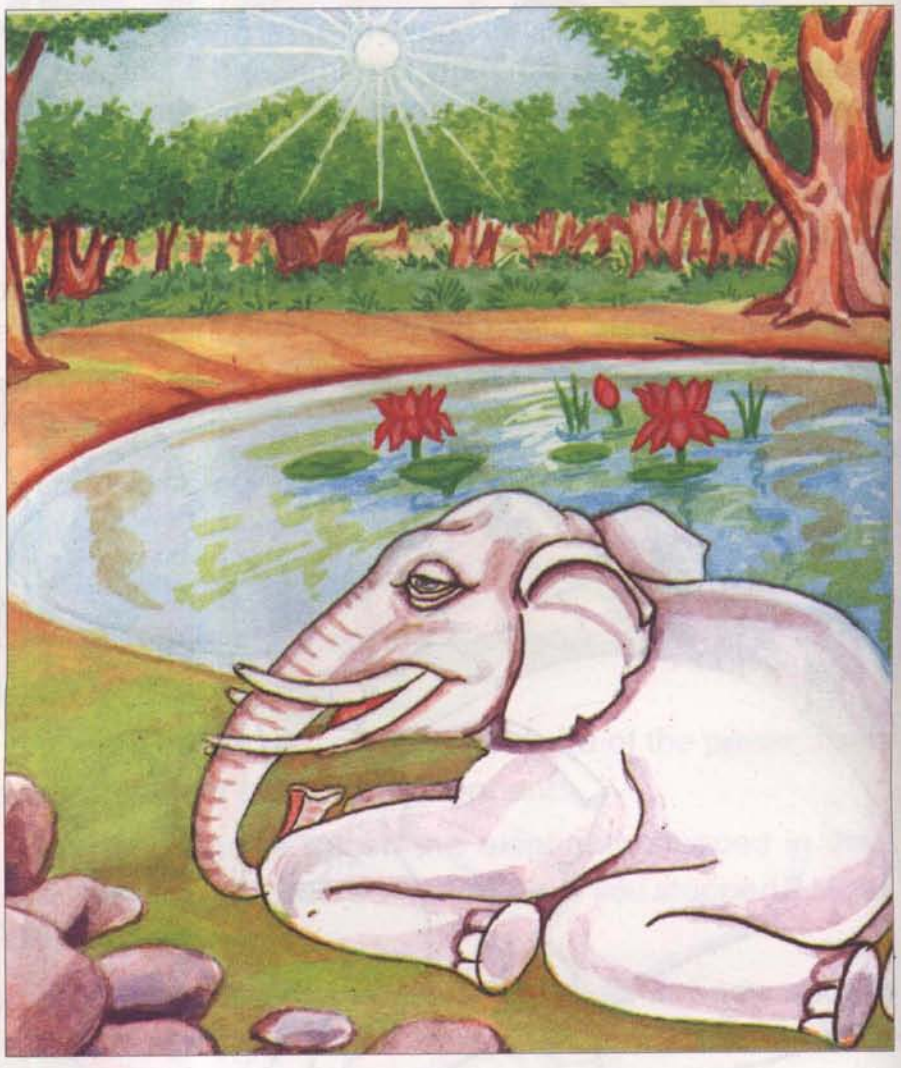
tormented you. Please pardon me. You are blessed that you are going to pay homage at Ashtapad Teerth."

After getting preached by the ascetic, the king elephant resolved—"Now I will once again observe *Shravak-dharma* (code of conduct for Jain laymen). I will never get angry at anyone. I will never cause pain to anyone."

Once the disturbance was over the caravan resumed its journey with the ascetic. Everyone agreed—"Thanks to the power of austerities of the ascetic that we all were saved today."

Some also commented—"Today we have seen the divine influence of saints with our own eyes."



The king elephant now returned to the jungle and started leading a non-violent life following *Shravak-dharma*. He ate fallen and dry leaves in the jungle and drank water from the lake warmed and purified by sun rays. He avoided eating during the night and causing pain to any living being.

Consumed by the evil feelings of anger and vengeance, Kamath died and was reborn as a great serpent of Kurkut species (resembling a cock). He had large wings and venomous fangs. He was like an incarnation of the god of death. Flying around, that Kurkut serpent also landed in the same forest.

One day the king elephant, oppressed by thirst, came to a pond and entered it to drink water. The pond was in fact a swamp with just a little water at the top. The king

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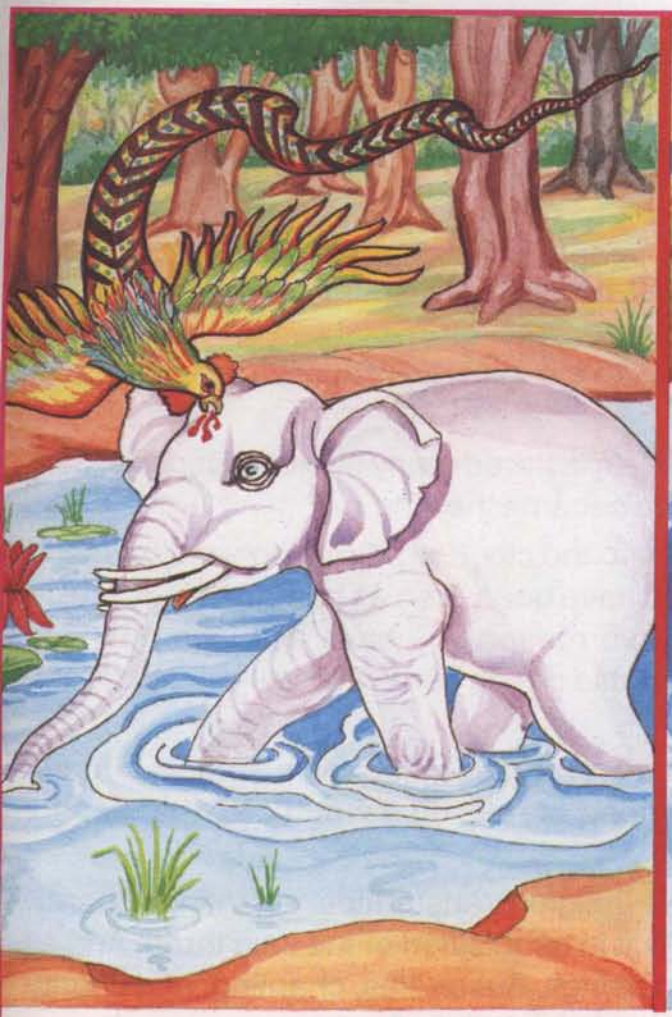

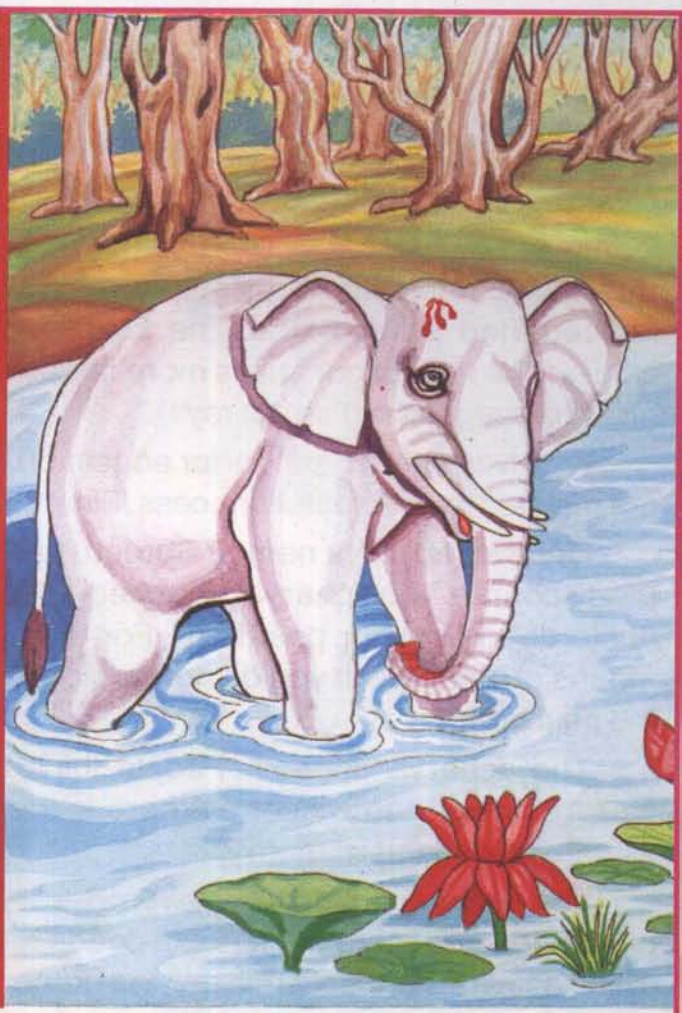

elephant was caught in the swamp. With every effort to come out he went deeper into it. The Kurkut serpent saw the helpless elephant. And at once the feelings of vengeance from past birth surfaced. Hissing in anger, the serpent drove its fangs into the head of the elephant. The strong poison spread all over the elephant's body. With the help of his *Jati-smaran-jnana* (memories of past birth) the elephant recognized the flying serpent—'This is my brother Kamath. I had harmed him during the past birth, that is why he has bitten me. He is an ignorant who is governed by hatred and keeps on multiplying animosity with animosity.'

He then thought—'I have to avoid anger. I will pacify anger with the water of forgiveness. If I endure pain calmly I will have a noble future life.'

For many days the hungry and thirsty elephant remained trapped in the swamp. Intense sun rays from the top and burning sensation of the poison inside the body, but he still remained calm and composed. Chanting Namokar Mantra with equanimity he died and reincarnated as a divine being in the eighth heaven.

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The Kurkut serpent killed hundreds of thousand creatures with his poisonous fangs and went to the fifth hell after death.

With forgiveness an animal became a god. With anger a man became a serpent and ended up in hell.

KIRANVEG AND THE SERPENT

After completing the life-span of eighth heaven, the soul that was Marubhuti reincarnated as a prince. The king celebrated the birth of his son. The queen said—"The face of our sun is more radiant than the sun rays. Therefore we will name him Kiranveg (as radiant as rays)."

Kiranveg went to school for education. He mastered many subjects and skills. He got married to a beautiful princess. Finally he became the king.

Once an acharya named Surguru came to the city. King Kiranveg went to attend his discourse. The acharya preached—"You have been born as human beings due to noble deeds in your past birth. For the same reason you have acquired all these means of pleasure. If you do not indulge in noble deeds here what will you get during the next birth ?"

The acharya added—"People think that everything can be acquired through wealth, power and wisdom. Where is the need of religion ? But think what begets wealth, power and wisdom ?"

The acharya himself answered—"It is religion. Austerities, chanting, charity, pilgrimage and other such noble deeds result in acquisition of the said three. And all these activities are possible only as human beings. Austerities, chanting, and charity can only be done by human beings and not by divine beings."

After listening to the sermon the king got initiated. After studying scriptures ascetic Kiranveg moved about observing various harsh austerities.

Once the ascetic thought—'There are eternal images of Arihants in Pushkaravar continent. Paying homage to them brings great boon.'

With his special powers the ascetic came to Pushkaravar continent. He paid homage and obeisance to the eternal images of Jinas. With reverence he sang songs of devotion for Arihants.

After this he thought—'Now I should go to Vaitadhya hill and do *kayotsarg* (to meditate dissociating oneself from the body).

He then came to Vaitadhya hill. He stood in meditation in the kayotsarg posture. Many years went by. In winter, summer and monsoon the ascetic stood still, like a statue, in meditation.

Kurkut serpent had taken birth as an infernal being. From there he was reborn as a terrifying poisonous snake on the very same hill. One day when that snake saw the

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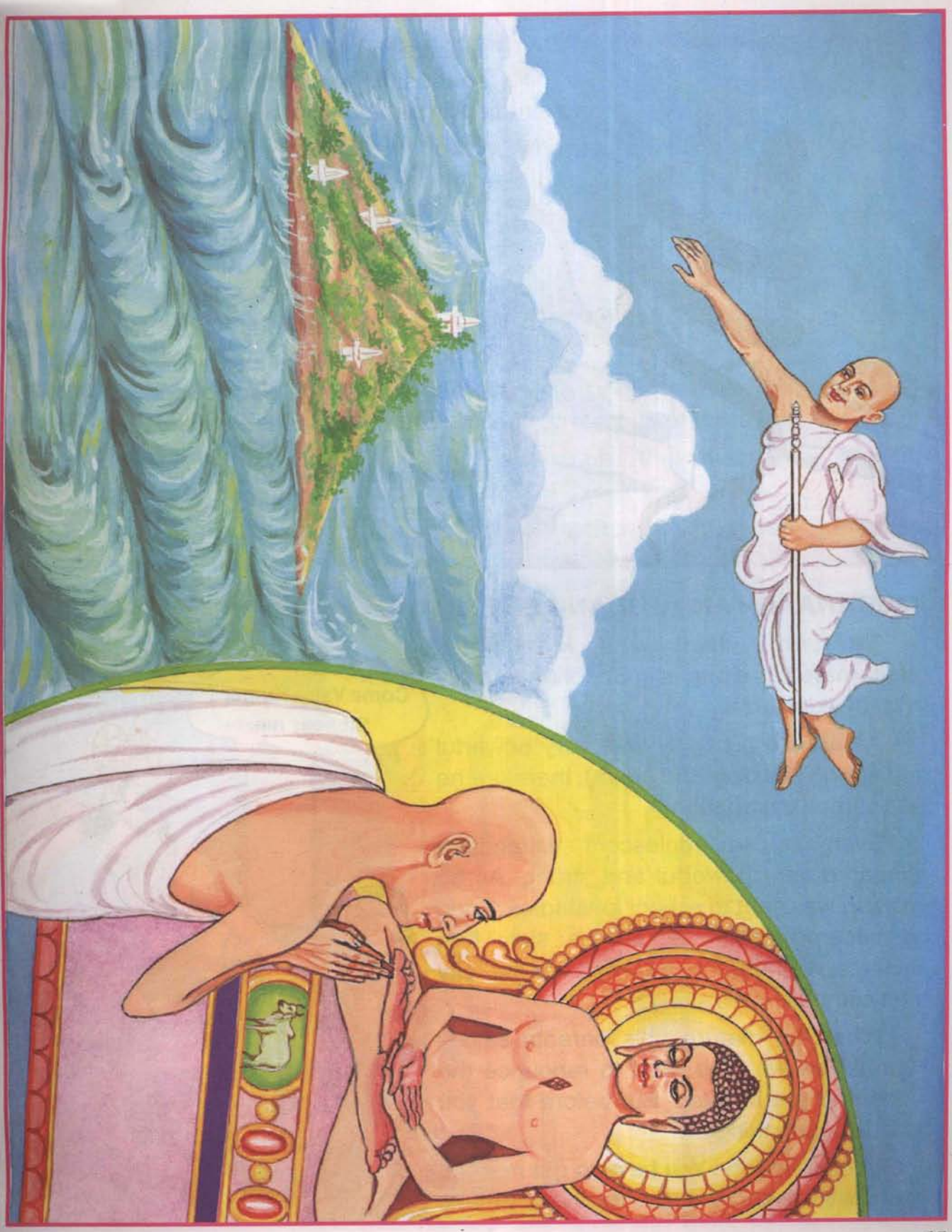

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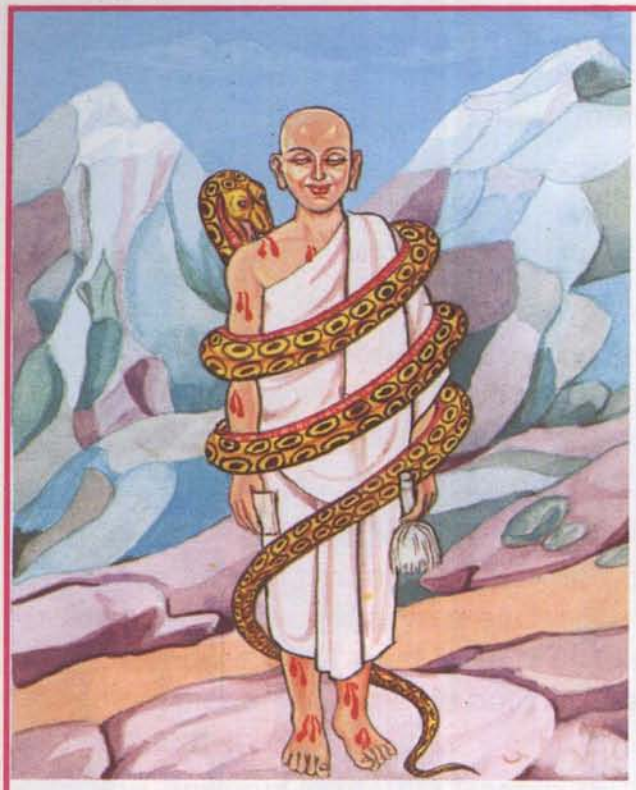


ascetic standing in meditation his anger and animosity were inflamed. The snake encircled the whole body of the ascetic. He bit the ascetic at many spots on the body. He filled the whole body of the ascetic with bite-holes.

The ascetic stood composed in spite of the intense agony of the poison. He thought—'This snake is my friend not enemy. He has today provided me the opportunity of enduring pain. If I endure this pain with equanimity, my *karmas* will be destroyed soon.' Abandoning his body in that state of equanimity ascetic Kiranveg reincarnated as a god in the twelfth heaven,

The poisonous snake was one day burnt in a forest-fire. He went to the sixth hell.

VAJRANAABH AND KURANG BHEEL

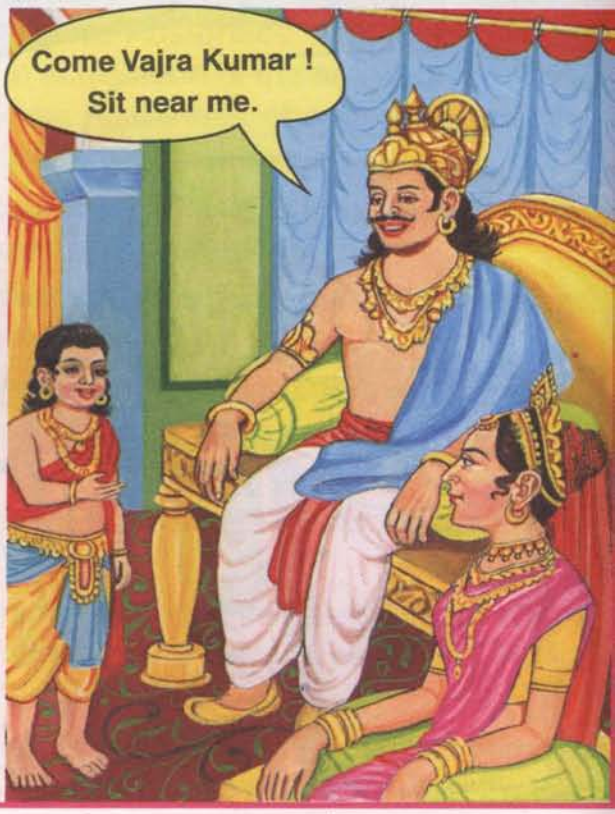
The soul that was Marubhuti reincarnated as a prince in Shubhankara city in Mahavideh area.

As a child his body was very powerful and strong like diamond (vajra); therefore he was named Vajranaabh.

Even as an adolescent Vajranaabh appeared very powerful and strong. As he grew he was sent to school for studies. Soon he became expert of all the sixty four subjects. Vajranaabh returned to the city after completing his studies.

When he matured his parents said—"Son ! Now we both want to renounce the world and get initiated. But before that you have to do two things."

Mother—"Son ! You have to get married and continue our lineage. You have to take



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responsibility of the state and take care of the people. You must perform these two duties."

Vajranaabh accepted—"I will do as my parents say."

Vajranaabh got married and then crowned. The royal couple took to the spiritual path after getting initiated. In due course Vajranaabh got a son.

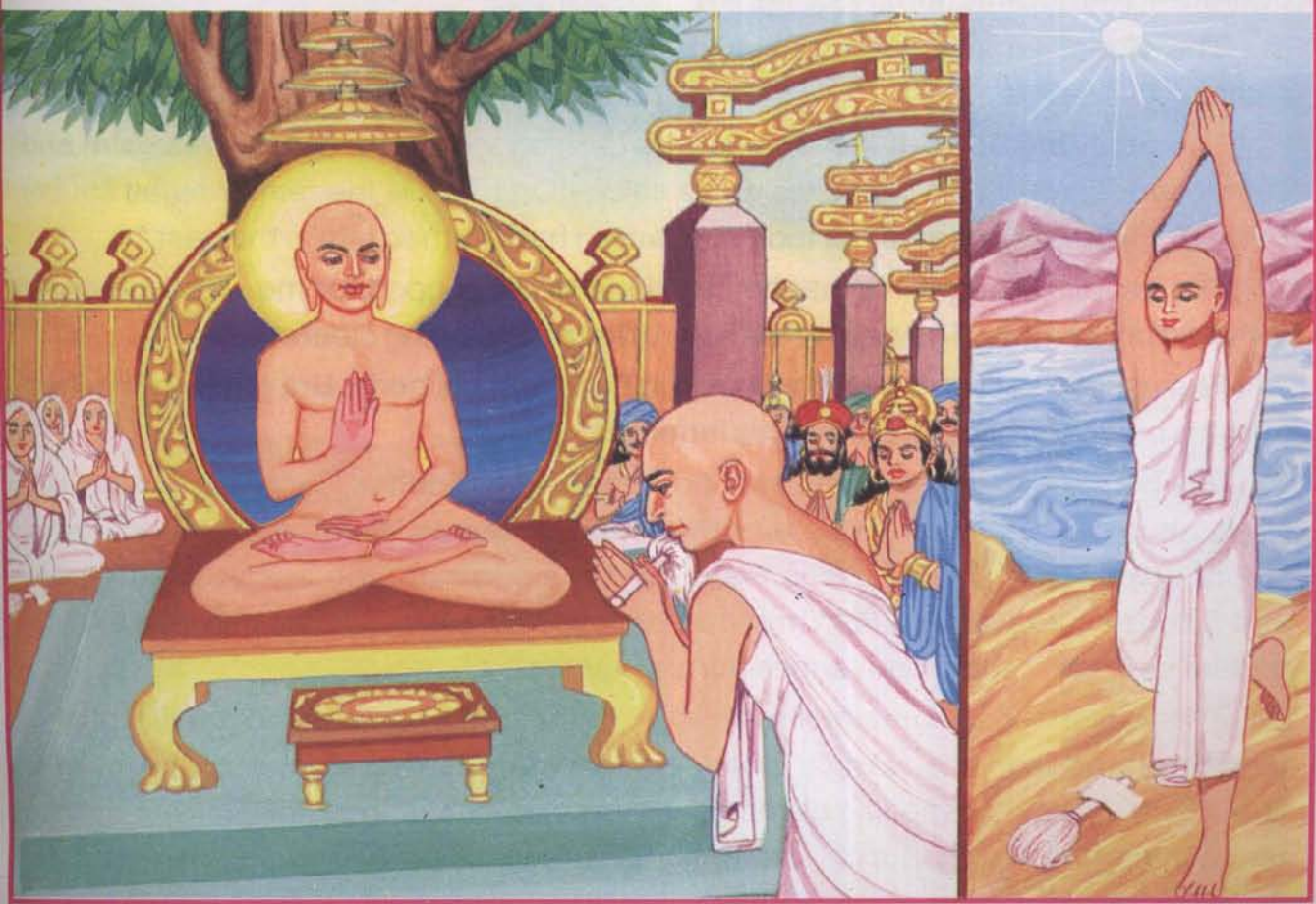
When his son matured, Vajranaabh said to him—"Son ! According to our family tradition you should now take over the state and allow us to get initiated."

Just then the gardener came and informed—"Tirthankar Kshemankar has arrived in our garden." Vajranaabh said—"Indeed, I am lucky. Time has come for my wish to be fulfilled."

King Vajranaabh paid homage to the Tirthankar and requested—"Prabho ! I am relieved of my duties. Please allow me to proceed on the path of liberation."

Tirthankar Kshemankar initiated king Vajranaabh. After studying scriptures, ascetic Vajranaabh commenced harsh austerities.

One day ascetic Vajranaabh thought—"In Sukachchha Vijaya also Tirthankar Bhagavan moves about. Let me go there and pay my homage."



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Ascetic Vajranaabh took the aerial route to arrive in Sukachchha Vijaya. He paid homage to Tirthankar Bhagavan. In his discourse Bhagavan said—"Kayotsarg emancipates from all miseries."

The ascetic thought—'Prabhu has said that Kayotsarg begets great boon. I should do kayotsarg.'

The ascetic came near a cave in the hill and started kayotsarg meditation. The soul that was Kamath died as the serpent and was reborn in hell. After leaving the hell he was reborn as a Bheel (an aborigine) in this very forest. He subsisted on the animals he hunted in this forest. One day that Bheel happened to come to the spot where the ascetic was meditating. The Bheel became furious on seeing the ascetic—"Seeing a tonsured head is a bad omen. I will hardly find any prey now."

When he again looked at the ascetic the attitude from the past birth surfaced—"Let me first destroy this cause of bad omen."

The Bheel aimed his arrow at the ascetic's chest. The arrow pierced the ascetic and blood spurted from the wound. The ascetic fell on the ground and uttered—"Namo Jinanam... ..."

The Bheel jumped with joy—"Great ! I am happy that the first kill was so satisfying."

The prostrate body of the ascetic was burning with pain. But he was calm and composed. Through his divine vision he saw—"Oh ! This is the reincarnated soul of Kamath. He has tormented me today because I had harmed him in the past."

The ascetic thought—'What he has done to me is good for me. This is helping me shed my karmas. The debt in the form of karmas is being cleared.'

The ascetic sat up. Blood continued to flow from his body. But getting detached from his body he concentrated on his inner self.

"My homage to the Arihants ! My homage to the Siddhas ! Now the lamp of my life is about to extinguish. May all my evil thoughts and all my faults done under stupor be undone. (*Tassa michchhami dukkadam.*) Under the auspices of Arihant and Siddha Bhagavan and with my soul as a witness I resolve not to take any food till my last moment. I seek forgiveness from all beings."

This way in a pure and sublime state of mind and engrossed in meditation the ascetic abandoned his earthly body. He reincarnated as a god in the Middle Graiveyak Vimaan (a specific divine realm). After concluding the divine life-span he reincarnated in Puraanapur city in Mahavideh area.

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SUVARNABAHU CHAKRAVARTI

The name of the king of Puraanapur city was Vajrabahu. The name of his queen was Sudarshana. One night the queen saw fourteen astonishing dreams.

In the morning the queen told the king about this—"Sire ! I saw strange dreams last night, what does it indicate ?

After hearing the details of the dreams the king said—"O queen ! These dreams are very auspicious. You are going to be the mother of a Shatkhand Chakravarti (sovereign of the six sections of the earth).

In due course the queen gave birth to a son. The king celebrated the birth with great festivities. Friends and relatives were invited to a feast. There were charities for mendicants and beggars. The newborn was named Suvarnabahu.

When Suvarnabahu matured he was crowned. His parents got initiated by an acharya and lead ascetic life.

With his power and magnanimity King Suvarnabahu conquered all the six sections of the earth and became a Chakravarti.

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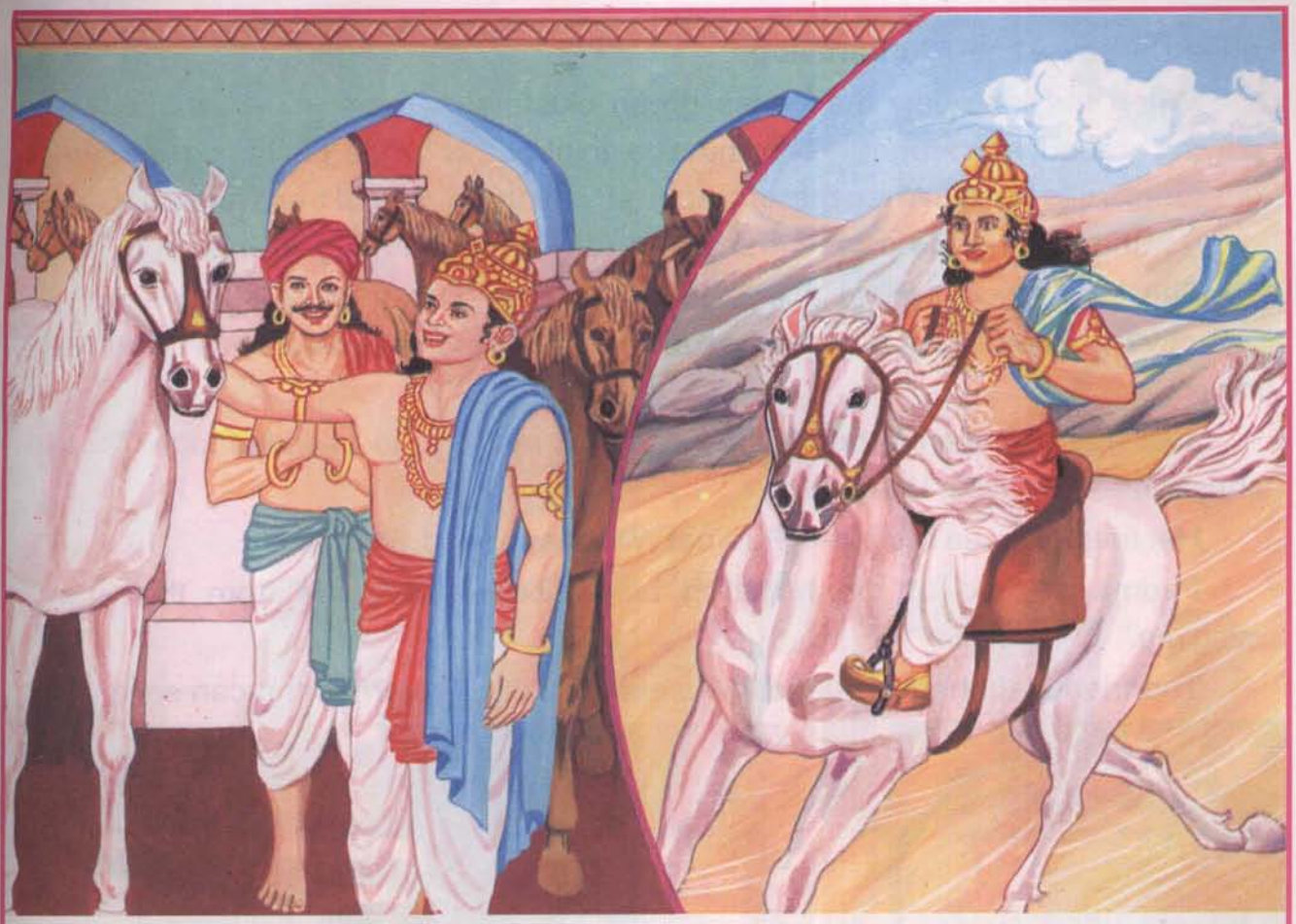

Once Suvarnabahu was inspecting his stable when he saw a strong and beautiful white horse. He asked—"This horse is beautiful to look at. Is it equally good to ride on ?"

The guard—"Sire ! This horse has wind-like speed. Indeed, it is quick."

The king—"Good ! Today I will ride this horse only."

On king's instruction the horse was saddled. The king rode the horse. His bodyguards also rode their horses to accompany the king. The moment the king was on the horse, it galloped as if flying in the air. The bodyguards were left behind. The racing horse entered a forest. The king drew the reins but the horse increased its speed. As the king pulled the reins the horse continued to accelerate. The king was very tired and thirsty. At last, in order to jump from the horseback, he released the reins. Surprisingly the horse stopped in its tracks.

King—"Oh ! This is a mistrained horse." The king got down. He saw a pond in front. In order to rest, the king came under the shade of a banyan tree on the bank of the pond. After that he took a bath in the pond, drank cold water and reclined. Soon he was asleep. After some time he awoke and started looking around for food. A little

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ahead he saw a beautiful hermitage.

When the king saw the dense green clusters of trees and beautiful fawns playing around, he thought—'This must be an abode of sages. Let me go and see if I get some fruits to eat.' When the king approached the cluster of trees he saw a young lady. He thought—'Who is this ? Is she some divine damsel, fairy or Urvashi ?'

The king stood behind a tree and watched—'Daughter of some sage! So attractive, so beautiful. It appears as if all the beauty in this universe has crystallized in her.'

Just than a hovering bumblebee came to rest on the beautiful face. The girl shrieked — "Oh ! Help ! Help me !"

Her friend Nanda rushed—"Padma! What happened, Padma ?"

Padma pointed at the hovering bumblebee—"Save me from this. It will sting me."

The friend laughed—"Friend! Who else but king Suvarnabahu can save you ?

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Call him. He will come for your protection."

Suvarnabahu uttered from his hiding place—"As long as Suvarnabahu, the son of Vajrabahu, rules this land who can cause disturbance. Who dare do that ?"

The two girls were surprised—"It is a male voice. Who hides there ?" They looked around nervously and held each other.

Suvarnabahu came out of his hiding—" Lady ! Don't be afraid. Tell me who disturbs you in this peaceful hermitage ? I will at once destroy that rascal."

Frightened Padma pointed at the hovering bumblebee—"This."

Suvarnabahu laughed—"Lady ! This poor thing has been drawn by your fragrance. Why are you afraid. See it flew away after seeing me."

For some time the two friends were dumbstruck at the radiant presence of Suvarnabahu. Nanda gathered her courage and asked—"You appear to be some great person. Are you a god or a Vidyadhar ? Who are you ?"

The king laughed and said—"Don't be afraid. I am neither a god nor a Vidyadhar. I am the envoy of king Suvarnabahu. By the king's order I have come here to protect the sages in this hermitage."

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Another friend spread a mattress—"Please take your seat." And with a smile they joined their palms to greet the guest.

Padma continued to gaze at him—'He cannot be an envoy. I am sure he is Suvarnabahu himself. So magnificent ! So handsome !'

Shifting her gaze she asked—"Gentleman ! It is good that you have come to protect us. Please take a seat. I will go and inform Gurudev."

Suvarnabahu—"Why bother, lady ! I will go and meet the sage."

He then took a step forward and asked—"Oh ! I failed to get your introduction."

Padma smiled and looked down. Her friend said—"Gentleman ! Doesn't she look like the daughter of a sage ? But it is not so, she is a princess."

"Indeed, her beauty and grace conveys this. May I know about her lucky parents ? Why did she leave the palace and came to a forest ?"

The friend replied—"She is the daughter of king Vidyadhar of Ratnapur. Her father died after her birth."

"Oh ! How sad!" — the king said.

After that the princes started fighting for the kingdom. There was a revolt in the kingdom. Her mother brought her to the hermitage. Galava Rishi is queen's brother."

The king—"How did you know about king Suvarnabahu ?"

The friend informed that one day some great sage had come here. Our Gurudev asked him—"O sage! Who will marry this girl ?"

The sage predicted—"Chakravarti Suvarnabahu, the son of king Vajrabahu will come on a mistrained horse and will marry this girl. She is going to be the chief queen of the Chakravarti."

The king laughed—"Oh ! So this is the secret. You are, indeed, qualified to be a queen."

By that time king's bodyguards also arrived. They all hailed emperor Suvarnabahu. Seeing this new arrival, Padma left along with her friend. The friend informed sage Galava—"Gurudev ! King Suvarnabahu has arrived in our hermitage."

Galava Rishi was very pleased—"Aha ! Today the prediction of the wise sage has come true." Galava Rishi, queen Ratnavati and other residents of the hermitage came to greet the emperor. The king paid homage to the sage.

The sage happily offered greetings—"We are honoured today. We welcome Chakravarti Suvarnabahu in this hermitage."

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The Rishi offered a raised seat to the king in the cluster of Champak trees. He served fruits to the king. After that he said—"O king ! The words of the great sage have come true today. She belongs to you (pointing at Padma). Till today she was under my care. Please accept her now."

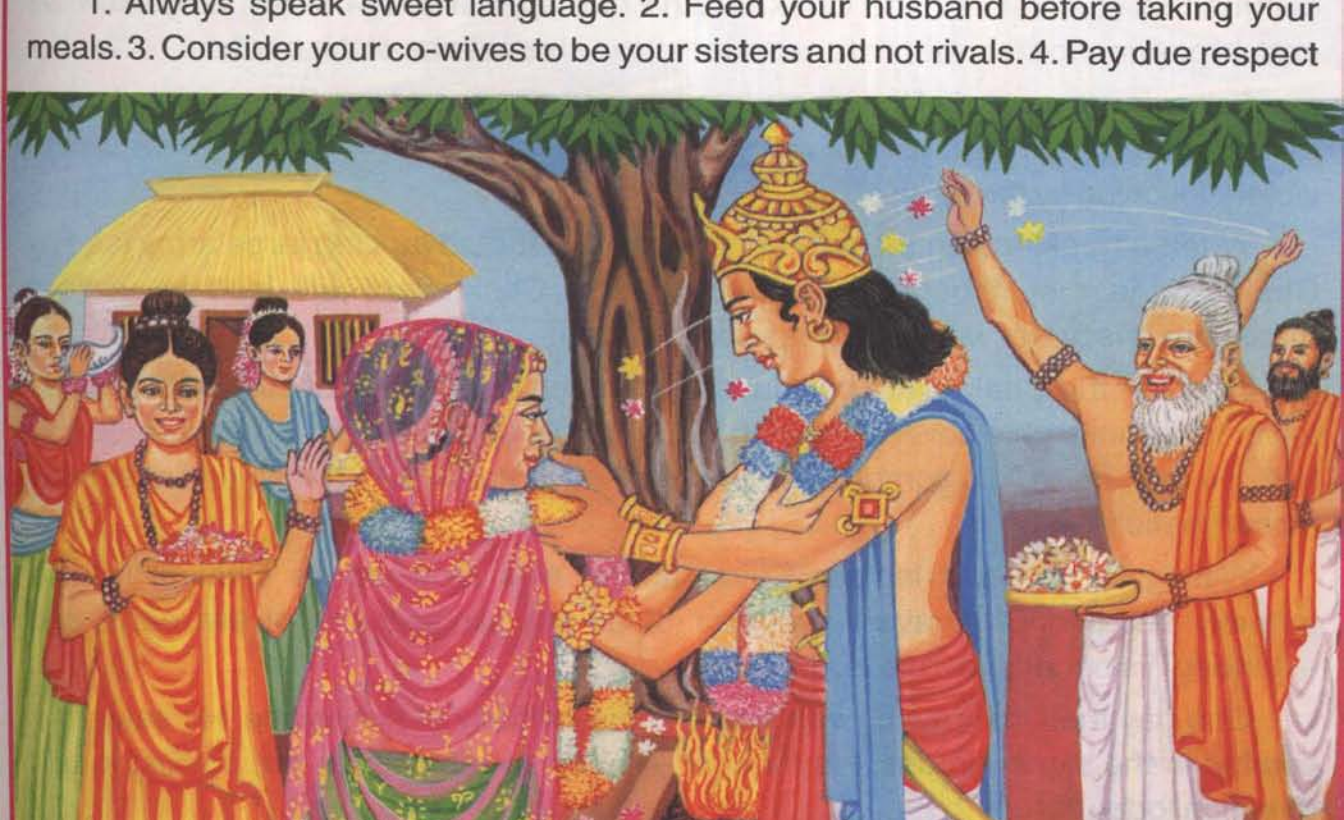
All the male and female hermits in the hermitage gathered around. With great joy and festivities the young couple was married by mantra chanting.

At the time of her departing the queen embraced her daughter. With tears in her eyes she said—"Darling ! I am sorry I have neither diamond and pearl necklaces nor gorgeous dresses to gift you on the occasion."

Padma too was sobbing—"Ma ! Your blessing is all I need." The Rishi commented—"Sister ! Why do you say that ? You have numerous divine gems of knowledge and experience."

The queen—"Of course ! Padma ! I want to give you seven gems while sending you to your husband's place. Listen carefully—

1. Always speak sweet language. 2. Feed your husband before taking your meals. 3. Consider your co-wives to be your sisters and not rivals. 4. Pay due respect



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to your parents-in-law. 5. Never be conceited about being the chief queen of a Chakravarti. 6. Love your step children like your own. 7. Follow the religious and family discipline."

Accepting the mother's advise Padma said — "Ma ! I will always cherish your priceless words like priceless gems." And she sobbed embracing her mother.

Galava Rishi blessed the king and said — "O king ! I today entrust this Padma (goddess of wealth) to you. Please protect her in every way."

The king paid homage to the Rishi and respect to the queen — " Please don't worry. I will ensure that she is always happy."

Seeking leave from the hermitage Suvarnabahu returned to his capital.

One day the head of the armoury came and informed — "Sire ! The Chakra-ratna (disc weapon) has appeared in the armoury."

Suvarnabahu got up and came to the armoury. Following the prescribed procedure he worshiped the Chakra-ratna. After that the emperor instructed his commander-in-chief — "The Chakra-ratna has appeared in our armoury. Now we should commence our march to conquer all the six sections of the earth."

Following the order of the king a large army was assembled. Big and small rulers joined the large army with their own contingents. The Chakra-ratna lead this march of victory followed by the large army.

When other kings on the way got the news of the advancing large army lead by Chakra-ratna they thought — "Opposing the Chakravarti will lead to useless massacre. It is better we accept his subordination.'

This way the Chakravarti concluded his march of victory over six sections of the earth to establish his sovereignty. On return to his capital he observed a three day fast. He then called his commander-in-chief and instructed — "Make arrangements for coronation."

With great joy and fanfare Suvarnabahu was crowned as Chakravarti. He formally became Chakravarti emperor of all the six sections of the earth and extended his beneficent rule to all people.

One day the Chakravarti was sitting in the balcony of his palace. He saw gods coming in the sky in groups. He thought — 'Why so many gods are coming in this direction today ?'

Just then his gardener informed — "Sire ! Tirthankar Bhagavan has arrived in the city."

The Chakravarti stood up from his throne and facing the direction of the

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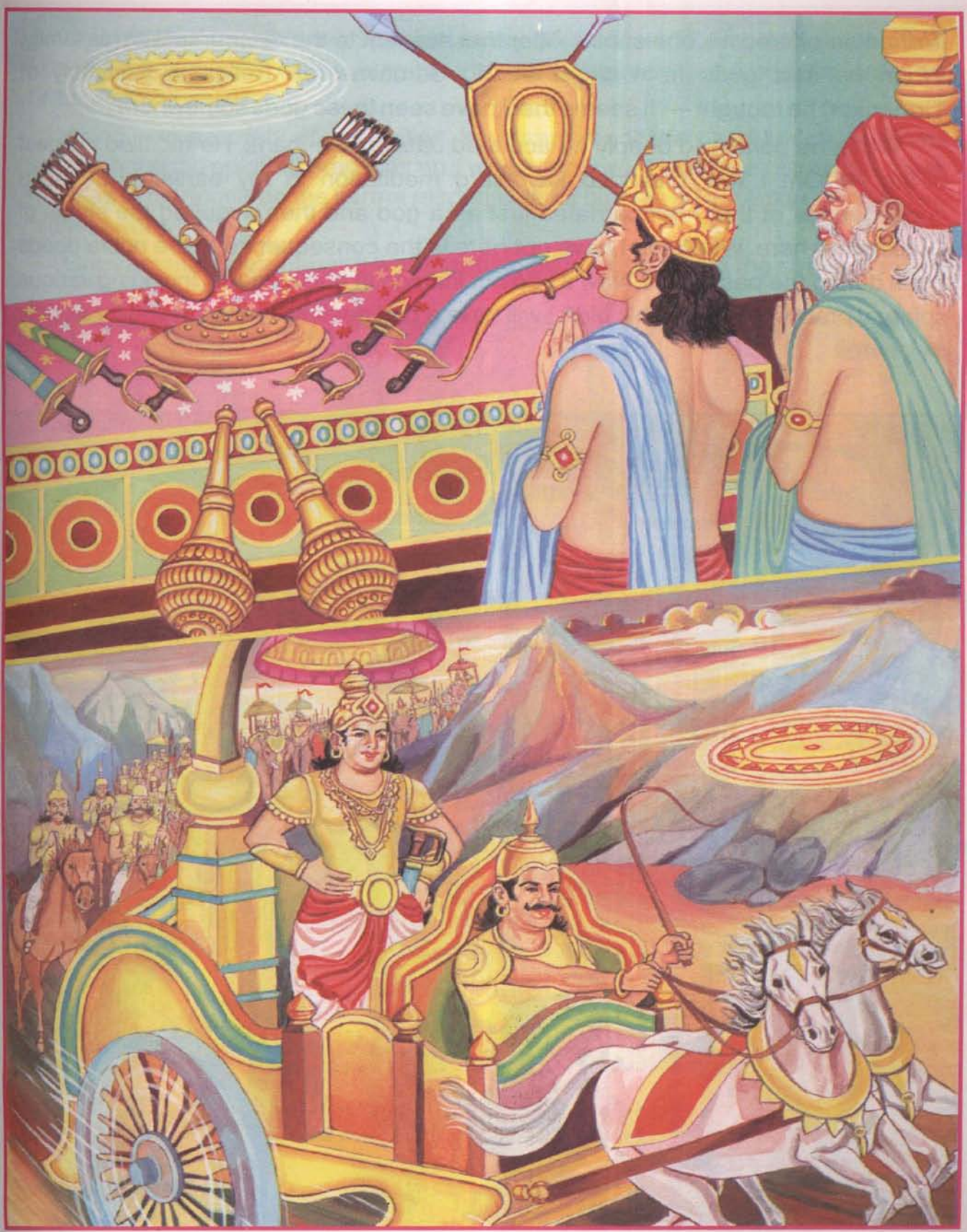

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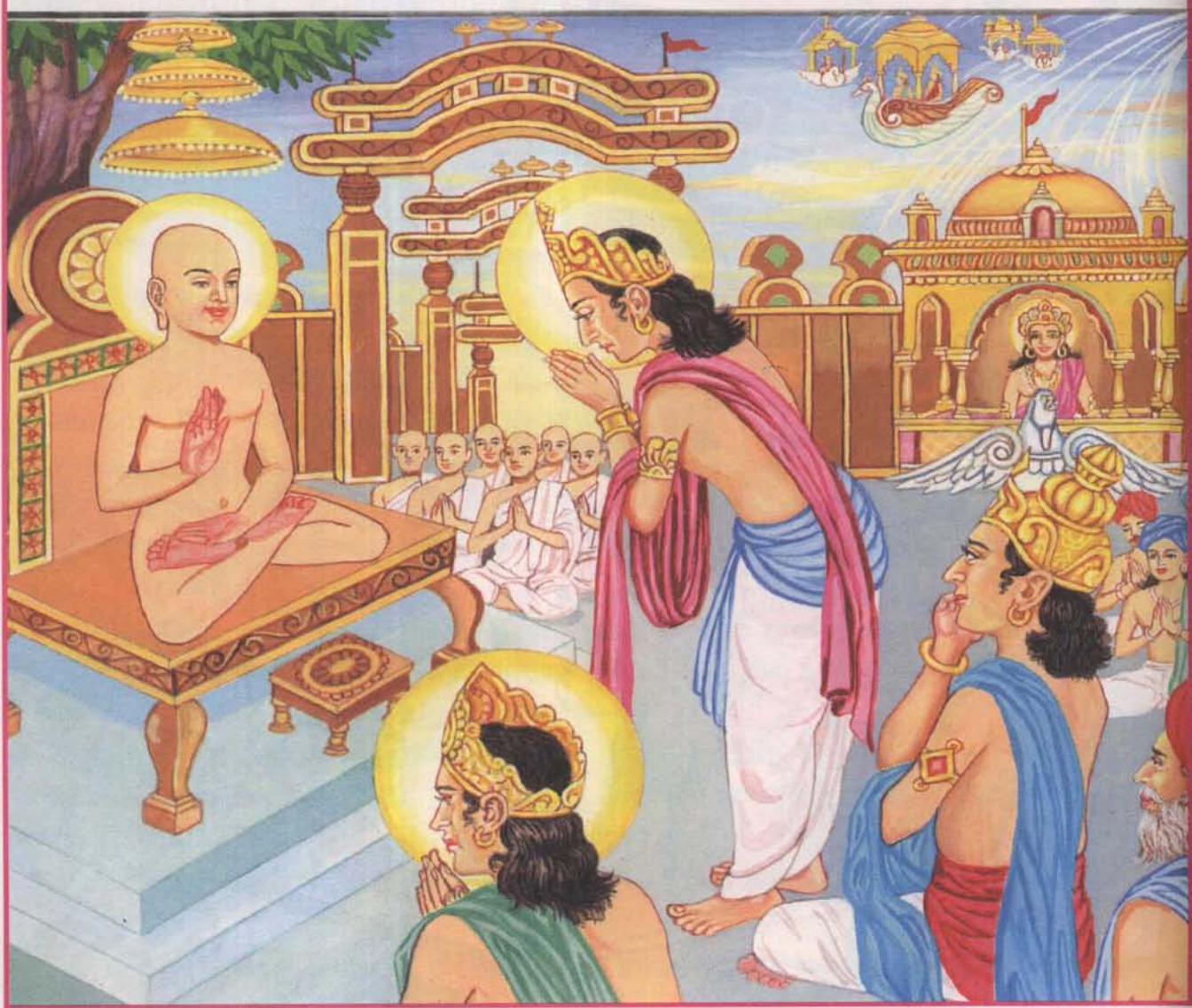
Tirthankar offered his obeisance. After that he went to the discourse with his family. When he saw gods from close. in the Samavasaran (religious assembly of Tirthankar) he thought — 'It seems that I have seen these gods somewhere?'

When he pondered deeply he acquired *Jatismaran-jnana*. He recalled his past births — 'Oh! I had practiced kayotsarg meditation in my earlier birth. As a consequence of that I reincarnated first as a god and then acquired the status of Chakravarti here. Whatever I have got here is the consequence of the noble deeds done during the past births. Now if I do not indulge in noble deeds, including various spiritual practices, during this birth I will have a bad destiny due to craving for worldly pleasures.



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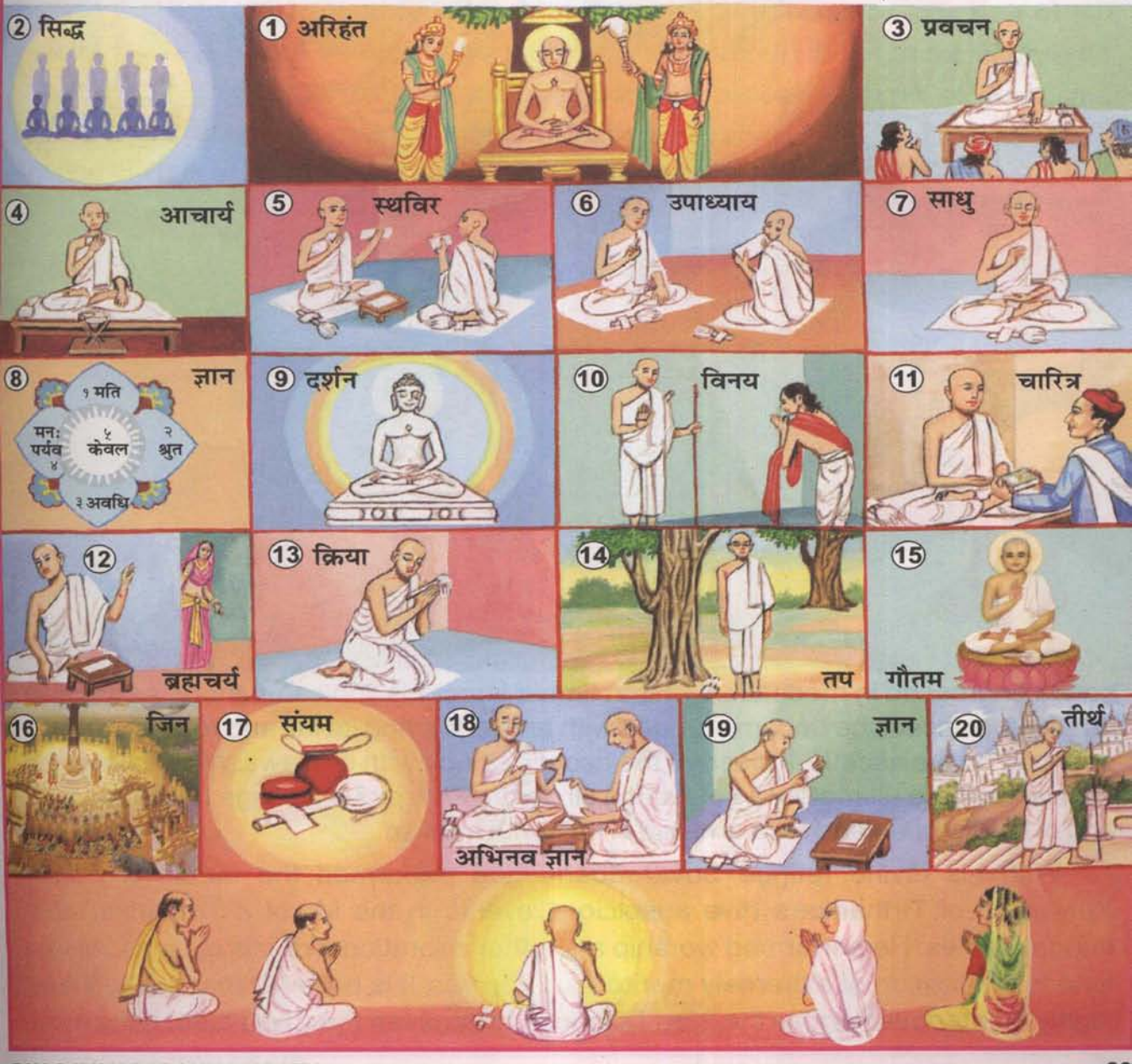
This chain of thoughts lead Suvarnabahu to detachment. He entrusted his son with the responsibility of the empire and got initiated into the ascetic order by Tirthankar Bhagavan.

Along with a variety of austerities, kayotsarg meditation and special resolves Suvarnabahu did spiritual practices and worship of twenty themes (*Bees Sthanak*). This lead to his acquiring the karma responsible for birth as a Tirthankar (Tirthankar-naam-karma).

Once ascetic Suvarnabahu was standing on a hilltop facing the sun with raised



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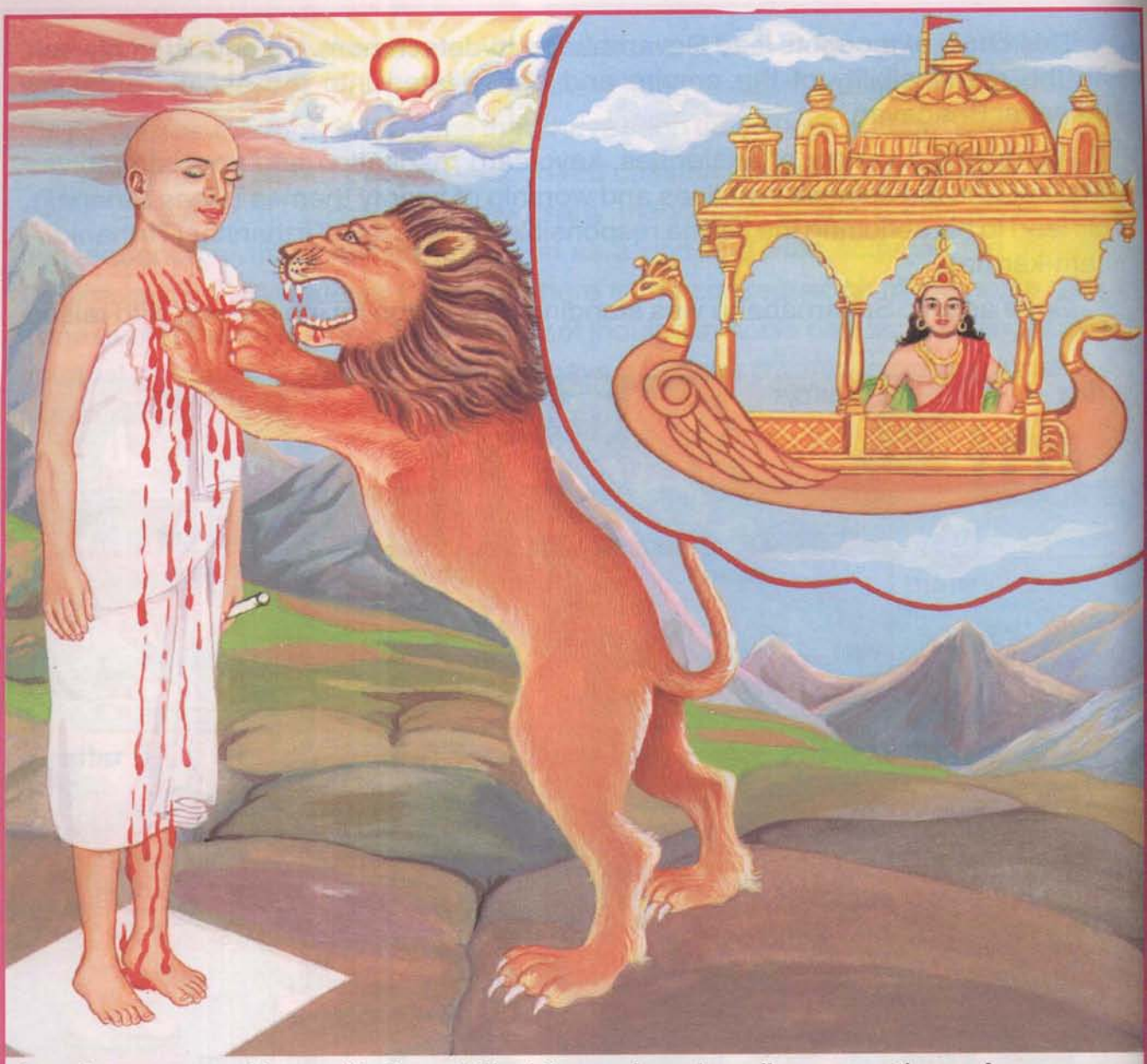

hands engrossed in meditation. At that time a ferocious lion came there. As soon as he saw the ascetic he became furious with anger. Waving its tail and roaring, the lion pounced on the ascetic. It slashed the ascetic's body with its claws. While falling, the ascetic took the ultimate vow of fasting till death. With pious feelings he came to the end of his life-span and reincarnated in the tenth heaven.

With his divine retinue Suvarnabahu god performed the rituals of *Panch Kalyanaks* of Tirthankars (five auspicious events in the life of a Tirthankar) five hundred times. He performed worship and other adorational rituals of Jinas. All this lead to acquisition of extremely meritorious *karmas*. It is believed that due to these highly meritorious *karmas* the 23rd Tirthankar Bhagavan Parshva Naath is the most

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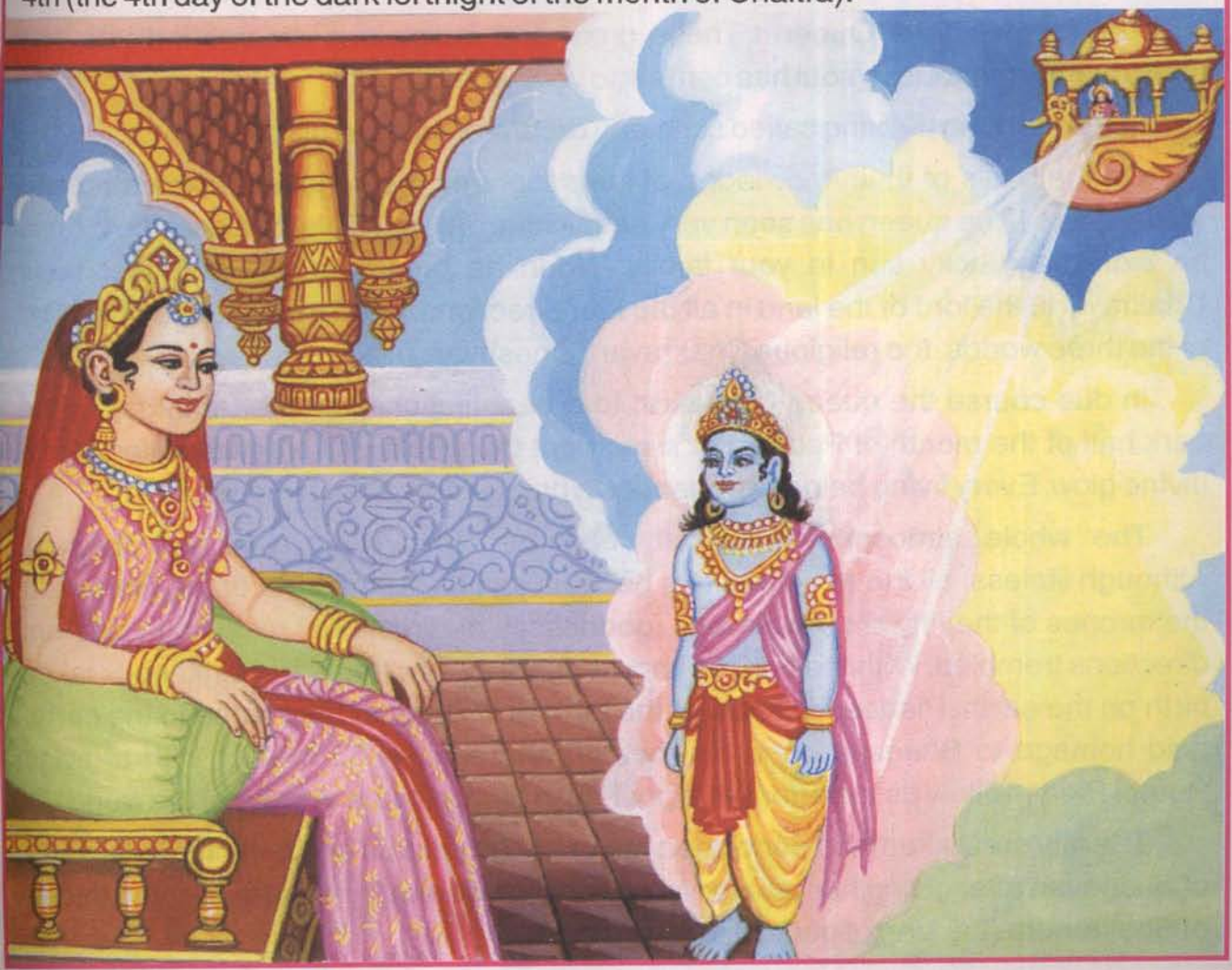
worshipped and adored Tirthankar of this era.

One day Suvarnabahu god became aware that only six months of his life-span were left. From here I will descend and take birth as the son of mother Vamadevi in Varanasi city. Let me see how the mother will feel when I am born.

Driven by curiosity the god took the form of a beautiful and charming dark complexioned child and appeared before Vamadevi. When mother Vamadevi saw the divinely beautiful child every pore in her body was filled with joy. Her eyes beamed with happiness. She could not shift her gaze from the child. The god in the form of a child was pleased to witness the joy and happiness on the face of the mother. Bowing before Vamadevi he returned to his abode. Six months later, after concluding his life span of twenty Sagaropam (a conceptual unit of time), the maximum for that divine realm, he descended from Pranat Dev Lok on Chaitra Badi 4th (the 4th day of the dark fortnight of the month of Chaitra).



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BIRTH CELEBRATIONS OF PARSHVA

In Varanasi city of Kashi state ruled king Ashvasen. In his cavalry there were horses of many breeds and colours. People far and wide talked — "The cavalry of king Ashvasen is astonishing and indomitable."

The name of the wife of king Ashvasen was Vamadevi.

It was the fourth day of the first fortnight of the first month of the summer season. In other words, the fourth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Chaitra. At midnight when the moon entered the Vishakha constellation, Suvarnabahu god descended from Pranat Dev Lok, having a maximum life span of twenty Sagaropam, into the womb of mother Vamadevi.

Mother Vamadevi dozing in the comfort of her bed saw fourteen great dreams including the elephant and the bull. She at once got up and recalled the dreams. She went to her husband and described the dreams.

The king said — "Queen ! These great and auspicious dreams indicate that some highly meritorious soul has come into your womb."

In the morning the king called scholarly dream-diviners to his court.

On the basis of their knowledge of the scriptures the scholars deliberated and said — "Sire ! The queen has seen very auspicious dreams. This indicates the birth of an extremely lucky son in your family. When he grows up he will either be a Chakravarti, the lord of the land in all the four directions, or a Tirthankar, the overlord of the three worlds, the religious Chakravarti Jineshvar.

In due course the queen gave birth to a beautiful child on the tenth day of the dark half of the month of Paush. For a moment the whole universe was filled with a divine glow. Every living being experienced a unique delight for a moment.

The whole atmosphere naturally became clean, enjoyable and fragrant. Although lifeless, all the ten directions became joyous. At the birth of the Tirthankar the thrones of the fifty six Dikkumaris (goddesses of directions) residing in different directions trembled. With their divine knowledge they saw that a Tirthankar has taken birth on the earth. Pleased to know of the birth of Bhagavan they came to the earth, paid homage to Bhagavan and his mother, and said — "O mother with a divine womb! Please allow us to perform the post-birth rituals for the saviour of the world."

The fifty six Dikkumaris performed the post-birth rituals and celebrated the birth of Bhagavan after giving him a bath. When the birth ceremonies were over the throne of Shakrendra (the king of gods) trembled.

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प्रभु जन्म से तीनों लोक प्रकाश से जगमगा उठे।

सूतिका कर्म करती छप्पन दिग्कुमारिकायें।

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At that time a Devendra (king of gods) came there—"O mother ! I Shakrendra, the overlord of Saudharma Dev Lok, pay my respect to you." After that Shakrendra paid homage to the new born Tirthankar—"O savior of the three worlds! Please accept my homage. I want to perform your post-birth anointing." With these words Shakrendra put the mother to a trans-like slumber and placed a realistic image of the child near the mother.

Shakrendra transformed himself into five bodies. One body picked the infant. Two bodies waved whisks on two flanks. One body raised an umbrella and one lead the group waving the Vajra (divine mace).

The group came to Meru mountain and regaining his original form Shakrendra sat down on a crystal rock with the infant in his lap. Many Indras (kings of gods) came from all directions and paid homage to Bhagavan. Ishanendra produced water from golden horns and anointed the child Tirthankar. Ten Vaimanik, twenty Bhuvan-pati, thirty two Vyantar and two Jyotishk kings of gods, adding up to 64 kings of gods, performed the post-birth anointing of Bhagavan with water from sixteen million urns.

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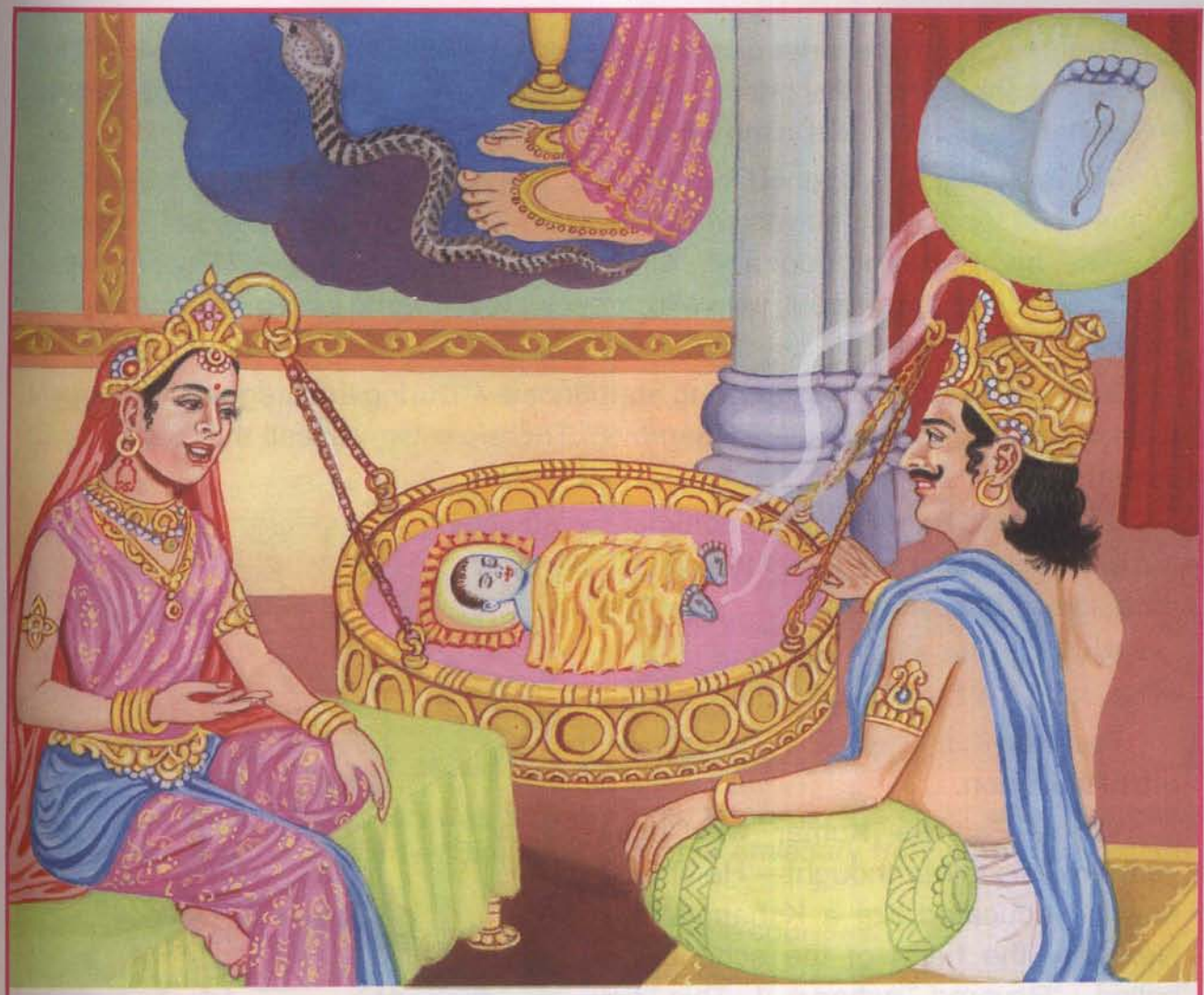

After that they applied fragrant things including sandalwood and saffron and wrapped the baby in beautiful clothes. All the Indras sang panegyrics for Bhagavan with joined palms—"O sun of knowledge ! O incarnation of religion ! O illuminator of the path of liberation ! We pay our homage to you." At last they returned to the mother and replaced the image with the child. #

In the morning maid Priyamvada informed the king—"Sire ! The queen has given birth to a son as radiant as the sun."

The king came and saw the child. Pointing at the feet of the child, the king said—"See, there is the sign of the Naag Dev (serpent god) on the child's sole. He will emancipate the Naag clan."

The queen said—"My lord ! What you say is true. One dark night during my pregnancy a black snake came near me. After touching my toes it went away."

All the gods and their overlords went to Nandishvar Dveep and performed the eight day devotional ceremony at the fifty two temples there.

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Returning from the inner quarters, the king called his minister and said—"Free all the prisoners from the prison. Announce a twelve day festival in Kashi state. Festivities should continue in the whole city for twelve days."

The treasury was opened for charities. The poor were given free food-grains, clothes and food. Aged slaves were freed from slavery. Thus relieved of all pain of poverty, humility and bondage, all citizens joined festivities. People talked blissfully—"Some great soul, who will emancipate the world from pain and torments, has incarnated.

In the feast for relatives the king announced—"During the pregnancy a serpent moved past the mother's flank (*parshva*). Therefore we will call this boy Parshva Kumar."

The old ladies of the family commented on seeing the divine blue complexion of the child—"He is as attractive as the blue lotus."

Another one said—"See the bluish aura of his body. It is like gem sapphire."

Parshva Kumar grew like the growing orb of the moon.

When Parshva Kumar was eight years old his father thought—'He should now be educated like a Kshatriya boy. Next day the head of the school was called—"Revered *acharya* ! This boy should be given an alround education and taught all subjects."

The a*charya*—"Sire ! He is a scholar by birth. What can I teach him ?"

The *acharya* himself learned many new facets of knowledge from Parshva Kumar. When the Tirthankar descended into the womb of his mother he was already endowed with *Mati*, *Shrut* and *Avadhi jnana* (sensory, scriptural and extra-sensory knowledge).

As a young man Parshva Kumar looked like Adonis. When nine cubits tall Parshva Kumar moved about in the city on horseback women commented—"Whoever gets our Adonis-like Parshva Kumar as her husband would be a very fortunate lady."

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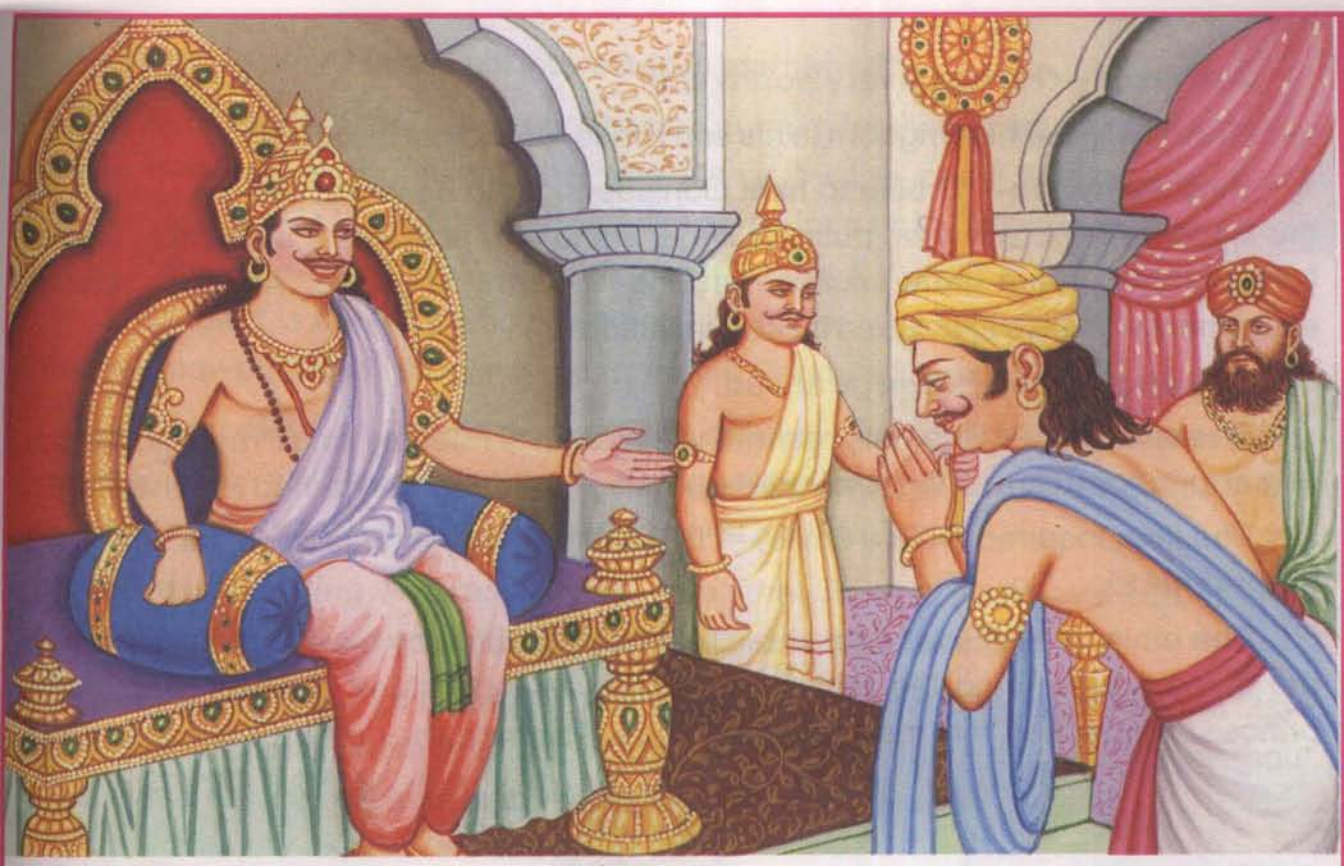

One day king Ashvasen was sitting on his throne in the court when the gate keeper came and informed—"Sire ! A handsome emissary from some other state desires to see you."

The king—"Escort him to the assembly with due courtesy."

The emissary came and greeted the king—"Victory to the great valourous king Ashvasen." The king gestured him to take a seat.

The king asked—"Gentleman ! To which country do you belong ? Who are you and what brings you here ?"

"Sire ! I am a friend and emissary of King Prasenjit of Kushasthal. My name is Purushottam and I have brought a message from my king."

The king—"Please convey the message."

"Sire ! You must have heard the name of the great warrior king Naravarm. He was highly valourous and had expanded his state by conquering rulers of many distant states."

King Ashvasen—"Yes ! I have heard about the bravery and valour of king Naravarm."

"Sire ! The king who subjugated many a ruler, one day went to pay homage to an eminent *acharya*. On listening to his discourse the king was filled with feelings of detachment."

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Ashvasen—"He was a very worthy soul."

"Sire ! He gave his kingdom to his son Prasenjit and got initiated."

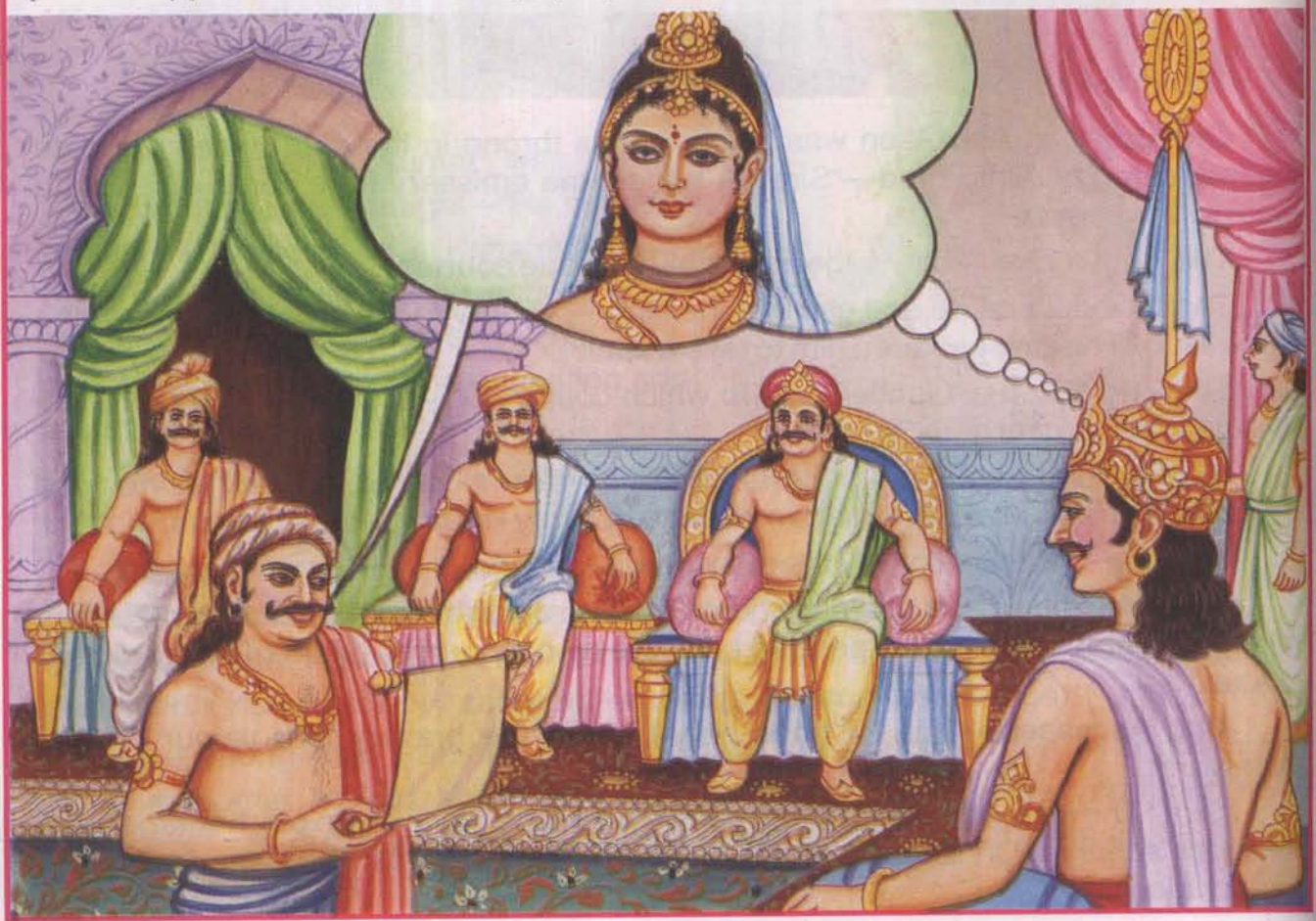
King Ashvasen—"Praise to him! Considering it to be worthless, he renounced the kingdom for which man puts his life at stake and acquires it by fighting terrible wars. Indeed, it is a great sacrifice and he is worthy of praise." All those present exclaimed—"Praise to him and his renunciation !"

The king—"Yes ! Please go ahead."

The emissary—"Sire ! At present the kingdom is ruled by king Prasenjit, the son of that king Naravarm. King Prasenjit has a fairy-like daughter named Prabhavati."

The king inquired (with a smile)—"Is it so ! The daughter is beautiful. She must be virtuous too... So... ?"

The emissary—"Sire ! As bumblebees are attracted by the aroma of flowers, in the same way hearing the praise of the beauty and virtues of Prabhavati, many princes approached with marriage proposals. However, she did not choose anyone."



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The king—"Why ? Is she not interested in marriage ?"

The emissary—"Sire ! Once during the Kaumudi festival Prabhavati went to the garden. In soothing moonlight she was sitting by the pool. At that time some Gandharva ladies (a kind of divine damsels) came for a bath. They danced and sang a song there. The song was—"On this earth Parshva Kumar is the incarnation of Adonis. Blessed is the lady who will marry the divinely beautiful, divinely virtuous, extremely powerful and astonishingly charming Parshva Kumar."

This song of divine damsels sowed the seed of love for Parshva Kumar in the heart of Prabhavati. She resolved—"Leaving aside Parshva Kumar, all males in this world are my brothers. Only he will rule my heart and life."

With a smile king Ashvasen said—"So, that is why you have come." The emissary—"Sire ! My story is still incomplete. Please bear with me."

The king—"Please go ahead." The emissary—"The Yavan king of Kalinga state near Kushasthal is a brave and indomitable warrior. When he came to know about Prabhavati's beauty he sent a message—"Give your daughter to the Yavan king otherwise your kingdom will be destroyed."

King Prasenjit replied—"A swan picks pearls. It never eats pebbles."

This enraged the Yavan king and he attacked Kushasthal. His large army has surrounded the city. Under siege, the whole city resembles a prison."

King Ashvasen—"This is injustice. This is immoral conduct."

"Help is required in order to counter that injustice and evil doing. Only ethical rulers like you protect religion and help friends in trouble."

Touching his sword king Ashvasen said—"It is the duty of a Kshatriya to fight injustice and protect justice."

He added—"Rest assured, I will at once join you with my army in order to help your king."

The king then ordered his commander—"Blow the trumpet and prepare the army to march. I will get ready and come."

The trumpet was sounded. Soldiers became alert and active. They started collecting their weapons.

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Engrossed in contemplation in his palace, Parshva Kumar heard the trumpet. He was startled. He stood up and asked his attendant—"What is the matter ? Why all of a sudden this sound of war-trumpets ?"

The attendant—"Sire ! There is an order to prepare for war."

Parshva Kumar came to his father and asked after greetings—"Father ! What is the matter ? What demon, devil or evil person has offended you so much that you are preparing for a war ?"

After telling the story of king Prasenjit, king Ashvasen added—"Son ! Isn't it our duty as kings to help the tormented and oppose injustice ?"

Parshva Kumar—"Father ! Indeed, it is true. Not to oppose injustice is also injustice; it is unethical and cowardly."

"Son ! That is why I have sounded the war trumpet." Parshva Kumar—"But is it right that a father goes to war when a young son is available ? Does it speak good of the son ?"

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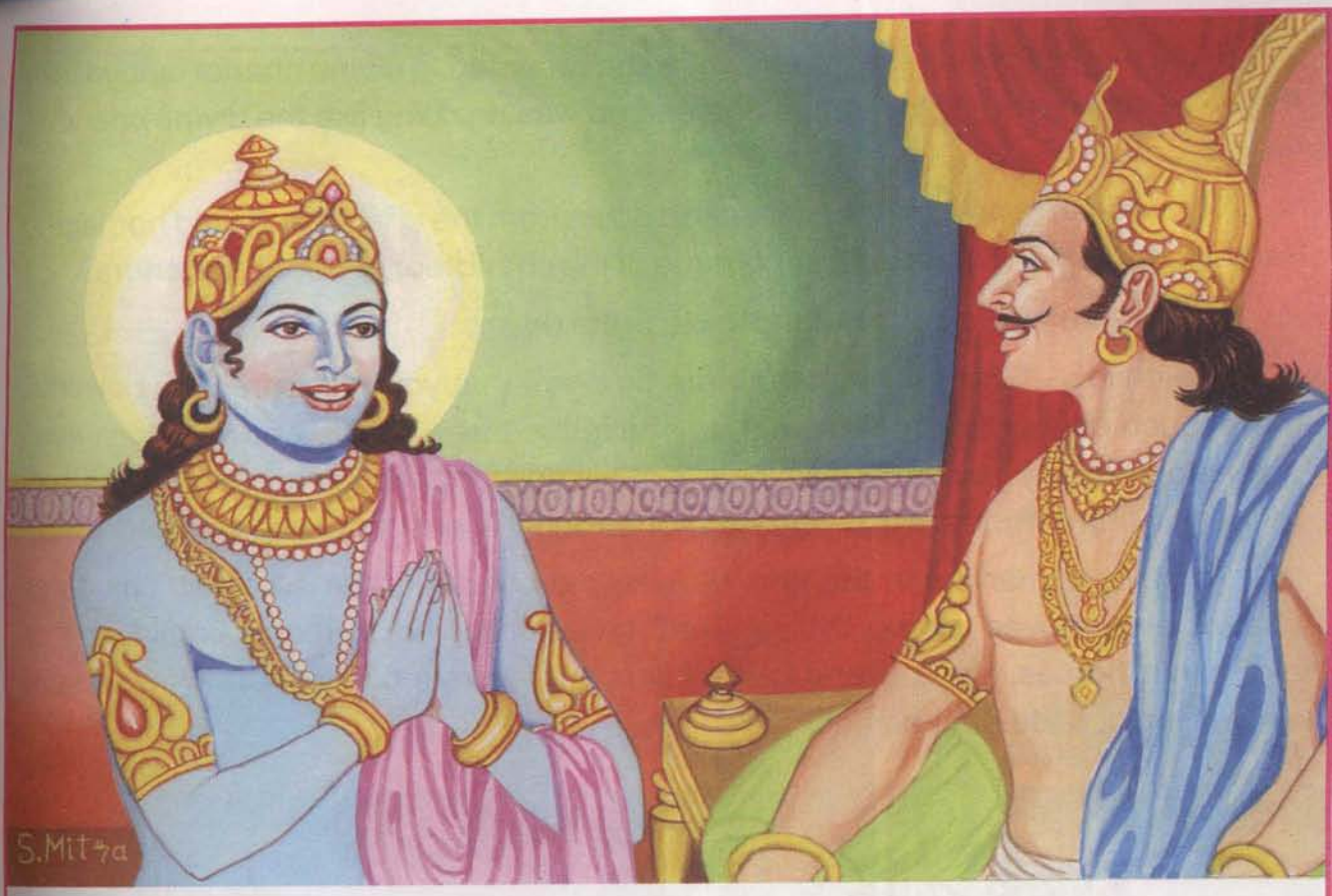

The king—"Son ! Your playful indulgence in enjoyments is my pleasure. To go to war is for me."

Parshva Kumar—"Father ! For me battle is just another game. Why did I get training for war ? Don't you have faith in my bravery and valour ?"

Father—"Son ! Who can doubt your bravery and valour ? But I don't want you to go to war."

Parshva Kumar—"Father ! Believe me, I will fight such a war that justice is protected without shedding blood of even a single soldier."

The king (with surprise)—"Son ! You are capable of doing what you say. But..."

Parshva Kumar—"Father ! No ifs and buts please. Kindly devote your time to religious practices and bless me to go."

After getting blessings from his father, Parshva Kumar marched with the army.

On the way the army camped for the night.

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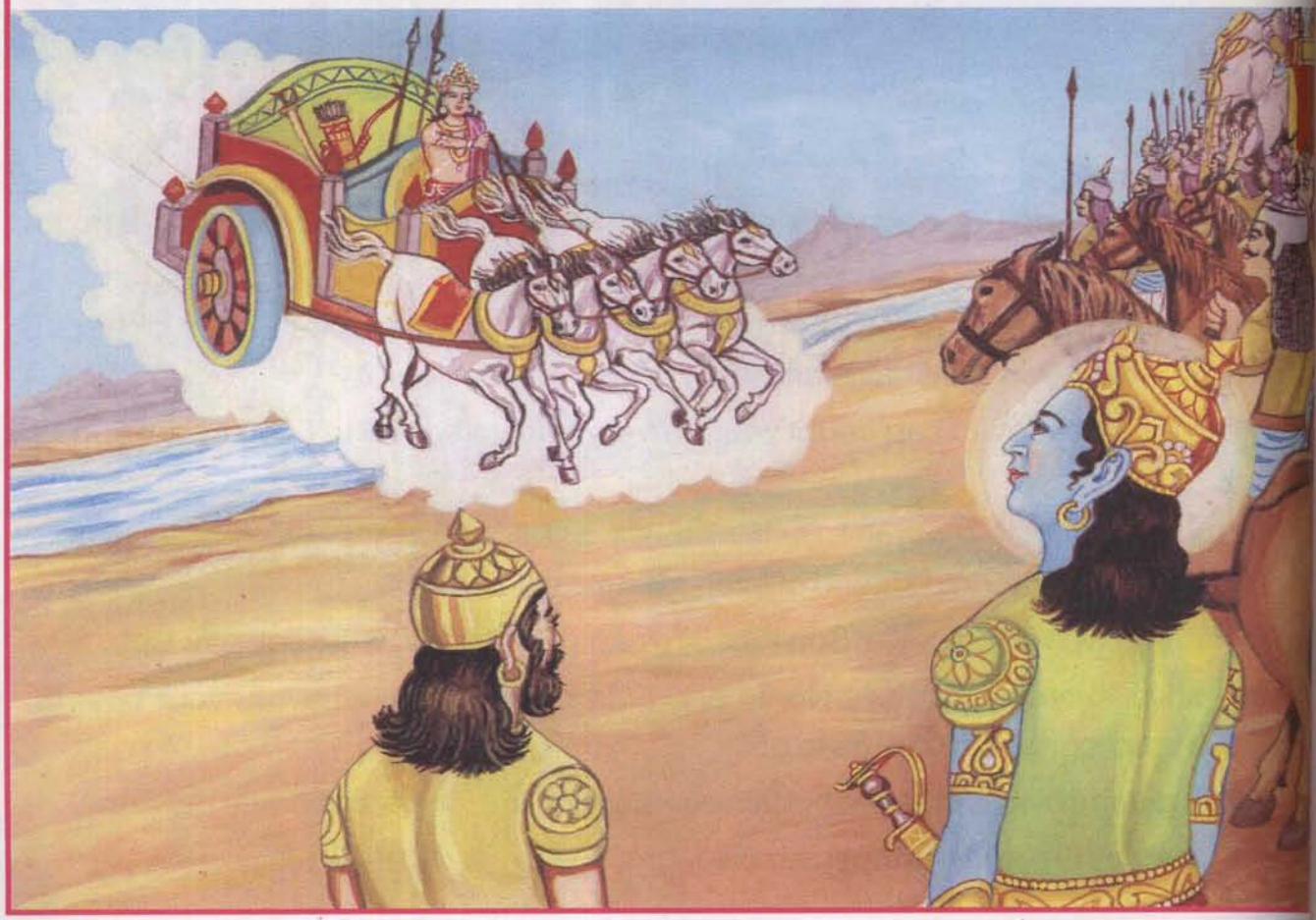
In the morning when the march was to be resumed, a divine chariot landed from the sky. It was driven by four white horses and was dazzling like the divine chariot of the sun god.

A driver with divine weapons stepped down from the chariot and paid homage to Parshva Kumar—"Please accept homage of the charioteer of Saudharmendra."

Parshva Kumar raised his hand to bless the driver.

The driver—"Sire ! My master Indra conveys that you are extremely powerful, mere touch of your finger is enough to shake the three worlds and you don't need any help from any quarter. However, out of his devotion for you my master has sent this divine chariot fitted with divine weapons. Kindly alight this divine chariot."

Parshva Kumar sat in the chariot. Like the chariot of the sun god, this divine chariot also moved above the ground. It was followed by large contingents of elephants, horses, chariots and foot soldiers on the ground. The large army camped on arriving outside Kushasthal.



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The gods built a grand palace in a beautiful garden. Parshva Kumar stayed in that palace. In the morning he called his emissary and said—"Take my message to the Yavan king."

The emissary came to the Yavan king and said after greetings—"I am the emissary of Parshva Kumar, the son of king Ashvasen a friend of king Prasenjit."

The Yavan king stared at him—"What brings you here ? To surrender for fear of a battle ?"

The emissary (with a smile)—"O Yavan king ! Ordinary animals play around in the jungle only as long as a lion does not come to the jungle and roar. You should know that Shakrendra himself comes and bows before Parshva Kumar and seeks his kindness. Parshva Kumar is very kind. He does not want to shed even a drop of blood. He has compassion both for a friend as well as a foe."

The Yavan king—"Emissary ! Stop this worthless praise. Only cowards talk of kindness and compassion. If your master is brave tell him to come to the battle field."

Emissary—"He is already in the battlefield. Just one unstoppable arrow from his bow is enough to devastate your whole army. But you are being given a chance. If

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you want to save yourself come to him and seek his pardon. Otherwise the fate of evil and noble is sure to be decided in the battlefield."

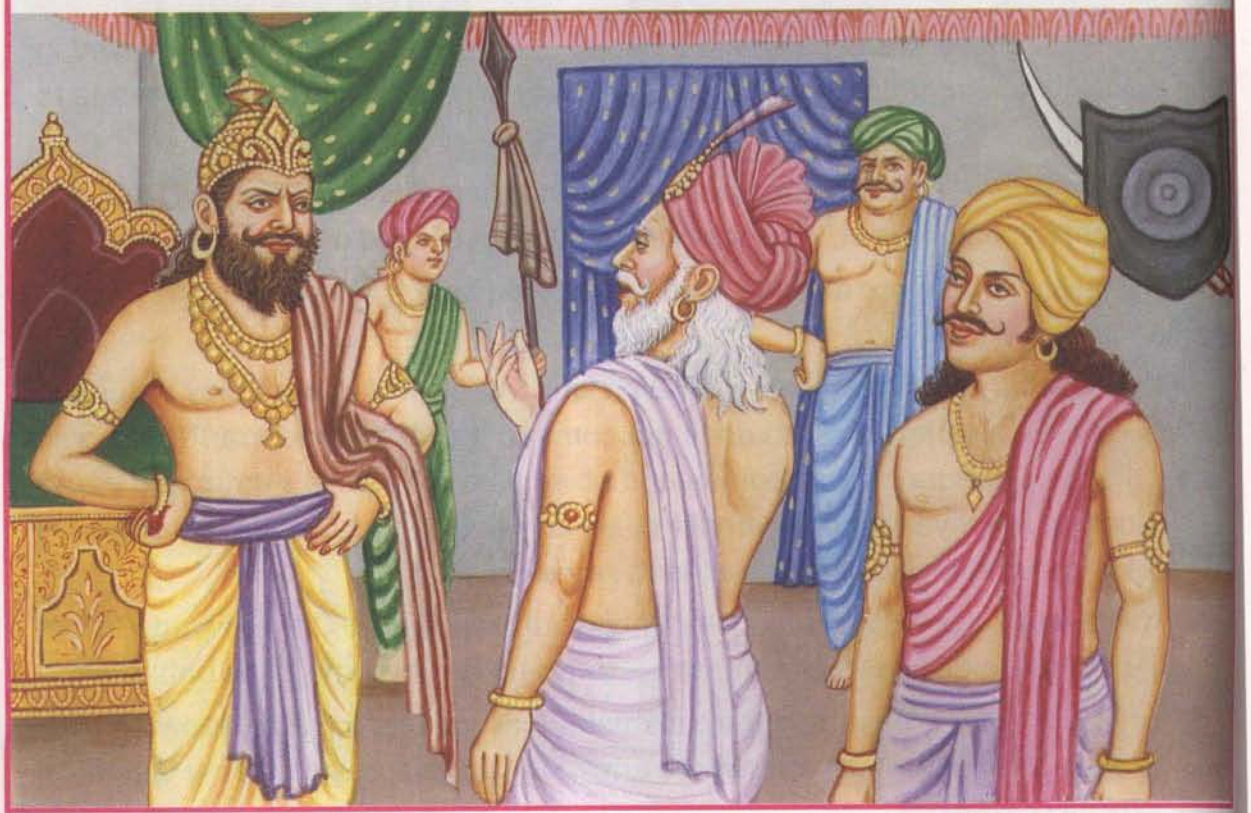
Enraged Yavan king said—"Idiot ! Coward ! Go and tell your master to face me in the battle field if he has some strength in his arms."

The emissary—"O Yavan king ! Don't be foolish to consider the kindness of my master to be his weakness. Consequence of war is destruction. That is why you are being given a chance."

The courtiers got angry at these words from the emissary. They stood up and said—"Idiot ! Are you an enemy of your master ? Why are you irritating the Yavan king. You appear to be a person who invites death by poking a snake or a lion."

At this point the elderly minister of the Yavan king stood up and said—"Courtiers ! It is not he but you who are enemies of their master."

Astonished Yavan king looked at his minister. The minister said—"Master ! Parshva Kumar is not an ordinary person. He holds the status of the infinitely powerful Tirthankar. Thousands of gods and kings of gods serve him. He is more powerful than a Vaasudev or a Chakravarti. To confront such a person is like colliding with a mountain."



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The minister waved his hand and said—"Come out of the tent and see the miles wide expanse of the camp of his army." The Yavan king stepped out and looked down at Parshva Kumar's camp from a hilltop. He looked wide-eyed at the elephants, horses, chariots and soldiers moving around as far as he could see.

The minister pointed—"See there sire ! Gods have raised a divine palace for Parshva Kumar. He is magnificent and unconquerable."

The terrified Yavan king asked—"Minister ! What should I do now." Minister—"Sire ! You should surrender and seek his pardon."

The Yavan king collected some gifts and came to Parshva Kumar's camp with his minister and staff. He was dumbstruck when he saw Parshva Kumar—'Oh ! Is he a divine personage ? So much compassion in his eyes ? Such joy on his face ?"

He then joined his palms and said—"O Lord ! Please forgive me. I was terrified when I came. But now I am very calm and free of fear."

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Parshva Kumar smiled and said—"O Yavan king ! When I have no anger for you, where is the question of forgiveness ? I only want that you should abandon the path of injustice and immorality. Instead of war accept peace and instead of animosity learn to love."

The Yavan king—"Master ! tell me what to do ?"

Parshva Kumar—"Seek king Prasenjit's pardon and establish friendly relations with him. Return to your kingdom and justly rule your people. Neither do I require your kingdom nor do I want to subordinate you."

The Yavan king—"Your magnanimity and greatness are worthy of praise. Without a battle you have enslaved men."

The soldiers went and informed king Prasenjit—"Sire ! A miracle has happened ! Parshva Kumar has conquered the Yavan king without a fight."

King Prasenjit came to Parshva Kumar with heaps of gifts. With joined palms he said—"Lord ! You have done an unprecedented work. The task that was impossible to accomplish even after a terrible bloodshed was made so easy through your influence."

Parshva Kumar—"Here is your friend, the Yavan king."

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The Yavan king and Prasenjit embraced like friends. They sought mutual forgiveness and exchanged gifts.

King Prasenjit requested Parshva Kumar—"Kindly grace my city with your visit."

Parshva Kumar rode an elephant and entered the city. He was followed by both the kings and their large armies.

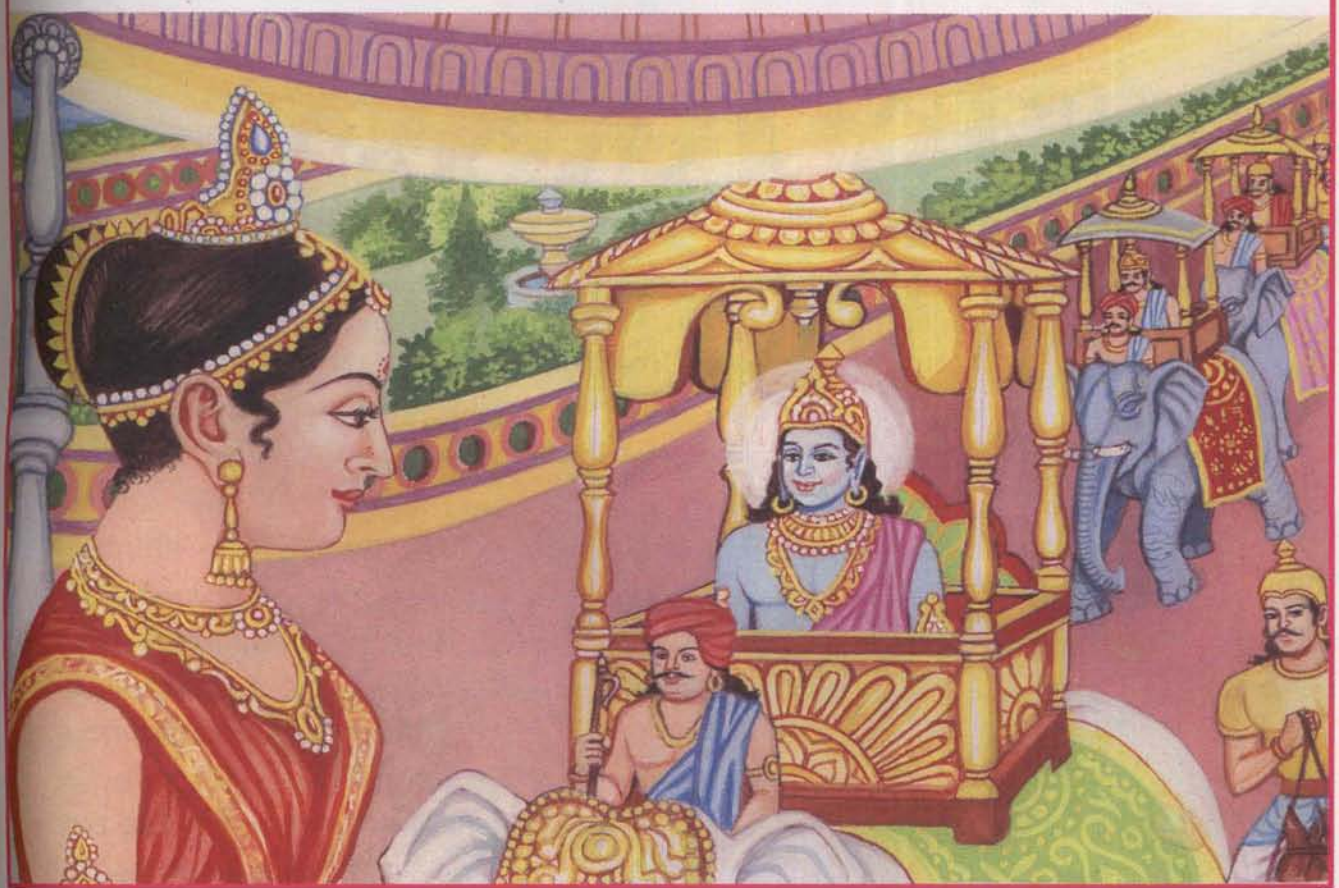
Prabhavati saw Parshva Kumar from the balcony of the palace—"Thousand times more handsome than what I heard ! Astonishing !"

She prays joining her palms—"O Lord ! Blessed is she who gets a husband like you."

However, she was worried—"Will he accept my father's request or not ?"

And she resolved—"If he doesn't accept me I will remain unwed all my life. I will spend all my life thinking about him and adoring him."

After the welcome ceremony in the assembly, king Prasenjit requested—"O great man ! Please accept my daughter's request."



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Parshva Kumar—"O king ! Presently I am here to fulfill my father's desire to help you. Marriage proposal cannot be discussed here."

Prasenjit—"Sir ! What you say is right. I will accompany you to Varanasi and request king Ashvasen."

King Prasenjit came to Varanasi along with Parshva Kumar. He requested king Ashvasen—"Sir ! Only you can fulfill my daughter Prabhavati's wish."

King Ashvasen looked at Parshva Kumar—"Son ! Please accept king Prasenjit's request."

Parshva Kumar—"Father ! What is the purpose of accepting the possessions that I am destined to renounce ?" The parents insisted—"Son ! We know that you are detached and without desires, but even then it is the duty of a son to fulfill desires of his parents." Mother Vamadevi added—"Son ! My dream will come true once I see you married."

Submitting to everyone's desire, Parshva Kumar married Prabhavati. Beholding the beautiful couple the parents and relatives brimmed with joy.

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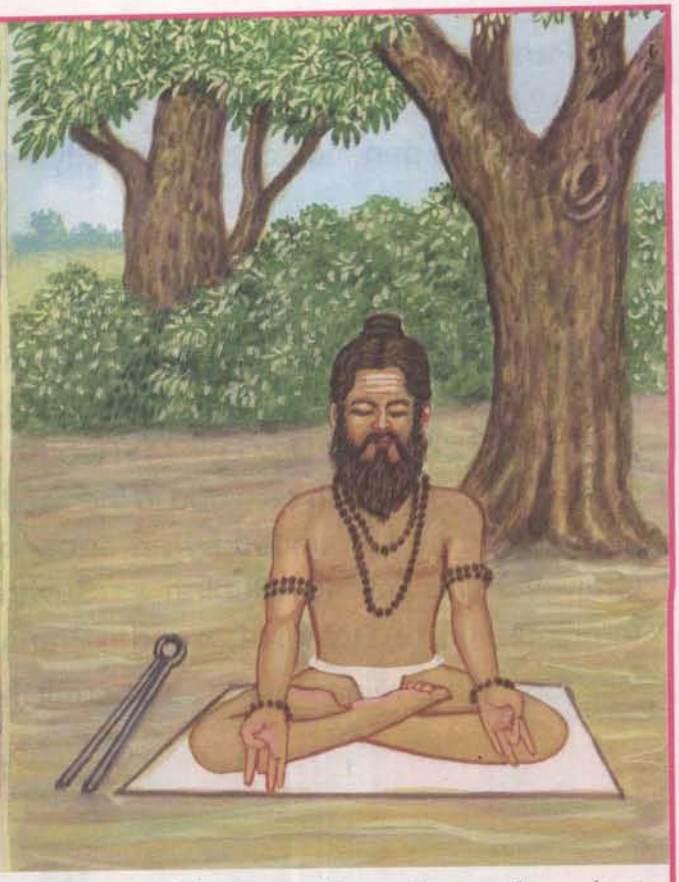

After its passage through many rebirths, the soul that was Kamath was born in a poor Brahmin family. His parents died immediately after his birth. As a street dweller he wandered and begged around lanes and highways. Looking at his wretched condition people started calling him Kamath (ill fated).

Once a mendicant came that way. Kamath asked him—"O sage ! These rich people eat fruits and sweets, live in palaces and I find it difficult to get one square meal even after so much hardship of begging. Why is it so ?"

The mendicant—"This is due to fruits of *karma*. These people performed austerities, chanting and charity during their past birth. As a consequence they enjoy this life."

Kamath—"Sire ! Can I also perform austerities ? How to do that ?"

The mendicant initiated him as a hermit and said—"Go and do penance in solitude. Penance begets everything."

Wandering around, hermit Kamath came to the banks of Ganges in Varanasi and commenced his penance.

One day Parshva Kumar was sitting in his palace when he saw hundreds of people going towards the Ganges. Some carried baskets full of flowers and some carried sweets.

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Parshva Kumar asked his attendant—"Where are these throngs of people going ? Is there some festival ?" The attendant—"Master ! A hermit named Kamath is doing five-fire penance outside the city. People are going there to pay homage and worship."

Parshva Kumar meditated. Scenes from his and Kamath's past nine rebirths surfaced—

(1) Marubhuti bows at the feet of hermit Kamath who hits him with a rock. (2) An elephant is caught in a swamp and a flying snake wounds him with bites. (3) Rebirth as a god in Sahasrar Dev Lok. (4) Rebirth as king Kiranaveg, harsh austerities and snake bite. (5) Rebirth as a god in the twelfth heaven. (6) Rebirth as king Vajranabh, got initiated and wounded by an arrow of Bheel. (7) Rebirth as a god in middle Graiveyak Vimaan. (8) Rebirth as Suvarnabahu Chakravarti and wounded by a ferocious lion. (9) Rebirth as a god in Pranat Dev Lok.

"So, he has reincarnated as a hermit this time. Let's see."

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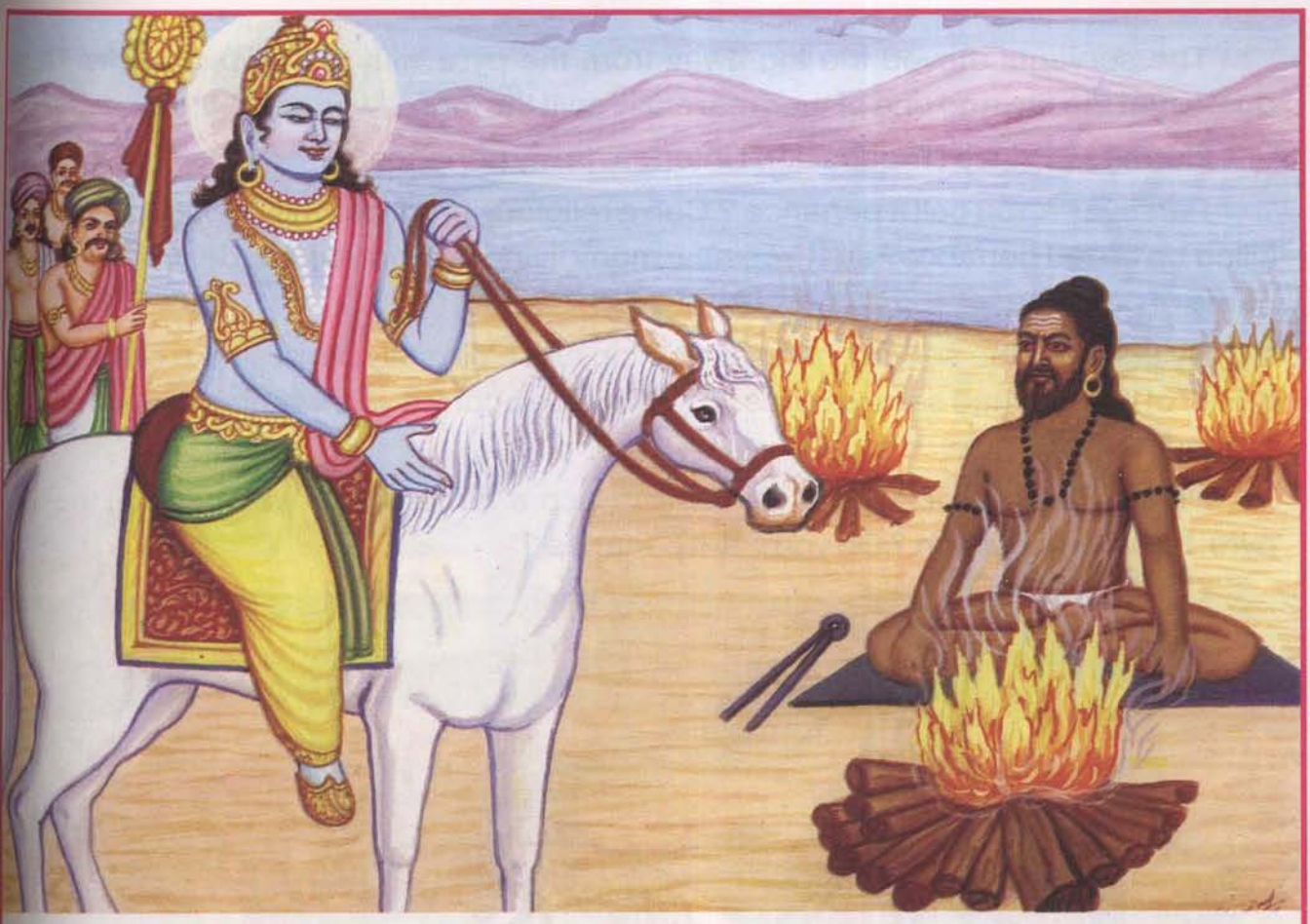

Parshva Kumar rode a horse and arrived on the banks of the Ganges. There he saw that logs of wood were burning in all the four directions of the hermit. The hermit was sitting in the middle. Large crowd was standing all around.

With his supreme knowledge Parshva Kumar saw that there was a long snake in one of the large logs. The log was burning. He was moved—'Oh ! Very bad ! What a foolish penance ?' Moved by compassion, Parshva Kumar said to the hermit—"What sort of penance is this. You are burning a five sensed being in fire ?"

The hermit was irritated—"Prince ! You are still a child. It is me not you who knows more about penance. How do you know that a living being is burning in my five-fire ?" In spite of all efforts by Parshva Kumar the hermit did not accept that a snake was burning within the log.

Then Parshva Kumar instructed his servants—"Take out that log. There is a snake burning inside."

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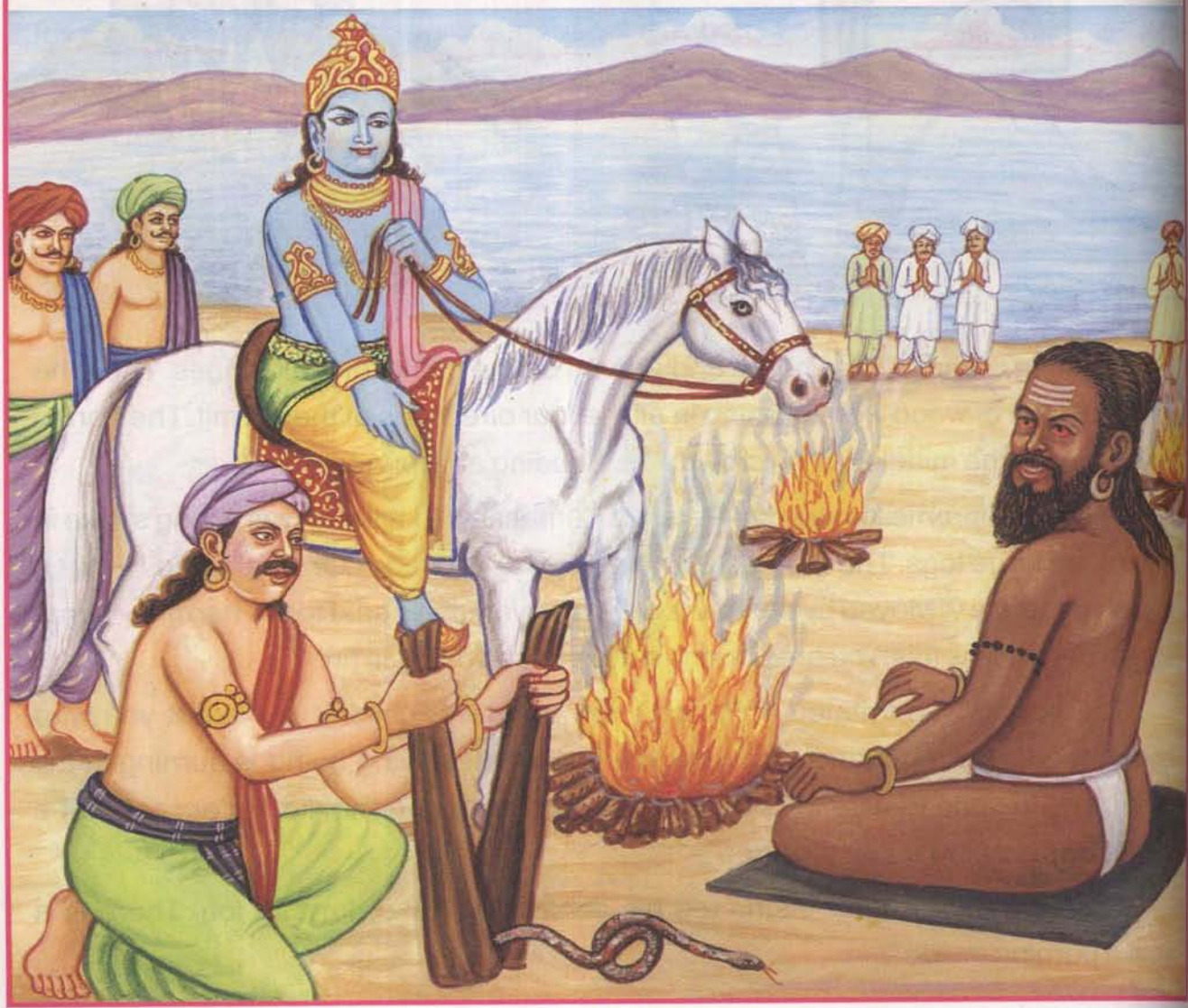
The servants moved the log away from the pyre with the help of sticks. They quenched the fire and one of them carefully split the log.

Hermit—"Prince ! Please don't interfere in my penance."

Parshva—"You call it penance ? Can a religious practice where living beings are killed be called penance? Just see how many living beings you are destroying in the name of penance."

By that time the servant had split the log and a partially burnt snake came out of it. Half of its body had severe burns. In intolerable agony it was writhing around on the ground.

Prince Parshva pointed at it—"See ! Such a large snake was burning in your pyre. Is that you religion ? Do you call it penance ?"



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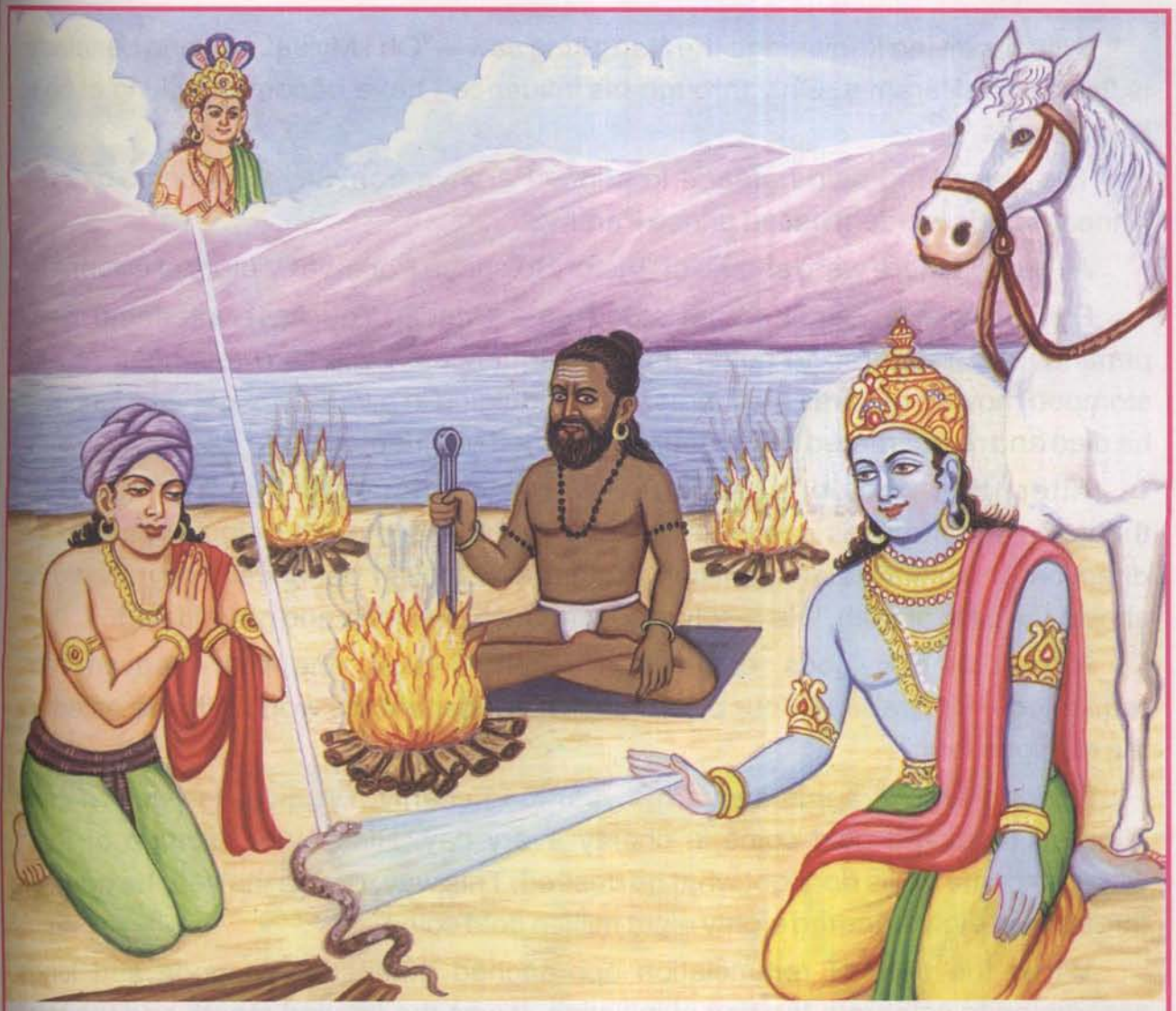

The onlookers looked in surprise. People cursed the hermit—"Cursed is your penance ! The serpent god was burning in your pyre and you did not know ? Shame ! Shame !"

The hermit looked down silently but his eyes became red with anger.

Prince Parshva dismounted and came near the snake.

"O snake ! I know that you are suffering intense pain. Calm down. Listen to the Mantra and have faith in it." He then gave instructions to his servant. The servant sweetly chanted Namokar Mantra thrice—"Namo Arihantanam... Namo Siddhanam..." The snake listened to the mantra with devotion and died enduring the pain with equanimity.

A blue glow emerged from the body of the snake and ascended in the sky. The soul of the snake reincarnated as Dharanendra, the king of Naag Kumar gods.

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With his divine knowledge the Naag king saw—"Oh ! My saviour and benefactor is this prince Parshva. Only through his influence I have become the king of Naag Kumar gods."

The Naag king paid homage to prince Parshva from sky. The onlookers who witnessed this incident hailed prince Parshva.

All around there were shouts of "Victory to prince Parshva! Victory of Dharma !"

Fuming with anger, Kamath stood up—"Prince! You have interfered in my penance. Be prepared to suffer the consequences. I will take revenge." And he stomped moving towards the jungle. After indulging in a variety of pervert penances he died and reincarnated as an Asur god named Meghamali.

After this incident prince Parshva's thoughts took a turn. He thought—'Ignorance is casting a veil on religion. People are being mislead in the direction of violent ritual sacrifices (Yajna) and foolish penance. They should be shown the path of truth." He resolved to renounce the world and get initiated.

Nine Lokantik gods came from Brahma Lok, the fifth heaven, and requested—"O Prabhu ! Your pious resolve will benefit the world. Please establish the religious ford."

Prince Parshva commenced the year-long charity. He gave ten million eight hundred thousand gold coins in charity every day. Rich, poor, woman or man, whoever came at his door got what he desired. This way, during the year he donated three billion eight hundred eighty eight million gold coins.

When the time of renunciation approached thousands of gods and kings assembled to celebrate the day of initiation. It was the second month and the third fortnight of the winter season. In the morning of the eleventh day of the dark half of the month of Paush he sat in a large palanquin. The palanquin was carried on shoulders by men in the front and gods in the rear. Thousands of men and women and innumerable gods were showering flowers. They took the palanquin to the Ashramapad garden.

Prince Parshva took off his glittering cloths and ornaments. Shakrendra took them in a gem studded plate. After that Parshva pulled out his hair. Indra placed a divine cloth (a saffron-yellow scarf) on Bhagavan's body. Standing under a tree, Prabhu uttered salutations to the liberated souls—Namo Siddhanam—and took the vow—"Since this moment I renounce all sinful deeds."

Three hundred persons got initiated along with Bhagavan Parshva Naath.

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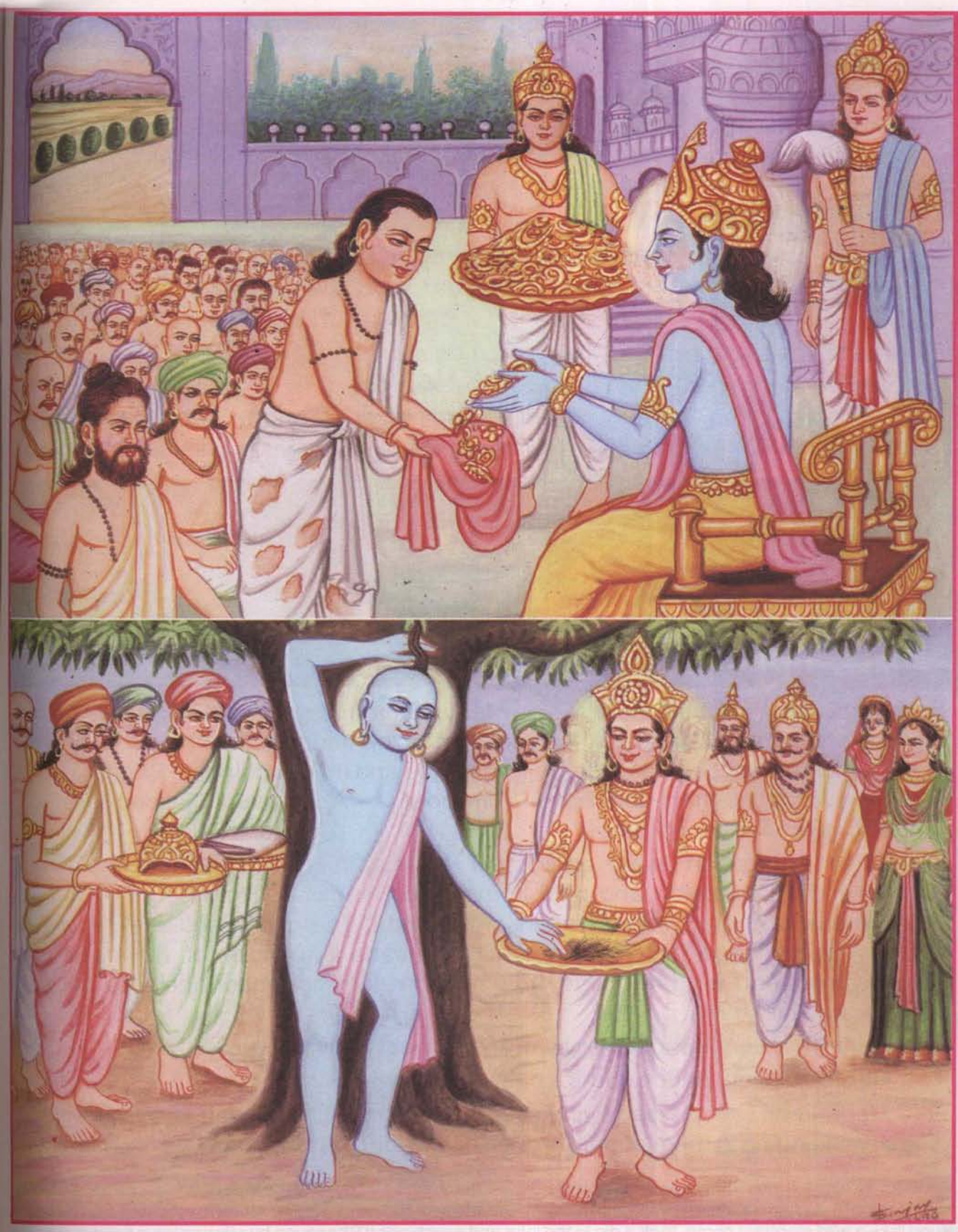

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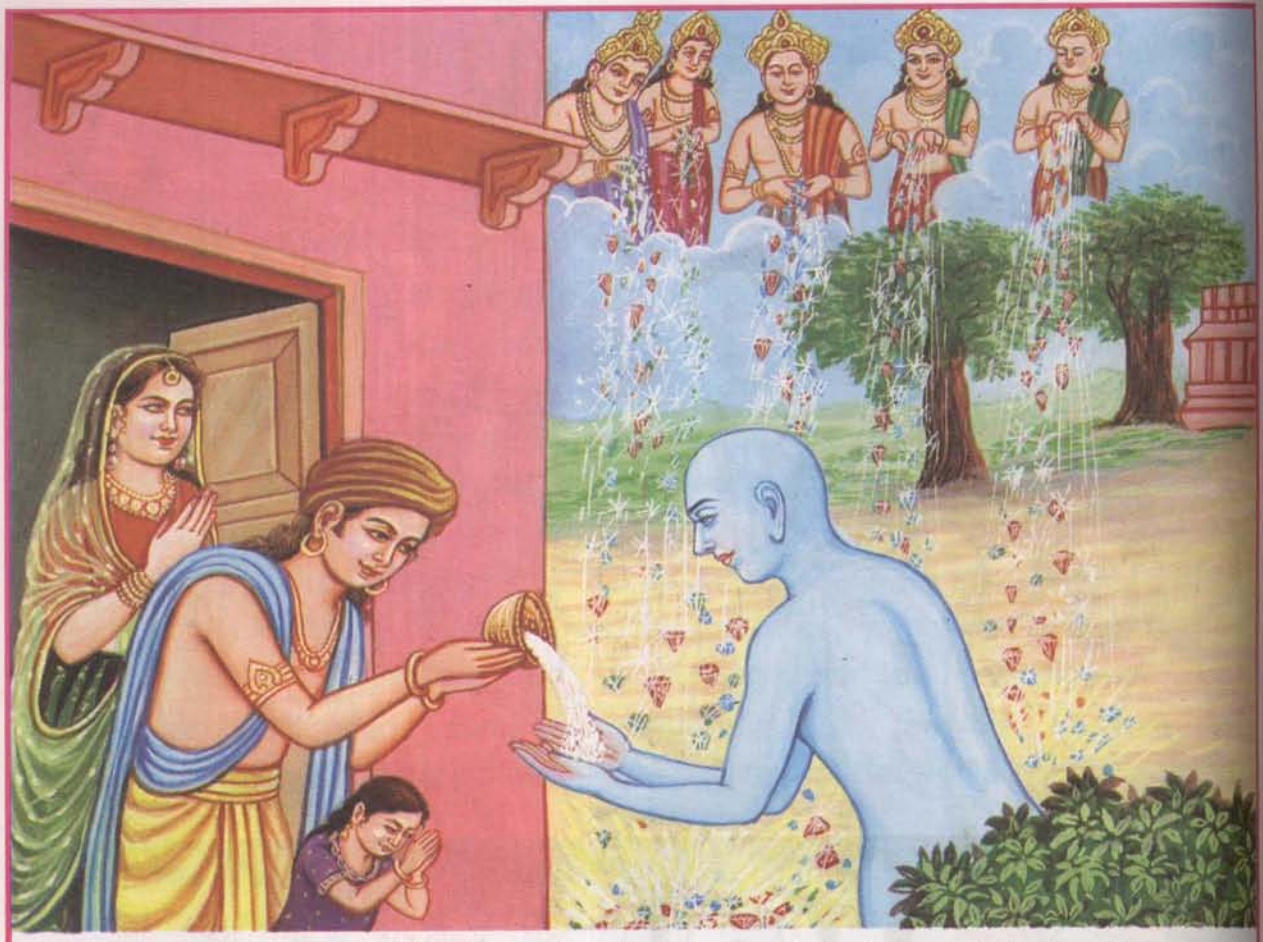

At the conclusion of the three day fast, he had started on initiation, he moved around and came to Kaupatak city. He went to the door of householder Dhanya to seek alms. The householder offered Kheer (rice and milk pudding) to Bhagavan with devotion. At that moment gods hailed from the sky—"Ahodanam! Blessed donation!" and showered five divine things."

Once Bhagavan was engrossed in meditation in Kaushamb forest. Dharanendra Dev came and paid homage to Bhagavan. He thought—"Oh ! So intense sun rays on Bhagavan's tonsured head !" The god raised snake-hood as canopy over Bhagavan. The serpent god made a canopy of his hood over Bhagavan's head for three days. It is said that for this reason the area became popular as Ahichhatra.

During his wanderings Bhagavan arrived near a hermitage.

He stood in meditation under a banyan tree near a well.

Meghamali Dev passed flying over that place. He happened to see Bhagavan Parshva standing in meditation. Through his Avadhi-jnana he recalled the past births

Another incident from Bhagavan's pre-omniscience life has been lucidly narrated in scriptures. During his wanderings Bhagavan came to Kadambari forest in the valley of Kali hill. While he stood in meditation on the bank of Kund lake a wild elephant came, took a dip in the lake and worshipped Bhagavan by offering lotus flowers at his feet. This place became famous as Kalikund pilgrimage. The elephant reincarnated as a god and became a devotee of Parshva that pilgrimage.

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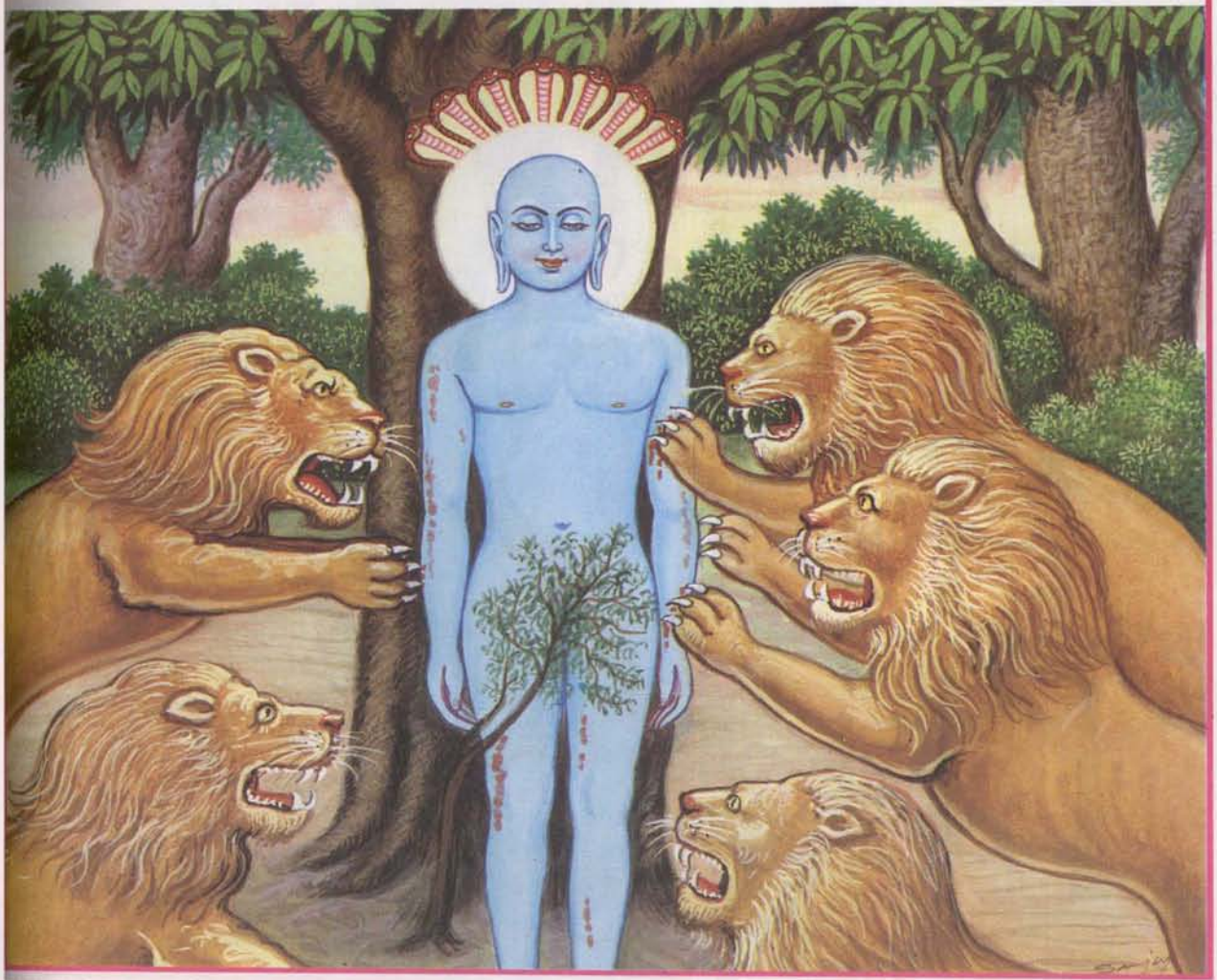
and was filled with an intense feeling of revenge. The fire of anger was inflamed—"This is my enemy. During my past births he has repeatedly tormented and tortured me. Today I will avenge all that." With his divine powers he created ferocious lions. Five-six lions roared, waved their tails and pounced together on Bhagavan. They wounded Bhagavan Parshva's body with their claws. The forest trembled with their roars but Bhagavan stood still in meditation like a statue.

The demon hovering in the sky thought—'He is still unmoved. All my efforts are being wasted.' Biting his lips and gnashing his teeth, the demon roared—"Today I will stop only after destroying my enemy. You have tortured me for many births. Today I will rest only after clearing all past debts."

Blind with anger, that demon created dense dark clouds in the sky and caused torrential rains like those at the time of the deluge. It started pouring from the sky. There were floods all around. The darkness in the jungle was pierced by continuous flashes of lightening in the dark clouds. Trees were submerged in the rising water.



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First it reached Bhagavan's knees and then gradually rose to his shoulders. Bhagavan still remained unmoved.

At that moment the throne of Dharanendra Dev trembled in the heavens. He thought—"What is this ? Some enemy is approaching or some great man is in trouble ?"

Dharanendra meditated and then suddenly uttered—"Misfortune ! Great misfortune ! The great benefactor Prabhu is in trouble. Rascal Meghamali Asur is creating havoc." Goddess Padmavati, siting next to him, said—"My lord ! Come, let's go and take care of Prabhu." With divine speed the two descended and paid homage to Bhagavan—"O god of gods ! This rascal is causing pain to you !"

Suddenly a large lotus started rising under Bhagavan's feet. Prabhu rose above the water level. A large snake appeared. It encircled the whole body of Bhagavan and raised its hood to make a canopy over Bhagavan's head. The lotus pedestal continued to rise with the water level.

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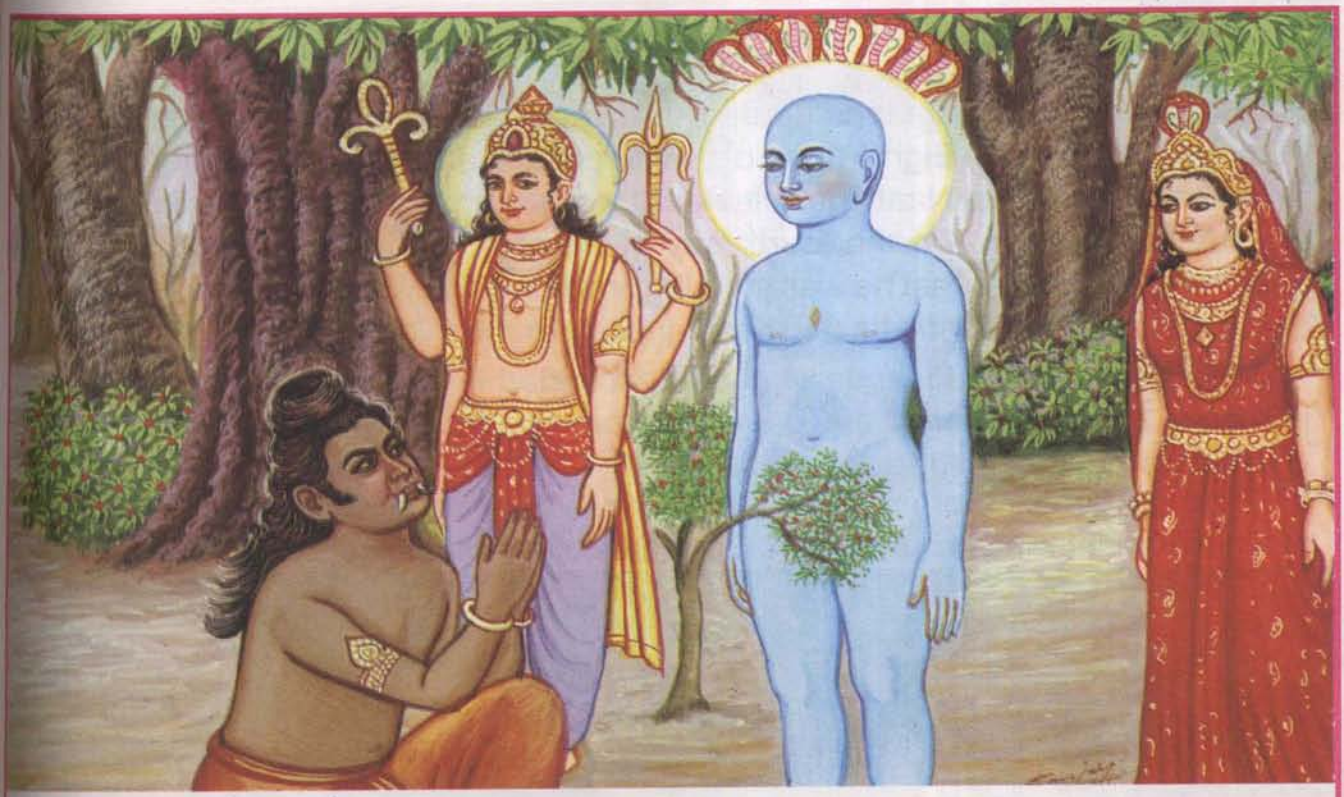

After this Dharanendra Dev challenged Meghamali—"Rascal ! What hateful act you are committing ? By tormenting Bhagavan Parshva, the ocean of forgiveness and compassion incarnate, you are committing a grave sin. O rogue ! This Vajra (divine weapon) will destroy you in an instant. But I can not destroy you in presence of Bhagavan, the embodiment of forgiveness. Withdraw your magic."

Meghamali saw that Dharanendra Dev was confronting him.

Dharanendra continue—"Rascal ! Prabhu pitifully saved you from the sin of violence. He sprinkled the ambrosia of forgiveness on you for many births. But every time you inflicted pain on him and burnt yourself in the fire of anger. Stop it now ! Otherwise I will burn you to ashes."

At the angry stance of Dharanendra, Meghamali trembled with fear. He at once withdrew his magic and falling at Bhagavan's feet, sought forgiveness—"Forgive me Prabhu ! Pardon my crime ! I tortured you for nine rebirths but you forgave me. Save me today. Save me from the fury of Dharanendra Dev, Prabhu !"

Bhagavan Parshva Naath was still engrossed in his meditation. He neither had affection for Dharanendra nor anger for Kamath. The affliction was pacified.

(Acharya Hemachandra Suri has praised this equanimity of Parshva Naath in the 25th verse of his Sakalarhat Stotra)

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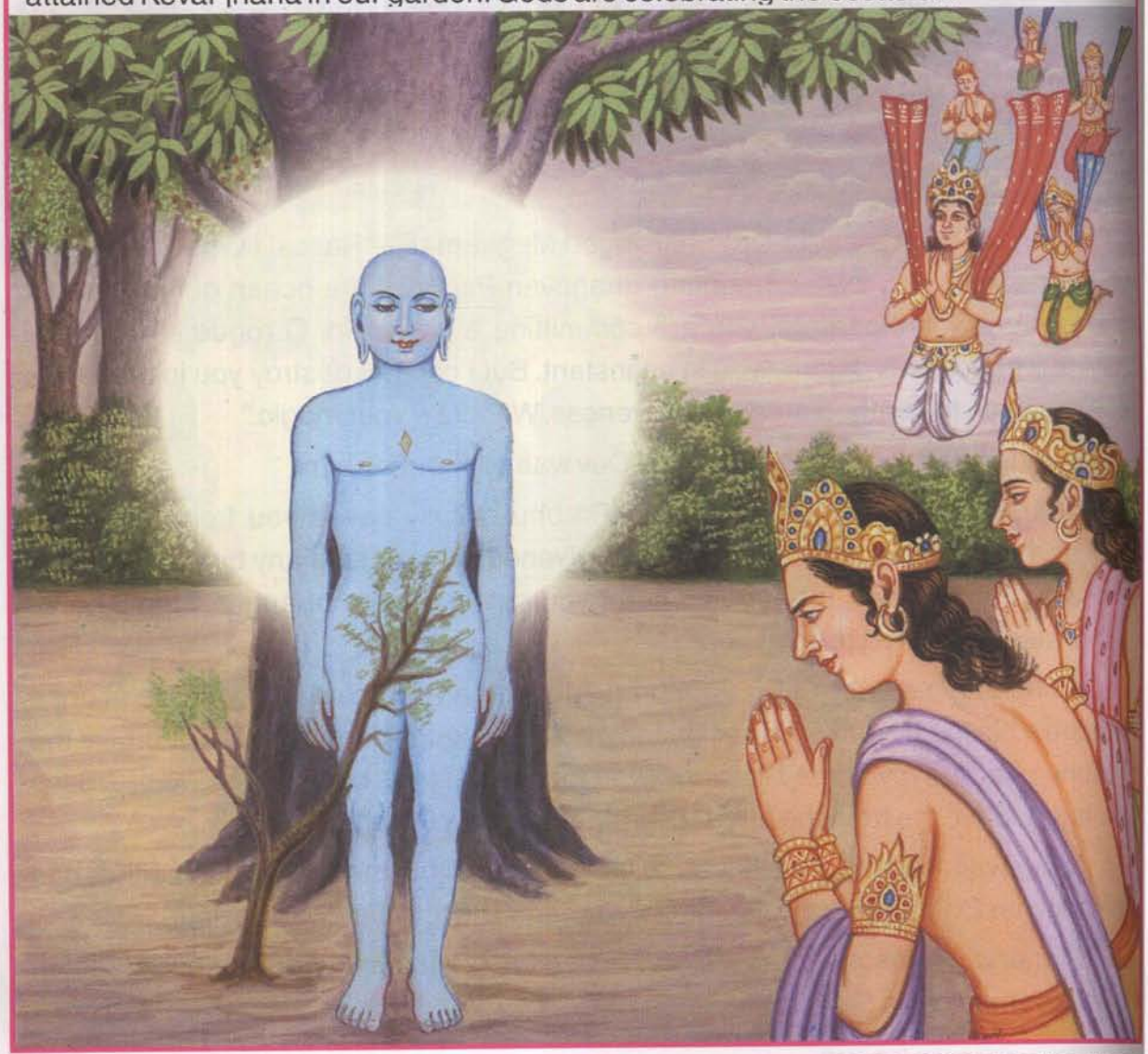
Both the gods returned to their respective abodes. Bhagavan Parshva Naath also resumed his itinerant way.

He arrived in Ashramapad garden near Varanasi and stood in meditation under a Dhataki (Amla) tree. Eighty three days had passed and it was the eighty fourth day since Prabhu Parshva Naath got initiated. It was the first fortnight of the first month of the summer season. On the fourth day of the dark half of the month of Chaitra, observing a three day fast he was standing in meditation when, ascending the levels of spiritual purity, Prabhu attained Keval-jnana around mid-day.

From heavens thousands of gods descended in groups on the earth. Paying homage, they celebrated the gaining of omniscience by Bhagavan. They then created Samavasaran (the divine assembly).

The gardener informed king Ashvasen—"Sire ! Prabhu Parshva Naath has attained Keval-jnana in our garden. Gods are celebrating the occasion."



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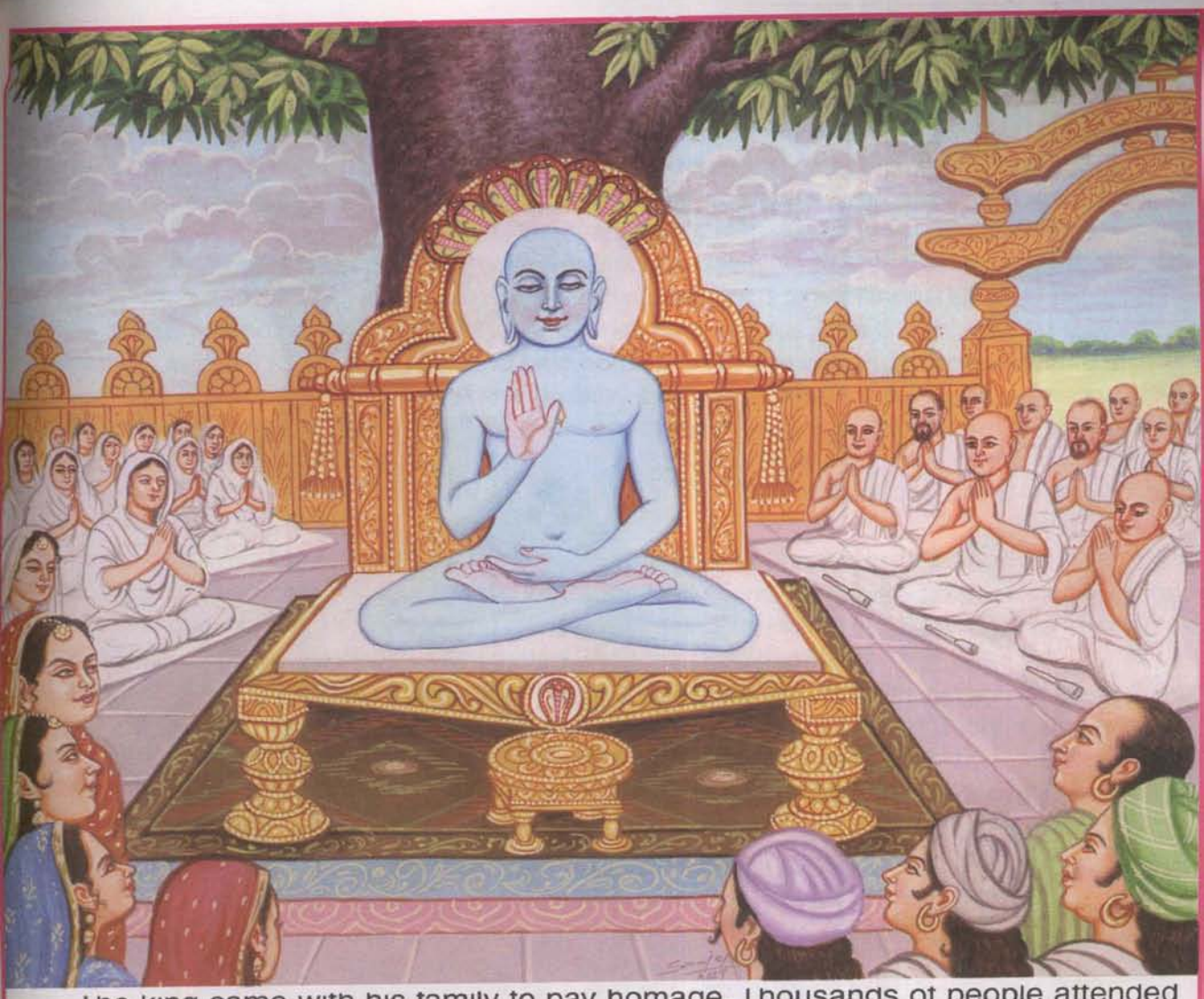

The king came with his family to pay homage. Thousands of people attended Prabhu's sermon. Bhagavan gave his first sermon on the concept of religion. He showed the four dimensional path of spiritual uplift in the form of abandoning violence, abandoning falsity, abandoning stealth and abandoning possessions.

Bhagavan laid special emphasis on the 12 vows, 60 transgressions and 15 charitable activities while elaborating in detail the concept of religion.

After listening to Bhagavan's sermon hundreds of people including king Ashvasen, Vamadevi and Prabhavati got initiated. Hundreds of laymen took householder's vows. Many scholars including the renowned Vedic scholar Shubhadatt and many princes too got initiated after getting enlightened by Prabhu's sermon. Bhagavan established the four pronged religious ford in the form of Shravak-shravika (laymen and women) and Sadhu-sadhvi (male and female ascetics). Shubhadatt (Shubhadinna) became the first Ganadhar (chief disciple). In the religious order of Bhagavan Parshva Naath there were eight Ganadhars.

In Avashyak Sutra there is a mention of ten Ganas and ten Ganadhars. As two of these were short lived, Sthananga Sutra mentions only eight with an explanatory foot note. The names of the eight Ganadhars are—Shubha, Aryaghosh, Vashisht, Brahmachari, Som, Shridhar, Virabhadra and Yashasvi.

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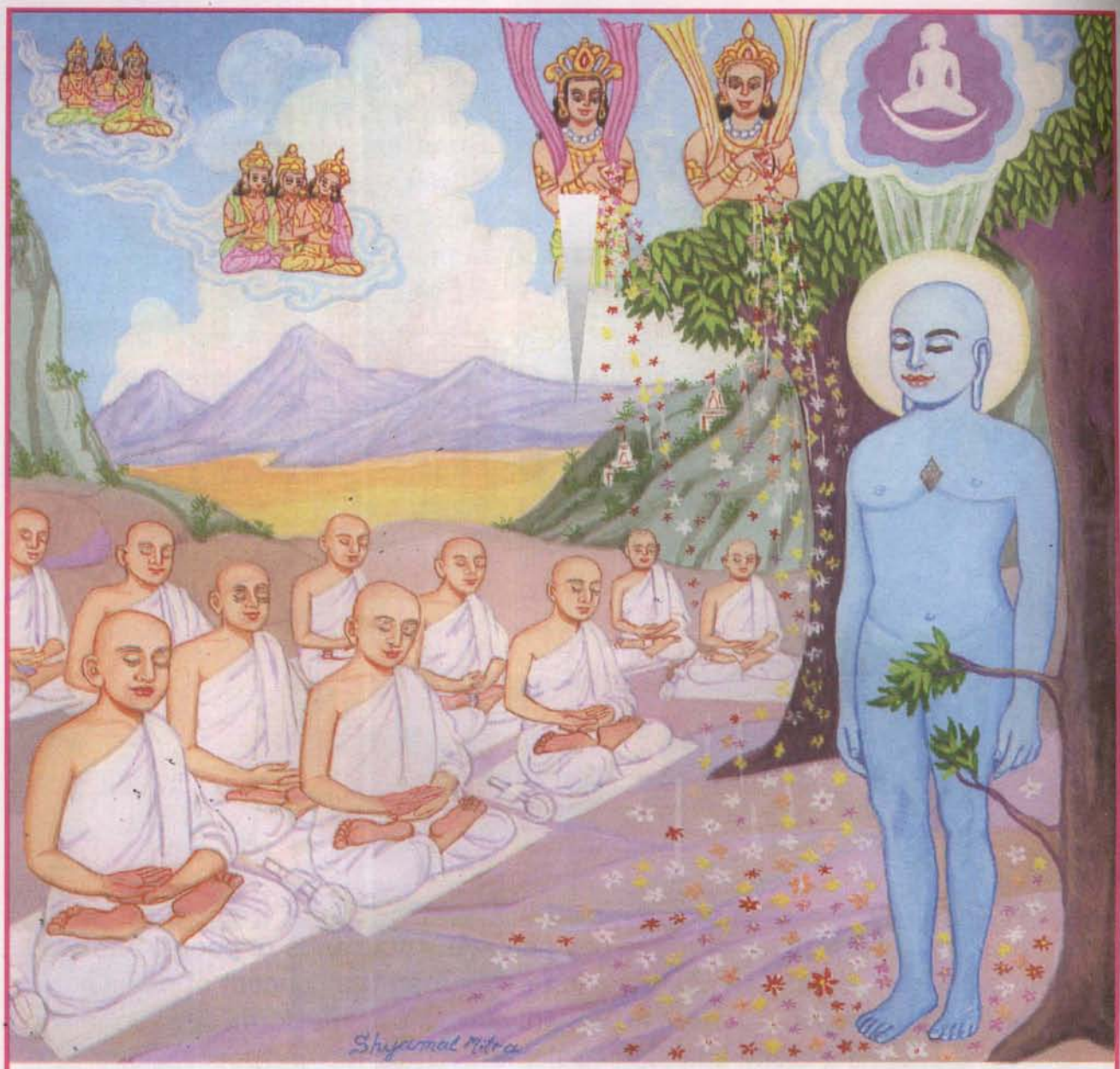

Prabhu wandered for many years and gave religious sermons. Thousands of people got initiated. When the end was near, Bhagavan went to Sammetashikhar along with thirty three ascetics. Taking the ultimate vow of fasting he sat in lotus pose in meditation. Prabhu attained nirvana on the eighth day of the bright half of the month of Shravan.

Bhagavan Parshva Naath was a householder for thirty years. After that he spent seventy years of his life as an ascetic. Thus he attained nirvana at a mature age of 100 years on Sammetashikhar.

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206 VRIDDHA KUMARIKAS (OLD SPINSTERS)

Description of a unique incident from the period of influence of Bhagavan Parshva Naath is found in two Jain scriptures. This incident finds a mention rarely in other sources. The incident is the initiation of 206 old spinsters in his order. Many aged spinsters from merchant families from numerous cities got initiated in Bhagavan Parshva Naath's religious organization at different times. They indulged in spiritual practices and observed ascetic-discipline. Due to some transgressions in secondary vows and dying without self criticism and atonement, some of them reincarnated as chief queens of Chamarendra, Balindra, Vyantar and other kings of gods. Like Suryabhadeva they came to Bhagavan Mahavir's Samavasaran and paid homage to Bhagavan after displaying their unique grandeur and opulence. Seeing this divine display, even Ganadhar Gautam was enchanted and astonished. When asked by Gautam about these goddesses, Bhagavan Mahavir revealed that they were chief queens of different kings of gods. During their past birth, as old spinsters, they got initiated in the order of Bhagavan Parshva Naath. They acquired this unique opulence due to their ascetic-discipline and penance.

These details clearly indicate that even during the period of Bhagavan Mahavir there was great respect for Bhagavan Parshva Naath. Also, a strong belief prevailed among masses that his name-chanting was panacea for all troubles and gaining success. That is why during Bhagavan Mahavir's period he was respectfully called Purushadaniya Bhagavan Parshva Naath.

Many scholars are of the opinion that during that period the four-fold religion of Bhagavan Parshva Naath was recognized as one of the prominent religions. Tathagat Buddha also initially accepted this four fold path and later evolved his eight limbed religion based on this.

See — ten chapters of ten goddesses in the fourth section of Niryavalika Sutra and lessons 1 to 10 of the second part of Jnata Sutra.

TIRTHANKAR PARSHVA NAATH (INFORMATION IN BRIEF)

Name	:	Parshva Naath	Place of nirvana	:	Sammetashikhar
Symbol	:	snake	Date of nirvana	:	Shravan Shukla 8
Clan	:	Ikshvaku	Pre-omniscience period	:	84 days
Father	:	Ashvasen	Life-span	:	100 years
Mother	:	Vamadevi	Main Ganadhar	:	Shubha (dinna)
Descent from	:	Pranat	Number of Ganadhars	:	10
Date of descent	:	Chaitra Krishna 12	Number of Sadhus	:	16,000
Place of birth	:	Varanasi	Chief Sadhvi	:	Pushpachula
Date of birth	:	Paush Krishna 10	Number of Sadhvis	:	38,000
Date of initiation	:	Paush Krishna 11	Complexion	:	blue
Keval-jnana at	:	Varanasi	Yaksha of the order	:	Parshva Yaksha
Date of Keval-jnana	:	Chaitra Krishna 4	Yakshini of the order	:	Padmavati

It is believed that there was a gap of about 250 years between the nirvana of Bhagavan Parshva Naath and the establishment of Bhagavan Mahavir's religious order. During this period we find mention of four prominent *acharyas* and important heads of the order in Bhagavan Parshva Naath's lineage of disciples—

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1. Ganadhar Shubhadatt (Shubha), 2. Arya Haridatt, 3. Acharya Samudra Suri and 4. Arya Keshi Shraman.

The period of Arya Keshi Shraman is believed to be 166 to 250 years after the nirvana of Bhagavan Parshva Naath. He was a highly influential *acharya*. He had organized a large congregation of his ascetic organization. Emphasizing on the duties of ascetics, Arya Keshi Shraman had said—"Shramans! The time has come that you pursue the goal for which you had renounced the world. Only selfless sages like you have accomplished and will accomplish the salvation of the world. Therefore get ready to work for the spread of religion."

After listening to this discourse patiently, all ascetics agreed—"Master ! We are ready to work for the spread of religion exactly as per your directions."

Arya Keshi Shraman made nine groups of ascetics according to their abilities and instructed them to wander around in different remote areas.

1. Vaikunthacharya with 500 ascetics was sent to Tailang area.
2. Kilikaputracharya with 500 ascetics was sent to South Maharashtra area.
3. Gargacharya with 500 ascetics was sent to Sindhu-Sauvira area.
4. Yavaacharya with 500 ascetics was sent to Kashi-Kaushal area.
5. Arhannacharya with 500 ascetics was sent to Anga-Banga-Kalinga area.
6. Kashyapacharya with 500 ascetics was sent to Shaurasen (Mathura) area.
7. Shivacharya with 500 ascetics was sent to Avanti area.
8. Palakacharya with 500 ascetics was sent to Konkan area.
9. He himself wandered around with one thousand ascetics in the Magadh area and worked for spread of religion through regular discourses.

With his preaching he attracted the following rulers towards Jainism—

(1) King Chetak of Vaishali, (2) King Prasenjit of Rajagriha, (3) King Dadhivahan of Champa, (4) King Siddhartha of Kshatriyakund, (5) King Shuddodhan of Kapilavastu, (6) King Vijayasen of Polasapur, (7) King Chandrapal of Saketpur, (8) King Adinashatru of Shravasti, (9) King Dharmasheel of Kanchanpur, (10) King Jayaketu of Kampilapur, (11) King Shataneek of Kaushambi, (12) King Balabhadra of Sugriva city, (13) Kings of eighteen republics in Kashi-Kaushal area, and (14) King Pradeshi of Shvetambika city.

Keshi Shraman of the lineage of Bhagavan Parshva Naath and Indrabhuti Gautam, the first Ganadhar of Bhagavan Mahavir met in the Tandukavan garden of Shravasti. According to the 23rd chapter of Uttaradhyayan Sutra, after his discussion with Gautam, Keshi Shraman accepted five great vows, joined Bhagavan Mahavir's order for spiritual practices and attained liberation. ❑❑

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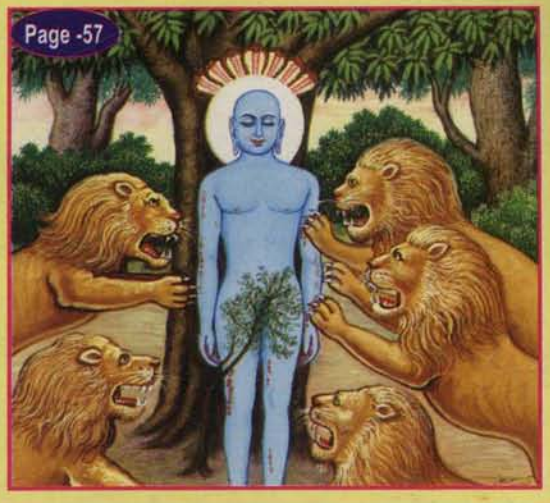

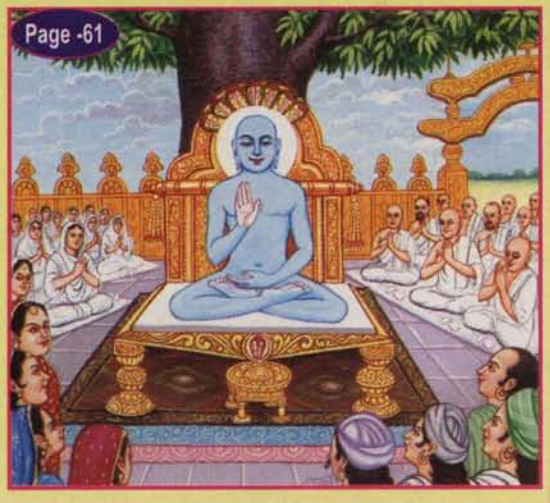

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