

MAHAVIRA

HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

By

SARASWATI RAGHAVACHARI

B. A. (Distinction)

Under the instruction of

JAIN MUNI KANAKVIJAYA.

JAIN SASTU SAHITYA

UJJAMBAI DHARMASHALA

RATAN POLE, AHMEDABAD.

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EXTRACTS FROM A FEW OPINIONS

1. Prof. Firoze C. Davar M. A. LL. B.
“ The writer is a talented gentleman and has ably brought out the salient points in the inspiring life of Shri Mahavir within a brief compass. I am sure this booklet will stimulate many and lead several aspirants to a detailed study of the great prophet's life. ”
2. Sarabhai M. Dalal, High Court Pleader.
“ Mr. Raghavachari is known for his inimitable style and lucid, luminous, brief yet comprehensive expression. He gives rich evidence of the same in this booklet.....I have no doubt that the aim cherished by the talented author of this book — to kindle a desire in the heart of the reader for a deeper and wider study of the life and teachings of Mahavira — will be fulfilled. ”
3. Moosaji I PATEL, Judge of Small Causes,
Ahmedabad.
“ Teachings of Mahavira will be a pointer in the right direction in this materialistic age.”

—PREFACE—

This booklet has been written only to please Muni Sri Kanakvijaya, whom the author has known since 1929.

The idea of making the book useful to a wider circle of readers has been of a later growth. Technical words and philosophical and metaphysical expressions have been scrupulously avoided. If the booklet happens to give pleasure to other readers, it will be only a happy accident.

It is the belief of the author that Mahavir, like all great teachers, has a message not for any particular sect but for all humanity.

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**MUNI MAHARAJ SRI KANAKVIJAYA
WHO HAS DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO
THE SERVICE OF JAINS IN PARTICULAR
AND ALL HUMANITY IN GENERAL**

રવર્ગસ્થ ગહેન કમળાના જીવનની રૂપરેખા



ગહેન કમળાના પિતાશ્રી શેઠ. બાલાભાઈ જગનલાલ અમદાવાદમાં
હાળ પટેલની પોળમાં ખારા કુવાની પોળમાં રહેતા હતા. તેમની

માતૃશ્રીનું નામ જૂરીબ્દેન હતું તેમને ત્યાં સુપુત્રી બ્દેન કમળાને જન્મ સંવત ૧૯૬૧ ના માગશર સુદ ૧૫નો થયો માતા પિતાને કમળા બ્દેન જ સંતાનમાં હોવાથી તેઓએ તેમને ઘણા લાડથી ઉછેર્યાં; અને તેમનો સંબંધ શેઠ ડાહ્યાભાઈ ગોકળદાસના પુત્ર રમણીકભાઈ સાથે બાંધ્યો. તેમને ત્રણ પુત્રો, અને ત્રણ પુત્રીઓ છે. તેઓના નામ અનુક્રમે શ્રીમતી, રમેષશ્રંદ, પ્રીયદાન્ત, પ્રમિલા, પીયૂષકુમાર, અને પૂર્ણિમા.

બ્દેન કમળાનો સ્વભાવ ઘણો જ માયાળુ અને મીલનસાર હતો. તેઓ નિખાલસ, શાન્ત અને સાદા હતા. તેમને બાલ્યાવસ્થાથીજ ધર્મના પ્રબળ સંસ્કારો હતા. તેમને જીવ દયા તરફ અત્યંત પ્રેમ અને તીવ્ર લાગણી હતી. કોઈપણ મનુષ્યનું દુઃખ સાંભળી તેમનું હૃદય આર્દ્ર થઈ જતું.

ધર્મનું રટન કરતાં અને પંચ પરમેષ્ઠીનું સ્મરણ કરતાં સંવત ૨૦૦૦ના અષાઠ સુદ ૯ ને શુક્રવારે બપોરે ૨-૧૦ મિનિટે તેઓએ ભૌતિક દેહનો ત્યાગ કર્યો.

આવા ધાર્મિક વૃત્તિવાળા અને જીવ દયા ચુસ્ત સ્ત્રીના સ્વર્ગવાસથી સગાસંબંધી તથા મિત્રોએ એક સદ્ગુણી સ્ત્રીને ગુમાવી છે. પરંતુ જન્મેલા કોઈ પણ પ્રાણીને મૃત્યુ શરણ થવાનું છે એમ સમજી એમના સદ્ગુણોનું અનુકરણ કરી ધર્મનું આરાધન કરી જન્મનું સાર્થક કરવું એજ સારભૂત છે.

તેઓએ સમેતશીખર, જેસલમેર, પાલીતાણા, કેસરીઆજી, માકુભાઈનો સંઘ, ગીરનાર, આમુ, પંચતીથી, વિગેરે તમામ જૈન તીર્થોની યાત્રા કરી છે. તેમજ આયંમીલની ઓળી, નવાણુ, અક્ષયનીધિ તપ આદિ અનેક તપ કરેલાં

वीरः सर्वसुरासुरेन्द्रमहितो
वीरं बुधाः संश्रिताः
वीरेणाऽभिहतः स्वकर्म निचयो
वीराय नित्यं नमः
वीरात्तीर्थमिदं प्रवृत्तमतुलं
वीरस्य घोरं तपो
वीरे श्रीघृति कीर्ति कांति निचयः
श्री वीरभद्रं दिश ॥ १ ॥

MAHAVIRA

HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

CHAPTER I

Great Men

I

The great men of earth are the shadow men, who, having lived and died, now live again and forever through their undying thoughts. Thus living, though their foot-falls are heard no more, their voices are louder than thunder and unceasing as the flow of tides and air.

—BEECHER.

GREAT men are like mile-stones which mark the progress of humanity on the road to the Place of Peace.

The value and interest of history are chiefly due to the lives led and the services rendered to the world by the heroes who are enshrined in its pages.

As the stars are the glory of the sky, so great men are the glory not only of their country but also of the whole world.

Great men send out rays of silvery light which illumine the hearts of their fellow-men and help them to rise above all that is low, mean, selfish and contemptible.

Hence a person who renders even material assistance is certainly considered great; for, admittedly, he rises above himself.

Greater still are the intellectual benefactors who extend our vision, deepen and enlarge our understanding and enable us to know the right from the wrong.

But the greatest of all are the great Saviours, who, by their teachings have brought spiritual peace to the millions of this Earth.

CHAPTER II

Mahavir's Greatness.

II

No man has come to true greatness who has not felt in some degree that his life belongs to his race, and that what God gives him, He gives him for mankind.

—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

Generally it is not given to a single individual to embody more than one of the above three kinds of greatness.

But the supreme greatness of Mahavira was that his life typified all the three because he was not only a material and intellectual benefactor but also a great saviour of souls.

Mahavir was the son of a king. While many sons of kings have had hearts of clowns, Mahavir's heart was kingly too. With him giving was identical with being solicited. The ground on which he stood was the bed of the KALPA VRIKSHA and both his arms were the kindly branches of that Wishing Tree. His charities during the twelve months before his renunciation are said to have amounted to 80·8 crores of gold coins.

As an intellectual benefactor, by the supreme greatness of his mind he illumined the intellects of almost every one he had come in contact with. He purged away ignorance, spread true knowledge, and won the lasting gratitude not only of his contemporaries but also of posterity.

Thirdly, spiritually great that he was, he not merely pointed out, but also led, the way to the Place of Peace. Hence the life of such a great personality is bound to be read with great utility and interest.

CHAPTER III

Invocation.

III

In desert wilds, in midnight gloom;
In grateful joy, in trying pain;
In laughing youth, or nigh the tomb;
Oh ! when is prayer unheard or vain ?

—ELIZA COOK.

MAHAVIRA, the very word is full of sweetness and light, of love and life.

It fills the air with odours like precious perfume poured forth.

It brightens the mind with a glory of truth which dismisses all fear.

It brings delicious peace to the disturbed heart.

It gives to the soul the immortal strength of the Almighty Himself.

That name is the only answer to all our doubts, the only spring of all our courage, the only earnest of all our hopes, the Omnipotent Charm against all our foes, the only remedy for all our weaknesses, the only supply of all our wants and the perfection and fullness of all our desires.

Q. Who was Mahavir ?

A. I shall tell you.

Q. Why does his name act with such talismanic effect upon one and all that hear it ?

A. You shall read in these pages.

It is the aim of the author of this booklet to deal in very brief outline with the life and teachings of one of the greatest souls that became incarnate in flesh and blood in order to teach by precept as well as by example the path of salvation to mankind.

CHAPTER IV

Parentage

IV

With joy the parent loves to trace
 Resemblance in his children's face;
 And as he forms their docile youth
 To walk the steady paths of truth,
 Observes them shooting into men
 And lives in them life o'er again.

—LLOYD.

In the history of Northern India, the Kingdom of Magadha is celebrated in Story and Song.

More than two thousand years ago this

Kingdom was ruled by a powerful King called Chetaka who belonged to VASISTHA GOTRA. He had a sister of great beauty, intelligence and virtue; yea, she had all those distinguishing features which unequivocally indicated the destined mother of a great soul.

In the neighbourhood of Magadha, there was a small principality called Kundalpura. It was ruled by King Siddhartha, the powerful chief of a clan known as Gnatakas. He was a KASHYAPA by Gotra. By all evidence he was an extremely rich and powerful king, a noble Kshatriya, well-versed in all the arts and sciences proper for his caste.

Quite naturally, Chetaka, the great king of Magadha could not find for his sister, Trisila Devi, a better or a noble husband than King Siddhartha.

So it soon happened that King Siddhartha and Trisila became man and wife; and they lived in the enjoyment of the supreme felicity of each other's company. They had a son whom they called Nandivardhan. Soon Trisila became pregnant once again.

CHAPTER V

The Great Birth

V

The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
 Hath had else—where its setting,
 And cometh from afar;
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
 But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
 From God, Who is our Home.

WORDSWORTH.

When a great soul is about to become incarnate on earth in flesh and blood, numerous indications appear clearly to the eye of Wisdom.

Did not the wise men of Bethlehem foresee the nativity of the Son of God? Was it not also the case when Lord Krishna was about to be born? Similarly there were numerous signs or indications that a great birth was about to take place in the palace of Kundalapura.

Trisila had some of the sweetest and most auspicious dreams of her life. Wise men interpreted the dreams as betokening the imminent birth of a Great Immortal.

The wealth, power and glory of the royal

family began to multiply many-fold. Hidden treasures and mines of precious metals and precious stones were discovered in the different parts of the kingdom. Great prosperity was experienced by the high and the low throughout the land of Kundalpura.

Thus when one and all of the constellations had assumed the best aspects, Trisila painlessly gave birth to the healthy child whom she had borne for nine months and seven and a half days. It was on the 13th day of the bright fortnight of the month of CHAITRA.

CHAPTER VI

Universal Rejoicings

VI

We ring the bells
and we raise the strain
We hang up garlands everywhere
And bid the tapers twinkle fair,
And feast and frolic —

For there has been a great birth.

The news of the birth spread like wild fire across the length and breadth of Kundalpura.

The people of Kundalpura (Kshatriya Kund) celebrated the birth of the prince with all the pomp

and grandeur which indicated the extent of their love and respect for their great ruler.

Even the angels above seemed over-joyed at the birth of a soul which was destined to become a great Saviour of mankind.

King Siddhartha's heart became inflated with intense delight and words of joy and benediction flowed down his lips. He sent for his police officers and ordered a general release of all the state prisoners.

The City was most beautifully decorated. All kinds of talent were extensively rewarded by the king. The poor received gifts which made them forget their poverty. The king remitted numerous taxes and cancelled the debts which the people had owed him. In the palace, the birth was celebrated in the traditional fashion with all the attendant rites and ceremonies.

CHAPTER VII

The Naming Ceremony

VII

He that is ambitious for his son
 Should give him untried names;
 For those have served other men,
 haply may injure by their evils.

—TUPPER.

After all the festivities, when the day arrived for giving a suitable name to the new-born, King Siddharth addressing his numerous guests said, "Even from the very day that my queen conceived this boy there has been a general increase of prosperity not only in my family but throughout my kingdom. So let the boy be named Vardhamana."

It is not out of place here to refer to the various other names by which he is indicated.

Vira, Ati Vira, Sanmati are also the names by which he is referred to in some of the Jain Shastras.

He is also known as Gnataputra because he was the leader of the Gnatrikas, a clan of kshatriyas.

The Buddhists called him Nataputta for the reason that he was the head of the Niganthas or Jaina monks.

He was endowed with unlimited courage and capacity for the practice of severe austerities. So he was named Sramana.

Last but not the least important is the name Mahavira. by which he is universally known. He stood unmoved like a rock in the midst of dangers and terrors; and he was gifted with

heroic valour. Hence he was given the significant name of Mahavira.

CHAPTER VIII

Early Years

VIII

Ye tiny elves, that guilt-less sport
 Like linnets in the bush
 Ye little know the ill ye court,
 When manhood is your wish.
 The losses, the crosses,
 That active men engage;
 The fears all, the tears all,
 Of dim declining age.

—BURNS.

Mahavira inherited from his parents all that was good and praise worthy in them.

Indeed he had the manly valour of his father and the extraordinary personal beauty and charms of his mother.

The boy hood of Mahavira was a perfect illustration of the saying, "The Childhood shows the man as the morning shows the day."

King Siddhartha entrusted him to the care of the best nurses in his realm. Each of them had a duty specially assigned to her and nothing

foul either to the eye or the ear was allowed to reach him.

Mahavira took active part in all the sports which were commonly indulged in by the children of his age.

Undoubtedly, he was the acknowledged leader of all the young boys who lived in the neighbourhood of the palace of King Siddhartha. He led them for sports into the huge gardens attached to the king's palace; and at some other times, he led them away into the surrounding grounds where they generally played to their heart's content.

An incident which happened at this time illustrates his courage and strength which brought him the title of VIRA.

One day, while he was playing about in the company of the other boys, a demon-like elephant ran amok in the street. All the other boys shrieked in terror and took to their heels calling Mahavira to follow them at once. But Mahavira courageously encountered the elephant, and having soon brought it under control, began to ride on its back with the triumphant aspect of a victor.

Such was Mahavira in his boy-hood days.

CHAPTER IX

Education.

IX

Every man has two educations—that which is given to him and that which he gives himself. Of the two kinds, the latter is by far the more valuable. Indeed all that is most valuable in a man, he must work out and conquer for himself.

—RICHTER.

Once a great thinker of the 19th century was asked, “At what age should a child’s education begin?”

The answer was, “Before the child is born.”

Paradoxical as the answer may be, modern educationists have come to realise the quintessence of truth and wisdom which underlay it.

In this connection, I can not help remarking that King Siddhartha was not only aware of this great principle of education but also practised it in the case of his own son whose life is delineated here.

We are informed that during her pregnancy, the Queen was under the care of the best persons that could be found in the land. Women of vast

education and deep culture were in constant attendance upon the Queen. The purest objects and sources of amusement were provided for her. She was, in those days a constant reader of poetry and the religious scriptures. She frequently took part in literary and theological discussions which were held in her presence. Dancing and music were her recreations.

It can not be doubted that all this attention paid to the queen had its effect on the child she was carrying. Thus it would appear to be no wonder that even as a child, Mahavira was a well-developed Soul.

So early in life as at the age of eight, he is described as having been highly intelligent, widely learned, gifted with extensive AVADHI GNANA, possessed of the rare blessing of a clear memory of his previous lives and not lacking an extraordinary ability to endure pain.

Ancient Jain literature records a most interesting anecdote about the schooling of Mahavira.

At the age of eight, according to the established custom of those times, Mahavira was taken to a primary school which was conducted by one of the most learned men in the whole

kingdom. It was indeed a great day of joy and feasting.

It was the occasion for the gathering together of all the kith and kin of the royal family; and with rich presents to the GURU, Mahavira entered the school premises at the auspicious moment.

There, to the wonder of his teacher and all the assembled people, Mahavira answered questions which even the most learned had, till then, attempted in vain. Further, he removed the lingering doubts of the preceptor himself, who stood aghast in wonderment.

Thus it would appear that, with little or no aid from teachers, Mahavira had enlarged the world of his knowledge to the furthestmost extent.

CHAPTER X

Marriage and Progeny

X

We, by sweet experience, know
That marriage, rightly understood,
Gives to the tender and the good,
A paradise below.

—COTTON.

Ah ! what would the world be to ~~the world~~
 If children were no more ?
 We should dread the desert behind us
 Worse than the dark before.

—LONGFELLOW.

Years rolled by and Prince Mahavira grew up to be a noble youth. Popular reports carried his fame far and wide to the courts of kings and princes. Rulers of states with daughters of marriageable age began to cast longing eyes at Prince Mahavira for their son-in-law.

Not a day passed without the arrival of at least one messenger from a foreign court at the palace of Kundalpura with the offer a princess as bride for the son of King Siddhartha.

Trisila Devi, like all mothers of great sons was anxious to have an excellent daughter-in-law.

A few intimate friends were set about Mahavira to find out his views on marriage and the leanings of his heart.

Mahavira began to argue with them about the blessedness of the state of celibacy and the sorrows of matrimony.

Just then, Trisila Devi entered the room and by opening the flood-gates of her maternal affection swept away all opposition from the

heart of Mahavira. He said to her, " Then I shall marry if only to please my parents. "

Soon after, Mahavira married the daughter of King Samaravira and Queen Padmavati of Vasantapur. Yasoda was the name of the Princess; and the celebration took place with all pomp, grandeur and ceremony. It is described as a sight which gladdened the hearts, not only of human beings but also, of demi-gods and gods.

CHAPTER XI

Mahavira as a House-holder

All of a tenor was their after-life,
No day discoloured with domestic strife;
No jealousy, but mutual truth believed,
Secure repose, and kindness undeceived.

—DRYDEN.

Not many details are available about the life led by Mahavira as a house-holder.

As he was endowed with the most delicate sentiments and sensibilities, it is certain that he would do nothing which would either directly or indirectly distress his wife in the least.

Virtuous, sincere and honest, the famous son of Siddhartha was also the most devoted of husbands.

A few years elapsed during which Mahavira discharged his duties as a house-holder. But all the while, he was preparing himself for his great mission in life.

In the mean time, Yasoda Devi was in the family way and presented Mahavira with a daughter who was later on named Priyadarshani. She was also known as Anoja.

To conclude this part of the story, Priyadarshani was married to Jamali, who later on became a disciple of Mahavira. A daughter was born of this marriage and was known as Yasovati.

CHAPTER XII

In the world but not of the world

Stone-walls do not a prison make

Nor iron bars a cage;

Minds, innocent and quiet, take

That for a hermitage.

—LOVELACE.

Thus it would appear that Mahavira was living the life generally led by the great princes of those days. He was sucking out of life every drop of virtuous pleasure that this world could afford.

But it must be remarked here that Mahavira, though he was in the world, was not of

the world. Though he drank in the pleasures of life, the pleasures did not drink him up. Sometimes a thought would flash upon his mind that he was born with a mission in life. But he would say to himself, "Not yet," and again the waves of worldly life would begin their incessant flow and ebb.

The idea, that he was born to become an instrument for the Spiritual uplift of mankind and that the time was fast approaching when he should wake up from his sleep of worldliness, became more and more persistent and all-absorbing as he neared the age of thirty years.

CHAPTER XIII

That Fine Delicacy of Feeling

Gentle feelings produce profoundly beneficial effects. It is the spring-rain that melts the ice-covering of the earth and causes it to open to the beams of Heaven.

—FREDRIKA BREMER.

At about this time, one day, Mahavir felt that there must be a parting of ways in the course of his life. He thought of Renunciation. But his mother could ill bear the very idea. The son is ever too young to his mother.

She began to plead with him against the idea of renunciation. He was too young, too delicate, too inexperienced for the hard life of a SANYASIN, she said. Her motherly eye could never behold him practising the austerities of penance and prayer.

Mahavira tried to impress upon her mind the great truths about the emptiness of worldly pleasure, the supremacy of the Spirit over the body, the great goal of NIRVANA and the necessity of renunciation for its attainment.

But she advanced the argument of tears which he could hardly meet. He agreed not to become a Sanyasin during the life-time of both his parents.

CHAPTER XIV

Not Yet !

Patience, my Lord ! why, it is the soul
of peace;
Of all the virtues, it is nearest kin to Heaven;
It makes men look like gods; the best of men;
That ever wore earth about him, was a
sufferer;
A Soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit,
The first true gentleman that ever breathed.

—DECKER.

His parents died and Mahavira began to think seriously of translating his resolution into action.

But that was not to be so soon.

Nandivardhan, the elder brother of Mahavira and the first-born of King Siddhartha, was disconsolate. The death of both his parents almost at the same time shocked him not a little; and when Mahavira informed him of his determination of renunciation, he was over—whelmed by dejection and despair.

He said to Mahavira, "Brother, both our parents are just dead. That gave me grief poignant enough; then the onerous duties of King—ship have fallen on my weak shoulders; and I almost despair of discharging them satisfactorily. Now you want to leave me! How can I bear such a rapid succession of sorrows! Please do not leave me now; stand by me and help me to stand up."

Mahavira was deeply touched by the words of Nandivardhan. Further, his own wife, Yashoda, stood before him, her eyes darting forth meaningful looks.

Only he who has ever loved with a full heart can understand the oratory of the eye,

the mute eloquence of a look or the persuasive power of a loving face. Love's most significant thoughts are unspoken. The full heart knows no rhetoric of words. It resorts only to the pantomime of sighs and glances.

Mahavira looked now at his brother and then at his wife. His heart moved like a pendulum betwixt the ideal and the actual.

He began to think. By means of his three-fold knowledge——MATI, SHRUTI and AVADHI GNAN —— he knew that the full span of his earthly existence was of 72 years. He was only twenty-eight years old. He could wait for two years more, he thought.

Then he said to his brother, "For another two years, I shall stay with you in this palace." Yashoa shed tears of joy and Nandi Vardhan embraced his brother in thankfulness.

XV

Mahavira & Buddha.

And I read the moral—A brave endeavour
To do thy duty, whatever its worth,
Is better than life with love for ever—
And love is the sweetest thing on earth.

—J. J. ROCHE.

Would we codify the laws that should reign in house-holds and whose daily transgression annoys and mortifies us and degrades our household life, we must adorn every day with sacrifices.

—EMERSON.

Before proceeding further, it may be interesting to contemplate the manner in which Gautama Buddha, the contemporary of Mahavira renounced the world.

Gautama determined on leaving his royal house-hold; he spoke not a word about his resolve to any one.

At mid-night, he got up from beside his beloved princess, cast a last look at her and his little child who slept there and went forth in search of enlightenment.

But Mahavira, as we have seen, was, anxious not to pain the hearts he was leaving behind. His parents were happy to the end of their lives. He pacified his brother; he reconciled his wife to the idea of his renunciation. He allowed them two years to prepare for the hour, when he was to become a Sanyasin.

Thus there is a severe austerity about Gautama Buddha while we find a supremely human element in Mahavira. Buddha was for us; but Mahavira was of us.

CHAPTER XVI

Two Years After

If we do not know what the sorrow of penitence is, we have been living only on the surface of life ———— unmindful of its deep realities, unconscious of its grand glories.

—F. D. HUNTINGDON.

During the two years which followed the decease of his parents, Mahavira, was no doubt, externally a house-holder; but in thought, word and deed, he was an ascetic.

He observed perfect celibacy, spent long hours in prayer, to and contemplation of, the Supreme; paid very little care or attention to the needs of the flesh; and ate only the food which he had received free from his fellowmen. He exercised perfect self-control; and his life, in fact, was such as put many sages to shame.

At the end of two years, Mahavira determined on Varshika Mahadana (the giving of valuable gifts for a whole year).

It has been very wisely said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be."

When a rich man wanted to become a disciple of Christ, the latter said to him, "Go

home, distribute thy wealth among the poor, take up the cross and follow me."

Following the same principle, Mahavira spent a whole year, day in and day out, giving away his wealth to one and all that came to ask for alms. The poor, from far and near, were fed on a scale almost unimaginable to the human mind, and each received gifts which destroyed his poverty for his life-time.

Every one, who came and received, blessed the hand that bestowd.

Thus at the end of twelve months of uninterrupted charity, Mahavira commenced his ascetic life with the object of speedily showing the benighted world the path of emancipation from the maladies and sorrows which abound here under the Sun.

It was on the 10th day, in the dark fortnight of the month of Margasira that, leaving his palace, he went outside the city to a park named Shandavana.

Great crowds of loving people followed him there. In their presence, he made a public renunciation of all worldly attachments.

Then he tore away the hair from his head by the handfuls and took the five great vows.

Having done these, he entered upon a life of penance which was to last for twelve years.

CHAPTER XVII

Twelve years of Penance.

Let come what will, I mean to bear it out,
 And either live with glorious victory
 Or die with fame, renowned for chivalry :
 He is not worthy of the honey-comb,
 That shuns the hive because the bees
 have stings.

—SHAKESPEARE.

“ I shall not think about or care for my body. I shall concentrate all the powers of my Mind, Soul and Spirit on the attainment of that perfection which alone can entitle me to be a true teacher of humanity and the pointer of the right path to Salvation. Come one, Come all, O Sorrows, Pains and Miseries of this world !

“ May the Lord so guide me that I shall not break ! ” With this resolution Mahavira started his twelve years of penance and prayer.

For twelve years he travelled from place to place leading the hard and precarious life of a house-less Jain Muni. He did not set foot on the earth during the rainy season because Jain Munis are forbidden travelling during that period of four months. It is known as CHATURMAS.

But the other eight months did not find the Lord in any one place.

It is not necessary to chronicle the details of these travels. Precise, instructive and interesting descriptions are to be found in the Jaina Shastras.

But two incidents, which happened at this time, are quite characteristic of the great teacher. They have inspired many great men of later times. So a brief mention of them is necessary here.

CHAPTER XVIII

Resist Not Evil.

There was never yet philosopher that could endure the tooth-ache patiently, however they have writ the style of gods and make a pish at chance and sufferance.

SHAKESPEARE.

It so happened that Mahavira reached the town of Kumaragaon where he was an entire stranger, and finding a suitable place for meditation sat down and fell into a trance. His entire being was switched on to the Great Maker and the body merely reclined against the trunk of a tree but it was insensitive.

It was a public common and some cow-herds

were grazing their cows all around him. All on a sudden, they were called off into the village by an urgent message and they cried out to the body of Mahavira " O Stranger, keep an eye on our cows till we return. "

Mahavira heard them not; and the rustics mistook his silence for consent and went away.

On their return after some time, they did not find the cows there, for they had strayed to the very edge of the common.

So they were deeply enraged and set about beating and torturing the senseless body of the Greatest spiritual teacher of all time; but the Lord neither moved nor spoke; for he was so deeply absorbed in his meditation that physical pain touched him not.

Soon, as the Lord returned to consciousness, there were passing that way a few acquaintances of his; and they immediately rebuked the cowherds informing them of the identity of their great victim. The Lord, out of the ocean of mercy which filled his heart, pardoned the rustic cowherds and again moved out on his travels.

Historians and biographers relate similar incidents in the lives of other great heroes and teachers of mankind.

It was at a cemetery called Devoktamukta near Ujjain. Mahavira sat in deep meditation on the sorrows of the world and his own mission

on Earth. Rudra and his wife Parvati, it appears, took it into their heads to test the Lord's powers of endurance. They tried all means to tempt him out of his meditation; but Mahavira had so thoroughly annihilated the longings of the flesh and the cravings of the senses that all the efforts of Rudra and his spouse were in vain. They were so well satisfied and pleased that they praised the Lord and wished him and his mission success.

Christ had his temptations; indeed what great teacher had not to resist them and prove his fitness for his mission on Earth !

The path to Greatness is paved with temptations !

Soon after, he attained the Manhparyaya Gnan, the fourth one which extended his power of knowledge not a little.

As months rolled into years, Mahavira went on performing one penance after another and extending more and more the power of his soul and the strength of his spirit.

Thus at the end of twelve years of penance, the severest recorded in the annals of human history, he attained Kevalgyan, omniscience, the highest type of knowledge, which knew no

limits, which felt no barriers, which was infinite. His body was no more a clog on his spirit. He was spiritual, body and soul.

CHAPTER XX

Thirty Years of Travel and Preaching.

The world is a great book, of which they that never stir from home read only a page.

St. AUGUSTINE.

Does the road wind up-hill all the way ?

Yes, to the very end.

Will the day's journey take the whole long day ?

From morn to night, my friend.

CHRISTIANA ROSETTI.

Thus having attained Kevalgyan or omniscience and finished his preparation, Mahavira entered upon his life's mission. He was no more a Sadhaka; he was now a Siddha; he was a Jina, a conqueror. He alone could preach the doctrine of Jainism, the Way of conquering the lower self and attaining self-realization or Moksha or Salvation.

It is said about Mahomed that his first disciple was his wise; and today there are millions of Moslems scattered throughout the world. The first disciple of Mahavira was Gautama Indrabhuti. The great teacher first preached his

doctrine to him. The effect was marvellous. Gautama became the most enthusiastic follower of Mahavira and remained with him till the last when the Lord attained Nirvana.

Then Mahavira preached to the people in the neighbourhood. The torch of knowledge lighted their hearts and minds; and they were converted.

Then the Lord began his travels across the length and breadth of Hindusthan preaching his doctrines, making converts and bringing peace and hope to the hearts and minds of the suffering millions.

I can not do better than reproduce a brief description of these travels prepared by Mr. M. C. Jaini on the basis on the Jain authorities and Shastras.

Mahavira travelled through many parts of India and preached the high doctrines of Jainism and Nirvana to people professing different creeds and religions.

It was his earnest desire that people should give up their wrong beliefs and follow the true path to happiness.

He preached on both sides of the Ganges. First, he preached in Magadha and the country

round Kundalpura, where he received due greeting.

From Magadha he preceeded to Behar where he visited Shravasti, Vaishati and many other places. He is said to have extended his travels even to the foot of the Himalayas.

In Videha, he was patronised by Chetaka, the ruling chief of that country.

Kunika, the king of Anga also welcomed him as a great teacher.

Shantaneeka, the ruler of Kaushambi, who had heard much about his severe penances and noble teachings, paid homage to the great teacher and entered the Holy Order.

During these thirty years Mahavira is said to have converted to Jainism many powerful kingdoms of Northern India including Magadha, Behar, Prayag, Kaushambi, Champauri.

But the place where he spent a large part of his life was Rajgriha, the capital of Magadha.

An interesting incident which happened during Mahavira's stay at Rajagriha cannot be omitted even in an out-line of his travels.

Shrenika, the powerful king of Magadha, having heard of the arrival of the great

preacher in his capital went over to him with all his ministers and generals. He was charmed with the religious splendour of the Lord and the great assembly of devotees of both sexes. He is said to have put sixty thousand questions to Mahavira and received most satisfactory answers before joining the Holy Order.

Thus travelling from place to place with the whole of his order of ascetics, preaching the philosophy of KARMA and converting kingdom after kingdom to Jainism, Mahavira passed the last thirty years of his life.

CHAPTER XXI

Nirvana.

The day without a cloud had passed
And thou wert lovely to the last;
Extinguished, not decayed !
As stars that shoot along the sky
Shine brightest as they fall from high.

—BYRON.

Can that man be dead
Whose spiritual influence is upon his kind ?
He lives in glory; and his speaking dust
Has more of life than half its breathing
moulds.

—MISS LANDON.

At last we have reached the end of our story and the golden key is about to turn opening the palace of Eternity to admit the greatest moral and spiritual teacher of all time.

Mahavira preached the word of God for thirty years along the length and breadth of India. He had eleven disciples who were the most enthusiastic missionaries of his doctrines. They were like the twelve apostles of Christ; and each of them was the leader of a school with numerous Munis as members. They were, all the eleven, converts to Jainism; and they had a total following of about fourteen thousand eight hundred munis. There were also thirty-six thousand nuns who had entered the order or Mahavira led by CHANDANA, a relative of the teacher, who was among the first to receive the teachings of Mahavira. Lastly there were about one hundred and fifty nine thousand lay followers of the male sex and three hundred thousand of the female sex. Thus the teachings of the Lord spread far and wide.

Pavapuri is a lovely place about seven miles from Behar. The ruler of the place was Hastipal, a patron of Mahavira; and Lord Mahavira arrived there in the month of KARTIKA. He preached there for seven days in the presence of almost

all the ruling chiefs who had specially come there from the surrounding country. There were present many of his disciples and followers, princes and beggars, wise men and the ignorant, of all castes—all anxious to pay their homage to Mahavira.

It was the 15th day of the first half Kartika. The Lord preached for almost the whole night; and then every one went to sleep.

But Mahavira was quite awake. He knew that his end had come; and when it was twilight, his noble soul shuffled off its mortal coil and attained Nirvana or salvation.

CHAPTER XXII

Character and Teachings.

Character is the product of daily, hourly actions and words and thoughts, daily forgiveness unselfishness, kindnesses, sympathies, charities, sacrifices for the good of others, struggles against temptation, submissiveness under trial. Oh ! it is these, like the blending colours in a picture or the blending notes of music, which constitute the man.

J. R. MACDUFF.

Mahavira was one of the most handsome persons who ever walked upon this earth.

His was not the soft and delicate beauty of elegant royalty; but it was the noble grandeur and striking presence of a heroic figure of proved strength. He was indeed a lion.

It is not always that a beautiful body houses a rich and beautiful mind. But the intellectual excellence of Mahavira was felt even when he was a mere boy.

The moral and spiritual greatness of Mahavira was an impregnable tower against which the waves of worldliness and temptation beat in vain.

His knowledge was infinite as he was master of all the five sources of knowledge——
Mati, Shruti, Avadhi, Manapharyaya and Keval Gyan.

His culture was like-wise deep and boundless because he had educated himself not in schools, at the feet of masters but by means of the practice of Yoga.

He was one of the most powerful speakers that had ever stood before an audience. He spoke with all the forcefulness of truth which carried ready conviction to the hearts of his hearers.

His patience was deep as the ocean; his forbearance stood unmoved by the evils of the world even as the eternal Himalayas.

Mahavira was indeed, as his name indicates endowed with great physical courage. Add to it the moral and spiritual courage which found their abode in his heart.

The supreme lesson of "AHIMSA" rings out from every chapter of his life. He believed in non-violence not merely in action but also in thought and word.

Finally the excellent purity of his life and the noble example of his career have had a magical effect upon every one who had come in contact with him or read an account of his life.

CHAPTER XXIII

END.

A man improves more by reading the story of an eminent person than by the finest rules and precepts of morality.

ADDISON.

Now we are almost at the end of our story. But how difficult it is to tear away from a

subject so attractive and ennobling as the life of the greatest PRINCE OF SUFFERING AND SACRIFICE !

The aim of this booklet is only to kindle a desire in the heart of the reader for a deeper and wider study of the life and teachings of Mahavira.

If after reading this booklet the reader should feel even the slightest curiosity for a glance at a wider page, the author will feel that his labour has been amply rewarded.

E N D.

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