

# Mahavir in the Making

## From Bhil to Bhagawan

- Dr. Jayanti Lal Jain

The story of Mahavir is narrated here briefly to show how a tribal man (Bhil) rose to the state of Bhagawan (God). The purpose is to disseminate this knowledge and derive inspiration that anyone can achieve that exalted state of pure soul. For those who want to embark on the path of Moksha, it is necessary to know how others have accomplished the same task. He lived an ordinary life like many of us and sometimes placed in so much adverse conditions than what are we placed today. We are in better and advantageous position in many respects.

In Jain literature, only the story of Mahavir is available for such a long period and spread over innumerable births. For no other Thirthankars or anyone else, such a complete story is available in the literature. For others, the story relates only to a few births. We are really fortunate to have such a vast story which throws a great light on the way a person achieves Moksha. The story covers a period of more than one *kodakodi sagar*, which is estimated to be 74 digit number of years, starting with 4. One *sagar* is approximately 60 digit number.

The story is presented here, according to birth, in three parts to facilitate easy understanding. Although there is a long story available in Jain literature for each of births, it is explained here with a very brief description to capture the essence of what happened in that life. Part I essentially narrates his rise and introduction to the spiritual world. However, he was unable to take full advantage of available opportunities in human births and remains in the state of superficial level of spiritual knowledge. As a result, he goes back to the vicious cycle of births of all types – innumerable births of having four, three and two senses and ultimately in births with only one sense. This is shown in Part II. After spending very very long time in births with only one sense, there is a dramatic turn in the story as he gets human birth again. Certain events, although seemed to be with good intentions, land him in births of lion and hell. However, he attains self-realisation in the life of a lion and in successive births quickly ascends the different ladders and was ultimately born as Mahavir. Lord Mahavir attains Moksha and becomes Bhagawan for all times to come. This is Part III of the story which is briefly depicted in this essay.

### Mahavir in the Making - Part I

Birth	Brief Description
Bhil/Tribal	Trillions of years before the birth of first Thirthankar, Adinath, there was a group of Jains & monks who had gone for a pilgrimage and the dacoits looted them. One monk among them, Sagar Sen Muni was lost in the jungle and was meditating on the nature of pure soul sitting on some rock. A tribal leader (Bhil) named Pururava mistook him to be an animal and wanted to kill but his wife prevented him saying that he looked like a saint. Both of them went to the Saint, prayed and decided to give up eating animals, became a vegetarian after listening to the Saint's preachings.
First Heaven	Lived for 2 ' <i>Sagar</i> '; enjoyed pleasures of Heaven. Life in heaven is full of mental anguish except that one does not have to earn to live and body free from diseases
Marichi	Human life, grandchild of Adinath, first Thirthankar and son of Bharat –

	Chakravarty King. Took to renunciation along with Adinath but later dissociated and started his own religion which is now called Hinduism.
Fifth Heaven	Lived for time equivalent to 10 ' <i>Sagar</i> ', pleasures of Heaven but no peace. Temptation for pleasures bring heavenly creatures back to worldly life and thus perpetuate births.
Priyamitra	Human life, born in a Brahmin family. Did lot of penance, became a monk but did not acquire knowledge of pure soul
First Heaven	Spent 2 ' <i>sagar</i> ' of sensuous pleasures. When one is about to complete time in heaven, all their pleasures start diminishing, one cries or weeps due to fear of losing such pleasures.
Puspamitra	Born in a Brahmin family; renounced world life at an early age. Someone promised heaven to the child and hence he went along with them but of no avail.
Second Heaven	Spent one ' <i>sagar</i> ' in this ' <i>Ishan</i> ' heaven. Good deeds land a person in heaven but cannot ensure Moksha in the absence of knowledge of pure soul.
Agnisaha	Born in a Brahmin family again in a city called Shretika; became a monk.
Third Heaven	Lived for a period of 7 ' <i>sagar</i> '
Agnimitra	Again born in a Brahmin family in a city known as Mandir, renounced worldly life and led a life of a monk
Fourth Heaven	Known as Mahendra Heaven. As he lived a pious life, he is born again and again – heaven and as human.
Bhardvas	Again born in a brahmin family
Fourth Heaven	Uncountable number of years in this heaven. After this, gets many births having four, three and two senses and ultimately births having only one sense.

### **Mahavir in the Making - Part II**

	1000 births of medicinal plant – swallow wort
	80000 births of shell
	20000 births of Margosa tree
	900000 births of banana tree
	3000 births of sandalwood tree
	50000000 births of oleander plant
	60000 births of prostitute
	50000000 births of hunter
	200000000 births of elephant
	600000000 births of donkey
	300000000 births of dog
	6000000 births of impotent person
	200000000 births of woman
	9000000 births of washerman
	80000000 births of Horse
	200000000 births of cat
	6000000 births of abortion/miscarriage in mother's womb
	50000 births of king
	8000000 births of heaven
	Many births of land of enjoyment (Bhog-bhumi)

### Mahavir in the Making – Part III

Sthavir (Human)	Born as a Brahmin in city of Rajagrahi (now in Bihar). Became a monk in Atheist tradition
5 <sup>th</sup> Heaven	Born in Brahmswarg, life of 10 ‘sagar’
Vishwanandi	Born as Prince of King Vishwabhuti of Rajagrahi who had renounced Kingdom. The Prince constructed a garden for which there was fight with his cousin and the latter was defeated. However, Vishwanandi also became a Jain monk. His guru was Sambhutswami.
10 <sup>th</sup> Heaven	Born in Mahashruka Heaven, age 16 ‘Sagar’; His cousin Nandvisakh also born in the same heaven
Triprashta Vasudev	In Pandanpur city, born as Triprashta Vasudev – as son of King Prajapati. His brother was Vijay. A lion was disturbing the public, so the Prince kills the lion. He also kills, Ashwagriva in the fight who was his cousin in the previous life over the question of marriage.
7 <sup>th</sup> hell	The father Prajapati and brother Vijay go to Moksha, son in the 7 <sup>th</sup> Hell.
Lion	Leads a life of cruelty and violence
Hell	Goes to Hell again
Lion	Born again as Lion. Fortunate to see two Jain monks Amitkirti and Amitprabh and gets enlightened and gives up life of violence, dies after a month with Samadhi
First Heaven	Called as Sinhketu, acquires further knowledge of Pure Soul
Kanakdhraj King	Once the king had seen Jain Monk in the forest garden adopts life of a monk, dies contemplating on the nature of pure soul.
8 <sup>th</sup> Heaven	Named as Devanand who taught the knowledge of pure souls to others in the heaven known as Kapishta
Harishhen king	Born as a son of Vajradhar King of Ujjaiyini. Once Shrutsagar Acharya came to the city, the father renounced the kingdom and the son was crowned as the king. Later on, Harishhen also becomes a Jain Monk and dies in Samadhi.
10 <sup>th</sup> Heaven	This is known as Mahashukranad, spends 16 ‘sagar’ in Pritivardhan Viman
Priyamitra king	Born in Kshemdhyaati City, becomes Chakravarti King, rules for a long time of millions of years, renounces the world; went to Samavasaran of Kshemankar Thirthankar and got benefited from his preachings, dies with Sallekhana (samadhi)
12 <sup>th</sup> Heaven	Born as Suryaprabha deva. 12 <sup>th</sup> Heaven is known as Sahastrar, Fabulous wealth but does not give lasting peace.
Nanda King	Born as son of Nandivardhan, King of Swetnagari. The father attained Moksha. In due course, Nanda King happened to listen to Paushtil Shrutakewali, came to know of previous births and renounces the world. Here, the karmic bondage of Thirthankar takes place, ponders over 16 ‘Karan Bhavana’, develops unflinching faith in nature of pure soul and dies with Sallekhana..
16 <sup>th</sup> Heaven	Known as Pranat Heaven; born in Pushpotarvimana as the best Indra.
Mahavir	Born as son of Siddarth, King of Kundalpur. The mother gets 16 dreams. The King, public and Devas (Indra etc.) celebrate the birth. Renounces the worldly life at the age of 30, attains Kewalagyan (State of Arihant) at the age of 42 and achieves Moksha at 72. He was the last, 24 <sup>th</sup> Thirthankar of this era. Mahavir becomes Bhagawan for all times to come.

## Lessons from the Story

Some of the lessons of Lord Mahavir's story are given below which one should ponder over from time to time and these will provide great insight into the story and our lives.

- The purpose of the story is not to convey that it takes a long time and efforts to achieve Moksha but to emphasise that if right efforts are made in the direction of understanding the nature of pure soul, one can attain Moksha very quickly, even in less than 48 minutes.
- The climax and anti-climax of the story are to be noticed, as anyone can pass through such stages. There is nothing new in ups and downs in lives as regulated by karmic bondage.
  - Born as grandson of first Thirthankar and then ultimately he himself becomes the last Thirthankar
  - He was the son of Chakravarty King Bharat, who was son of Adinath. He himself becomes Chakravarty later on.
  - He adopted the life of a monk and goes to heaven and also goes to Hell after being the great King.
  - Ate flesh being a lion and taught the whole World the supreme principle of non-violence as Thirthankar.
  - Lived in Hell and life with one sense, but also attained Moksha.
  - He himself taught false principles in previous births and taught the World the path to Moksha as Thirthankar.
- The story tells how he elevates from the birth of Bhil and then falls to lower life including that of one sense. Further, he rises again, becomes King several times, adopts renunciated life, and becomes even Chakravarty King. He keeps shuttling between heaven and other worldly life until he gets self-realisation. Thus, no one can escape the vicious circle of births without self-realisation.
- What a strange coincidence. While Adinath was the first Thirthankar of this era, Marichi, the likely 24<sup>th</sup> and the last Thirthankar of this era must have played in the lap of his grandfather and the latter must have taught him that soul is the Supreme God – 'Appa is Paramappa'.
- Mahavir's search for truth started in the birth of Bhil but did not get through quickly and took a very long time as he diverted himself from true path. He had golden opportunity to attain Moksha in the period of first Thirthankar as his grandfather, father, uncles – such thousands of kith and kin - achieved Moksha but Marichi faltered. We must not divert our attention from true path in this life. Marichi was the son of Bharat, Chakravarty King, and he had thousands of sons. All attained Moksha except Marichi.
- When Adinath attained 'kewalagyan', all the 4000 monks, who earlier took to renunciation along with him and did not follow the path of the Moksha, again turned to the true path after listening to Adinath but only Marichi did not change. He wanted to become like Adinath and hence started other belief – Sankhyamata/Hinduism.

- His story starts as Bhil who becomes a good guy, then turns opponent to Adinath and adopts the same path ultimately after millions of births. One has to pay dearly for opposing eternal principles.
- He went to all lower forms of life due to disbelief in the nature of pure soul and had to suffer through the vicious cycle of births and deaths.
- A soul takes infinite births due to self-delusion or not knowing the self as a pure soul. Ignorance about self is our great enemy in the whole world and in all times. Sins can cause a few births but lack of knowledge of soul causes infinite births. Therefore, the first and foremost duty of every one of us is to acquire the knowledge of our soul if we want to achieve lasting happiness.
- Adopted vegetarian life for a short while; it landed him in heaven and then in the great family of Adinath Thirthankar where opportunities to learn about pure soul were plenty. Such is the tremendous benefit of being a vegetarian. However, by itself, it is not enough to ensure Moksha in the absence of knowledge of pure soul.
- In the birth as Triprashta Vasudev, he kills a lion and gets birth as lion but in the birth of lion itself, he gets first enlightenment. Even animals can attain self-realisation. Do not kill animals as one may have to born as animals.
- He developed a good garden in Rajagrihi in one of his births. At the same place, his first divine sermon was delivered. Our bondage, even with places, can cause good or bad events in the same place in different lives. Attachments in any form create bondage.
- In a cycle of 2000 *sagar*, unless a soul realizes the nature of pure soul, goes back to existence of life with one sense – trees, water, fire etc. Human births are very few. Hence, we must break the vicious cycle of births by acquiring knowledge of pure soul in this life itself.

The story of Mahavir is an eternal story of all of us and this World. There are infinite such Mahavirs in existence. Like him, we can also attain Moksha if we change our lives and embark on the path of Moksha through realization of pure soul. The story of Mahavir is a case study of all Jain principles and is the essence of stories of all souls. Some souls are in Part I of the story, some in Part II, some in Part III and some have achieved Moksha and gone beyond the story.

**About Dr. Jayanti Lal Jain:** Dr. Jain currently serves as Director, Center of Philosophical Sciences, Mangalayatan University at Aligarh, India. He is a very learned Jain scholar giving daily Pravachans, covering multiple aspects of Jain studies, delivering key note speeches for many Jain programs or special auspicious events for the last 25 years. Dr. Jain holds Ph. D in Economics from Oklahoma State University, USA and Ph. D in Jainology from University of Madras, Chennai. He was Professor Emeritus at Department of Jainology, University of Madras. He worked at Indian Bank, Chennai as Chief Economic Advisor/ General Manager. Dr Jain has published many articles on Jain Philosophy and on Economics, Banking and Finance. His books on 'Pure Soul and its Infinite Treasure', 'Acharya Kundakund and Jain Philosophy' have been published by University of Madras. He has delivered many special lectures in India and abroad and has considerable teaching experience.