



Lessons from Parshvanath Bhagwan's Life

The soul of Kamath, after completing his life span in the fourth narak was born as Kamath, the son of a Brahmin named Rora. During his childhood he had lost his parents and was raised as an orphan, living a miserable life. One day observing some rich men, resplendent in their finery, he became disgusted with life. Concluding that the rich owed their opulence to their penances in some previous births, he decided to follow their example, became a mendicant performing various penances and performed rituals called Panchagni (five fires). As a mendicant, he had no material possessions and lived on the charity of others. Many people were impressed by his penance and therefore worshipped him.

Lesson: Happiness comes to those who make others happy. Peace and well-being come to those who contribute to the peace and wellbeing of others. What you sow is what you reap. You will keep on undergoing a miserable life till you change your attitude and replace your hatred by love and forgiveness.

One day prince Parshva was enjoying a view of the town from the balcony of his palace and noticed many people going to the outskirts of the town. On enquiry, his attendants informed him that a mendicant named Kamath was doing a ritual called Panchagni Tap – five fire penance. He immediately realised the violence of living beings involved in the fire.

Lesson: “Ahimsa Paramo Dharma” Parsva concern and care for all lives, even those of animals that might otherwise pose a threat to his own safety, was indicative of his spiritual progress.

Miniature Painting of Parshvanath Kalpasutra Manuscript



Pratima of Shri Parshvanath Bhagwan which is one of the most ancient Jain pratimas in Varanasi installed at Bhelupur Tirth



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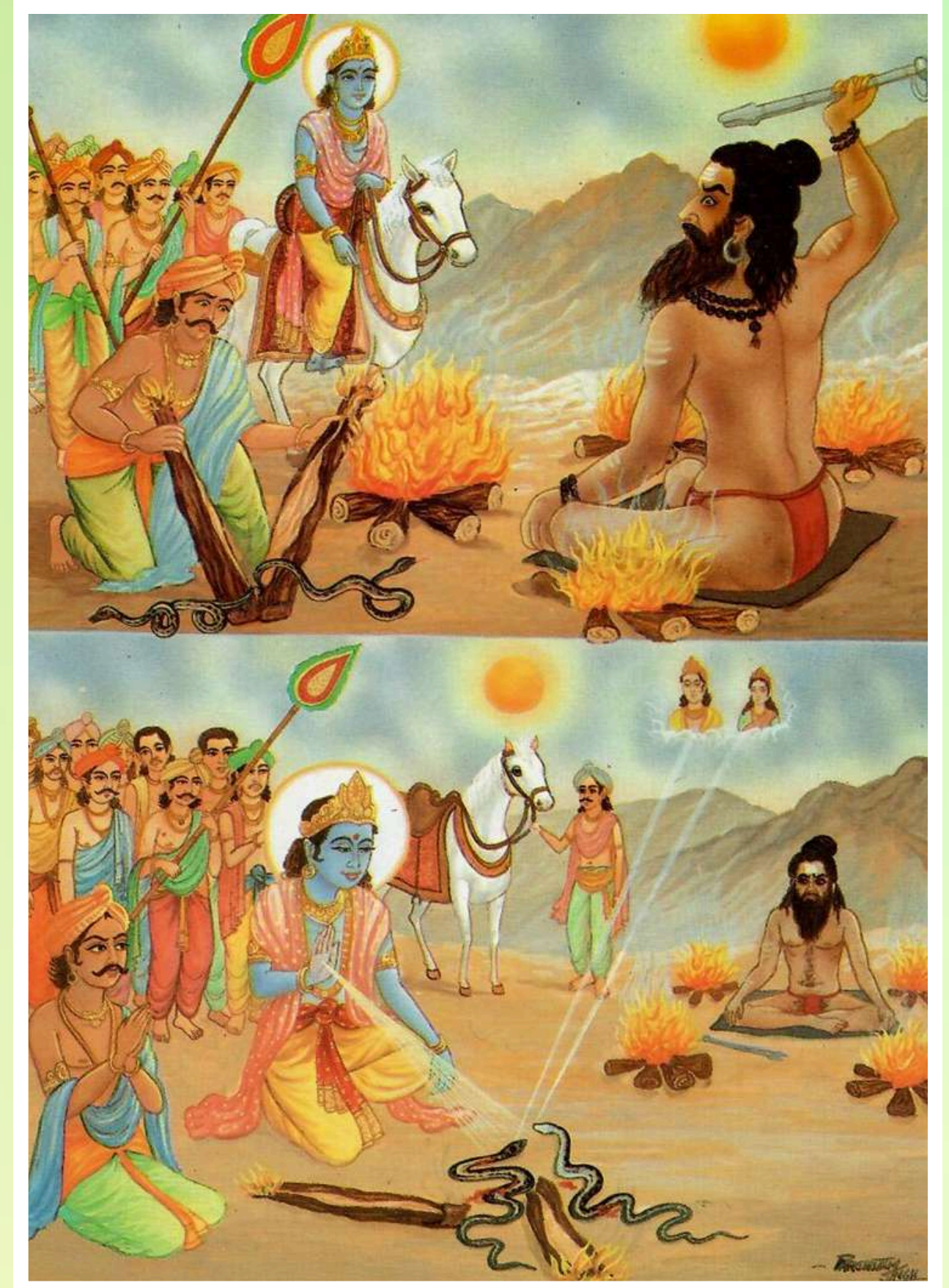
On reaching Kamath, with his avdhi jnana, he could see inside one of the logs were a pair of serpents, writhing in pain due to the intense heat of the burning flames. He asked Kamath to stop the fire, as there were 2 five sense beings being burnt. Kamath was irritated and told the prince that he is young and did not know anything.

Lesson. When someone points out your mistake or disagrees with your opinion, take a moment to find out if they might be right. If you find out, you are wrong simply ask for forgiveness. Arguments will take you nowhere.

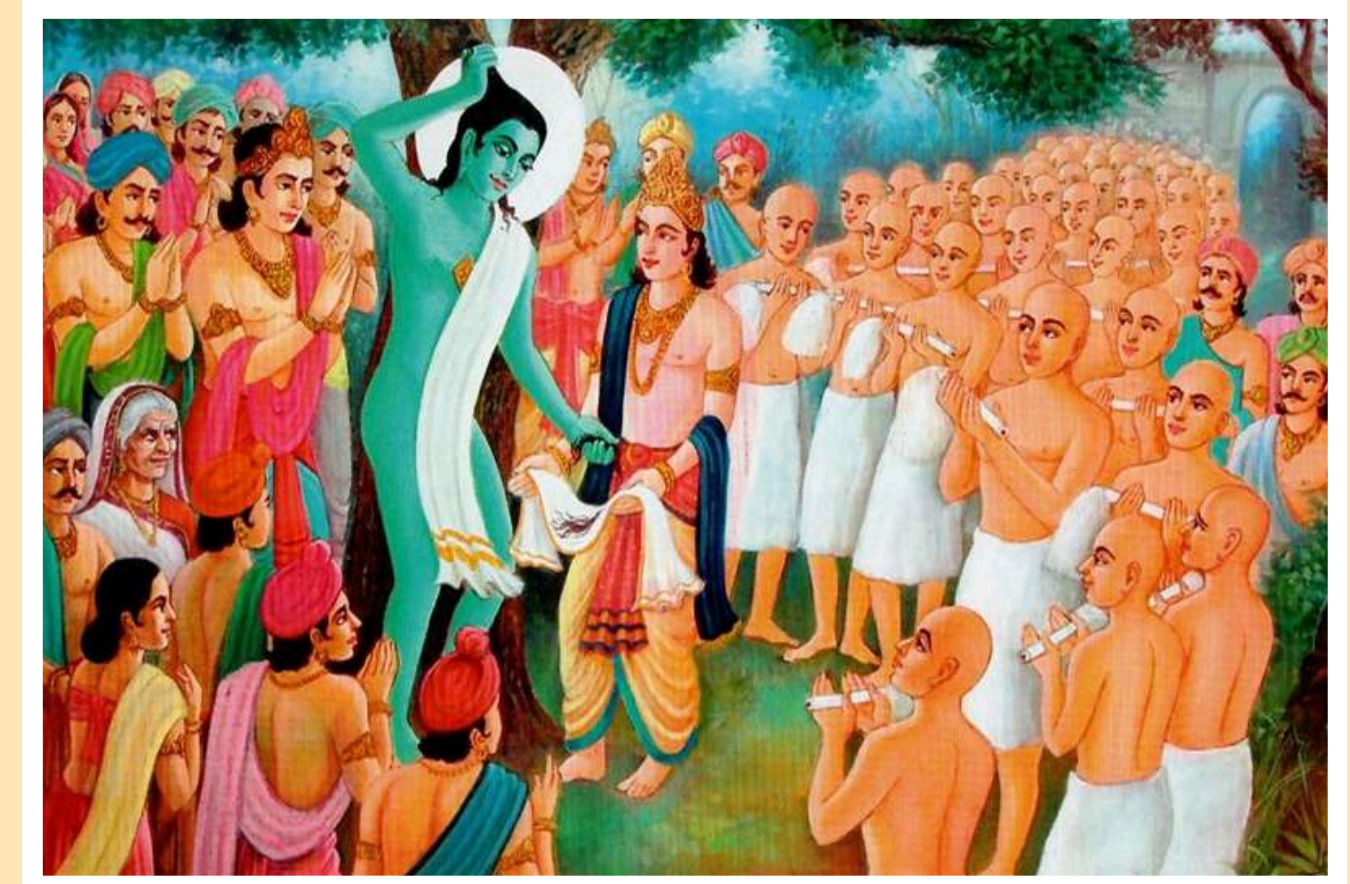
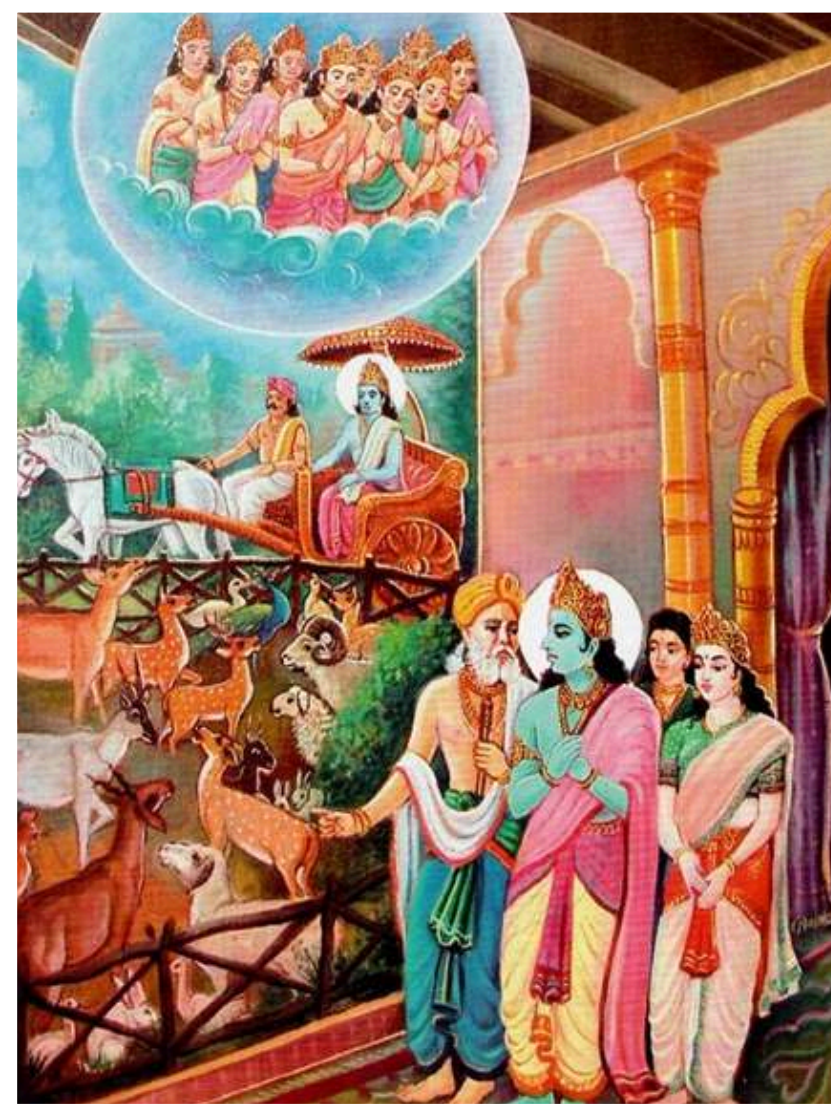
He asked his attendants to remove the specific log and split it. On splitting the log, a pair of serpents, partially scorched, fell on the ground writhing in pain.

Realizing that they were about to die, prince Parshva said to them that they should not be annoyed with the ignorant mendicant and should remain equanimous during the last moments of their lives. He also recited the Namokar Mantra. As a result of equanimous thoughts and hearing the Namokar Mantra, after death the pair were born as the king and queen of the gods of the Nag Kumar clan (Dharanendra and Padmavati)

At this event, instead of feeling remorse or pity for the snake, Kamath was very annoyed by the interference of Parshva. Since he was powerless at that time, Kamath resolved to seek revenge. He began observing an even more severe penance and, at the end of his life, he was reborn in heaven as Meghamali, the god of rain.



Parshvanath Diksha Kalyanak



One day in the spring season, Parshva saw a picture of Neminath – the twenty second Tirthankara – painted on a wall in his palace and was inspired to follow his example and renounce the world, which he did when he was thirty years old.

As per Jain scriptures, it is said that for one year, he performed Varshidan – donating 10 million 800 thousand gold coins every day. At the age of 30, after doing attham tap (3 day fast), his procession passing through the city of Varanasi, he reached the garden named Ashrampad and became an ascetic under an Ashoka tree along with three hundred other Kings.

Next day, to break his fast, in a place called Kopakata, a devout shravak named Dhanya offered kheer to Parshvanath. Dev's hailed Dhanya from the sky, saying "aho danam" as per our scriptures.

Lesson. When we offer ascetics something, it might seem as if we are giving something, but actually it is us who is receiving much more in the form of great blessings.

As a ascetic, Parshvanath observed severe penances, including fasting and spent most of his time meditating in search of the ultimate truth.





Final Encounter with Kamath – As Meghamali

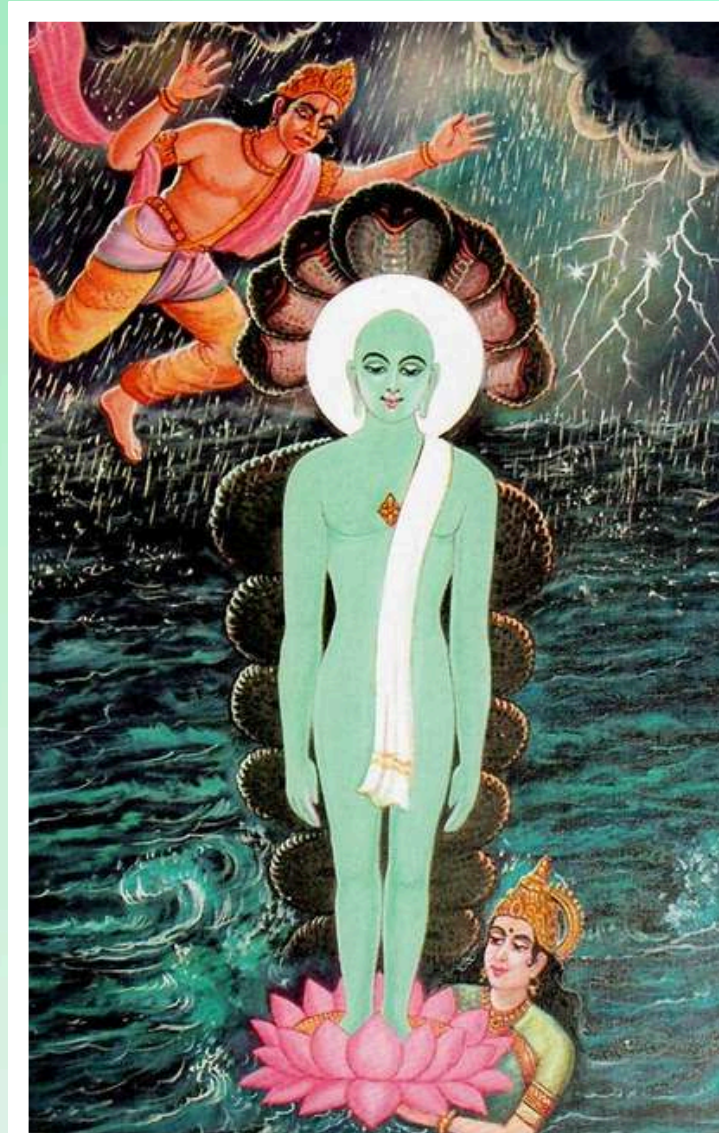
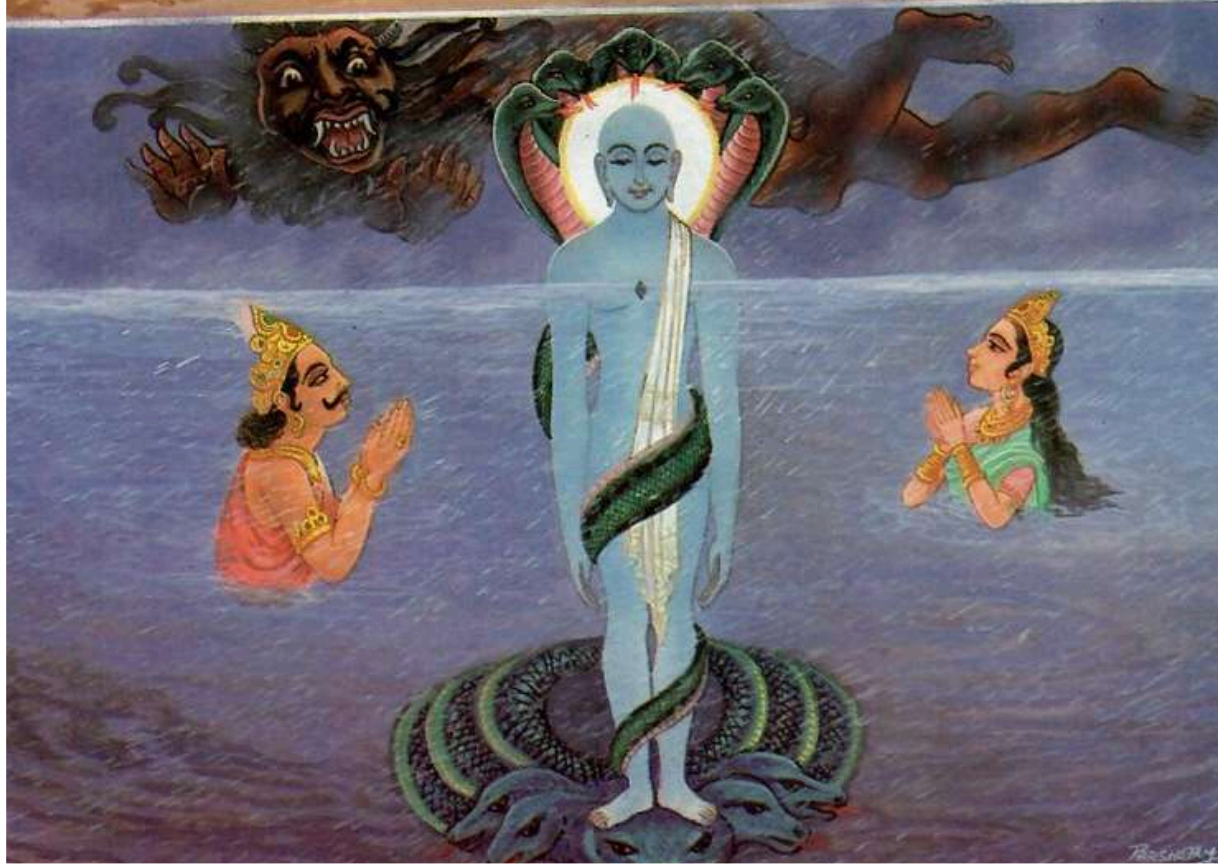
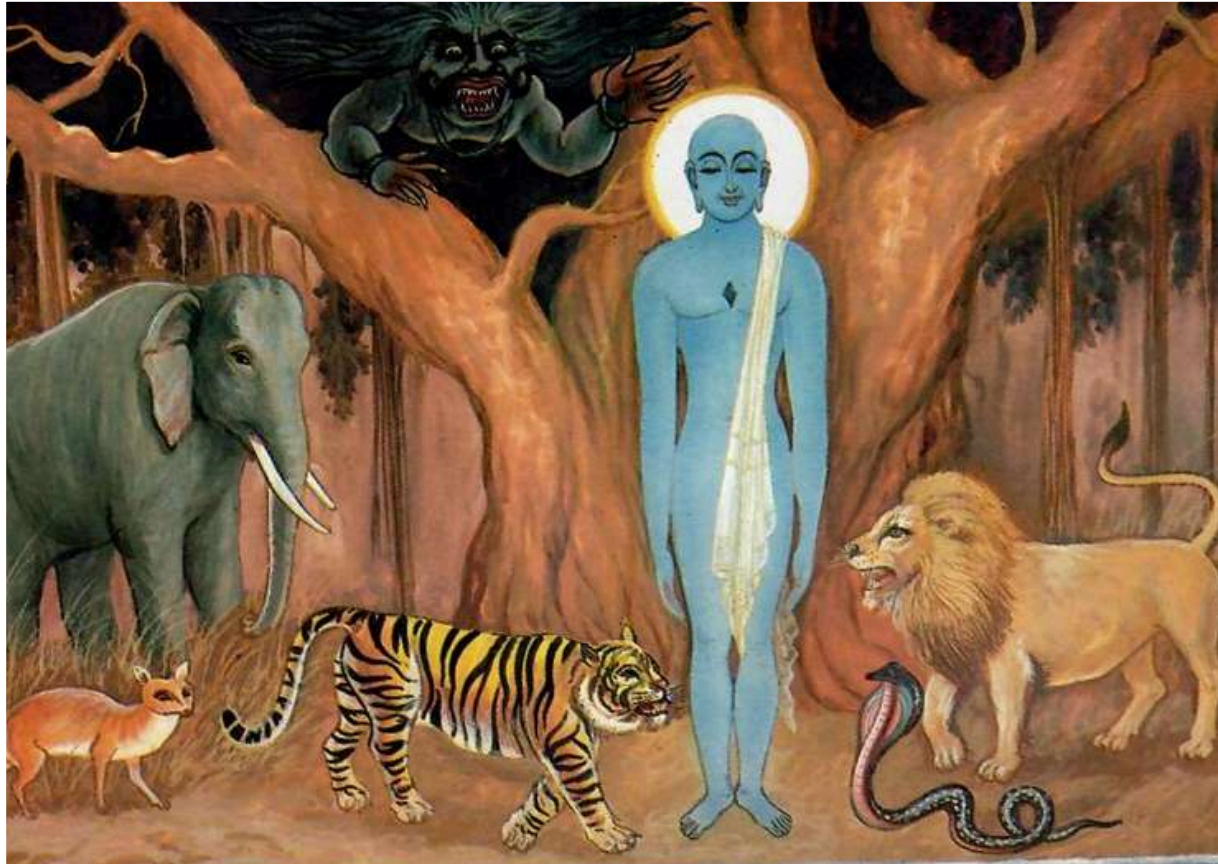
Once Meghamali saw Parshvanath standing in meditation. He came and started upsaarg on Parshvanath as way of revenge for interfering in his fire ritual in his previous life. Using his powers, he summoned fierce animals such as elephants, lions, tigers and snakes to attack Parshvanath, who remained undisturbed and continued with his meditation. Meghamali then started pouring heavy rains and creating thunder, but still Parshvanath remained unperturbed in meditation.

Dharanendra and Padmavati – heavenly God and Goddess realized their benefactor from their previous life was in danger of drowning. They descended and placed a quick growing lotus flower below Parshvanath's feet to make him float and Dharanendra spread his fangs over the head and sides to protect Parshvanath from the pouring rain.

Throughout this incident, Parshvanath remained in deep meditation, developing perfect equanimity. He neither had any animosity or hatred towards Meghmali nor any special affection for Dharanendra and Padmavati for the protection they had extended.

Dharanendra admonished Meghmali, who finally realizing his mistakes, fell at the feet of Parshvanath, sincerely begging for forgiveness for all his evil acts.

Lesson: Parshvanath showed us that one should be detached and impartial regardless of whether a person is our supporter, friend, or enemy. We may not always know and understand the reason why a person behaves in a unexpected way towards us; it may be because of karma from a past life. **Important to remember - How people treat you is their karma; how you react is yours.**





Parshvanath Bhagwan



Lord Parshvanatha
23rd Tirthankara of Jainism

Parshvanath Bhagwan attained Moksha at Samet Shikhar at the age of 100 years and 83750 years after his predecessor, Neminatha Bhagwan.

According to the Kalpa Sutra, at the time of his death, Parshvanath Bhagwan had established the Chaturvidh Sangh comprising of 16000 Sadhus, 38000 Sadhvis, 164000 Shravaks and 327000 Shravikas.

According to scholars, Parshvanath established a code of conduct to be followed by those having renounced the world – ascetics – and also by the house-holders – laypeople. He emphasised that penances without any inner development was meaningless. He prescribed the four ways of conduct known as Caturyama comprising of Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), Asteya (non-stealing) and Aparigraha (non-possession). These four principles together with the addition of the fifth of Brahmacharya by Mahavir Bhagwan have formed the five basic principles of Jainism. From a very young age, Parshvanath was a fervent advocate of these principles, long before he renounced the world.

A K Chatterjee – Jain Scholar has stated that Parshvanath was the “first historical prophet of ancient India to clearly understand the significance of Ahimsa. The concept of non-violence, no doubt to be found in the earlier Upanisadic works and also in Mahabharata, but to Parshvanath, ahimsa meant something more concrete. It was his whole existence. His other teachings – not to like, not to steal and non-possession are course to be found in all schools of thought.”

Parshvanath dispelled ignorance, resisted priest aristocracy, permitted women to take diksha and was opposed to ritual violence. The Aryans as well as the tribal people acclaimed Parshvanath as their spiritual master according to many scholars. Mahavir and Buddha were both heirs to Parshvanath’s legacy, which is still relevant today. During the time of Mahavir and Buddha, there were many sramana ascetics who belonged to sangha established by Parshvanath Bhagwan. They eventually joined sangha established by Mahavir, Buddha or other sramana proponents.

