



Kartiki Poonam - Acharya Hemachandra Jayanti

# Acharya Hemachandra

1088 AD– 1173 AD

Acharya Hemchandra was one of the most eminent scholar of his era, a polyglot as well as a polymath. He is not only one of the greatest Svetambara Jain monk of Gujarat, but also one of the greatest monks of literary personalities of India. It is due to his influence of his literary works and influence with Kings of Gujarat, that the Jain culture shines brightly in Gujarat today.



**Acharya Hemachandra with King Kumarpala**

**Acharya Hemachandra**, born in 1088 A.D. on Kartiki Poonam, in Dhandhuka (present day Khambhat), Gujarat was a prodigious scholar, poet, and polymath who left an indelible mark on the cultural and religious landscape of Gujarat. His influence was so profound that he was bestowed the title **'Kali-kal Sarvajna'** meaning 'all knowing in the present era of darkness'.

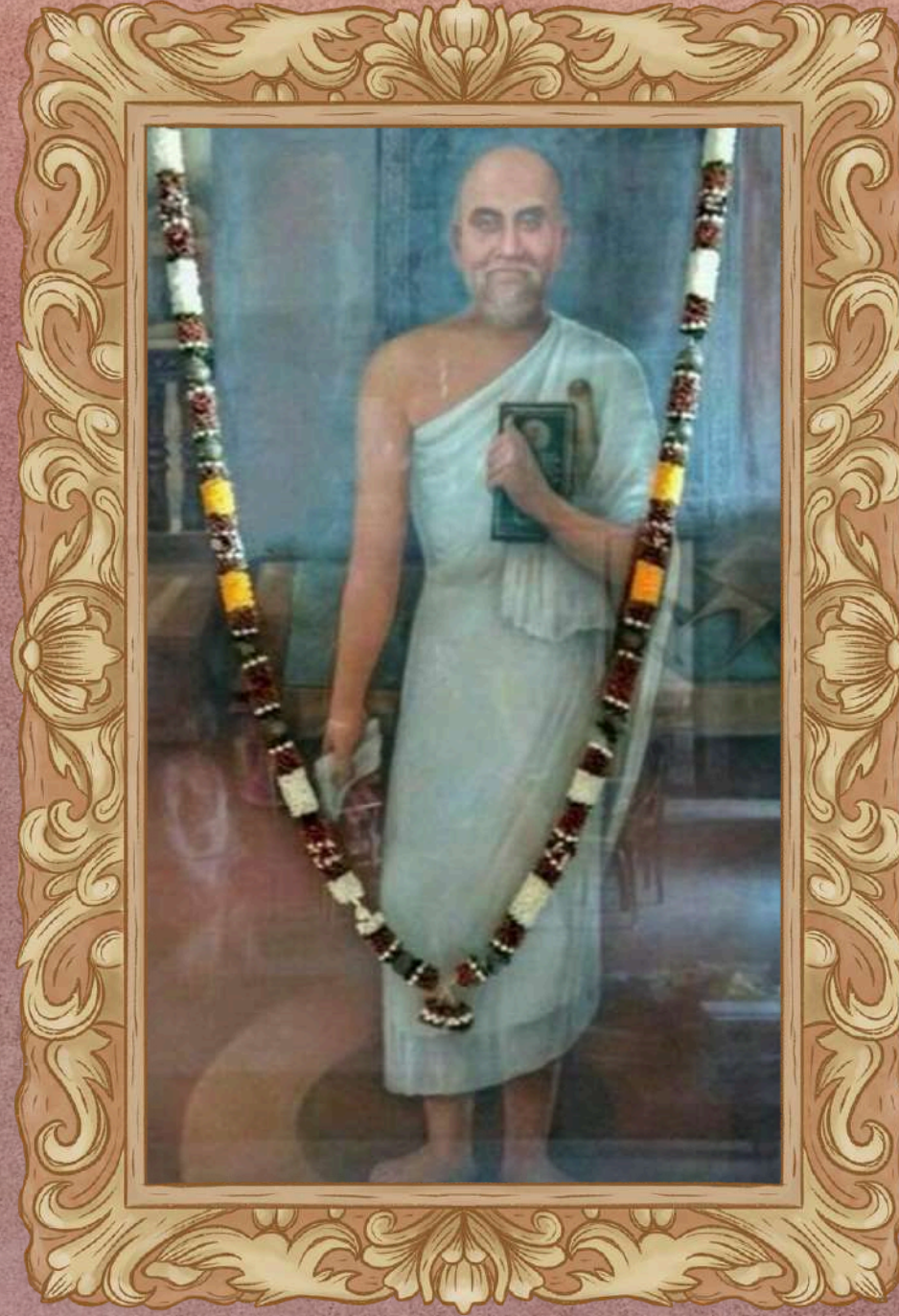
His parents were Chachadev and Pahini, belonging to the Modha Vanik (merchant) caste. Both were devoted Jains. Whilst pregnant, Pahini had a dream, which Acharya Devchandrasuriji interpreted as that the son born to her would make great strides in spiritual knowledge, intuition, conduct and would become a great spiritual leader. The son born was named Changdev.

Despite initial resistance from his mother, Pahini, Changdeva was eventually initiated into monkhood at the age of eight by Acharya Devchandrasuriji and renamed Somachandra. His intelligence and dedication saw him mastering various philosophies, Jain & Non-Jain scriptures, logic, grammar and other disciplines as well as cultivating virtues like forbearance, tolerance, holiness, simplicity, discipline, chastity, and generosity. By the age of twenty-one, he was ordained as an Acharya and given the name Acharya Hemachandra.

As a Jain Acharya, he played a significant role in reviving the Jain religion and had a profound influence on the history of Gujarat. Acharya Hemachandra's influence extended beyond religious circles. He served as advisor to King Siddharaja and later to King Kumarpala of the Solanki Dynasty in Gujarat, when his impact became more pronounced. Acharya Hemachandra had predicted seven years earlier that Kumarpala would be the king, and he had once saved Kumarpala's life. These events led Kumarpala to consider Acharya Hemachandra his spiritual teacher and benefactor. Under Acharya Hemachandra's guidance, Gujarat became a centre of non-violence, learning, and good culture. King Kumaapala, greatly influenced by Hemachandra, accepted Jainism and implemented laws that nurtured the Jain religion. Violence and the killing of animals were prohibited, and vegetarianism became prevalent not only among Jains but also among all the people of Gujarat. Jainism, thus, became the dominant religion of the region.

In addition to his spiritual and political influence, Acharya Hemachandra's scholarly contributions were vast and varied. He was a prolific writer who is said to have penned 3.5 million shlokas (stanzas) during his lifetime. He wrote on grammar, doctrine, prosody, and contemporary history. His works included grammars of Sanskrit and Prakrit languages – *(which are still held in high esteem)*, texts on science, logic, mathematics, and practically every branch of Indian philosophy. In the field of mathematics, Hemachandra made a significant contribution by presenting an earlier version of the Fibonacci sequence around 1150, about fifty years before Fibonacci.

His literary works, such as **“Yoga-shastra”** and **“Trishashti Shalaka Purusha Caritra,”** are highly regarded for their eloquence and profound insights into Jain philosophy. Unfortunately, much of Acharya Hemachandra's written work has not been preserved, which is a sad commentary on the Jain community. Among the scores of books that have been preserved include *Yoga-shastra*, *Trishashti Shalaka Purusha Caritra* – *(biographies of 63 Jain luminaries)*, *Kavyanushashan*, *Abhidhan Chintamani Kosh* *(Dictionary)*



Throughout his life, Acharya Hemachandra's focus was not only on his own spiritual progress but also on universal welfare. Despite this, he faced opposition and attempts to discredit him and Jainism, particularly from some Brahmins. However, Acharya Hemachandra remained steadfast in his principles. When accused of disrespecting Hindu Gods, he demonstrated his broad-minded attitude based on basic Jain principles by bowing down to Lord Shiva and said:

**“Bhavbijānkura janānā Rāgādyāhā Kshayamupāgatā Yasya;  
Brahmā Vā Vishnurvā Haro Jino Vā Namastasmāi.”**

*“I am bowing down to that god who has destroyed passions like attachment (Rāga) and hatred (Dvesha), which are the cause of worldly life, whether he is Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, or Jina.”*

Acharya Hemachandra passed away in 1173 A.D., at the age of eighty-four. Acharya Hemachandra was one of the most eminent scholars of his era, a polyglot as well as a polymath. He is not only one of the greatest Svetambara Jain monks of Gujarat, but also one of the greatest monks of literary personalities of India. His legacy continues to shine brightly in Gujarat. His teachings and writings have left a lasting impact on Jainism and the cultural fabric of Gujarat, making him a revered figure in the annals of Jain history.





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1088 AD - 1173 AD

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*Quotes from:*

## **YOGASHASTRA OF HEMCHANDRA**

“All living beings are souls, with consciousness and the breath of life, like me. Just as I welcome happiness and find pain offensive, all beings enjoy happiness and dislike pain. Upon thinking about this, as it applies to all beings, I will not act in a way that would cause such undesired violence, torment, or loss of life to any living being.”

“Pride is that which makes me blind, because it robs the eye of discrimination. It is also the destroyer of the three goals of human pursuits - Dharma - discharge of duty; Artha - acquirement of wealth; Kama - gratification of desire, as well as of decent behaviour, learning and a good character.”

“The darkness of ignorance was blinding my vision. A healing paste has now been applied - the medicine of true Knowledge. Now my inner eyes are open. To the Master who helped me, who removed the layers of ignorance and enabled me to see rightly, I humbly offer my appreciation and gratitude.”

“May no one commit evil. May no one suffer. May the entire world be liberated. Such a sentiment is called friendliness.”



**YOGASHASTRA OF**  
**HEMCHANDRA**

The text consists of 1009 verses divided into 12 chapters shedding light on Jain code of conduct as well as a Jain treatise on Yoga.

Hemchandra highlights ascetic practices for moral upliftment, service to one's parents, meditation, recitation of the Jinas' names & meritorious conduct. It is guide for ascetics as well the layperson on the path of liberation.

