

Navnat Vanik Association (UK)

Paryushan Celebrations 2013



Saturday, 7 September 2013

Day 6 (Morning) – Bhagwan Mahavir's cycle of births

A Tirthankara is one who founds a tirth.

A Tirth is a Sangh (community) that is made up of Saadhu, Sadhvi, Shravak, Shravika

Bhagwan Mahavir's aatma, at some point, was also wandering like us, and we would also have come in contact with his aatma.

Bhagwan Mahavir went through 27 lifetimes, which is highlighted in the Kalpastura. The Kalpasutra was written for the information of everyone, and to educate everyone - not as a holy book.

However, when one of the kings read this book during Paryushan, that tradition carried on and still does till today where the Kalpasutra is read and celebrated during Paryushan.

Kalpa = Achar, or action, daily life practices. The Kalpasutra highlights the achar of sadhu and sadhvis.

So let us know look at how Bhagwan Mahavir's aatma was transformed from an ordinary human being to attain moksha in 27 lifetimes.

First birth - Nayasar - This is the first of the 27 lifetimes of Bhagwan Mahavir. Even though Bhagwan has gone through many lifetimes before this, this Nayasar birth is what we consider as pivotal in Bhagwan's journey. Bhagwan's aatma was born as a carpenter in this birth. He had never been in contact with saadhus or other saints, but according to his culture, he never ate food

before feeding someone first. One day, the king ordered him to build a beautiful palace for him out of the wood available in his vast forest. So Nayasar went into the forest to cut wood. As the clock struck 12pm, he started looking out for someone to offer his food before he ate. But there was no one to be found. After hours of waiting, a saint who had lost his way passed by. Nayasar welcomed the saint and offered him food and water. And then he also ate. After lunch, Nayasar asked the saint whether he was lost and offered to take him to the town. On the way, the saint talked to Nayasar about some dharma - Nayasar showed the saint the way out of the forest, and the saint offered to show Nayasar a way out of the world. And through that, he gave Nayasar the way to Samyak Darshan. Just one vow of feeding someone before eating led Bhagwan's aatma in this birth to Samyak Darshan. And it says in the Kalpasutra that once an aatma gets Samyak Darshan, that is when the count of birth and rebirth starts until moksha.

Third birth - Marichi - After passing away as Nayasar, because of his Samyak Darshan, Bhagwan's aatma took birth straight in dev lok, and then came back to earth in the form of Marichi, the son of Bharat Chakravarti and grandson of Bhagavan Rishabhdev. One day, Bharat Chakravarti took Marichi to a congregation where he gets vairagya (complete detachment), and as a result he takes diksha. However, after a few years, he was unable to bear the heat and rain and extreme weather. So he decided to carry an umbrella, wear wooden slippers and started wearing colourful clothes. But he knew that Rishabhdev would not approve of this, so he stayed away from him. Marichi had Samyak Darshan from his past life, so he knew within that he is unable to take sanyaas properly, but it is the right thing to do. Whoever he gave upadesh (instructions) to, he always said that if you want to do true sadhna, then go to Rishabhdev - I will not be able to offer you what you're after. Because I have modified the dharma to suit my needs, so it is not in its true form. Even though he couldn't walk on the true path, he always knew what the true path was and advised everyone accordingly. That is Samyak Darshan.

So one day, a congregation is held with Rishabhdev and since he had not heard Rishabhdev for a long time, he decided to go there. But he stayed by the entrance hidden away after everyone went in so as not to get noticed. After the congregation, Bharat Chakravarti asks Rishabhdev if there is anyone in the congregation who has the qualities of the next tirthankara. Rishabhdev replies that not in the congregation, but your son who is standing by the door will be the 24th tirthankara of this era, and

he will be known as Mahavir. Bharat Chakravarti rushes to the door and does vandan to Marichi. He explains to Marichi that he is bowing down to the future tirthankara that is residing within him. Hearing this, Marichi felt a sense of pride and honour for his family and ancestry, and started dancing away. And as a result, his Samyak Darshan was put to the side, and he bound a "neech gotra" that led him back to dev lok and the circle of birth and rebirth until the 16th birth when he was born as Vishvabhuti.

16th Birth - Vishvabhuti - Bhagwan's aatma is born as Vishvabhuti, the cousin brother of Vishakhanandi (son of King Vishvanandi), and they both live in peace and harmony with each other. One day it so happens that Vishvabhuti was taking a bath and Vishakhanandi was trying to go in - however, it was a rule that only one person could take bath at one time, so Vishakhanandi waited by the door and one of the maid servants saw this. She ran to the queen and told her that her prince son was waiting by the door whilst that ordinary boy was taking a bath. Hearing this, the queen complained to the king. The king sent a servant to trick Vishvabhuti out from his bath by saying a battle was upon them and he had to come to fight. Hearing this, Vishvabhuti rushed out, put on his clothes and arrived at the king's darbar. And Vishakhanandi entered the bath at that time.

Vishvabhuti tells the king that he will go and fight, and the king didn't need to trouble himself. But when he reached the battlefield, he realised that there was no battle. He returned to the palace, and back to finish his bath when he found out that because of trickery, he was kicked out of the bath. He gets very angry and using all his strength, he punches a tree and all it's fruits fall to the ground. After a while, his Samyak Darshan kicks in and he wonders whether all relationships are like this and life is just trickery. He decides to take diksha, and becomes a saint.

He involves himself in such deep tapasya that his body gets shriveled. One day when Vishakhanandi is passing by in his chariot, he sees Vishvabhuti weak and worn away. He taunts Vishvabhuti by saying that how weak he is and he was showing off by punching the fruit tree. Where is all your strength now? This arises anger in Vishvabhuti again and just then, the horns of a cow that is passing by jabs into Vishvabhuti's stomach and he falls to the ground. But because of his immense anger, he gets up, pulls the cow by the horns and throws the cow into the sky - such was his strength. And he vows that whatever next life he gets, he will rip apart this Vishakhanandi to pieces. Vishvabhuti passes away

and takes birth again as Triprishta Vasudev.

18th Birth - Triprishta Vasudev - As Vasudev, he was very fond of listening to music. So he ordered his servant that when he falls asleep, the servant should stop the music. But the the servant didn't stop the music, and the consequence of this was that he ordered molten lead to be poured in the ears of his servant. After this birth, he was born again as a Chakravarti and the cycle of birth and rebirth continued until the 25th birth when he was born as Nandan Rishi.

25th Birth - Nandan Rishi - In this birth, Nandan Rishi did 1.1 million "maas khaman", and did such auspicious deeds that he bound the "naam gotra" of a tirthankara. After going up to dev lok and being reborn as human, in the 27th birth, Bhagwan Mahavir is born again to reach his final destination.

27th Birth - Mahavir Bhagwan - We all know that in this birth, because of the incident of the molten lead, Bhagwan had to suffer for his karma by suffering painful nails being nailed to his ears. But he accepted this with complete detachment and in full knowledge that this is because of his past karmas that he is now suffering.

After much penance and numerous lifetimes, Bhagwan Mahavir's aatma reaches the final destination. Such was the life of Bhagwan that we all can be inspired to lead a righteous life. Bhagwan's life also teaches us a very important lesson that even tirthankaras are not absolved from suffering for their sins. Their karmas have to be cleared in one lifetime or the next.

Navnat Vanik Association (UK)

Paryushan Celebrations 2013



Saturday, 7 September 2013

Day 6 (Evening) – The foundation of Bhagwan's tapasya

We continue our journey of Bhagwan's life after he was born. When Mahavir was born, he was born as Vardhaman. And he was given the name Mahavir by the Gods when they witnessed him bearing tremendous pain and suffering in his quest for moksha.

When Vardhaman was young, he would play outdoor games with other children. On one such day, whilst playing, a snake appeared on the scene. Seeing this, all the children ran away, but Vardhaman stood his ground. He picked up the snake with his hands, and took it away from the area. Seeing this, the children went to tell Mother Trishla, and she came running to Vardhaman. Vardhaman reassured her that he was fine and explains to her that if our conscience is clean and peaceful, then nothing will happen to us. But if we are full of poison, then we will get poison in return. Even at such a young age, Vardhaman was full of consciousness and knowledge.

When Vardhaman reached the age of adulthood, his mother wanted to get him married. He got married to Yashoda, and soon after, they had a daughter Priyadarshana. However, throughout all the shastras, there is no mention of Yashoda. Even Vardhaman's son-in-law and his life story is mentioned in the shastras. But how Yashoda lived her life after Vardhaman's diksha, how she gave him permission to go away, how she raised her daughter - there is no mention anywhere. Why were the historians unable to write anything about Yashoda? She must have been so privileged and with such good karma that she was destined to be the wife of Vardhaman. And with such heavy

heart, she would have given Vardhaman permission to go away, to never return.

Behind the diksha of Vardhaman and his moksha, Yashoda was a strong pillar and foundation. Without her support, Vardhaman may not have been able to dedicate his life to sadhna - at a ripe age of 28 years. We can only imagine today how difficult Yashoda's life would have been, only imagine her state of mind when she agreed to let Vardhaman go, and that in itself serves as inspiration for us to live our life for the betterment of the world.

Bhagwan Mahavir did great sacrifices, but behind his sacrifices, Yashoda's sacrifice was tremendous and instrumental in Bhagwan's life. After Bhagwan took diksha, he left home and started his sadhna - all alone. He spent his first "chatur maas" in a little hut of a sanyaasi and got immersed in his sadhna. After a few days, cows starting eating the straw from his hut, and the Gurudev of the community came to request Bhagwan that if he wished to stay there, then he would also have to look after the hut. Bhagwan replied, "When I'm immersed in my sadhna, I don't even have any awareness of my own body, so how will I be able to look after your hut?"

Bhagwan then decided to leave the place and ventured deep into the forest in the midst of his "chatur maas". He took several vows such as not taking any action that hurts another person, not speaking any ill words, not staying in any place that hurts someone, and other such vows. As a result, he suffered immense pain and went through tremendous tribulations, but he always remained steady in his goal and did not veer till the end.

Gods are not born. Human beings are and through their effort and sadhna, they reach a stage of vitraag which leads them to the state of Godhood.