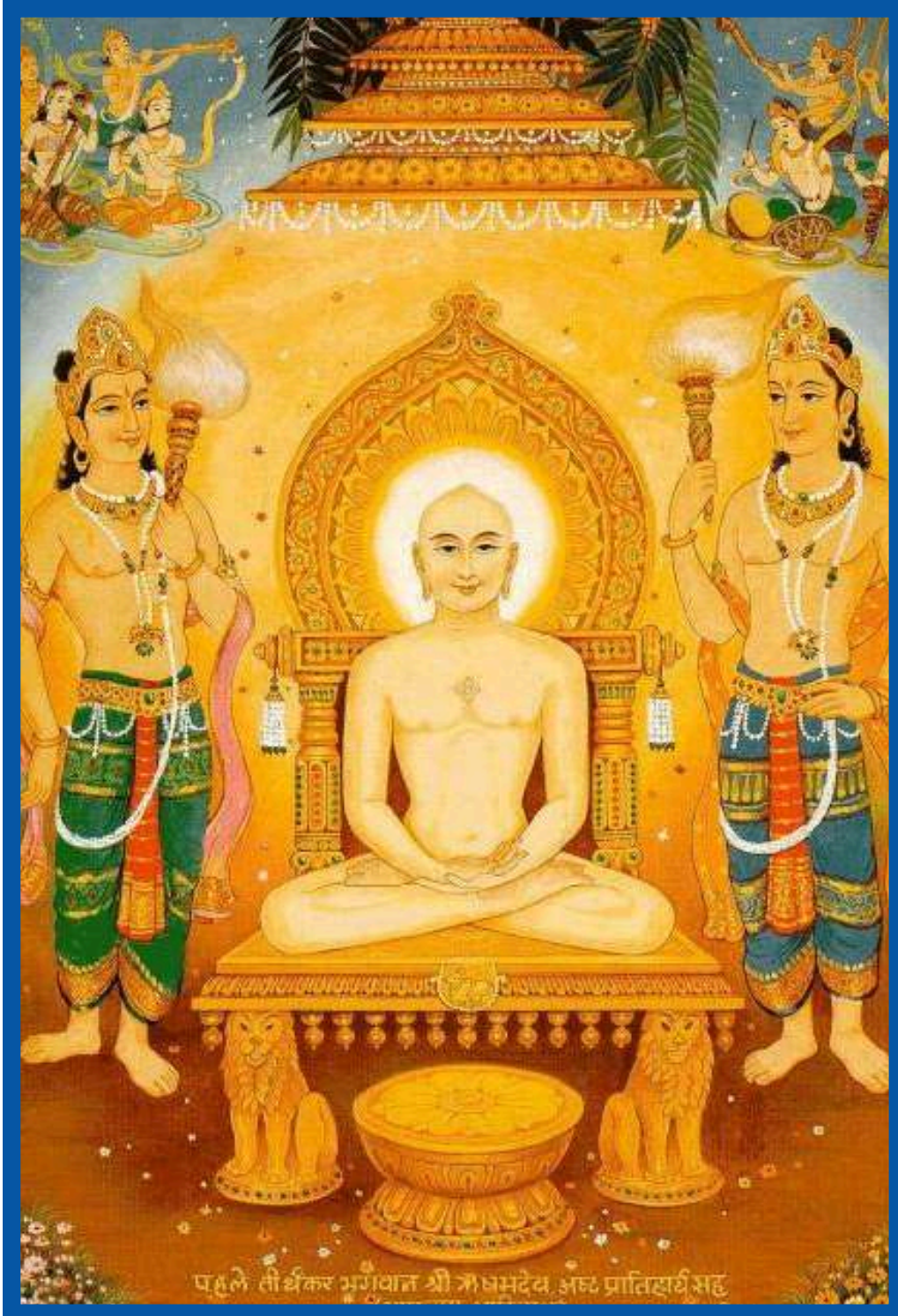


ADINATH BHAGWAN



As the first Tirthankara of the current Chauvisi – 24 Tirthankaras, Adinath is greatly revered by all Jains. Adinath, in Sanskrit means 'First Lord'. He is also referred to by other names including Rushabhdev, Rishabdev, Rishabh, Adishwar, Rishabhdeva, Adishvar, Vṛṣabhanātha, Ṛṣabhadeva, Ṛṣabhanātha, mata Marudevi na nand.

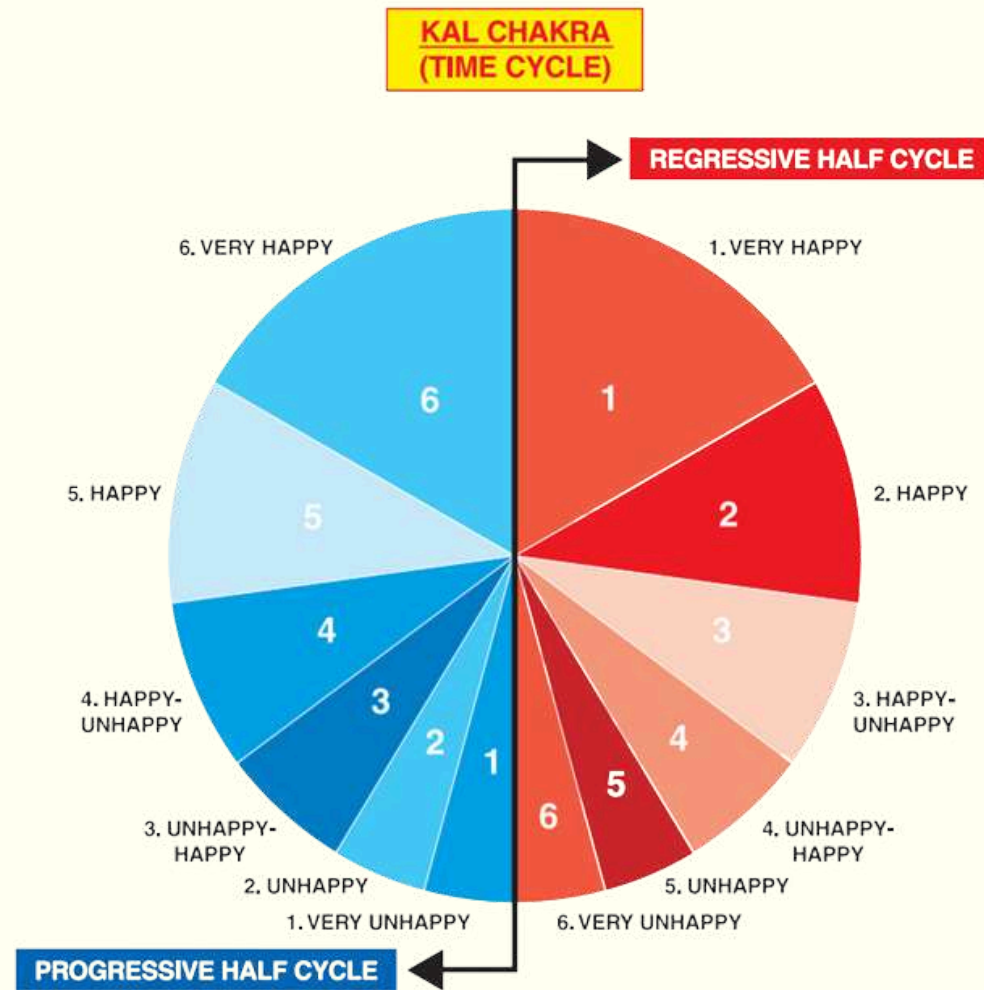


Jain chronology places him in almost immeasurable antiquity in the past. He was born at the end of the third period in the current regressive half cycle of time (Avasarpini). The details of his life are given in the Mahapurana and Padmapurana of the Jainas are corroborated by the Hindu Purans like the Bhagavat and Shivapurana. He is mentioned as an incarnation of God Vishnu in Bhagwat Puran.



There is copious evidence that he was worshiped in the Indus Valley civilizations. In the excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, nude images of a male ascetics standing in Kayotsarga posture and seals with emblem of bulls (bull being the symbol of Adinath) have been found. From the evidence gathered from numerous finds, scholars conclude that the Indus Valley Civilisation was a pre-Aryan civilisation with the Ahimsa cult. From the absence of any weapons, scholars have reasoned that there might not have been wars and that the state administration was probably founded on the principle of non-violence. Prof N L Kachhara has stated that "it is a good augury that such archaeological discoveries and other evidences are gradually favouring the Jaina tradition of its antiquity."





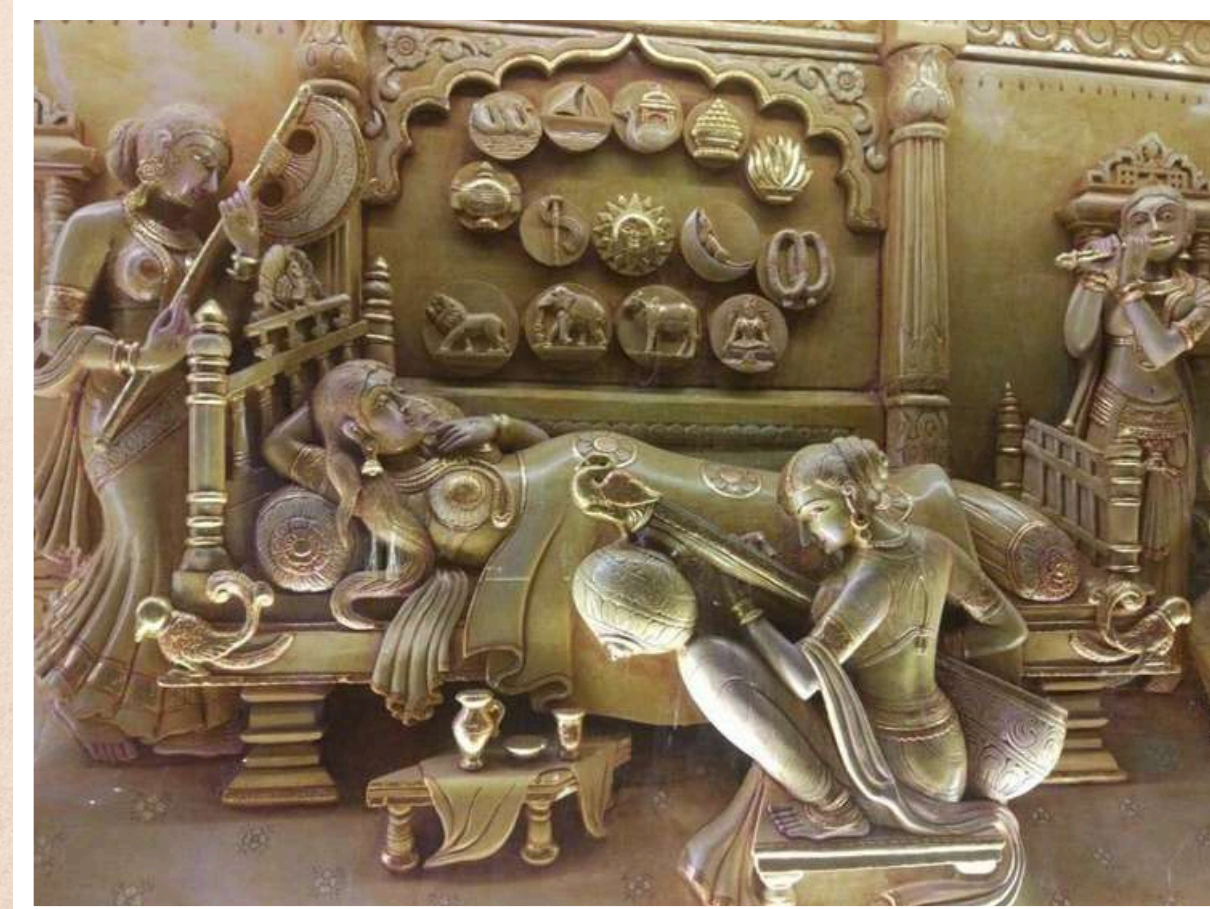
“The cause of change is time
Which flows like a water stream
This cycle of time of twelve periods
is always on the move

In the age of Avasarpini
Matter is systematically destroyed
In the age of Utsarpini
Matter is systematically built”

According to Jaina tradition, the cycle of time is beginningless and endless, but there are cycles of time. It is divided into two half cycles known as ‘descending’ – avasarpini and ascending – utsarpini, which are then subdivided into six additional fixed time periods (aras) respectively and each period’s name indicates the condition of life that predominates in each one, ranging from extremely happy to extremely unhappy.

During the first three Aras of the current descending cycle, the ten wish-fulfilling trees known as *Kalpa-vrikshas* yielded all that man needed or desired. It was also known as the epoch of twins (Yugalia). A human couple used to give birth to twins – one male and one female. This twin would become husband and wife on reaching adulthood. The twins used to lead a happy and contented life and died a natural death together. To consume what was available was the way of life. As such this period was also known as *Bhog-Bhumi-Kaal* or the era of free consumption.

With the passage of time gradual changes occurred and around the end of the third Ara the power of the *Kalpa-vrikshas* diminished. The all-round deterioration in conditions spelled the beginning of quarrels and disputes, which required the establishment of laws. According to Svetambaras, seven Kula Karas – *lawgivers or patriarchs* appeared one after the other. Nabhiraja was the seventh and the last in the line of Kula Karas. His wife was Marudevi



One day, during the last part of the third Ara of the current descending cycle of time, Marudevi sees fourteen auspicious dreams that announced the birth of a great and pious soul destined to be a Tirthankara. When Nabhiraja heard about these dreams from Maudevi, he said, "Devi! You will give birth to a highly endowed soul who will show the path of peace and happiness to this world”.

On completion of the pregnancy period, Marudevi gave birth to twins – son and daughter. The whole world was delighted at the birth of a soul destined to be a Tirthankara. Peace prevailed everywhere. 56 Dik Kumaris celebrated the birth and 64 Indras performed the post birth anointing rituals on Mount Meru. This was the first and start of tradition of celebrating a birth of a Tirthankara known as Janma Kalyanak Ceremony.



The boy was named Rsabha as he bore the mark of a bull on his thigh and his mother – Marudevi – saw a bull in her first dream, whilst the twin daughter was named Sumangala. As the baby Rsabha was fond of sugar cane (ikshu), the family was formally named as 'Ikshvaku' – signifying the beginning of the Ikshvaku Clan.

The Jaina philosophy does not believe in incarnation of God. All mundane beings are born with some imperfectness. Though Rishabdev was also one of such being, even whilst in his mother's womb, possessed three types of knowledge – *Matijnana* (sensory knowledge), *Shrutjnana* (scriptural knowledge) and *Avadhijnana* (clairvoyance knowledge). His intention or insight (*praynae*) had been awakened since birth. There was something unique, something extraordinary about him.

Rishabdev marriage to Sunanda, whose twin died in an accident (said to be the first accidental death to take place in this half time cycle), marked the beginning of the marriage system. He was also married to his twin Sumangala, in a ceremony arranged by the Gods. Sumangala gave birth to Bharat, Brahmi and ninety-eight other sons, whilst Sunanda gave birth to Bahubali and Sundari.

“The one who experiences the other's grief
As intensely as his own
To him comes the mighty honour
of leading society to the fore
For the people of this land, today,
Rishabha's guidance is a must
on him rests the charge of giving
to this new age, the right direction”

It became apparent that the deteriorating of morals and world conditions in general required more than KulaKara and by popular demand, Rishabdev was crowned as the first King of this era. He laid down and followed the path of Ahimsa and truth. A beautiful city named Vanita was built – later it became popularly known as Ayodhya.

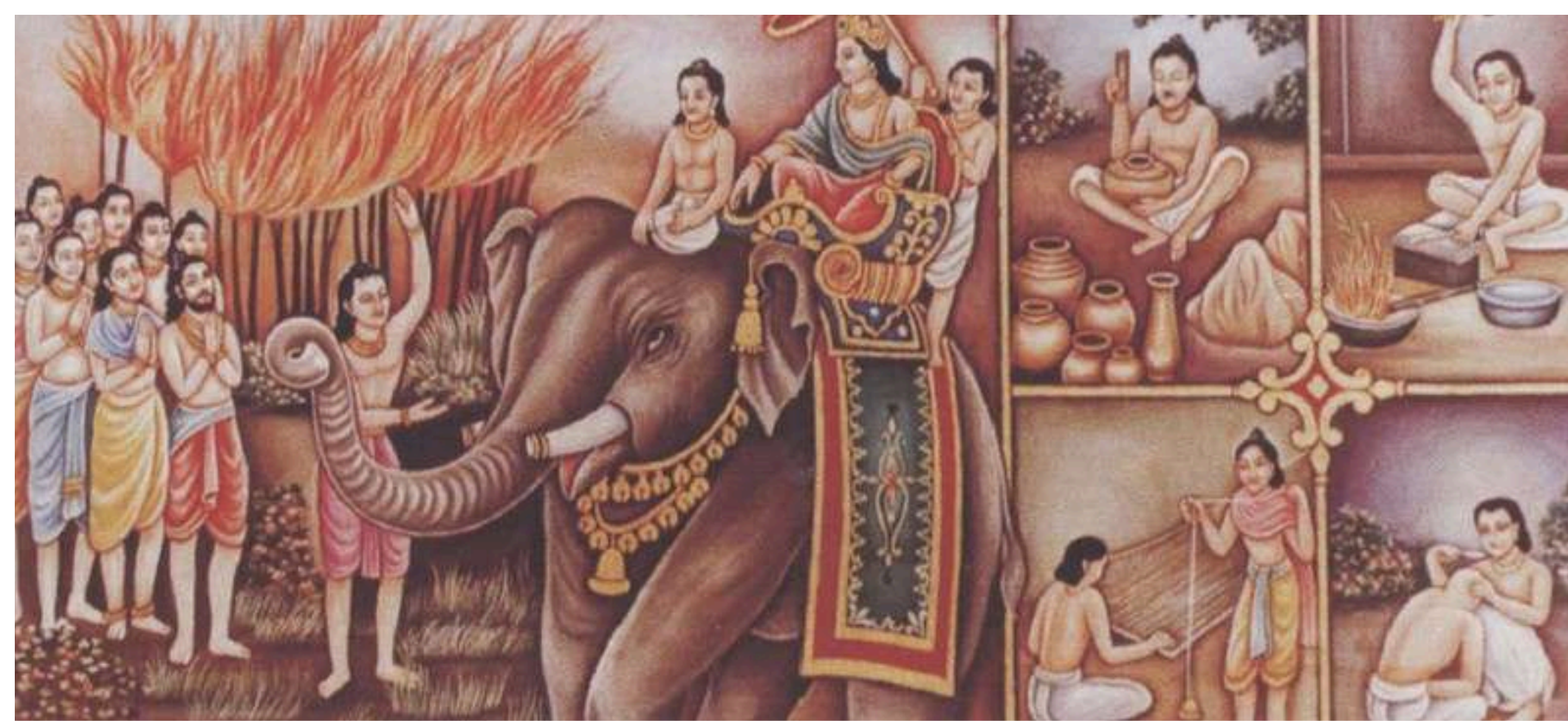
Rishabdev was a highly endowed, farsighted, and industrious individual. He had a profound insight into the human psychology. Looking at the needs of the times and society he evolved numerous arts, crafts and trades and taught them to people with right aptitude and physical and mental capacities. He laid the foundation, of civic life and taught men how to co-operate with one another for mutual benefits.

Rishabdev taught 72 arts to his eldest son – Bharat, 'Iksan Vidya' to his younger son – Bahubali, eighteen scripts to his elder daughter – Brahmi and mathematics to Sundari. By introducing and teaching writing, painting, music, archery, economics, medicine, sports etc, he made the people well organised and cultured.



Pratima of
Tirthankara Adinath (Rushabhdev)
at Shatrunjaya Mahatirth, Palitana
in Padmasan mudra.





The discovery of fire opened the door for unprecedented development. The crafts of making pots and pans, instruments, tools, clothes, and pictures developed. Making pots and pans became necessary for cooking food. Instruments and tools were required for farming and for building houses. So, the craft of iron came into existence. The social life gave birth to the craft of making clothes and to architecture. The craft of the barbers was introduced to cut hair and nails. All these five crafts came into existence after the discovery of fire.



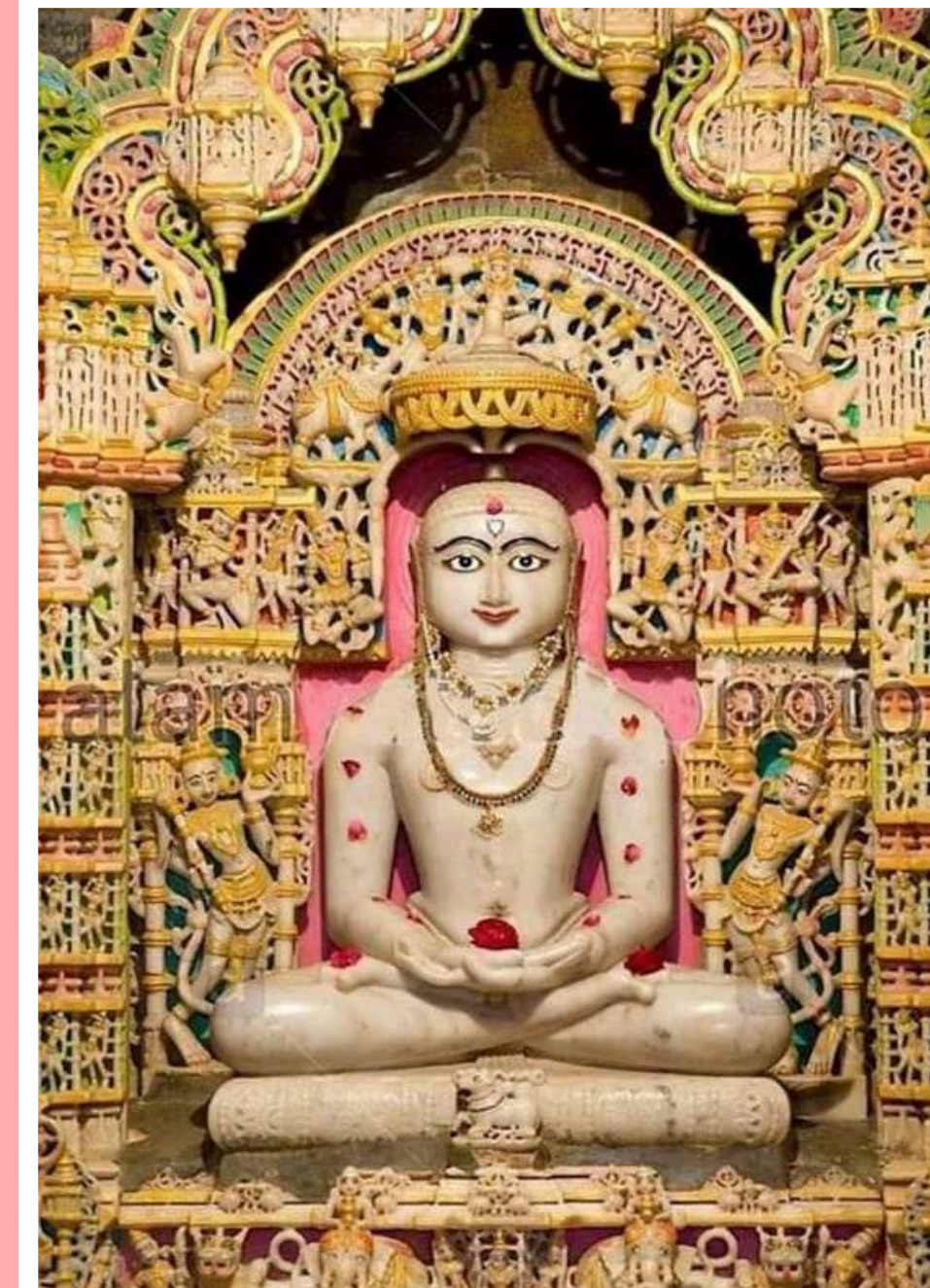
“Self-discipline before disciplining others
was the fundamental mantra of governance
Rishabha was under control
Because of his own self-discipline”

“The dignity and qualities of the Adipurusha
Lent pride to the society whole
On every head as though there was
Ornamented a crown of flowers”

(Rishabha is referred as Adipurusha – first man
– not physically but as the one who taught the
way of world to humanity)

He divided the society into broadly three occupational groups – farming and trading (Vaishya); soldiers (Kshtriya) and others doing a variety of services were known as Shudra. The fourth group known as Brahmins came into existence during the reign of his son Bharat.

According to Jain tradition, it is stated that after a long span of time (6.3 million purva), King Rishabdev's interest in mundane things and activities declined. One day, whilst watching a performance, a dancer fell down and died. Stunned by the realisation that nothing in life lasts forever, Adinath began introspecting and detaching himself from worldly affairs. He decided to spend his life in search of lasting happiness. He renounced his kingdom, dividing it between his children, and took diksha and became an ascetic.



ADINATH BHAGWAN

After one year of meritorious charity, Rishabhdev sat in the palanquin named Sudarshana and arrived in the Siddharth-vana garden. Under an Ashok tree, Rishabhdev abandoned all his apparels and ornaments and started pulling out his long strands of hair. After four fistfuls, when he was pulling out the fifth fistful of hair Indra said, "Sir! This strand of hair on the crown of your head and hanging down over your shoulders looks attractive. Kindly leave it as it is." Rishabhdev agreed. Due to this bunch of hair, he got the popular name-Keshariya ji (one with hair). From this incident, the lesson for us is that it is important not to be dogmatic about anything but be openminded as everything is relative, which is the principle of anekanta

It is said that with Rishabhdev four thousand others also took Diksha, taking a vow of total silence and penance. After some time, the others grow weary of the hard austerities of Rishabhdev, and settled in the woods on the banks of Ganga and eat the fruits of the forest. It is stated that it is from this time onwards, that there are on this Earth, ascetics living in forests, wearing matted hair, and subsisting on bulbs, roots, fruits and so forth.

Realising that he must break his fast for the sake of future ascetics, who would otherwise break the vow like his former four thousand fellow companions, Rishabhdev set out to break his fast. When Adinath Bhagwan took diksha, asceticism was new to the people. When he went for gochari (alms), they offered him gold, jewellery, gemstones, elephants, horses, and expensive clothes but not food. He had to fast for 13 months and 13 days until finally he came across a sugar cane farm near the town of Hastinapur, owned by his great grandson - Shreyanskumar, who offered him sugarcane juice, thus breaking his fast. The day of this parna is known as *Akshaya Trithya*.

One thousand years, after taking diksha, Adinath attained kevaljnana, under a banyan tree in the Shakatmukh garden, outside Purimtal town, near the city of Ayodhya. He had 84 gandharas, the chief gandhara was his grandson - Rishabhasen - also known as Pundarik

Adinath, sitting in the meditation in the Paryanka Asana (sitting posture), attained Nirvana (moksha) at Mount Ashtapad together with 10,000 additional Jain ascetics.

Verses By Acharya Mahapragya (Translated By Sudhamahi Regunathan)

Text & Images : Various Sources

“In the five fistful pulls
One fistful alone was left
Even in the expression of removing hair
A subtle message was sent
Then came a message, a request from Indra
To leave a clump of hair
Respect for sentiment
is Like beauty seen without blemishes”

