



# Come one, Come all Let's go to Girnar !!

(Significance of Girnar with the Jain Shwetambar society in mind)

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## **Publisher**

Shri Girnar MahatirthVikas Samiti  
Hemabhaino Vado, Uparkot Road, Jagmal Chowk  
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## Places Of Availability

### **Shri Girnar MahatirthVikas Samiti**

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Dedicated In Divine The Feet Of  
**Sahasavan Tirthodhhaarak,**

A Man Of Strong Will Power  
&

Determination,

**Who Did 3000 Upvas**

&

**11500 Ayambil In His Life,**

A Stalwart Of The 21st Century,

A Gleaming Star In The Sky Of Jainism,

**Param Pujya Acharya Shrimad  
Vijay Himanshusuriji Maharaj Saheb...**





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The prestigious Jainism considers Shatrunjay and Girnar as the two most supreme and sacred pilgrimage places of this universe.

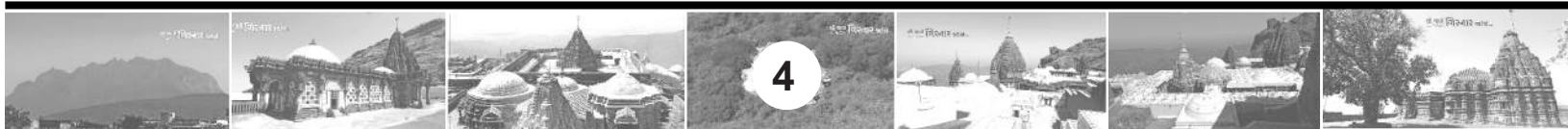
Currently the significance and glory of the King of all Pilgrim Places – Shatrunjay is widely known and accepted by the Jain community but the fact that Girnar, too, enjoys the same importance is still undisclosed. This awareness about Girnar's significance has been prevailing from years together and has resulted in the disregard of this holy place.

Today, every year, Lakhs of Jains from across the globe purify their soul by visiting the eternal, Shatrunjay but not even 50,000 pilgrims come to Girnar.

The various religions and sects existing in India sing the glory of Girnar in their respective scriptures. The different sub – castes in the Hindu religion such as Vaishnavs, Buddhas, devotee of Shiva, Rama, Goddess Ambika as well as the Jains – be it Shwetambar or Digambar, Girnar is a symbol of faith and devotion for infinite devotees. Amidst the storm of fights, among many castes to attain the ownership of this holy place, Girnar yet stands unmoved and composed, gifting peace and purity to all its devotees.

By the wish of my Gurudev – Param Pujya Panyas Shri Chandrashekhar Vijayji Maharaj Saheb. I got the golden opportunity of staying in the presence and guidance of the great Tapasvi Himanshusuri Maharaj Saheb who did 3000 upvas and 11500 ayambil in his life span of last 13 years.

His dedication and devotion for Shatrunjay and Girnar was matchless Every drop of blood in his body was loyal to Jainism. I have very closely witnessed the pain and agony he experienced regarding the current problems faced by Jainism. In the last few years of his life, he was extremely disturbed by the ignorant attitude of the Jain Shwetambar society towards Girnar. He, thus, expressed his deep desire





regarding the creation and publication of suitable literature, throwing light on the eminence of the Great Girnar. That very day, I sought his blessings and determinedly started contemplating and writing.

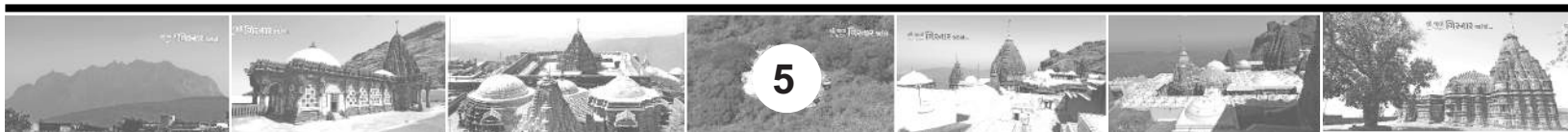
Till date, collection of information related to Girnar from various scriptures is in process. In the meantime, considering the current situation, need was felt for immediate publishing of a booklet highlighting the significance of this holy place. On the basis of the information collected by the study of various scriptures, I have made a small attempt to describe the glory of this auspicious pilgrim place in a simple language keeping in mind the Jain Shwetambar society.

I sincerely hope that this book helps in strengthening the reader's devotion and dedication towards Girnar and increase their enthusiasm in visiting and doing this pilgrimage.

I am grateful to the writers – publishers of various books and scriptures which have proved helpful in my work. Knowingly or unknowingly, if I have written anything against Jainism, I seek forgiveness from the bottom of my heart.

Here, I put down my pen, with heartfelt wishes that by reading this booklet you all devotionally worship this highly charged and sacred mountain, Girnar and thus attain salvation at the earliest.

**Bhavodadhitarak Gurupadpadmarenu  
Muni Hemvallabhvijayji**

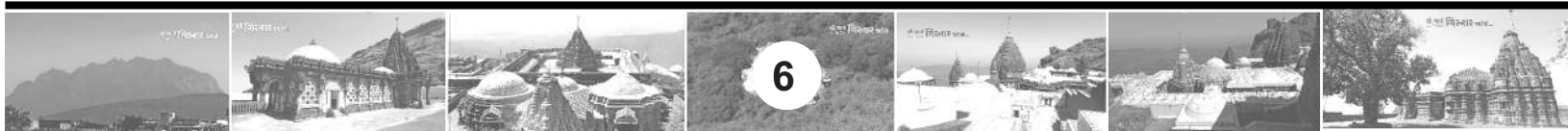




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Various books and scriptures like:-

1. Prabhavak Charitra
2. Prabandh Chintamani
3. Samyaktva Saptika
4. Raivatak Udhaar Prabandha
5. Prabandha Kosha
6. Chatuvirshati Prabandha
7. Kumarpal Prabandha
8. Kumarpal Pratibodha
9. Vastupal Charita
10. Raivatgirikalpa Sankshepa
11. Raivatgirikalpa
12. Ujjyant Stava
13. Ujjyant Mahatirthkalpa
14. Girnarkalpa
15. Shri Girnar Mahatirthkalpa
16. Tirthmala Sangraha
17. Sukrutsagar
18. Raivatgiri Rasu
19. Raivatgiri Sparshana
20. Shatrunjay Mahatmaya
21. Girnar Na Geetgayako
22. Garvigaatha Girnar Ni

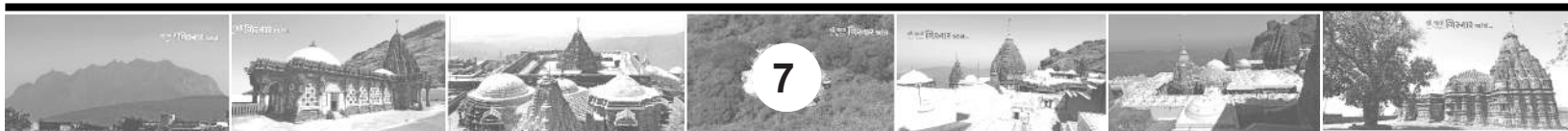






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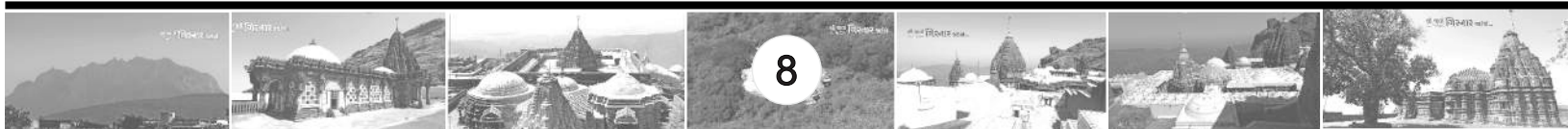
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## Glory of Girnar is Unique It cannot be sung enough...

1. The mountain of Girnar is eternal like that of Shatrunjay. At the end of the 5th era, when the height of Shatrunjay will reduce to 7 arm lengths, Girnar will stand 100 Dhanush (400 arms) tall.
2. Raivatgiri (Girnar) is the 5<sup>th</sup> peak of Shatrunjay mountain and is thus instrumental in endowing blessed souls with the 5<sup>th</sup> gyan i.e. kewalgyan.
3. This beautiful mountain of Girnar can be compared to the splendid Samovasran (congregation of devotees receiving a sermon from Lord). Its main peak resembles chaitya vriksh and the 7 smaller peaks are like the 3 different levels of the Samovasran. The 4 small mountains around the main mountain are like the 4 entrances of the Samovasran.
4. Innumerable Tirthankaras have visited Girnar and have attained moksha (salvation) here. Endless others have accepted renunciation and eventually attained enlightenment (kewalgyan) and moksha on this mountain.
5. In the previous cycle of 24 Tirthankaras – (1) Shri Namishwar, (2) Shri Anil, (3) Shri Yashodhar, (4) Shri Kritarth, (5) Shri Jineshwar, (6) Shri Shuddhamati, (7) Shri Shivankar and (8) Shri Spandan – these 8 Tirthankaras renounced the world, attained enlightenment and finally salvation on this sacred mountain. while two other Tirthankaras attained only salvation here.
6. In the current cycle of 24 Tirthankaras, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Tirthankar Lord Neminath had renounced the world and attained omniscience in Sahasavan (forest of a 1000 mango trees) and eventually achieved complete liberation on the fifth summit of this high mountain.
7. In the next cycle of 24 Tirthankaras, (1) Shri Padmanabh, (2) Shri Surdev, (3) Shri Suparshwa,

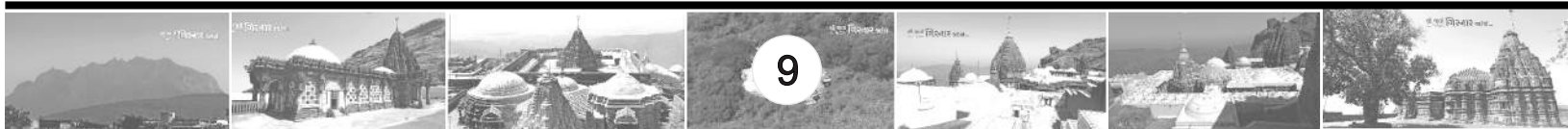






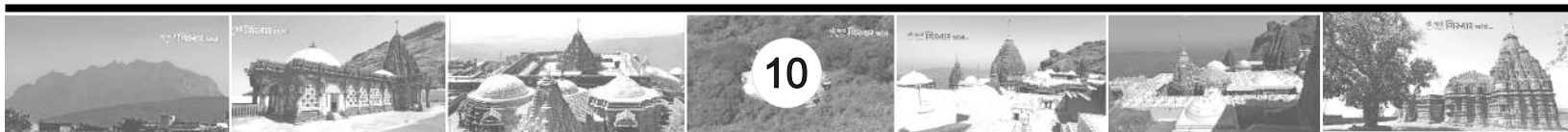
(4) Shri Swayamprabh, (5) Shri Sarvanubhuti, (6) Shri Devshrut, (7) Shri Uday, (8) Shri Podhal, (9) Shri Pottil, (10) Shri Satkirti, (11) Shri Suvrat, (12) Shri Amam, (13) Shri Nishkasha, (14) Shri Nishpulaak, (15) Shri Nirmam, (16) Shri Chitragupt, (17) Shri Samadhi, (18) Shri Samvar, (19) Shri Yashodhar, (20) Shri Vijay, (21) Shri Mallijin and (22) Shri Dev – these 22 Tirthankaras will attain salvation and (23) Shri Anantvirya and (24) Shri Bhadrakrut will accept monkhood (diksha), attain enlightenment and salvation on this holy mountain, Girnar.

8. By worshipping this sacred shrine, 8 brothers of Lord Neminath including Rahnemi, many princes such as Shamb and Pradyumna, 8 main queens of King Krishna, Sadhvi Rajmatishri and innumerable other souls have attained salvation here. King Krishna as a result of his devotional reverence and worship will become the 12<sup>th</sup> Tirthankara, Lord Amam in the next cycle of 24 Tirthankaras and will attain salvation from here.
9. Inspired by the ceaseless faith and revelation of this pious shrine, the 5 sons (1) Kalmegh, (2) Meghnad, (3) Bhairav, (4) Ekpad and (5) Trailokyapad of a trader named Dhar sacrificed their lives and were reborn as the Kshetradhipatis (guardians) of this place.
10. When Vallabhipur was destroyed, the idol of Lord Neminath installed by Indra Maharaja there, was kept concealed somewhere in Girnar and the same idol is now the main idol of the glorious Girnar shrine.
11. The current idol of Lord Neminath is the oldest in the world which was installed by the Brahmendra:- celestial being from the 5<sup>th</sup> Devlok (heaven) during the era of Lord Sagar, the third Tirthankara of the previous cycle of 24 Tirthankaras. This idol was installed 84,785 years ago and it will be worshipped at the same place for the next 18,465 years, after which it will be taken to Patal Lok and will be worshipped there.
12. Indra Maharaja made a hole in the Girnar mountain with the help of his Vajra (his divine weapon) and built a temple of silver, having balconies of gold and installed a 120ft high idol of Lord Neminath made of black gemstone.



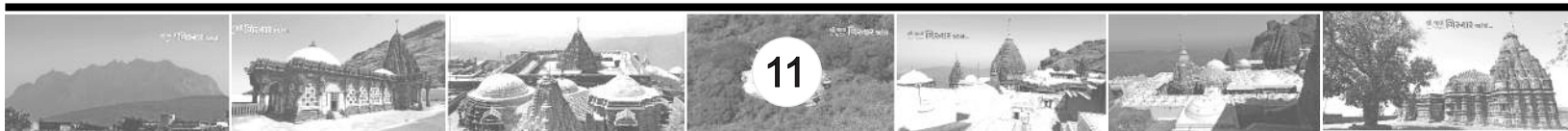


13. Indra Maharaja had made a similar east facing temple at the place where Lord Neminath attained salvation.
14. There was a time when Girnar was adorned with huge rocks called ChatraShila, AksharShila, GhantaShila, AnjanShila, GyanShila, BinduShila and SiddhaShila.
15. Like Malayagiri, where all other trees become like the fragrant sandalwood; similarly the one visiting and worshipping Girnar with devotion and sincerity also becomes purified and free from heinous sins and deep bondages of the evil karmas.
16. Like the touch of parasmani converts iron into gold, similar is the sacred touch of Girnar.
17. A person worshipping Girnar does not suffer from poverty in this life as well as future lives.
18. Even beasts and birds residing in the holy mountain have achieved salvation in eight births.
19. The glorious Girnar shrine is a hoard of punya and is like a Tilak (ceremonial mark) on the forehead of this earth.
20. Several celestial gods and goddesses reside here for the fulfillment of their longings and desires.
21. Many saints, without eating anything else, survive only on pure air of this sacred mountain and perform strict penances and meditation in its unexposed caves.
22. Girnar is superior amongst all other tirthas, and its pilgrimage gives the fruits equivalent to the pilgrimage of all other teerthas put together. The powerful sight and touch of this sacred place results in the eradication of all sins.





23. By worshipping this great mountain, vicious people as well as those suffering from dreadful diseases like leprosy are freed from suffering and blessed with happiness.
24. Due to the grace of this precious shrine, the divine trees like Kalpavriksha that adorn its high peak, fulfill the wishes of the faithful devotees. Smaller peaks, rivers, trees, kundas and every land of this enormous mountain is considered chaste.
25. There are tiny concealed wells on Girnar which are invisible to the common man and are capable of converting matter into gold and fulfilling all the desires of the pilgrims.
26. The soil of this energetic land, when combined with oil or ghee and burnt in fire becomes gold. However, this is possible only under the guidance of a knowledgeable person.
27. All types of seasonal flowers bloom throughout the year in the Bhadrashal forest. These forests are filled with sweet water, fragrant flowers and fruits, and have become a play ground for the Indra (head of celestial gods and goddesses).
28. All living creatures residing on the peaks of Girnar-be it in water, earth or in the sky attain salvation in 3 lives. The trees and minute organisms in the soil, water, air and fire also gradually pave their way towards salvation.
29. People who donate their wealth, earned through legitimate means on this great land attain all sorts of wealth and luxuries in their future lives.
30. Noble, elevated souls who perform penance even for a day in Girnar become worthy of being served by the celestial gods and goddesses, men and women.
31. Anybody who fasts here for a day (upvas), for 2 days (chath), for 3 days (attham) and so on is blessed with all happiness and pleasures and eventually attains salvation.



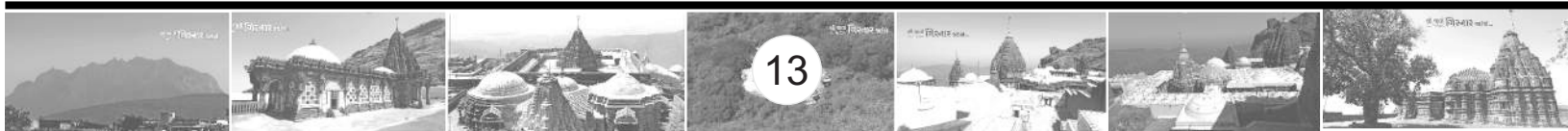


32. Pilgrims coming to Girnar and worshipping Lord Neminath achieve the highest happiness of salvation in a short time. Those who cannot come to Girnar, but contemplate on Girnar with pure thoughts, even sitting at home, achieve complete liberation in their fourth life.
33. The pious peaks, rivers, streams, minerals and trees of this holy mountain give happiness and joy to all living beings.
34. On the occasion of the installation (Pratishtha) of Lord Neminath on Girnar Mountain, the rivers of all the three worlds had descended in the huge Gajendrapad pond for providing water to shower the Lord.
35. Mere touch of the pure waters of the GajendrapadKund on Girnar washes off the sins of several lives of a person.
36. A person who showers the idol of Lord Neminath with water from Gajpadkund, after taking bath with the same water purifies his soul and frees it from sins and vices.
37. A person drinking water from this pond gets cured from physical diseases such as asthma, depression, diseases of stomach, gynac problems etc. as well as the dreadful disease like karmas afflicting the soul.
38. Varied divine medicines, herbs for making divine concoctions and processes for making gold etc. are available on this Girnar Mountain.
39. Even if the shadow of a bird flying over this holy shrine touches it the bird achieves salvation in a short time.
40. The renunciation and enlightenment of Lord Neminath took place in the Sahsavan forest on Girnar. Crores of Gods made arrangements for the first and the last samovasaran (ceremonial sermon) of Lord Neminath in the forest of Sahsavan (Laksharamvan) on Girnar.





41. Records show that 24 temples of gold were built at Sahsavani on Girnar.
42. Krishna Vasudev created three temples in Sahsavani where the presiding deities were made of silver, gold and precious gems.
43. In a cave in Sahsavani, 72 idols are installed belonging to the previous, current and the future cycles of 24 Tirthankaras each.
44. Jain monk Rahnemiji and nun Rajimatishreeji attained salvation in Sahsavani.
45. Sahsavani has a unique Samovasaran temple with an ancient idol of Lord Neminath.
46. On the first summit of Girnar Mountain, there are 14 unique Jain temples which gleam like shining pearls on this green carpet like mountain.
47. There is only one temple in entire country where the presiding deity is not a Tirthankara and this temple is of liberated soul Rahanemiji Lord Neminath's brother on this Girnar.
48. The grace of Adishtayika, guardian of the glorious shrine of Girnar Shri Ambikadevi, who helped stalwarts like Shri Hemchandracharyaji, Shri Bappabhattachariji, Shri Vastupal-Tejpal, Shri Pethad Shah and other such great souls in their attempts to spread the glory of Jainism is also experienced on this mountain.
49. Without the pilgrimage of Girnar, one's soul is not cleansed of sins, sorrows and is not freed from the cycle of rebirth and death.







## History of the idol of Lord Neminath

Lord Sagar, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tirthankara of the previous era of 24 Tirthankaras (Gat Chovisi), attained the absolute supreme knowledge (Kevalgyan) on the land of Bharat Kshetra, in Jambudveep. After attaining enlightenment, Lord Sagar travelled from one destination to another, purifying the land and imparting knowledge in the form of sermons (Deshana) seated in a **Samavasaran\***, where crores of celestial beings, saints, nuns, human beings as well as animals would gather to worship Him and listen to His divine voice. In the midst of an enchanting sermon, given by Lord Sagar in a garden situated on the outskirts of the city of Ujjayini, King Naravahan asked Lord Sagar, "Oh Lord! When would I able to attain salvation (Moksh)?" Lord Sagar replied, "You will attain salvation in the reign of Lord Neminath, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Tirthankara of the subsequent era of 24 Tirthankaras who will remain celibate throughout his life". On hearing this, King Naravahan renounced the materialistic world and was ordained a life of sainthood (Diksha) by Lord Sagar. After completing an austere life as a saint, King Naravahan took birth as a celestial being named Brahmadev in the 5th heaven (5th Devlok called Brahmaloak), with life span of 10 **Sagaropamas\***.

Almighty Lord Sagar, adorned by eight exclusive symbols (Ashtpratiharya) that are confined to a Tirthankara only, arrived at a lovely garden in the city of Champapuri where a samavasaran was created. Lord Sagar started his religious sermons.

Brahmadev the soul of King Naravahan left the luxuries of the 5th heaven to listen to the divine sermon given by Lord Sagar, respectfully bowed down to him and asked him, "Oh Lord! When will I attain salvation and be able to experience the eternal bliss that liberated souls experience?"

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\* A three layered circular structure created by celestial beings for a Tirthankara's sermon soon after he attains Kevalgyan.

\* 1 Palyopam = countless years and 1 Sagaropam = 10 Kodakodi [1 crore x 1 crore] palyopams.



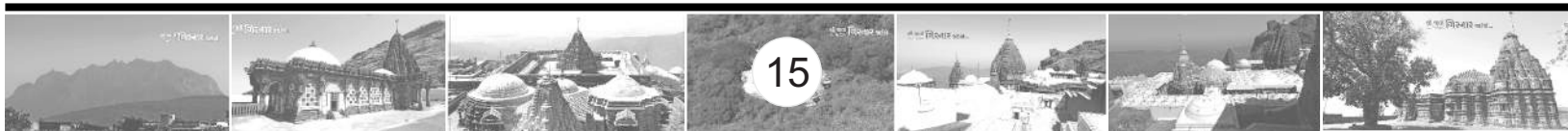




Lord Sagar resolved Brahmadev's query by saying, "Hey Brahmadev! You will be the first disciple (Gandhar) of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Tirthankara Lord Neminath in the subsequent era of 24 Tirthankara and your name will be Vardatta. You will be instrumental in awakening souls and showing them the path of salvation. " A soul attains permanent and true happiness only when he reaches the final destination – Moksh i.e. he attains salvation. All the worldly, materialistic pleasures experienced in various births are short lived and not happiness in real terms. To be free from temporary joys and sorrows, pain, diseases and attain eternal happiness of the soul, one should sincerely strive by walking on the path of renunciation, performing strict penances and nurturing compassion for all living beings. Thus, with a heart filled with purity, simplicity and devotion you can pave your way to salvation by destroying all your Karmic bondages". On hearing these promising words, Brahmadev was delighted. With deep respect and gratitude towards Lord Sagar he went back to the 5<sup>th</sup> heaven.

Brahmadev thought,"I shall have an idol of Lord Neminath carved with the most exquisite precious gems and worship Him. Alas! With his grace, I shall be free from ignorance like darkness obstructing the light of knowledge. With his grace, I shall be free from all my karmic bondages and my transmigration from one life to another shall end!". Filled with these emotions, Brahmadev got a robust idol made, whose grandeur and aura spread 12 yojans (unit of measurement) wide. Brahmadev devotionally worshipped this idol thrice a day, in the best possible way with devotional music, dance and excellent other divine offerings, for a continuous period of 10 Sagaropams. His love and devotion for Lord Neminath kept on growing everyday. Thereafter, Brahmadev's soul transmigrated from one body to another and eventually took birth as King Punyasar in the reign of Lord Neminath.

Lord Neminath said, "King Punyasar, in one of his previous lives, specially got a magnificent idol of Lord Neminath made for him and worshipped it with heartfelt devotion, continuously for a period of 10 Sagaropams. Due to this devotion he was reborn as King Punyasar, who accepted sainthood and became my first disciple, Vardatta. He will attain salvation in this life itself". On hearing these divine words of Lord Neminath, Brahmadev (of that period) stood up, bowed down to him and said,"Oh Lord! My ancestors and I have been worshipping the same idol with utmost loyalty and reverence in our hearts since ever and ever. All Brahmadevs that were born in the 5<sup>th</sup> heaven have assumed this to be immortal, till you acknowledged its mortality today". Lord Neminath replied, "Hey Indra! Heavens mainly



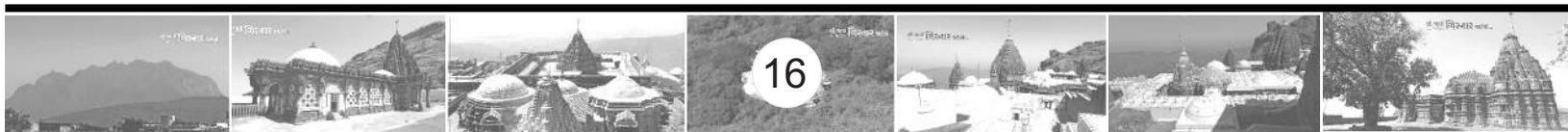


have immortal idols, whereas mortal idols are present in the mortal world (Tirchaloka), please bring that idol here.” Brahmadev immediately got that idol from the 5<sup>th</sup> heaven. King Krishna delightfully took the idol from Lord Neminath for worshipping it.

Lord Neminath then started portraying the significance of the holy mountain of Girnar and said, “Girnar is the 5<sup>th</sup> golden peak of Shatrunjaya. It is enveloped by heavenly trees such as the Mandra and Kalpavruksha. The waterfalls and streams running through the mountain, depict that the sins and violent instincts of those souls, having the potential to be liberated, will be washed away by the mere sight or touch of this pious mountain Girnar. One who donates money earned by lawful means for any good cause related to Girnar, would be prosperous in his future lives. One who will worship the idol of Lord Neminath with supreme devotion and offer unadulterated food, clothes and vessels to saints on this holy mountain, is said to have set foot on his journey towards the eternal bliss of liberation. Not only birds but even the trees that reside on this holy mountain are very fortunate. Celestial beings, saints, enlightened souls, demigods and angels frequently visit this sacred mountain to pay homage and offer their services. One is also relieved from severe diseases like leprosy, if he bathes continuously in the the waters of the wells or ponds ( like the Gajpad Pond)present here, for a period of 6 months”.

Hearing about the magnificence of Girnar, King Krishna asked Lord Neminath, “Oh Lord! O ocean of compassion! How long will we be able to worship the idol obtained by Brahmadev that has been placed in the temple of my palace? Where will it be worshipped once it’s been taken away?” Lord Neminath replied, ”This idol will be worshipped in the temple of your palace till the city of Dwarkapuri exists, after that it will be worshiped by the celestial beings of Kanchangiri. 2000 years after my salvation, Ratnasar a merchant, will bring this idol from a cave to Girnar, with the help of Ambika Devi. With extreme faith and devotion, he will install the idol in a temple here. The idol will stay in this temple for 1,03,250 years. On the onset of the barbarous 6<sup>th</sup> era, Ambika Devi will take this idol to the netherworld (patalalok). She with many other celestial beings in the netherworld will continue worshipping this idol.”

After knowing the marvellous history of Lord Neminath currently residing on the top of the pious mountain Girnar, we conclude that this idol was made in the reign of Lord Sagar, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tirthankara of the previous era of 24 tirthankaras, by Brahmadev of the 5<sup>th</sup> heaven and thus, is the most ancient idol worshipped on the land of Bharatkshetra, today.





## Antiquity of the idol of Lord Neminath

Years of the previous ascending cycle of time (Utsarpini Kaal) :

21,000 years of 1st era + 21,000 years of the second era + 84,250 years (after which the reign of Lord Sagar began) of the 3rd era + x years (a few years after the inception of the reign of Lord Sagar, Brahmadev got this idol made) of the 3rd era. Thus total of 1,26,250 years +x years deducted from 10 Kodakodi sagaropams of the previous ascending cycle of time.

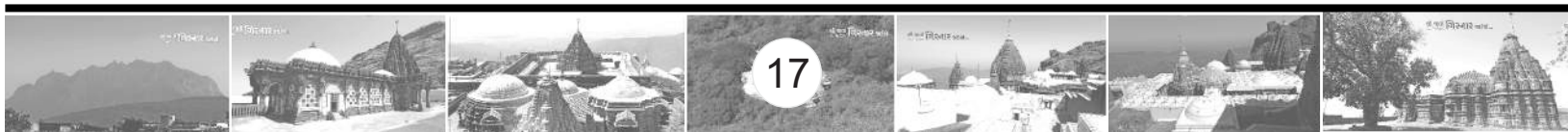
Years of the present descending cycle of the time (Avasarpini kaal) :

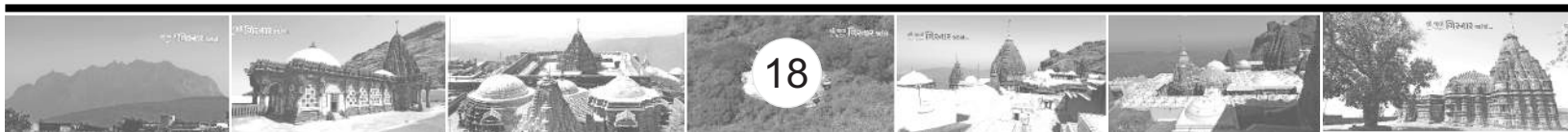
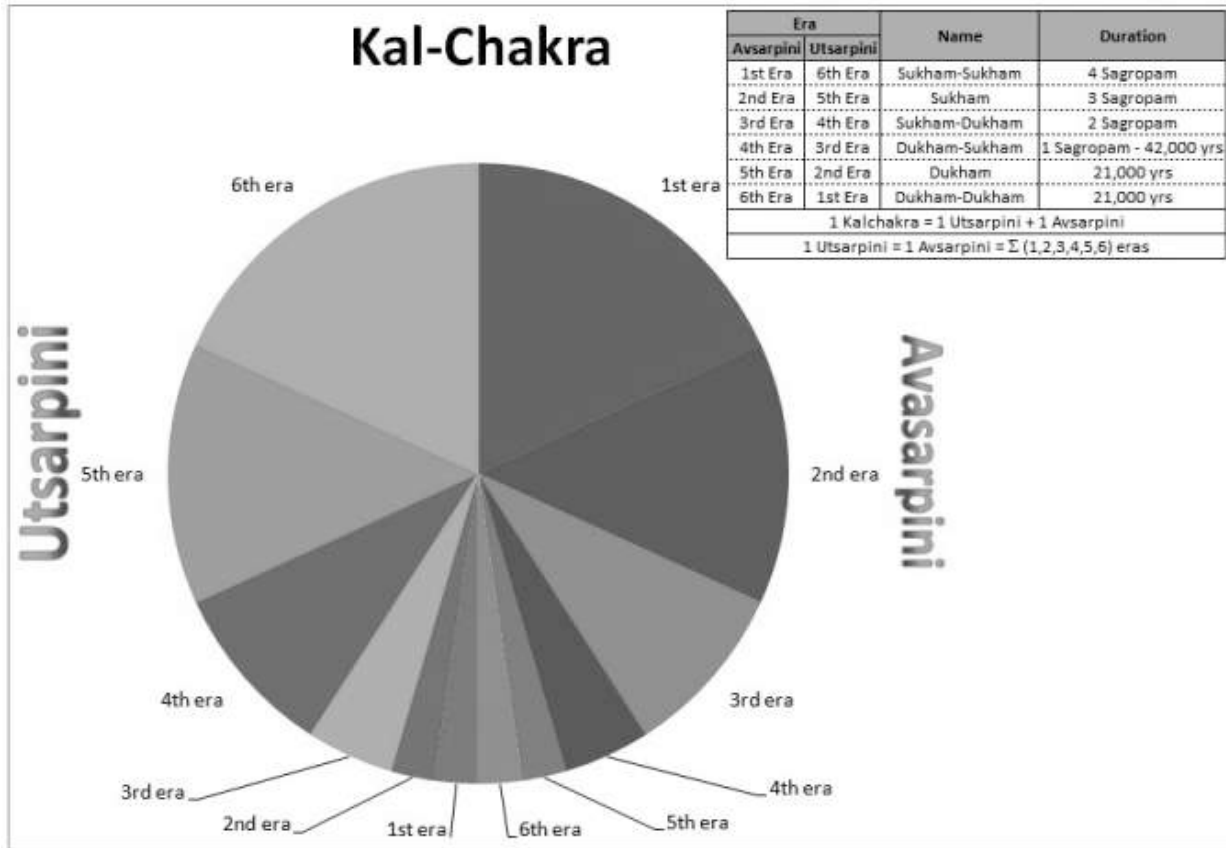
39,485 years subtracted from 21,000 years of the 6th era (yet to come) + 18,484 years which are left of the 5th era. Thus, 40 kodakodi sagaropams of the previous descending cycle of time.

Thus, (A total of 1,26,250 years + x years deducted from 10 kodakodi sagaropam of the previous ascending cycle of time) + (39,485 years deducted from 10 kodakodi sagaropams of the present descending cycle of time) = 20 kodakodi sagaropams of one time cycle (kalchakra) minus total of 1,65,735 years and x years, result to the time period of this idol's existence till date.

Antiquity of the main temple or the present location of the idol of Lord Neminath

2000 years after the salvation of Lord Neminath, the idol was placed in the current temple situated on the pious mountain Girnar. The reign of Lord Neminath lasted for 82,000 years after his salvation, followed by the reign of Lord Parshvanath which lasted for 250 years, succeeded by 2,335 years of the reign of Lord Mahavir. Thus the temple where the idol of Lord Neminath currently resides is approximately 84,785 years old.









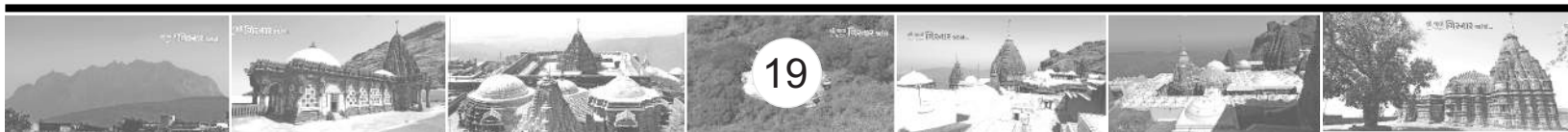
## Re – instalment of Lord Neminath by Jain Merchant Ratnasar

In the present descending cycle of time, approximately 2000 years had passed after the salvation of Lord Neminath- the 22nd Tirthankara of the current era of 24 Tirthankaras. On the fortunate land of Bharatkshetra, in the prosperous city of Kampaliya, located in the blessed land of Saurashtra, lived a wealthy and wise merchant, Ratnasar. Unexpectedly, Saurashtra experienced a twelve year long drought which resulted in the death of many animals as well as human beings. The citizens experienced difficulties in earning a livelihood for themselves and poverty increased day-by-day. Thus, Ratnasar decided to step out of his hometown in order to earn a living. He travelled from one state to another and finally reached the city of Kashmir. Ratnasar's destiny changed for the better. The meritorious deeds done by him in his past births bore fruits. Though he became wealthier by the day, his heart was filled with generosity and virtuosity. Thus, he decided against hoarding the wealth he earned and started using it for charitable as well as religious causes with the aim of attaining progressive births in the future and moving closer towards spirituality. With this purpose in mind, Ratnasar organised a religious tour on foot (Pagpala Chharipalit Sangh) covering different religious holy places such as Siddhachal and Girnar. The tour was organised under the guidance and godly presence of **Acharya\*** Anandasuriji.

During the course of this religious tour, Ratnasar built several temples, served many saints, helped the religious congregation of pilgrims and continued devoting himself in the service of his mentor, Acharya Anandasuriji. But on the other side, Ratnasar also faced many hardships on his tour because of his previously accumulated bad karmas. He prayed to Ambika Devi for strength in order to withstand the trouble caused by demons, devils, monsters and evil spirits and moved ahead on his tour. On reaching his hometown-Kampaliya, Ratnasar affectionately invited the entire society for a grand feast and asked them to join him on his religious tour on foot. By the direction and grace of Acharya Anandasuriji, the entire congregation comfortably reached the eternal holy mountain,

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\* An Acharya is the highest leader of Jain order, final authority in the monastic order and has the authority to ordain new monks and nuns. He also has the authority to consecrate new idols.

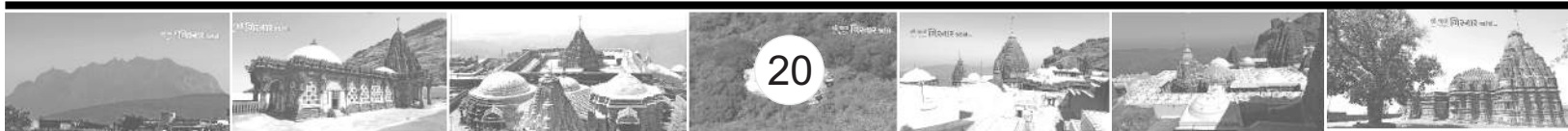




Siddhachal. Experiencing the spiritually uplifting atmosphere there, and devotionally worshipping Siddhachal and its innumerable temples, their joy knew no bounds. Enthusiastically, they proceeded towards the glorious mountain Girnar – the salvation place of Lord Neminath and other infinite Tirthankaras. The congregation of pilgrims, got engrossed in the spiritually charged atmosphere and began their ascent. They reached the holy place where Lord Neminath attained supreme knowledge. Worshipping the idol of Lord Neminath here, they proceeded towards the primary peak of the auspicious mountain of Girnar. While climbing uphill, the pilgrims observed that the steeple of the temple was vibrating. On noticing this Ratnasar, immediately asked the clairvoyant Acharya Anandasuriji for an explanation behind this vibrating steeple. Acharya Anandasuriji politely replied, “Hey Ratnasar! This is a bad omen, which indicates that you will be the cause of destruction as well as reconstruction on this pious mountain”.

On hearing this, a chill ran down Ratnasar’s spine. Every single drop of blood flowing down his veins was replete with reverence for Jainism and how could he even imagine himself to be the cause of destruction here!! He was so shocked and disheartened that he started retracing his steps. On seeing this, Acharyaji stopped him and said, “Ratnasar you will not be the direct cause of any destruction here, but the pilgrims who have accompanied you on your religious tour will be the cause of destruction and hence you will be indirectly related to destruction on this sacred mountain. On the other hand, you will play a major role in the reconstruction of the temple on this eternal mountain. So cheer up! These words lifted Ratnasar’s spirits and he moved ahead towards the main temple. Reaching there, he and all the elated pilgrims first bathed in the pure and sacred waters of the Gajapad Pond. He then dressed himself in royal garments, took along with him a pot-full of water from the Gajapad pond and proceeded towards the main temple. It was a wooden construction, and was adorned by a plastered idol of Lord Neminath installed by a devotee, King Vimal.

Using the pure water that they had got along with them, the enthusiastic pilgrims performed the devotional ritual of showering that water (with the aim of purifying and cleansing their soul) on the plastered idol of Lord Neminath. Out of over excitement and extreme devotion, the pilgrims continued this ritual for a relatively long time. Celestial beings as well as temple guardians warned the pilgrims







and requested them to use less water but the ignorant pilgrims turned a deaf ear towards them. On the other hand, they increased the amount as well as the intensity of flow of water on the idol. As a result the plaster of the idol dissolved. It lost its original form and eventually landed up being nothing but a heap of clay.

Ratnasar was taken aback witnessing this horrid sight. He could not take in the shock and fainted. All the pilgrims expressed sincere regret on realising that their ignorance caused such a disaster. Chaos and disappointment prevailed. Ratnasar, the head of the congregation of pilgrims slowly gained consciousness after water was sprinkled on him. But his heart was filled with deep sorrow and seeing the deformed idol of Lord Neminath, he could not hold back his tears. He was confused and completely broken.

He started cursing himself, "This holy place has been ruined by a sinner like me. Oh God! How I hate myself for doing this! I condemn the disgraceful actions of my ignorant co-pilgrims. I had come here with utmost devotion to worship this eternal mountain, Girnar and Lord Neminath, but look what I have done? Instead of playing a helping hand, I have been a destroyer here. What should I do to be free from the bad karma I have brought upon myself by doing such a sinful act? I should sincerely perform many good religious and charitable deeds to compensate for this horrible deed. How do I go about it? I have no idea. And that is why I surrender not only my worries and thoughts but my entire self to you, Dear Lord Neminath, Help me!! You are my only security and life saving grace". Determined Ratnasar, then gave up on food and water, sat crossed legged and started meditating in front of the deformed idol of Lord Neminath.

Days after days passed, but Ratnasar stuck by his oath and continued fasting. Every passing day was a test to his willpower and devotion, but he did not give up. Seeing his diligence, Ambika Devi was highly impressed and appeared before him exactly on the 30th day of his penance. Ratnasar was overwhelmed and bowed down to her with respect and gratitude. Ambika Devi said, "Dear one, you are blessed!! Be free from all your worries. You have made your life meaningful by coming along with so many pilgrims to Girnar. The plastered idol gets renewed from time to time, just like old ragged clothes are replaced with new clothes. So, its not a big deal!! You too should apply a new layer of plaster on the idol and re-install it, where it originally was."





On hearing these words, disheartened Ratnasar said, “Oh Mother! Please suggest a better option. By destroying the idol I have become a great sinner and there are chances that in the future an ignorant worshiper like me can again lead to its deformation. O Divine Mother! If at all my devotion and penance has touched your heart, please reward me with an idol, which cannot be destroyed or deformed by the worshippers in the future and on which the pilgrims can contently perform devotional rituals like showering of water to their hearts’ content.

In a spur of a moment, Ambika Devi disappeared without responding to Ratnasar’s request, leaving him disturbed and confused. Without further grieving about Ambika Devi’s departure, Ratnasar regained stability and started meditating again. Ambika Devi examined Ratnasar’s potential to withstand difficult circumstances, but seeing Ratnasar unaffected by her attempts to disturb his meditation Ambika Devi made a thunderous appearance, mounted on her lion like celestial vehicle which illuminated the entire environment. She said, “My brave child! I am impressed with your conviction and dedication. Ask for anything Ratnasar, your wish shall be my command. Ratnasar promptly replied, “Dear Mother!! Present me with an impermeable and everlasting idol of Lord Neminath which will remain as it is till eternity and be a cause of joy to infinite pilgrims”.

Ambika Devi replied, “Enlightened Lords have forcasted you to be the saviour of this religious place. Hence, without going astray follow me!!” Ratnasar obediently followed Ambika Devi as she led him in the east direction towards the Suvarna Cave, Ambika Devi requested Siddhivinayak Dev (Adhishthayik of the Suvarna Cave), “Oh noble one! The guardian of the Suvarna Cave! I humbly request you to open the gates to this wonderful cave!” Siddhivinayak Dev promptly followed Ambika Devi’s instruction and as the gates opened, a flash of divine light emerged. Ambika Devi entered the enchanting cave followed by Ratnasar. Inside was a Suvarna temple that exhibited a variety of beautiful idols made from precious crystals, stones, gems etc. Briefing Ratnasar about the origin and significance of the various idols, Ambika Devi said, “Hey Ratnasar, this idol is made by Saudharmendra, this one is carved out of the Padmaraj gem by Dharmendra. King Bharat, Adityayashu, Bahubali and others made these from precious gems and stones and worshipped them for years together. This particular idol is similar to any immortal idol and is made from the extracts of ruby and has been devotionally worshipped by Brahmadev in the 5th heaven for infinite years. This one is created by Ram and Krishna





Ratnasar was flabbergasted and joyous on seeing the wonderful cave and adorned idols of different Tirthankars. Each was extraordinarily enchanting and choosing one idol was a tough call. After a lot of contemplation, Ratnasar decided to choose an idol studded with rubies and other precious stones. But Ambika Devi decided saying, “Hey son! People in the near future will be malicious and greedy. Attracted to the precious gems, the shameless and undisciplined people will disrespect and cause harm to the idol. If you happen to choose this idol, you will repent in the future. Instead, choose this idol made from the extracts of ruby by Brahmadev. It is very sturdy and is extremely powerful and miraculous”. That idol of Lord Neminath brightly illuminated an area of 12 yojans around it. Saying this Ambika Devi, with her divine power, subsided the illumination effect of the idol and made it look like a normal idol made of stone. She then guided Ratnasar saying, “Immediately tie this idol with a raw cotton thread and without looking anywhere or without turning around and looking behind, take this idol with you. It will be automatically installed at the place where you leave it”. Ambika Devi left.

Ratnasar diligently followed her instructions and due to the grace of Ambika Devi, the idol seemed as light as cotton. He speedily brought it to the main gate of the temple. Ratnasar then realised that he would first have to move the de-moulded, plastered idol of Lord Neminath to another place, carefully clean the original section and then replace it with the new idol of Lord Neminath. Thus, he placed the idol he was holding on one side. After moving the plastered idol of Lord Neminath and cleaning that area, he reached out to bring the new idol which he had attained from the Suvarna cave. Ratnasar tried his level best using all his strength, but failed to move the idol even by half an inch. It was fixed to the ground and was as still and immovable as a mountain. Ratnasar was worried and did not know what to do. He again started fasting and meditating to invoke Ambika Devi and ask for help to deal with the situation. After he fasted for seven consecutive days, Ambika Devi appeared before him and said, “Dear child! I had previously warned you that this idol will be automatically installed at the place where you leave it. There is no point in wasting any more time, in the hope of moving the idol. Let the idol remain the way it is and rebuild the temple accordingly with the door facing westwards. Without further ado, start working on the requirements of the temple.





Ambika Devi disappeared Ratnasar followed her guidance and began the construction of a west facing temple. Ratnasar, along with the entire **sangh\*** was bubbling with joy and enthusiasm for the **installation ceremony\*** of Lord Neminath's idol in the newly built temple. The Suri Mantra, chanted by devout **Acharyas\*** during the installation ceremony attracted heavenly deities to become Adhishtayaks (guardians/protectors) of the newly built temple. Ratnasar performed the eight different forms of worship, to destroy the eight types of karmas by which the soul is bonded. With his heart overflowing with happiness and respect, he hoisted up the flag on the temple's steeple that soared high in the skies and kissed the clouds, thus depicting the glory of Jainism.

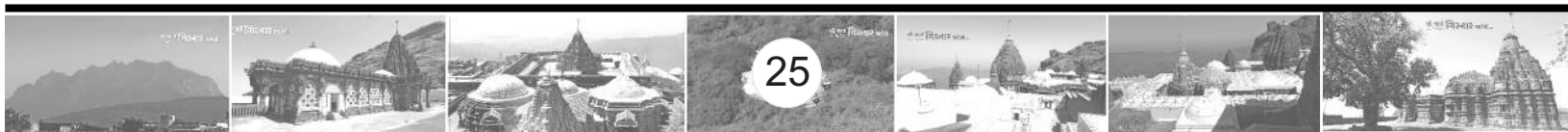
On completion of the ceremony, he humbly approached the idol of Lord Neminath, bowed down and said, "Oh Lord! You are the ruler of three world's, you are immortal, infinite, eternal and flawless. You are the one going to liberate me from this material world. You are imperishable, indestructible, unrivalled and free from all diseases. You are unaffected by celestial beings, worshipped by angles, demons and human beings. You are compassionate and the conqueror of not only external enemies but also the internal enemies such as ego, worldly, attachments and aversions. You are adorned with the eight divine accompaniments and yet completely detached by it. Dear Lord! I surrender my entire existence in your feet.

Ratnasar paid homage with utmost reverence as if virtually Lord Neminath was in front of him. Pleased by Ratnasar's devotion, Ambika Devi, the Kshetrapal and other celestial beings appeared before him and honoured him with a garland of parijat flowers. Ratnasar was humbled and gratified to see Ambika Devi's kind gesture. Ratnasar, a true shravak (Jain householder) ornamented the land of Saurashtra with numerous Jain temples and sowed the seeds of his wealth in the seven fields of donation which will eventually pave his path to salvation

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\* The fourfold religious order is the Chaturvidh Sangh and comprises of Jain monks, nuns, male & female householders.

\* The installation ceremony, known as the Pratishtha Ceremony is a traditional ceremony performed by an Acharya consecrating the idol of a Tirthankara. After the ceremony, the idol transforms from a stone statue to the enlightened Lord himself, worthy to be worshipped.







## History of The Existing Temple of Lord Neminath

In the state of Gujarat, the grandeur at the city of Patan was at its peak. Under the inspiration of Acharya Hemchandra Suriiji, a religious tour on foot was organized from this majestic city to the unblemished mountains of Girnar as well as Siddhachal. The conjugation of pilgrims along with Acharya Hemchandra Suriiji halted on the outskirts of the village of Vanthali. The pilgrims after bathing, dressed in extraordinary garments and precious jewellery, prayed and performed devotional rituals with deep gratitude in their hearts. The head of the congregation of pilgrims was wealthy, enthusiastic and devotional. On observing all this the emperor of Saurashtra, King Ra-Khengar's mind was filled with envious thoughts. He thought of fleeing the citizens of Patan and attaining their abundant jewellery, wealth and other valuable things.

Just as a monkey finds a ladder to climb to his destination, King Ra-Khengar found wrong advisers who encouraged him to rob the pilgrims of Patan. They said "It is your good luck that the wealth and riches of the city of Patan have entered your territory, don't loose this golden chance. Ensure that the affluent pilgrims are robbed off their wealth which will in turn enrich our treasury". King Ra-Khengar was afraid of violating the law and feared defamation on being caught for robbery. Nevertheless, he was highly influence by the words of his malicious advisors. After a little while he conspired a plan in favor of the robbery. King Ra-Khengar coaxed the pilgrims of Patan to extend their stay by a day in Vanthali, before proceeding towards Siddhachal, but unfortunately someone from King Ra-Khenger's family passed away the following day. Aware of the King's intention, Acharya Hemchandra Suriiji took this opportunity to meet King Ra-Khenger and preached him on the principles of human virtues and morality. Thus the congregation of pilgrims along with Acharya Hemchandra Suriiji proceeded towards Siddhachal without being looted and returned safely to Patan.

In 1114 AC King Siddharaj of Patan defeated King Ra-Khengar and conquered the state of Saurashtra . He imprisoned King Ra-Khengar, after gaining information of his malpractices and evil intention to loot the pilgrims from Patan and other such activities. At the very same time, King Siddharaj's minister, Minister Sajjan was travelling from Undira to Khambhat. He stayed at the house of Bhavsar in





the village of Sakapur. He noticed Bhavsar using gold coins along with coal in order to create fire in the stove. Bhavsar was oblivious to the fact that the coins were made of gold and assumed them to be other forms of coal. Minister Sajjan asked him, "Bhavsar, why have you kept these gold coins here?" Bhavsar did not know what to say and was unaware of the place of its origin. Nevertheless, he considered Minister Sajjan a virtuous and noble person and gave the gold coins to him. Minister Sajjan had taken an oath not to retain wealth that did not belong to him and thus on returning to Patan he offered those gold coins to King Siddharaj. This genuine gesture of Minister Sajjan impressed the King and thus he decided to give Sajjan an important position in his state administration. After King Ra-Khengar's death, on advice of his Chief Minister Bahad, King Siddharaj appointed Sajjan as the Chief Minister of the state of Saurashtra. He had faith in Sajjan's righteousness, honesty and loyalty.

Sajjan was diligent, hardworking, farsighted, skilled and completed the tasks he took on hand. The citizens of Saurashtra were pleased to have him as the Chief Minister. He made the city of Junagadh as the center of all key operations to be made in the state of Saurashtra. Due to his constant efforts, he succeeded in making Saurashtra a developed and a prosperous state. Once he happened to make a pilgrimage trip to the eminent mountain, Girnar, in Junagadh. He was shocked and devastated to see the extremely poor, dilapidated conditions of the temples which once upon a time shone like bright pearls on the green carpet like mountain. He was shattered and grieved on being a witness to such a horrible sight. He wondered how the temples could be in such a pathetic condition under the reign of King Siddharaj. Thus on the advice of Acharya Bhadreshwar Surji of Raj Gachha, he made an absolute decision to renovate the deteriorated main wooden temple of Lord Neminath.

The renovation of the temples, started on an auspicious day. Proficient architects, along with a team of skilful sculptors and other workers, offered their finesse and started restoring and rebuilding the various temples. The ruined temples were being transformed into masterpieces of a kind. Sounds of hammers and chisels echoed on the peak of the mountain. Minister Sajjan gave every ounce of his time, energy and effort to ensure that everything went smoothly and the glory of the temples of Girnar was restored to its original form. He was working round the clock. On one hand, were the governing responsibilities of the state and on the other the renovation of the temple on the pious mountain Girnar, which was going on under his supervision. He was constantly worried regarding the



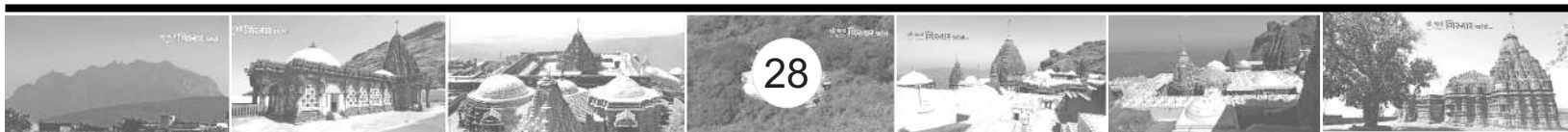




funds that were required for the ongoing renovation process. Due to the lack of time, he could not personally go to different towns and cities to raise funds. Therefore, he temporarily decided to use the previous three years' revenues from the treasury of Saurashtra for the ongoing work and then replace the funds at a later date by raising funds from the citizens of Saurashtra. In Vikram Samvat 1185 (1129 AC) he spent a sum of 72 lakh dramms (name of the currency) for the renovation of the temple.

It is rightly said that every good work faces difficulties. In the same way some people could not endure Chief Minister Sajjan's great work and thus went ahead and filled King Siddharaj's, ears against Chief Minister Sajjan. They informed him that Sajjan had not deposited a single penny earned from the revenue generated from Saurashtra into the King's treasury, for 3 consecutive years. To conspire against the minister, they falsely claimed that something had grossly gone wrong in his governance. Seeds of suspicion were sowed in the King's mind. King Siddharaj was highly disappointed and to cross check the information he got, he decided to personally visit Junagadh and audit the accounts and administration work of Saurashtra. King Siddharaj lost all the faith and confidence that he had in his Chief Minister Sajjan and his attitude towards him turned bitter. It was now beyond anyone's control to explain to King Siddharaj, the real situation. Clever Chief Minister Bahad understood the situation and sent a messenger to warn Sajjan of the forth coming difficulty. Sajjan was smart enough to understand the situation. He immediately started thinking of ways to earn back the revenues designated for the treasury. He remembered the prosperous shravakas of Vanthali, a pilgrimage place, who were always eager to serve the holy place, Girnar - physically or monetarily.

He immediately proceeded towards Vanthali to acquire the money he had spent on the renovation of the temples from the state treasury. Chief Minister Sajjan gathered the respected businessmen, wealthy shravakas and bankers of Vanthali, discussed the expenses made for the renovation process and explained the urgent requirement of money. Everyone eagerly accepted his proposal and started noting down large contributions that they wished to make. Sajjan heaved a sigh of relief. In the meanwhile, a man in soiled clothes was noticed making his way through the crowd. Struggling to come forward, he bumped in to a few rich businessmen. One of the few businessmen insulted him as he proceeded and condemned him of his monetary status by saying "What work do you have out here? Funds are being raised to cover the expenses for the time of renovation of the temples





on the holy mountain Girnar. Do you have the potential to contribute even two rupees for the cause?” But this did not discourage the man and he pushed himself amongst the crowd and reached the first line of people. He directly approached Chief minister Sajjan, went close to his ear and said “Oh Minister! I am ready to give everything I can for this wonderful and auspicious mountain, Girnar. Why are you straining yourself and raising funds for such a petty amount? Why are the funds from the state treasury at stake? Please have pity on my poor soul and let me be the beneficiary of the entire amount required for this cause!” Chief minister Sajjan was in little disbelief for a couple of minutes. He was stunned to see such a bagged man say these words. “Who is this man?” He thought to himself and asked the man in soiled clothes, “May I know your name?” The man humbly replied, “Bhim Sarthiya Minister”. These affluent men are fortunate enough to receive several opportunities to make such donations. I would be highly obliged if you permit me to make this donation and do some good deed and earn punya. Saying these words, he expressed his wish to everyone present, touched the minister’s feet and begged for his consent.

Chief Minister Sajjan was left with no option but to accept Bhim Sarthiya’s request and expressed his inability to accept funds from every one present at the fund raiser event. Chief Minister Sajjan then returned to Junagadh and got news about King Siddharaj’s arrival in Junagadh very soon. A huge procession was arranged to welcome King Siddharaj. After humbly gracing the event with his presence, King Siddharaj entered the royal palace. Seeing him, Chief Minister Sajjan bowed down with respect and asked about his well being. King Siddharaj had fallen to prey to all sorts of rumours with respect to Sajjan’s disloyalty to the state governance and his negligence in administrative matters. He angrily asked Minister Sajjan “How can I be doing well in the presence of traitor like you handling the administration. Where are the previous 3 year’s accounts showing the revenue generated from the state of Saurashtra?” Chief Minister Sajjan had anticipated Siddharaj’s anger and replied politely, “Dear King! I have documented accounts for every penny of the revenue of the state. If you please, rest for some time. I shall have the accounts ready for you.

King Siddharaj’s exasperation subsided on hearing Chief Minister Sajjan’s fearless reply. He repented for his fruitless anger because he had heard praises of Sajjan’s dedication towards the administration work as well as the fabulous work regarding the restoration of Jain temples on Girnar. In



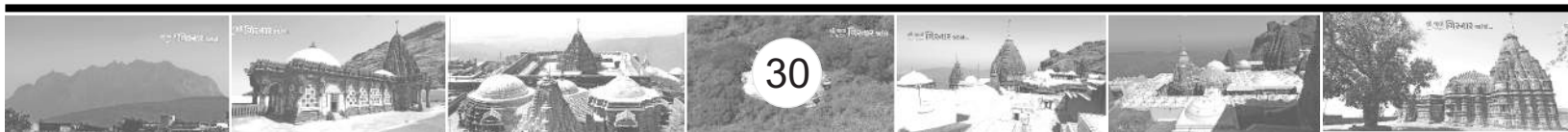


the evening, King Siddharaj called Chief Minister Sajjan and expressed his intense desire to climb Girnar on the following day, to witness the splendid work that was on the verge of completion.

At the crack of dawn, King Siddharaj along with Chief Minister Sajjan started ascending Girnar. The sight of the majestic temples soaring high in the sky took Siddharaj's breath away and he said, "Fortunate are the parents who gave birth to such marvellous souls who built such spectacular temples on this holy mountain." On hearing this Chief Minister Sajjan replied, "Oh Master! Blessed are your parents who gave birth to a virtuous soul like you who is the pioneer in restoring these temples."

This statement took King Siddharaj by surprise. Nevertheless, he remained silent. After a few moments of silence Chief Minister broke the ice and said, O master! Blessed are Karnav Dev and Minal Devi who gave birth to you. All credit goes to them for giving birth to a powerful, loyal and virtuous son like you. These amazing temples have been renovated with the help of the revenue generated over the past 3 years from the prosperous land of Saurashtra which is under your reign. Hence Karnav Dev and Minal Devi are blessed to have a noble and powerful son like you. The temple 'Karnavprasad', named after your father enhances the existing splendor of this sacred mountain, and thus your father's name will go down in history. Lord, there is a shrvak by the name of Bhim Sarthiya, in the nearby village of Vanthali, who is single handedly willing to sponsor all the expenses made. You have the choice of accepting that money and replacing the past 3 years' money spent from the state treasury or take this wonderful opportunity of adding virtues to your soul by financing the restoration of such awesome temples. The Final decision lies in your hands."

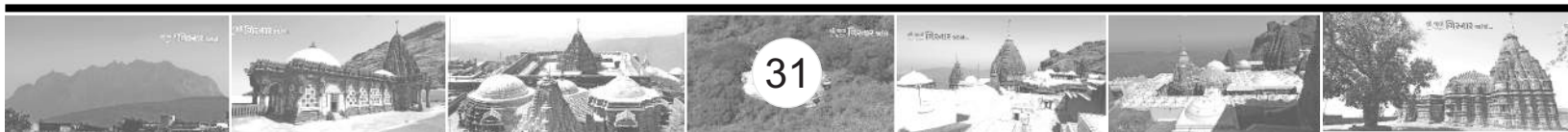
King Siddharaj's joy knew no bounds and he told Sajjan, "If I were to get the extremely valuable chance of restoring and renovating such sacred and glorious temples, then I am not worried about the three years revenue. Chief Minister! You have done an incredible job. Your intelligence, diligence and loyalty towards your responsibilities and work has made me extremely proud of you today. I sincerely apologise for having doubts in your intentions and work. Nevertheless, I am lucky to have a Minister like you!"





On other hand, Bhima Sathariya was anticipating Chief Minister Sajjan's command to send money across. He grew restless with every passing moment and wondered as to why were there no news from Chief Minister Sajjan. He was worried, thinking that he would lose the chance of performing such a noble act. Losing his patience, he went to Junagadh and questioned Chief Minister Sajjan's non responsiveness. Chief Minister Sajjan broke the news to him and said that it was King Siddharaj's decision and nothing could be done to revoke it. Bhima Sartiya could not accept the fact that he lost such a worthy opportunity and fainted on hearing these words. After regaining consciousness, he requested Chief Minister Sajjan, "O Minister! I have kept aside the money, I was going to give you for restoration and renovation of the temples. This money is now futile to me. I sincerely request you to keep the money and use it wherever you feel is appropriate.

Several bullock carts from the village of Vanthali, filled with Bhima Sarthiya's wealth arrived in the courtyard of Chief Minister Sajjan. Chief Minister Sajjan wisely used the wealth to build a Jain temple by the name of 'Merakvasi' and built a huge reservoir called 'Bhimkund' near the temples situated on the peak in the memory of Bhima Sarthiya.







## The Origin of Goddess Ambika Devi - Lord Neminath's Celestial Guardian

Saurashtra was adorned by the spectacular Raivatachal hills. To the south of these hills was the peaceful, and lawfully protected town, named Kuber. The residents of this town were wealthy and prosperous like Kuber (the God of wealth). Mesmerizing lotus gardens situated here, were a treat to the viewer's eyes. A high fort surrounding the city kept enemy soldiers at bay. The temples with enchanting idols of the Tirthankar Gods prevented the citizens from committing sins. Kuber was ruled by a benevolent King Krishna, a gem of the Yadav Dynasty, who was as famous as the **Indra Dev\***, as brave as a lion, and always willing to assist the needy.

"In this world, right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct are the foundation pillars of religion". There lived a spiritually wise Brahmin named Devabhata, whose chest was adorned with three sacred threads as an indication of his belief. He was inspired by the divine discourses of holy saints. He was married to a religiously inclined lady; Deval and they had a son named Somabhata. Somabhata was well groomed since childhood and was a man of integrity and character. He was married to an equally virtuous girl named Ambika who resembled **Goddess Lakshmi\***. In the course of time, Devabhata passed away. His exit from the world marked the onset of false beliefs and myths in his house, wherein his family members started feeding the crows on someone's death anniversary, worshipping the peepal tree and other such superstitions. But this didn't deter Ambika's faith in Jainism.

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\* **Indra dev** is the lord of all the celestial beings who serves the Tirthankaras. Indra Dev himself manages and celebrates the five auspicious events in Tirthankara's life, such as a Chyavan kalyanak, Janma kalyanak, Diksha kalyanak, Kevalgyan kalyanak and Nirvan kalyanak.

\* **Lakshmi** is the goddess of wealth, prosperity (both material and spiritual), light, wisdom, fortune, fertility, generosity and courage; and the embodiment of beauty, grace and charm. She is said to bring good luck, and is believed to protect her devotees from all kinds of misery and poverty.







A year passed and Devabhadd's **death anniversary\*** arrived. Various sweets and cuisines were prepared. That afternoon, two Jain monks, detached from the material world and engrossed in their spiritual practices, approached Devabhadd's house for **alms\*** in order to break their month long fast. They represented two contradictory personalities- sun for their intense penance and the moon for their compassion. Seeing them Ambika was filled with delight and immersed in devotional feelings. Ambika thought, "Oh! Lord! On this auspicious day, you have blessed me with the **darshan** of these two monks whose morality and chastity have the potential to purify this sinful world. How blessed I am to have them at my doorstep! My eyes have been purified on seeing them. My mother-in-law is not at home and the food is suitable to monks, as it will not cause the violation of any of their vows, I cannot let this golden opportunity pass away!" Thus she decided to offer **alms** to the monks and enrich her human birth! With this thought in her mind, she requested the holy monks to accept the food and water of her house. The monks, with their profound knowledge, found that the food as well as water was suitable for their acceptance. They accepted the alms and blessed Ambika whole-heartedly. Ambika's heart was exuberating with joy. She was multiplying her influx of **punya** by continuously appreciating her holy deed.

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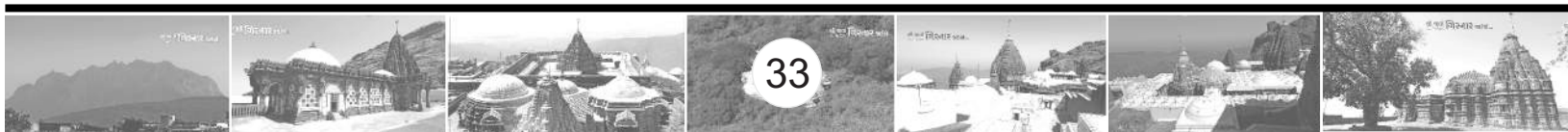
\* **The death anniversary** is also known as shraaddha-a hindu ritual performed for one's ancestors, especially dead parents.

\* **Jain Sadhus and Sadhvis** do not cook food, do not get it prepared for them, and do not accept any food, which has been prepared for them. They go to different householders and receive a small amount of vegetarian food from each house. This practice is called Gochari. Just as cow graze's the top part of the grass by moving from place to place, taking a little at one place and a little at another, in the same way Jain monks and nuns do not take all their food from one house. They accept food, which is within the limits of their vows.

\* Vision of saintly person is called darshan. It is most commonly used for "visions of the divine", e.g. of a deity, idol or a very holy person or an artefact. One could "receive" darshan or blessing of the deity in the temple or from a great saintly person.

\* Also known as Supatra Daan, which means offering alms to Tirthankaras, Gandharas, Jain monks and Nuns.

\* **Punya** is that which accumulates as a result of good deeds, acts or thoughts and that carries over later in life or to the next life. Such merit contributes to one's growth





Ambika's happiness knew no boundaries and she was on cloud nine. Her envious neighbour couldn't tolerate Ambika's elation and came out of her house with a devilish look on her face. She began creating a ruckus by calling Ambika offensive names in front of the people of the neighbourhood. Shouting at Ambika she said, "You tyrant, self-wiled daughter-in-law! You should be cursed! What kind of a strange behaviour was that? The food has not yet been offered either to the **pitrus**\* or to the Brahmins or the deities and you adulterated it by offering it to those bald-headed ones. You've taken disadvantage of your mother-in-law's absence and have acted as per your own free will. Your actions suit the low and backward caste and are completely unacceptable. In the meantime, Ambika's mother-in-law returned..

Fuming with rage the jealous neighbour entered her house and narrated the entire story to her mother-in-law and instigated her against Ambika. Ambika's mother-in-law also got carried away with her jealous neighbour and accused her in harsh words: "Oh! You wretched low caste, characterless lady! Who has given you the freedom to act according to `your own free will, when I am still alive?" Her mother-in-law on one side and the green eyed neighbour on the other, were like storm and lightening from either side and Ambika stood sandwiched in the middle like the moon-but the bitter accusations started shadowing the moonlight and she started shivering listening to the dreadful words that were thrown at her. In the midst of all this commotion, Ambika's husband arrived with other Brahmins. He was filled with anger on hearing his mother and neighbours' complaints and in return, he started insulting Ambika as well. Immensely hurt by everybody's false allegations, Ambika quietly left the house with her two sons.

As she walked on the road weeping, she was absorbed in her thoughts – "Dear God! Till date I have never disobeyed my in-laws and have never overruled their decisions. I have sincerely served my husband and never caused him any pain. Moreover, I have not resorted to any unpleasant acts which would disgrace my husband's family or my father's family. I have toiled day in and day out, neglecting my weak body and bad health in order to fulfill all my household responsibilities. Even though I am innocent, this society is humiliating me.

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\* **Pitru** is the name for deceased parents.





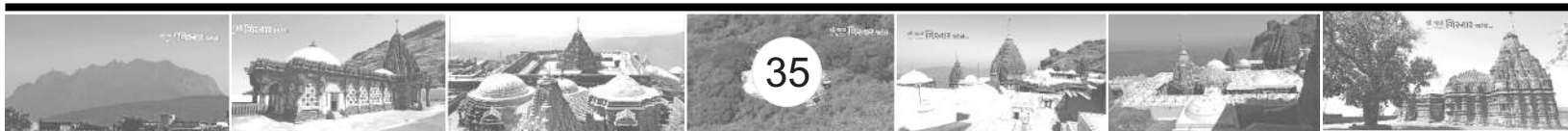
On this auspicious day, I took the opportunity to serve alms to the ascetic Jain monks who had been fasting by consuming only water for the past thirty days. This gesture would definitely help the family but their blind faith in Hindu customs has caused unwanted trouble. Their futile efforts to please the dead by making offerings of food to them is like irrigating barren trees with the hope of reaping fruits from them. Just as an owl cannot see daylight and thus thinks the sun is useless, similarly these people are condemning the meritorious act of offering food to Jain monks, as they cannot visualize the abundant punya it would give. Its pointless for me to further contemplate on this. I am not worried, but on the other hand, confident about the good result of this meritorious act. I shall continue appreciating my good deed and thank God for giving me this golden opportunity. I shall renounce my household life and surrender myself to the Jain monks". With these thoughts she proceeded towards the pious mountain, Girnar. I shall ascend this glorious shrine and devotionally worship Lord Neminath. I shall resort to penance in order to annihilate the **karmas**\* I have accumulated in this life as well as the infinite precious lives ". With an optimistic outlook, her younger child on her waist and the other child held by his finger, Ambika proceeded towards Girnar.

Distressed Ambika had just managed to reach the outskirts of the village, when her younger son, Vibhukar, who was seated on her waist, started crying. He was extremely thirsty and had been perspiring. His face had turned dull and tears rolled down from his eyes. At the same time, her elder son Shubhankar was also exhausted, as he had been continuously walking. He started complaining "Dear mother! Please give me some food. I am extremely hungry". Ambika had tears in her eyes on seeing her young and delicate sons suffer.

Ambika was exhausted walking in the scorching heat along with her thirsty and hungry kids. She thought to herself, "Shame on me! I am incapable of fulfilling my motherly duties of feeding my children and relieving them of their hunger and pain. Dear Lord! Why is there so much pain and misery in my life? O motherland! Please, give me the strength to bear all these troubles. The bad karmas I built in the past

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\* Karmas: The result of a person's good or bad actions accumulated in the soul which decides its fate in the future.,



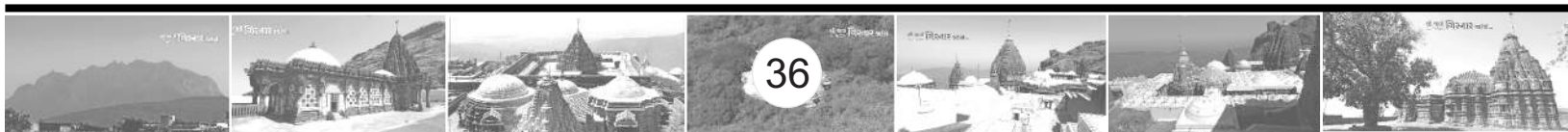


have resulted in the present situation – it feels as if all the accumulated bad karmas of the past have come together to show their result at once. This unnecessarily lamenting will not solve the problem. Whatever happens I will remain undaunted and will bravely face all my sorrows. In this dark night, you are my only silver lining, Lord reside in my heart, Oh Lord! reside in my heart”. Thinking about the present situation she sat to rest under a tree. As she sat down, she saw a lake filled with clean and cold water in front of her. Soothing voices of nightingales perched on the mango trees situated on either side of the serene lake could be heard. She reached out for the mangoes and fed them to the hungry children and quenched their thirst with water from the lake. She felt as though this was the instant result of the alms that she had offered to the Jain monk. Experiencing the instant result of her prayers, her faith in Jainism grew stronger. She was relieved off some of her fatigue as she rested under the cool shade of the tree.

On the other front, Ambika’s mother-in-law, started preparing new food items as she assumed that the food prepared by Ambika had been contaminated as it was offered as alms to the Jain monks. She opened vessels to prepare new food. Just as iron turns into gold with touch of **parasmani\***, similarly the empty vessels became golden and filled with food. This was the repercussion of offering food to the Jain ascetics. Deval was surprised to see all the food; she realised her mistake and regretted “I am so unfortunate to have banished my innocent, loving, goddess like daughter-in-law from the house. Shame on me! ”. Just then, there was a divine voice from the sky, “Hey unfortunate lady! You have only seen a fraction of the great amount of merit (punya) that Ambika has earned by making offerings to the Jain monks. The extremely virtuous Ambika’s glory is miraculous. As an outcome of faith and the offerings she made to the Jain monks, in the near future she will be worshipped by the King of the celestial beings”. Listening to this divine voice Deval got frightened and ran towards Somabhatt. She narrated the incident to him and told him to find Ambika and bring her back.

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\* Parasmani: a legendary gem very rarely seen, it is said to have an ability to turn base metal into gold.







Somabhatt was astounded and felt very guilty. With a lot of respect for Ambika, he left his house in search for her. Somabhatt passed one town after the other in search for her, but in vain. Just as he entered the forest, he saw Ambika with both the kids. Filled with immense affection and unable to bear the agony of separation from her and both the children, he cried out loudly, “Oh Ambika! My beloved! Please stop walking” and started walking swiftly towards her. Ambika did not hear Somabhatts words clearly and was nervous and startled on seeing him walking swiftly towards her. She thought to herself, “I am sure he is coming to kill me. Who is going to save a weak woman like me in this deserted forest from this merciless wicked person? How should I save myself? I am helpless I have no option but to die”. With these thoughts in her mind she started preparing herself to jump in the well, close to her. Before doing so, she prayed:

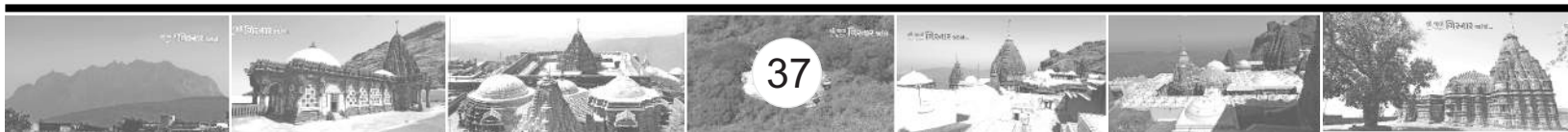
“I seek refuge in the feet of the Arihant Bhagawantas,  
I seek refuge in the feet of the Siddha Bhagawantas,  
I seek refuge in the feet of the Sadhu Bhagawantas,  
I surrender myself to the amazing Jain religion.”

“I pray not to be reborn as a Brahmin, beggar, a miser, a fool, an illiterate, a false believer, a commander or a soldier in the army. I wish that I am not born in any scheduled caste, scheduled tribe or in the Anarya countries such as the Kuru, Kutcha, Bang, Sindhu, Anga and so on. In my forthcoming births, I hope never to trade or sell poison, weapons, alcohol, illegal substances or any living beings. As a result of the alms I offered to the ascetic Jain monks, let me be born in the community of the well educated and high society people who worship the Jain Tirthankaras, Jain monks and Jainism! Let me be born among people who are donors, philanthropists, honest rulers and ones who can discriminate between good and bad, in the prosperous lands of Saurashtra, Magadh, Keer, Kashmir or any of the southern countries. Oh Lord! Gift me with prosperity, good health and generosity along with the proper functioning of all five senses in my forthcoming life”.

Building her tower of desires, Ambika jumped into the well with her two sons and took birth as a prosperous and well served goddess in the category of the forest gods known as **Vyantar Dev\*** .

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\* refer Tattvarthasutra







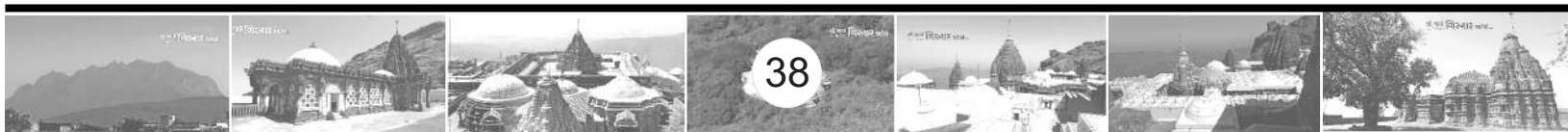
Sombhatt was running towards the well and yelling out, “Hey Ambika, my beloved. Don’t jump in the well, don’t jump!” Unfortunately, he was too late. Ambika, along with her two sons, had already jumped into the well and committed suicide. On seeing the dead bodies of his family, he grieved, “I curse myself for being so foolish. What kind of an evil person I am? I drove my prince like sons and goddess-like wife out of the house and I am solely responsible for their death. My life has no significance left after their death. I have nothing left to live for. Let me end my futile life!” He followed them by jumping into the well, and had Ambika in his thoughts till his last breath because of which he was born as a celestial lion—the vehicle of Goddess Ambika, who was his wife in the previous birth.

Just as the golden gleam of the rising sun spreads light in all four directions, similarly the radiance emitted from Ambika Devi’s body was so bright that it illuminated the entire celestial abode. Gracefully riding on the lion, adorned with exclusive valuable diamond and ruby studded golden ornaments, she looked extremely beautiful and was worshipped by many Gods and Goddesses. She had one child in her lap and one standing next to her. Out of her four arms, she used both her left hands to hold the rope and used both her right hands to hold bunch of mangoes. Looking at her grace and majesty her celestial guards who stood by her on either side’s asked her, “O goddess! What penance, donation, pilgrimage or virtuous deed did you perform in your previous birth as a result of which you are being served by the forest gods and other celestial beings?” Goddess Ambika, with the help of her clairvoyance, saw her previous life. She narrated her past birth to her celestial guards and expressed devotional gratitude towards Jainism. Being grateful to Jainism, she

left her celestial abode on a celestial airplane made by the Aabhiyogik Dev, and as she moved she illuminated her surroundings by her splendour. She reached **Sahasavan\*** that was situated on the pious mountain, Girnar.

The echoing of the sweet sounds of peacocks and the cooing of nightingales enchanted the environment of Sahasavan. Lord Neminath stood there; steady in meditation under the vetas tree, situated in one of the gardens of Sahasavan. He had been fasting and meditating for the past three days in order to destroy His past karmas.

\* Sahastraamravan i.e. the place where there are thousands of mango trees. (sahatra= thousand aam= mango van= forest).





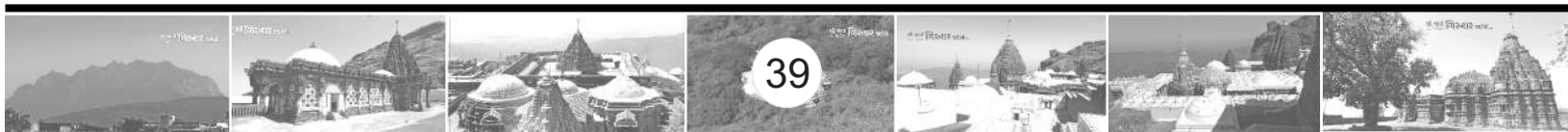
On the dark auspicious night of aaso vad amaasyaa, which is equivalent to bhadarva vad **amaavasyaa\*** according to Gujarati calendar, Lord Neminath attained Kevalgnyaan i.e enlightenment-supreme knowledge. Crores of celestial beings created the Samavasaran for Lord Neminath under the chaitya tree, which was 120 dhanush (i.e. approx 8640 feet) high. Lord Neminath said the word “Namo Titthassa” (my obeisance to the Tirtha) and ascended his royal throne. The Samavasaran had thrones placed in four directions. Lord Neminath was seated on the throne that faced the east direction and the remaining thrones had the replica of Him created by the celestial beings. The lower most enclosure of the samavasaran was made of silver and was the, parking ground for the conveyances of the heavenly beings. The middle enclosure made of gold was meant for all beasts and birds. All the celestial beings, the fourfold community comprising of the Jain monks and nuns and the male and female householders, occupied the precious stone and gem studded highest enclosure. Lord Neminath’s throne was placed in the centre of the highest enclosure. Goddess Ambika arrived in the Samavasaran and was thrilled to hear Lord Neminath’s last sermon. Everyone respectfully bowed down to Lord Neminath.

He began his sermon by saying, “Dharma is an unconditional companion, Dharma is compassionate, Dharma is the destroyer of all miseries. It looks after the welfare of all beings. Hence Dharma should be practiced by one and all!” (Dharma = religion).

Right faith (samyak darshan) is considered to be the seed of the Dharma which is like a wish-fulfilling tree known as the Kalpavruksh. The effort to practice Dharma is like the trunk of the tree. Charity, noble conduct (the noblest conduct being celibacy), penance as per ones capacity and purity in feelings are like the four branches of the tree. Gentleness, concern for inflicted ones, belief in righteousness are like the leaves of the tree of Dharma. Devotionally making pilgrimages to holy places like Siddhachal, Girnar, worshipping, serving saints and chanting the holy **Namaskaar Mahamantra\*** are like the flower buds of the tree. The comforts of the heaven are like flowers of the Dharma tree and bliss of salvation is the final fruit of the Dharma tree.”

\* Amaavasya means **Amaas i.e.** last day of the month (no moon day).

\* Namaskar Mahamantra is the oldest mantra of Jain religion. In this mantra, obeisance is paid to the highly elevated souls only and not to any specific person. These great souls can be categorized under the five groups-Arihant, Sidha, Acharya, Upadhyay and Sadhus.





“Thus, the one who gets rid of laziness and practices this Dharma faithfully and diligently will be exposed to opportunities for his spiritual upliftment and will soon eventually experience the eternal joy of salvation.”

Drenched in Lord Neminath’s grace, everyone was listening to the uninterrupted sermon with awe and respect. Along with 1000 attendants, King Vardatt, renounced the materialistic world, ordained monkhood and held the position of the chief disciple of Lord Neminath among 18 main disciples of Lord Neminath known as Ganadharas (since they are the leaders of different Ganas i.e. groups). The princess named Yakshini also renounced the world and accepted nunhood and many other women followed her. Dashaarha, Bhoj, Krishna, Balbhaddra are among the few males who became prominent shravaks (male householders) and their wives became shravikas (women householders).

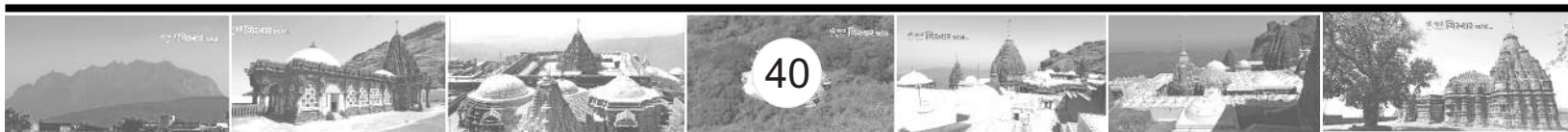
In this way, Lord Neminath established the four fold community and gave them preachings describing the darkness and sorrows of the four **places of existence** of living beings, beasts and birds, celestial beings (of heaven) and infernal beings (in hell). This can be illuminated by the lamp of four fold Dharma comprising of charity, noble conduct (the noblest conduct being celibacy), penance as per ones capacity and purity in feelings. After hearing Lord Neminath describing Goddess Ambika’s past birth, her deep faith in Jainism and her meritorious acts of offering alms to the Jain monks-the great devotee Indra Maharaja, on the request of other celestial beings, appointed Goddess Ambika as the presiding **Goddess\*** in the reign of the Lord Neminath. The celestial god named **Gomedha Yaksha\***, who was awakened by Lord Neminath’s words in his previous birth, was appointed as the **presiding God\*** in the reign of Lord Neminath. Goddess Ambika helps to eradicate obstacles and Gomedh Yaksha is responsible in helping people in the reign of Lord Neminath.

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\* State of existence is known as Gati which are four 1) Manushya Gati 2) Tiryanchn Gati 3) Dev Gati and 4) Narak Gati.

\* Goddess Ambika is known as the Adhishtayika Devi of Lord Neminath.

\* Gomedha Yaksha is known as the Adhishtayik Dev of Lord Neminath.





## Gomedh Yaksha

In the pleasant and peaceful village of Sugram, on the glorious land of **Bharatkshetra\***, lived a **Brahmin\*** who was renowned among other brahmins for his expertise in performing the Gomedh Yagna. He was known as Gomedh Brahmin.

Various animals were sacrificed to perform a yagna and the superstitious people believed that such **yagnas\*** would spiritually benefit them. Gomedh Brahmin was instrumental in the killing of many such animals for the purpose of this yagna. He thus accumulated a lot of bad karma as a result of which his wife and son passed away and he went into depression. Sometime later he started suffering from leprosy. None of his relatives took care of him in his ill condition and ridiculed him for being a leper and mercilessly showed him the way out of their house. He had no physical or mental support to revive himself from the tremendous pain he was suffering from. Leprosy led to the birth of worms in his body because of which his body emitted a pungent foul smell. The discharge of pus and other such matter aggravated this pungent smell. The unhygienic state of the body attracted flies and other insects which exacerbated his suffering pain. Unable to bear the burning sensation in his body he lamented and begged for death to come soon.

But as it is truly said - The good deeds done in the past never go waste. Sooner or later they definitely bear fruits. Due to his previous life's good deeds he saw a Jain monk passing by. The kind and compassionate Jain monk saw Gomedh Brahmin's miserable state. With concern in his heart he said, "O fortunate brother! Due to the influence of a fallacious master you killed many innocent animals with a belief that you were doing something spiritual.

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\* Jambudvipa continent has 6 mighty mountains, dividing the continent into 7 zones (kshetras). Bharat Kshetra is one of the 7 zones.

\* Brahmin is a name used to designate a member of one of the four classes in the traditional Hindu society.

\* A yagna is a ritual sacrifice derived from the Vedas. It is performed to please the Gods or to attain certain wishes. An essential element is the sacrificial fire- the divine Agni- into which oblations are poured, as everything that is offered into the fire is believed to reach the Gods.







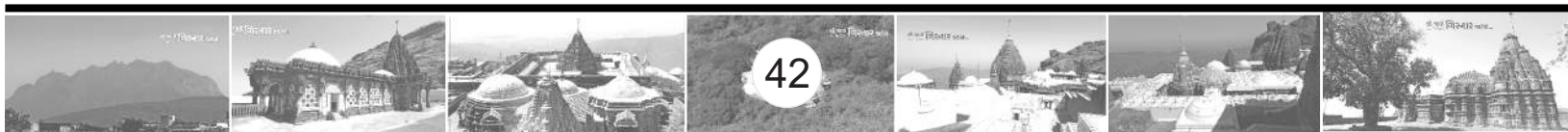
This anguish and pain that you are going through has sprouted from these bad deeds and the pain that you are suffering from is just a subdued glimpse of what you may have to suffer in hell. If you are tired of these sufferings and do not wish to suffer such pains in your forthcoming births, start understanding and practicing the principles of Jainism that have been preached by the Tirthankaras who have completely overcome their temptation and worldly attachments. Their existence itself radiates peace, austerity and non-violence towards all living beings.

Repent whole heartedly on the awful sins you have committed and ask for forgiveness. You can destroy your bad karmas by chanting Lord Neminath's name and devotionally offering prayers to the supremely holy mountain, Girnar that has been worshipped by crores of celestial beings and is the salvation place of infinite Tirthankaras. Due to its influence your bad karmas will be washed away".

On hearing the compassionate words of the Jain monk who unconditionally gave the righteous advice, Gomedh Brahmin made up his mind to put the advice into action. By chanting lord Neminath's name and thinking about the holy mountain of Girnar he experienced peace and composure. He passed away in this very condition and till his last breath all he thought about was the holy mountain and the religion preached by the Jain Tirthankars. Due to this, his soul was reborn as the powerful Gomedh Yaksh-leader of many celestial beings called yakshas. He was blessed with 3 faces to devotionally sing songs for the Lord and 6 hands to carry out a lot of work for the Jain **Sangh**\* .

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\* A Jain Sangh is the fourfold religious order (Chaturvidh Sangh) that includes Jain monks, nuns and male as well as female householders.





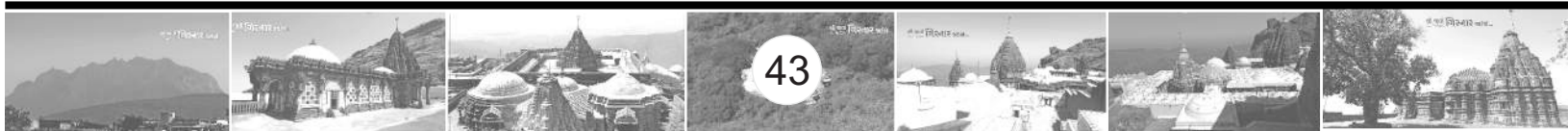


The three left hands were used to carry the shakti (one type of a missile), shul(spear) and nakul(mongoose) and the other three hands on the right carried the chakra(sharp edged disc), parshu(axe) and bijora(citron fruit). He wore a **janoi\*** across his chest and had a human being as his vehicle. Just like Ambika Devi, he too travelled to the majestic mountain, Girnar in his celestial airplane along with his fellow attendants. Filled with gratitude, he devotionally worshipped Lord Neminath and recalled the blessings that were showered on him by merely chanting Lord Neminath's name. At this point, Lord Indra acknowledged him as a devout devotee of Lord Neminath and established him as the **protector\*** of this holy mountain, Girnar.

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\* Ajanoi is a thin consecrated cord, composed of distinct cotton strands, worn across the chest by brahmins.

\* Also known as Adhishtayak Dev.





## The Virtuous Gajendrapad Pond

ત્રણ ભુવનની સરિતાતણા, સુરભિ પ્રવાહને ઝીલતાં,  
જે જલ ફરસતાં આધિ-વ્યાધિ, રોગ સૌના ક્ષય થતાં,  
જે જલ થકી જિન અર્ચતા, અજરામરપદ પામતાં,  
એ ગિરનારને વંદતા, પાપો બધાં દૂરે જતાં...

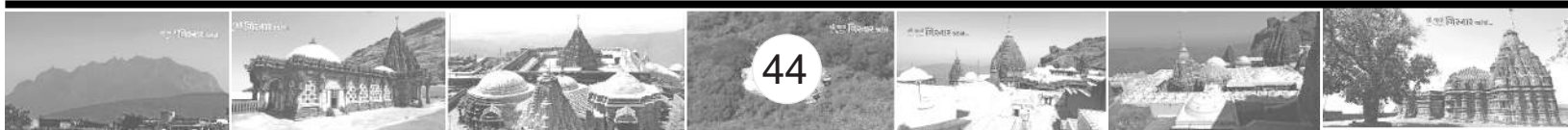
Central idea :- Gajendrapad pond collects the fragrant waters of all the rivers of the universe. By touching the water of this pond, even the most dreadful diseases go away. Showering the almighty with the water of this pond, is the road to salvation. So it is said that “By respectful bowing to Girnar, all the sins go away.”

In the beautiful town of Shirpur there lived a brave **kshatriya\*** named Purthu. He had an extremely beautiful wife, Chandramukhi who, unfortunately gave birth to a girl named Durgandha, whose body emitted an obnoxious odour. Purthu was in search for a compatible match for his daughter, but all his efforts seemed to go in vain as no one could bear the smell emitted by Durgandha. After persistently searching for a partner, Durgandha was married to Somdev, who was also highly troubled by the continuous odour from Durgandha’s body and thus secretly walked out in the middle of the night, leaving her alone.

Durgandha was not only ridiculed by her husband but was also rejected and condemned by her parents and relatives. Who in this world would show compassion to the one that is ridiculed by one’s bad karma? Due to the constant humiliation she was highly depressed and left her house and proceeded on a pilgrimage to different holy places in order to destroy her bad karmas. She paid homage

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\* A Kshatriya is a member of the second of the four great Hindu castes, the military caste. The traditional function of the kshatriya is to protect the society by fighting in the war time and governing in peace time.





to several Hindu shrines but that did not reduce the bad karma she had accumulated from her past. She started losing faith in God and lost her self confidence as well. She thus decided to commit suicide by drowning herself in the sea. On her way, she saw an austere saint and bowed down to him with respect. He too retracted his steps, unable to bear the odour of Durgandha's body. Embarrassed and guilty, Durgandha asked the austere saint, "O divine soul! If a saint like you, who is free from all desires also behaves like this and goes away from me, then where should I go? How will I be able to get rid of all my bad karmas?" he replied "Young lady! You may meet my spiritual mentor, Kulpati, the head of the hermitage, who is residing in this very forest. Do speak to him about your problems and he will surely give you a solution."

The words of the austere saint comforted Durgandha and she followed him to his hermitage in the forest to meet his spiritual mentor. Durgandha's body imbued with new life and vitality on seeing the mentor from a distance. He had long hair coiled into a bun, placed on the crown of his head and was sitting poised, deeply meditating on **Lord Adinath\***.

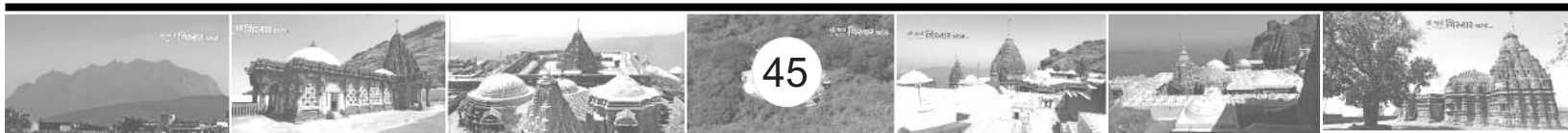
Durgandha came closer to respectfully bow down to Kulpati. He was a little disturbed by the foul odour of her body. But he politely asked her, "Dear child! Why does your body stink so much? What are you doing in this dense forest? Why have you come here?" Durgandha broke into tears on hearing the soothing and compassionate words of Kulpati. She narrated her life's unfortunate story, starting from her childhood days. Frustrated with her forlorn life, Durgandha requested Kulpati to give her a remedy in order to get rid of her anguish and suffering. He replied, "Dear child! I am not an omniscient person who would be able to tell you about the bad deeds that you committed in your previous lives- as a result of which

you are suffering pain in this life. I suggest you devotionally touch the holy mountain of **Siddhachal\*** as well as make a pilgrimage trip to the pious mountain, Girnar.

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\* Lord Adinath is the first of 24 Tirthankaras of present descending cycle of time (Avasarpini kaal).

\* Located in Palitana.





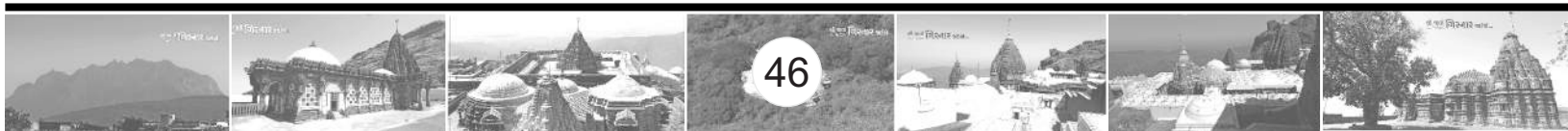
Many omniscients have described the grandeur and impact of the Gajendrapad pond situated on the pious mountain, Girnar. Your bad karmas will be destroyed upon bathing with the water of the holy Gajendrapad pond!.”

Durgandha was overjoyed and was filled with deep gratitude on hearing Kulpati’s nectar like words. She bowed down to him and travelled to the holy mountain of Siddhachal. She reached the top of the holy mountain and respectfully **circumbulated\*** the divine idol of Lord Adinath and devotionally worshipped him. She then moved further towards the pious mountain, Girnar and ascended the mountain from the northern side. She was neither allowed to bathe in the Gajendrapad pond nor was she allowed to enter the temple on the peak of the pious mountain due to the foul odour from her body. But her indomitable spirit did not let her give up that easily. She managed to somehow bathe with the water from Gajendrapad pond for 6 days at a stretch. On the seventh day she surprisingly realized that the foul odour coming from her body had completely vanished and on the contrary her body now gave out a pleasing smell. Seeing this transformation, she felt like she was on the 7<sup>th</sup> heaven and gladly realised that now no one could stop her from worshipping Lord Neminath. She immediately ran to the temple and worshipped Lord Neminath with utmost humility and dedication.

Floating in an ocean of bliss, as soon as she came out of the temple she saw an omniscient sage (one who has achieved kevalgyan- enlightenment, complete knowledge). Durgandha curiously asked the sage about her previous birth. The sage replied, “O kind lady! You were born to a Brahmin family in your former birth. You were extremely proud and egoistic about your cleanliness and made a mockery of a Jain monk and said Oh! Oh! Look at these Jain monks who roam around the forest and become all dirty! They don’t even take a shower! This is why their bodies stink so much. Moreover, the white clothes that they cover themselves with, turn filthy due to the perspiration and dirt that comes out of their bodies!” Due to the mockery and condemnation of Jain monks, you accumulated a lot of bad karma that led you to take birth in hell. Thereafter you were born as a hen,

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\* A pradakshina is when a devotee circumbulates the idol or the holy shrine.





a butcher, a sow and in this way you continued to bear the results of bad karmas, by transmigrating to such inferior lives. On destroying these bad karmas you got this precious human birth. Due to the bad karmas earlier built by you, you had to suffer in this life too and thus you were born with such a body.

Young lady, in this universe the superlative human, the omniscient Tirthankar has transcended all sorts of attachments and aversions and is worshipped in all the three worlds. Even the clothes worn by the Tirthankar's saints are not worthy of criticism. Imagine the intensity of sin committed by you when you criticized the saints who represent the Almighty himself. They are the destroyers of the **wrong belief\***, practitioners of the great five **vows\*** and the ones who glorify Jainism. Insulting or defaming these great respectable saints leads to the elongation of one's birth cycle. These saints are indifferent, detached, non-possessive and unconditionally compassionate to all living beings. They practice their sainthood flawlessly and are always worthy of admiration. How can you condemn such selfless monks who do not harm even a single living being and by merely uttering the word "**Dharma Labh**" they navigate the lifeboat of all living beings towards the **path of salvation**. Hey Durgandha! All your evil karmas have vanished as a result of this powerful pilgrimage and you have attained **Samyak Darshan**. The Bodhi Beej has been sowed in you. Your reverence of this great holy place will purify your soul and will take you to liberation, thus putting an end to your cycle of birth and death." Listening to the pleasant words of the sage, Durgandha was filled with gratitude and with immense joy bowed down at the omniscient sage's feet.

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\* Wrong belief is known as Mithyatva

\* The five great vows are: a) Non-harm; b) Truthfulness; c) Non-theft; d) Continence and e) Non-possessiveness.

\* Dharma Labh means obtaining the virtues of religion. This word is often uttered by Jain monks & nuns.

\* The path of salvation is known as the Moksh Marg.

\* Samyak Darshan is the correct faith that cuts the knot of attachment and uplifts your soul for the first time in your birth cycle.

\* Bodhi Beej is the seed of correct understanding.





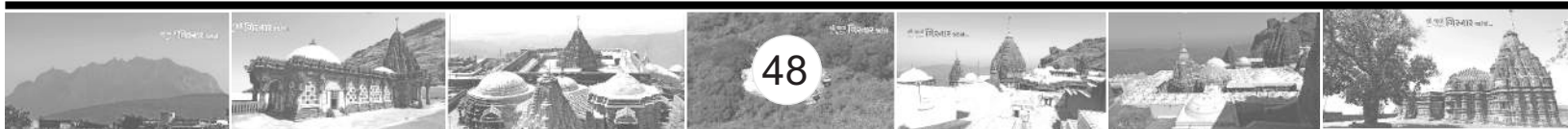


## RAJARSHI BHIMSEN

Once upon a time, in this blessed land of Bharatkshetra, there existed the flourishing kingdom of Shravasti which was ruled by a kind and talented King Vajrasen. He was an ardent follower of Jainism and protected the interests of the dwellers of Shravasti. He was married to a chaste lady, Subhadra. Unlike the virtuous parents, their son Prince Bhimsen was cruel and cold-blooded. He profusely indulged in the vicious seven addictions and derived pleasure in tormenting innocent people. His very own parents and teachers criticized and shunned him due to his violent and ill-mannered behavior and improper activities.

Bound by the circumstances King Vajrasen reluctantly declared Bhimsen as the Prince of Shravasti. He felt as though he was feeding milk to a dreadful snake and thus digging his own grave. He knew that Bhimsen had his greedy eyes on other's wealth and that he would oppress other women, thus disturbing the peace of the kingdom. Distressed by the horrors inflicted by Bhimsen, the citizens pleaded to the King, "Oh great King! We shouldn't be speaking of Bhimsen's cruelty, but we are unable to bear his spite any more. We seek mercy and kindness and pray that you deliver justice to us."

King Vajrasen patiently heard the woes of his beloved citizens and gave them hope and assurance. After a while, he summoned Prince Bhimsen in private, urging him to bring a positive change in himself, "Dear child, you should give up your unjust habits. Learn to be fair and impartial to the citizens of Shravasti, serving and nurturing them for a better future. A ruler is known by the way he keeps his people, and without those people, the King hardly has any identity. Even the ancient scriptures say that only those Kings who practice justice and honesty enjoy the abundant fruits of a prosperous kingdom. Never lay your hands on other women or anything that doesn't belong to you. Learn to respect your parents and teachers and devotedly worship our God. These form the foundation of a good life. Always tread the righteous path and never harass anyone. It is a King's duty to keep up to his words, be patient and stay away from the seven additions. Staunchly practicing this will yield victory, fame, riches and even heaven to a King." From time to time King Vajrasen would advise his son, but Prince Bhimsen only kept sinking deeper in his sins by relentlessly and maliciously continuing his evil practices. Tired of

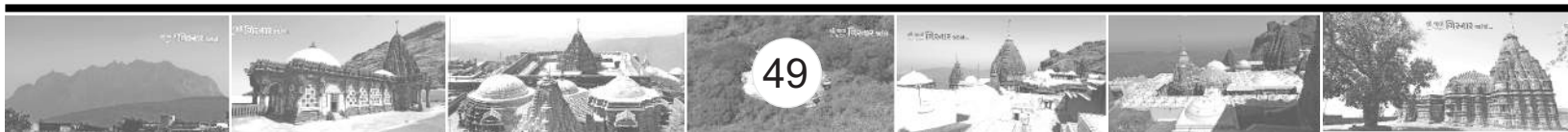




seeing this, King Vajresen imprisoned his own son. Misguided by his ill-advising companions, the Prince murdered his own parents, thus becoming the King. He remained drowned in the seven addictions and deliberately harassed the citizens of Shravasti.

Weary of seeing all the wrong doings of Bhimsen, the royal advisors, ministers and family members started discussing a solution to dethrone the unfit King and bring an end to all these improper activities. They held Bhimsen captive and dethroned him Jaysen was elected to take the throne and was given the title King Jaysen. He was astute, prudent and respected by the citizens. On the other side, the exiled Bhimsen strayed across the land continuing his misdoings by randomly stealing and even murdering people for petty amounts, which he would then squander on alcohol etc. Once, he landed up in the city of Prithvipur in the land of Magadh. Under the disguise of a servant for a gardener, he stole the produce of fruit, flower and leaves to sell it off on the sly. After getting caught in this act, he was thrown out of the job, and met the same end with his next employer as well. Despite being repeatedly met with such treatment, he could not free himself from his addiction of vices. Caught and thrown out of the job twice, Bhimsen, next found an employer in another businessman, Ishwardatt. Once when Ishwardatt was leaving for a travel abroad, Bhimsen driven by greed also went along with him.

They sailed for a month. One night, the bulbous bow of the ship hit the coral reef and got stuck in it. The captain of the ship along with the help of his crew tried all possible ways but could not find any solution to this problem. All their efforts were in vain. The ship remained stuck in the same spot for several days and this led to a depletion of food and water reserves on the ship. In this severe crisis Ishwardatt meditated deeply on the five supreme ones, that are the Arihants, Siddhas, Acharyas, Upadhyayas and Sadhus and considered ending his life by plunging into the deep waters of the sea. However, at that moment a strange event occurred. A parrot flew aboard and spoke to Ishwardatt, "Oh gentleman! All of you do not need to give up your life. I will show you the way to survive; I am not an ordinary bird but I am a deity residing in the mountains that you see ahead of you. One of you must be prepared to jump in the sea at the cost of your life. A massive bird, called Bharand is residing on the top of those mountains. The Bharand bird will fly soaring towards the man who jumps in the sea. The wind from the beating wings of that creature will release the ship and in this way one person's sacrifice will save the lives of all the others that are on the ship."



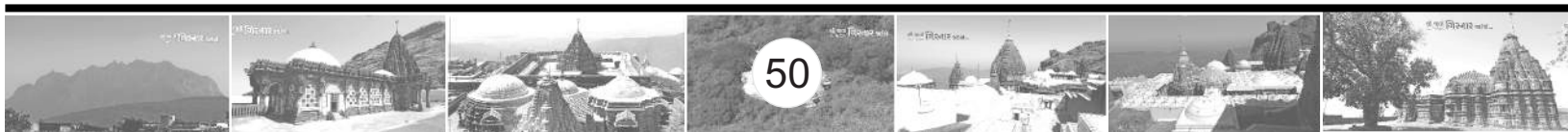


On hearing the parrot, Ishwardatt made an announcement on the ship, “if someone is ready to let go his life, he will be instrumental in saving lives of all those on board.” Nobody came forth. Driven by greed for money, Bhimsen asked for a compensation of hundred dinars ( name of a currency ) for being ready to do as the parrot guided. As he jumped in the dangerous waters, everything happened exactly in the sequence described by the parrot, and at last the ship was released, set free to sail. At the same time Bhimsen was fighting death and wanted to save himself. He sought for life saving advice from the parrot. The parrot replied, “You have to be patient and dive deep in the sea. A large fish will swallow you, and take you towards the shores. When it starts bellowing, you must put this medicine in their throat. That will create a hole in their throat making way for you to get out of the large fish and reach the shores. You are then free to go anywhere you want.”

Bhimsen followed the parrot’s advice and ended up on the sea shore. Hungry and thirsty, he roamed the forests, and survived on whatever fruits, water which was available there. Once he ran into a sage ( who is tridandi ) and paid obeisance. The tridandi sage blessed him and asked , “Hey stranger, who are you? Why are you wandering in the forest?” Considering him as a well wisher, he went on to narrate all the miseries and misfortunes of his life.

“What more can I say? Wherever I go, I do not achieve what I need. Even if I am dying of thirst, I will not find water in the sea! My misfortune is such that if I were to approach them, fruits of lakhs of trees, water from hundreds of rivers, gems from rohangiri ( name of a mountain ) will disappear! Even though I am without any responsibilities of a brother or a sister, parents or a wife, I still can’t feed myself!”

But alas! The tridandi sage was a cheat and he only pretended to get artificial tears in his eyes listening to Bhimsen’s miseries. He said, “Do not feel sad any more. It is because of your good deeds in the past that you found me here. Your sorrows and poverty will bother you no more. We sages are roaming on this land only to shower our kindness on others. You must now join me in my travel to Siha-dweep. I will take you to a jewel mine and from there you can take whatever you want and rid yourself from your poverty.” Carried away by the false promises of the deceiving tidandi sage, Bhimsen joined him in his journey. On reaching the mine, the imposter tridandi sage lowered Bhimsen in the mine, supporting him from one end of the rope. As soon as the sage collected the precious jewels passed to

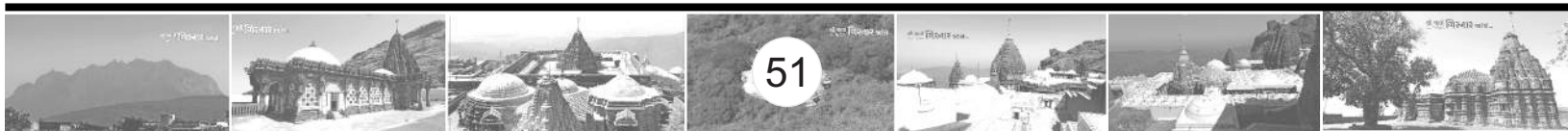




him by Bhimsen, he cut off the supporting rope, sending Bhimsen crashing down in the mine and fled with all the jewels.

Filled with sorrows, Bhimsen wandered in the mine and encountered a feeble man in a corner. The man also caught sight of Bhimsen and asked, "Oh sir! How did you land up in the mouth of this devil? Did you also get conned by the imposter tridandi sage, who lured you into finding gems? He conned me in the same way." Bhimsen sighed as he accepted the truth and asked the feeble man if he knew of a way out of the mine. The feeble man answered, "Tomorrow morning Ratnachandra, the deity of this mine will be worshipped by many demigods in the trance-lots of music and dance. When everyone is busy worshipping and lost deep in the trance, you can join the demigods on their way out and find your escape." Bhimsen was overjoyed upon hearing this and spent the entire day in conversation with the feeble man waiting for the next morning. As the feeble man had predicted, the following day, many celestial beings descended in their heavenly vehicles and eventually got immersed in the musical tribute to Ratnachandra. Finding the right opportunity, Bhimsen mingled with the crowd to escape without being noticed. He wandered here and there for several days before he reached Kshitimandanpur – the capital of Siha-dweep. Eventually he was employed at a businessman's warehouse as an assistant. Old habits die-hard! Bhimsen's treacherous habit of stealing had not come to an end. He started robbing his employer. On catching him they tied him up and dragged him all over the streets of the town, announcing him as a thief. As they were about to hang him, Bhimsen's immensely virtuous deeds in some past life came to his rescue. His old employer Ishwardatt happened to pass by. His gaze fell on Bhimsen and he remembered how his life was saved from the perils of the stuck ship at the sea by Bhimsen's sacrificial move. He spoke to Bhimsen and gathered the facts of the situation there. As a gesture of repaying the debt, he pleased the King for mercy and got Bhimsen released. Together they sailed back to Prithvipur.

On his journey, Bhimsen got engaged in the conversation with a stranger from a distant land. As Bhimsen shared the woes of his life, the stranger said, "Do not grieve. Come with me. We will go to Rohanachal mountain and search for precious stones." Bhimsen agreed with him and they began their journey. As they travelled, they happened to meet an aged sage by the name Jatil. When they were bowing to the sage, one of the sage's disciples named Jaangal descended from the sky. Jaangal, too,



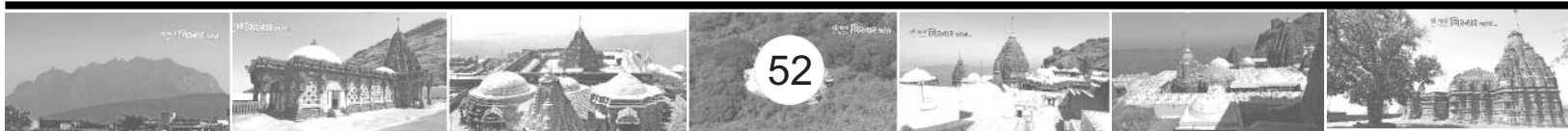




paid his respect to the sage. Seeing Jaangal after such a long time, sage Jatil asked him, “Dear Jaangal, where have you been for so many days?” Jaangal replied, “O great sage! I am returning from a pilgrimage to Saurashtra’s holiest shrines Siddhachal and Girnar. Which mortal is capable of providing a comprehensive description of these two holy shrines? Only the omniscient have the potential to describe its purity and piousness, but even they can’t fully describe the shrines’ entire significance. Words fall short in its elaboration. It is only a matter of one’s own personal experience. Furthermore, I have personally heard and seen the devotion with which people worship the pious mountain, Girnar. By worshipping this holy shrine, people attain happiness, peace, fame and glory equivalent to that of the Lord of celestial beings and in a short span of time attain salvation.

This way hearing the praises of the holy shrine Girnar from Jaangal, all the other sages were delighted. Bhimsen and his companion were also amazed and decided that after visiting Rohanachal, they would embark on a pilgrimage to the pious mountain Girnar. They both travelled further, coming across many towns, villages and forests before they finally reached the mountain of Rohanachal. They both duly paid their respects to the deity of the mountain and obtained permission to take precious stones from the mine there. Bhimsen stayed awake all night. At dawn, he forayed in the mine with necessary equipments and obtained two highly precious stones. They surrendered one of the precious stones to the royal treasury and took the other on board along with them on their journey. They were sailing on the night of full moon when the splendor of the moon was at its peak. In order to compare the brightness of the moon with the radiance of the stone, Bhimsen took out the precious stone. Owing to the unabated onslaught of his bad karmas, it slipped from his hands and sunk deep into the sea. One can’t get more or less than what one deserves. It’s the law of destiny!

Petrified and disturbed, Bhimsen lost his consciousness and collapsed. After a lot of attempts of revival by others, Bhimsen finally came back to his senses after cold water was splashed on him. He moaned to his fellow passengers “ I lost my precious stone in the sea! I am so damned! I am finished!” Seeing his dejection and distress, the co-travellers tried to console him but no avail. His companion, tried soothing him and gave him assurance by saying, “Dear friend, if we live we will be able together many other precious stone and gems in the future, so do not grieve. for the time being, it is more appropriate to head towards the pious mountain Girnar, the most profound place ever! It can take away the sorrow of miserable and the danger of the damned! Your wishes will be fulfilled there, or else you can keep my precious stone!” Bhimsen’s distress abated with assurance.







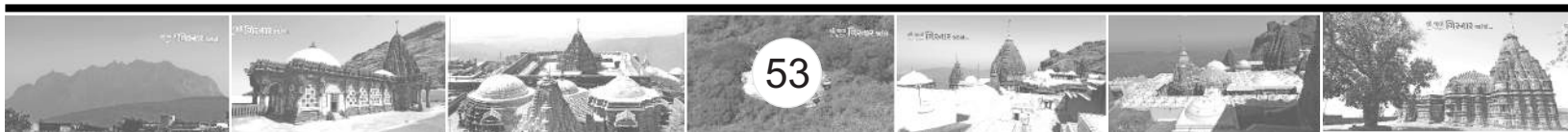
Bhimsen actually gathered composure as they crossed the sea and headed towards the great shrine of Girnar. But the bad karma gathered in their past seemed undeterred and its incursion continued as both of them got robbed of all their belongings and food. Suffering various hardships and struggles, they proceeded further in journey. They were elated to meet Jain monks on their way. They paid their obeisance to the Jain monks and went on to narrate their hardships and ill fortune, “Oh Swami! Foremost enveloped in bad luck and poverty, criticized by everyone, suffering insolence and ill treatment, we seek freedom from our troubles! Kindly help us end the misery or else we have no option left but to commit suicide by jumping off the mountain.”

The sympathetic and compassionate monk consoled them saying, “Young men! You failed to follow the religious path of meditation and worship in your past lives. Thus, today you experience so much pain and suffering. It is only and only by following the true principles of Jainism (i.e Jain dharma) that all beings take birth in a good caste, attain a disease free body, good fortune, immense happiness, **wealth** , long life, fame, education, comfort and riches, horses, elephants, a religious land and divine power. The monk continued, “Therefore, dear Bhimsen, stop this cycle of building bad karmas with your evil and inauspicious thoughts! In your past life you had brought suffering to a Jain monk for a duration of eighteen **ghadi** . Ideal men should strive to take care of the physical and psychological well being of Jain monks instead of causing them any pain or trouble. Serving them will destroy all troubles. It is because of your misdeeds that you are constantly facing such hardships. Devotionally worshipping the holy mountain Girnar, will destroy the rest of your bad karmas, making you the owner of abundant wealth and riches and you will also be instrumental in adorning this land with plenty of Jain temples and will ultimately attain complete liberation. So stop weeping over your past sorrow and head towards the pious mountain Girnar, and worship lord Neminath with utmost dedication.” On hearing such soothing words Bhimsen paced forward towards Girnar with great enthusiasm.

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\* In India ancient animals like cows, horses, elephants etc were considered to be wealth of a person. It was a sign of prosperity.

\* Aghadi is a measurement of time, which is approximately 24 minutes.



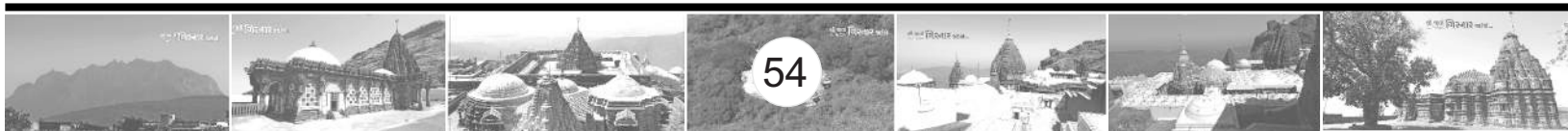


He experienced divine influence of the sacred land which inspired him to undertake extremely difficult fasts and meditation and reduced attachments for all bodily desires

Some day he happened to meet his younger brother, King Jaysen who had come on a pilgrimage to this holy place. Jaysen and his company of royal advisors and people of his kingdom recognised Bhimsen at once and greeted him heartily. With teary eyes, Jaysen spoke to him, “Dear Bhimsen, there is no place that I haven’t searched for you. My people have spent months looking for you, only to return empty handed. Where were you all these months? Please return with us and accept your kingdom!” Melted by such kindness, Bhimsen gave in to their sincere request and agreed to undertake the responsibilities. With their hearts filled with joy, they all duly worshipped Lord Neminath and began their journey back home.

Welcomed and revered by many Kings on his way, they made a grand entrance back into their kingdom. The citizens too were overjoyed with the return of their King and everyone’s spirits were high and jubilation filled the air. The streets were decorated and there was music and dance all around. King Bhimsen had given up all his vices and was duly performing his duties aided by his younger brother Jaysen as his heir and his stranger friend as his treasurer. With the support from his ministers, he carried on his administration impartially, like his father. As the time passed, the whole kingdom was free not only from crimes but also from threats of attacks, battles, famine, overpopulation etc. On the other side, Bhimsen was extremely repentant and remorseful of murdering his own partners. As an attempt to wash his sins, he embarked on a mission of building temples in every village of his kingdom. He worked with determination and continued adorning the land with divine temples, serving Jain monks as well as followers, helping the poor and assisting the citizens of his state.

One fine day, Bhimsen saw a Vidhyadhar in his palace and enquired where he came from. The Vidhyadhar replied, “Mighty King! I am returning after worshipping the eternal Shatrunjay Mahagiri and the divine Ujjayant Mahagiri (another name for Girnar). I now desire to worship the Lord here.” Hearing this, Bhimsen felt a sudden sense of disgust for himself. He felt ashamed that he did not even remember holy Raivatgiri (Girnar), the very shrine that made him the ruler of such comforts and luxuries. Guilt took him over, as he realized that he never went back to Raivatgiri to even express gratitude after his change of destiny. He gave up his kingdom and its responsibilities back to Jaysen.





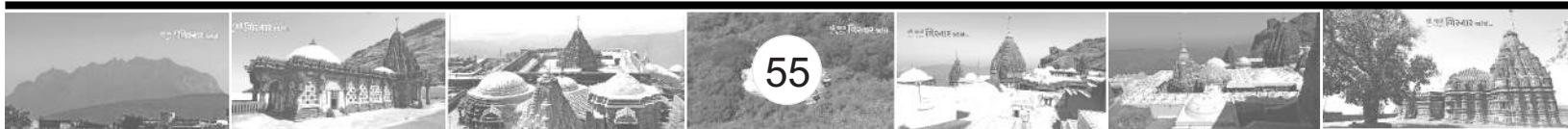
With a minimal number of helpers and possessions, he began his journey back to Raivatgiri. He celebrated and worshipped Lord Adinath continuously for eight days at Siddhagiri and proceeded towards Raivatgiri. There he duly worshipped Lord Neminath with items such as camphor, saffron, sandalwood, Nandanvan flowers etc. He followed the four fold religious principles namely donation, right conduct, austerity and **good thought**.

At a suitable time, inspired by Gyanchandramuni's influential preaching about religion, Bhimsen renounced the materialistic world, ordained sainthood (diksha) and began practicing extremely difficult meditation and penance. Thus, Bhimsen strived to destroy his past bad karmas. Due to his divine influence of Raivatgiri and combined strength of his penance, on the eighth day of his sainthood, he achieved enlightenment (kevalgyaan) and eventually attained salvation.

Raivatgiri is such a holy place that even the most heinous sinners can find their way to liberation. Even the smallest of good deeds done here bears abundant sweet fruits. This is how innumerable saints in the past have destroyed their bad karma and attained enlightenment. Long live the pious mountain Girnar!

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\* It is- Daan sheela, Tapa and bhaav.





## ASHOKCHANDRA

Ashokchandra, a kshatriya by caste was a poor man living in a small and peaceful town of Champapuri, situated in Bharatkshetra. He was frustrated of living in poverty and thus, decided to travel from one town to another in order to earn a living.

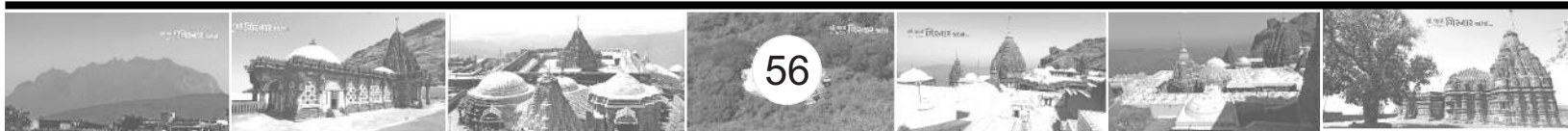
Just as every cloud has a silver lining, similarly Ashokchandra's sufferings, which was an outcome of the bad karma accumulated in the past, seemed to decline as he came in touch with a Jain Monk. The monk's body had shrunk due to the penance he undertook. Due to his soul's purity, his body aura was extremely tranquil and Ashokchandra respectfully bowed down to him and asked him for a way to overcome his poverty. The Jain monk replied, 'Oh son! This soul in its original form, is pure, divine and eternally blissful, incapable of wandering in the materialistic world but due to the bondage of vicious bad karmas built in the past lives, it has to pass through the cycle of life and death experiencing sorrow and happiness. As a result of vicious non-virtuous deeds you committed in your past births, you are suffering from poverty and pain. If you wish to destroy your bad karmas – in a short period of time, uplift your soul by engrossing yourself in the reverence and service of the pious mountain, Girnar!'

These words were like music to his ears and he immediately proceeded towards Girnar with every step he took, his accumulated bad karmas started shedding and his soul started becoming purer.

“રૈવતગિરિ સમરૂં સદા, સોરઠદેશ મોઝાર,  
માનવભવ પામી કરી, ધ્યાવું વારંવાર...”

Central idea: The success of this precious human life lies in devotionally and frequently remembering and worshipping the majestic Raivatgiri, located in the lap of Sorath region, west India.

“આ તીર્થપર જે ભાવથી, અલ્પપણ ધર્મને કરે,  
આ લોકથી પરલોક વળી, પરમલોકને તે વરે,  
જે તીર્થની સેવા થકી, ફેરા જન્મોના ટળે,  
એ ગિરનારને વંદતા, પાપો બધા દૂરે જતાં...”







Central idea: One who does even nominal religious activities with devotion here, will gain a series of good rebirths and ultimately attain salvation. It is rightly said that “by respectfully bowing to Girnar all your sins are washed away.”

Hearing about the glory of this sacred land, Ashokchandra started fasting and spent most of his time in deep, silent meditation on one of the tall peaks of this eternal mountain. The presiding Goddess Ambika was pleased with Ashokchandra’s penance and in order to help him get rid of his previous state, she gifted him a parasmani, a legendary gem, which has the ability to turn base metals into gold. With the help of this parasmani, he accumulated many possessions and wealth. Soon he had his own kingdom along with a strong loyal army to protect it. The bad phase in his life was replaced with the great fortune and good karmas. As an ill effect of the excessive wealth, he succumbed to unneeded luxuries and extravagance which intoxicated his five senses. As time passed, realising his folly he condemned himself for the excessive indulgence in material comforts which made him forget the huge favours of Goddess Ambika. He repented and cursed himself, “ I have forgotten to acknowledge the tremendous help I received from Goddess Ambika as well as the holy mountain Girnar. They are the backbone of my infinite wealth and prosperous kingdom. Shame on me for being so ungrateful towards the favours of Goddess Ambika! How embarrassed I am to be so immersed in these materialistic pleasures!”

Ashokchandra was totally disturbed by his unconcerned attitude, so in order to compensate for it, he gathered a congregation of pilgrims to set out on a pilgrimage tour. On the way towards the pilgrim places, he along with his relatives organized donation camps, did charity for the poor, worked towards renovating and restoring the old temples and did various virtuous deeds. The congregation headed to the splendiferous mountain of Shatrunjay and then proceeded towards Girnar- the salvation land of innumerable Tirthankars. Ascending the mountain, they paid reverence to Lord Neminath and showered the idol with the pure water of the Gajpadkund. He also paid homage to Goddess Ambika Devi with fragrant flowers and gratitude filled in his heart. After his devotional prayers & rituals ended, he started introspecting deeply filled with ascetic feelings, said to himself, “Oh! All the success, wealth and fame that I have been enjoying, are the fruits of dedication and reverence towards Girnar. Since the past 300 years, I misused my time by being obsessed with the materialistic pleasures, which will lead to pain and agony in my future births. I am fed up of this!” I don’t want any more of this temporary joy which is not going to spiritually uplift my soul. Instead I want to use all my energy and efforts in attaining the non-destroyable, immortal bliss of salvation (Moksh)”.







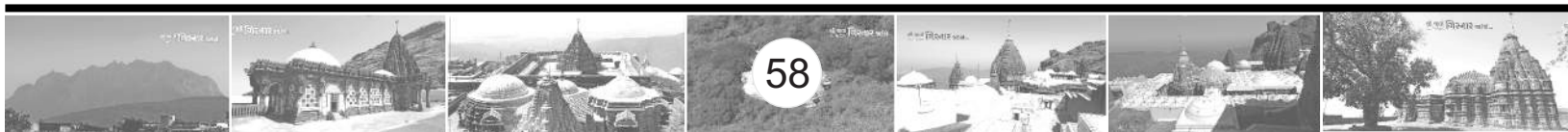
With these thoughts Ashokchandra entrusted his kingdom and other responsibilities to his son, paid obeisance to Lord Neminath and surrendered himself to his feet. He ordained monk hood and with the fire of penance and the strong vibrations of Girnar, he burnt his impure karmas and thus attained supreme knowledge and ultimately attained (Moksh) salvation from this enchanting, heavenly abode, Girnar!

Thus worshipping this eternal mountain with utmost amount of faith and admiration, one derives all sorts of materialistic and spiritual wealth and reserves a series of progressive future births, eventually leading to salvation! The worst possible sinners can get rid of their sins by assiduously worshipping this sacred mountain, Girnar. The wonders of Girnar are countless. Thus it is said

“આ તીર્થભૂમિએ પક્ષીઓની, છાયા પણ આવી પડે,  
ભવભ્રમણ કેરાં દુર્ગતિના, બંધનો તેનાં ટળે,  
મહાદુષ્ટને વળી કુષ્ટરોગી, સર્વસુખ ભાજન બને,  
એ ગિરનારને વંદતા, પાપો બધાં દૂરે જતાં....”

Central Idea: Even if the shadow of birds fall on this holy mountain, then the birth cycle pf those birds reduces. A person who has committed dreadful sins as well as the one suffering from major diseases like leprosy also get all the pleasures of life on sincerely worshipping Girnar.

Thus, by devotionally worshipping Girnar, all your sins get washed away.



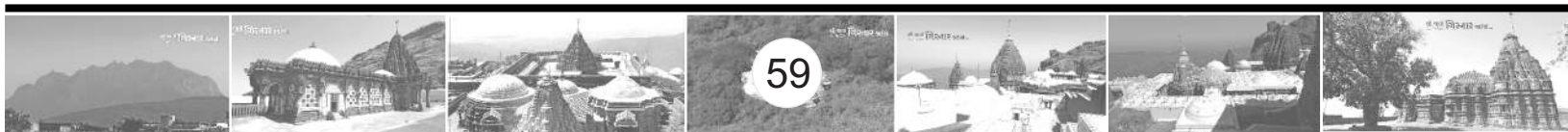


## DESIRE FULFILLING RAIVATGIRI

In the state of Saurashtra, in a village named Sugrampur, lived a kshatriya. Due to his past karmas, he was self-willed, reckless and violated the rules and regulations of the society. He was absolutely non-compassionate towards living beings and would pitilessly end someone's life. It was as though he was an old enemy of the king Harishchandra (a legendary character known for his truthfulness), for that is how much he lied and used foul language. He derived great pleasure from oppressing travellers he met while wandering around. He was filled with many vices. It is rightly said "What goes around comes back around". Therefore, as a result of his murders and sinful acts, he suffered from a dreadful disease called 'lun' (sun stroke). Suffering from the extreme pain of this disease, he destitutely travelled from village to village, town to town, pillar to post, in search for help!

Due to some virtuous deeds of his previous life, he came in contact with a Jain monk. He narrated his sad story and kneeling down he requested the learned Jain monk to help him to achieve peace of mind, and thus end the severe pain of his disease. The Jain monk selflessly portrayed in front of him the glory of the pious mountain, Girnar. To experience the influence of Girnar, he immediately proceeded towards the pious mountain. Soon he reached and ascended the holy mountain. His eyes were cleansed with the fascinating sight of Lord Neminath and with utmost dedication he worshiped Lord Neminath. He then bathed in the holy water of River Ujjayanti, which destroyed all his physical, emotional and mental diseases. He died with composure and was reborn as an extremely handsome and luminous celestial being with a body like the bright sun, illuminating all directions.

Enjoying the celestial luxuries, he suddenly recalled the long forgotten favours of Lord Neminath and the pious mountain Girnar, which had blessed his past life and was the root cause of his luxurious present life style. In his past life he had washed away all his sins by worshiping Lord Neminath in the temple built by Bharat Chakravarti on Girnar and had become a celestial being. In order to repay a fraction of these favours, he went back to pay obeisance to the pious mountain, Girnar and also built a Jain temple on its peak. He said, "I have attained prosperity due to the inconceivable powers of this holy mountain. If I don't stay loyal to it my future lives will be ruined. By worshipping this heavenly abode



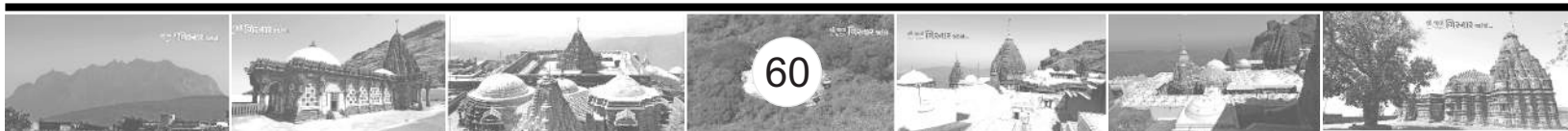


Girnar and the eternally divine Lord Neminath, I shall achieve bliss of the supreme knowledge and salvation in the future!” With these thoughts and deep contemplation, he became the presiding semi-god named **Siddhivinayak**<sup>2</sup> of Girnar and fulfills the desires of all the devotees of Lord Neminath.

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1- Raivatgiri: another name for the pious mountain Girnar.

2- Siddhivinayak is known as the Adhishtayik dev of the pious mountain, Girnar.



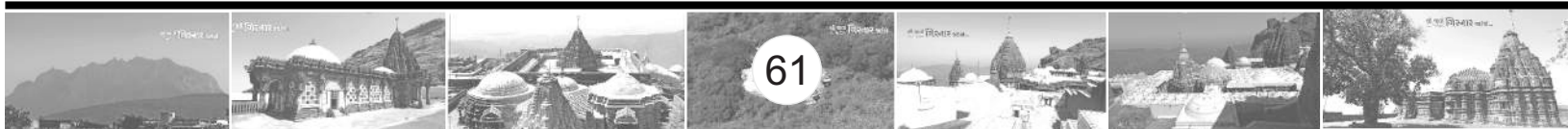


## SaubhagyaManjari

To the south of Bharatkshetra was a state called Karnataka ruled grandly by King Chakrapani. His wife, the beautiful queen PriyanguManjari, was also good natured and virtuous. Time passed by and she gave birth to a baby girl. Though healthy in all ways, with all other organs in proportion, the baby was born with a monkey's face, due to some past lives' sins. The King was shocked by this incident and suspecting some inauspicious events, performed many rituals to pacify many demi-gods and goddesses. He also performed the SnatraMahotsav, which celebrates the lord's birth and brings peace. But all attempts proved unsuccessful with an ugly face but beautiful destiny, the baby Princess was named SaubhagyaManjari. She grew up to be well versed in the 64 skills.

Once, when SaubhagyaManjari was sitting on the King's lap, a foreigner entered his court singing praises of the eternal mountain Shatrunjay. He then started describing the mountain Girnar, by saying "Oh! Long live-the pious mountain Girnar, this holy land is a plethora of virtues and morals, and the root cause in the destruction of pain and poverty. The pious steeples, rivers, streams and trees of this mountain provide happiness to all beings. The celestial beings who come to worship Lord Neminath consider the many comforts of heaven to be a speck compared to the spritual bliss experienced here." Listening to the description of the pious mountain Girnar, Princess SaubhagyaManjari attained jati-smarangaan (the knowledge which helps one call recall the previous births) and fell unconscious.

SaubhagyaManjari regained consciousness, after some cold water was sprinkled oh her. She joyfully told her father, King Chakrapani, "Oh father! Today has been the most auspicious day for me. Please listen to me carefully. In my previous birth I was a monkey on the pious mountain Girnar, described by this foreigner. Being a monkey, I was extremely restless and would indiscreetly jump from the steeples and the temples, across the rivers and from tree to tree in the forests. To the west of the mountain is a river called Amalkirti .The water of Amalkirti has many miraculous effects and is considered to have become holy due to the gentle sight of Lord Neminath. One day while jumping around with other monkeys I came to the bank of this river. While jumping about I got stuck in the dense branches of a mango tree and passed away. Due to the influence of the auspicious mountain, in spite of being a monkey in my previous life I was fortunate enough to be born as your daughter in this life. Now



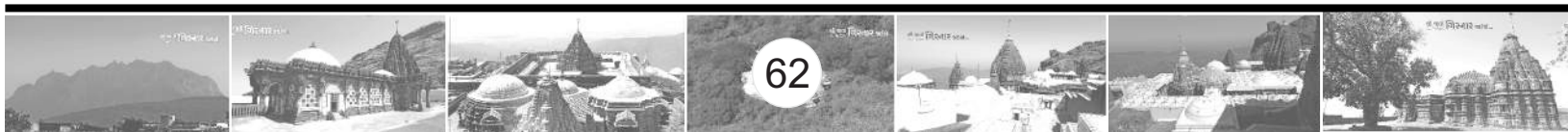


listen to the reason behind my monkey face. While struggling to free myself from the entanglement of the branches, my body fell into the holy waters of Amalkirti but my face of the monkey remained stuck in the tree and could not come in contact with the holy waters of Amalkirti. Oh father! Please let that face of mine be thrown into the Amalkirti so that my monkey face in this life can transform that into that of a beautiful young girl. Due to the overwhelming and heartfelt description of the pious mountain, Girnar, by this foreigner, I attained jati-smarangaan and could tell you my past life's story.”

The king was amazed on listening to the words of the Princess! He ordered his soldiers to go to the pious mountain Girnar and throw into the river the face of the monkey stuck into a mango tree that was situated along the banks of the river. As soon as the monkey's face touched the river, the princess's face was transformed into a young beautiful girl and she looked very pretty. The King was shocked with the transformation, which was a live example of the greatness of the pious mountain Girnar. Only a foolish person will not have faith in such a clearly visible event. It is rightly said that the glory of a mantra (sacred hymn) or a tirth (sacres shrine) is inconceivably auspicious!

King Chakrapani started to looking for a suitable groom for the Princess SaubhagyaManajri, since she had attained her youth. But due to her understanding of the queerness of karmas, the Princess decided to renounce worldly affairs. Instead of stepping on the thorny path of marriage, she desired to proceed towards the chaste, Girnar, in order to perform severe penance and attain salvation.

After expressing her wish to her father, she left the palace. Living in the soothing proximity of the pious mountain Girnar, she indulged in intense penance and become free from all her inauspicious karmas of her infinite past births. Engrossed in the meditation of Lord Neminath she took her last breath. As a result of her reverence and her attachment to the holy shrine she became a Goddess (Vyantar Devi) and was worshiped by all celestial beings. Due to the austerity of her past life, she resided in the drah (something like a pond) of the river, overcoming all the obstacles and assisting the Jain community in adversity.







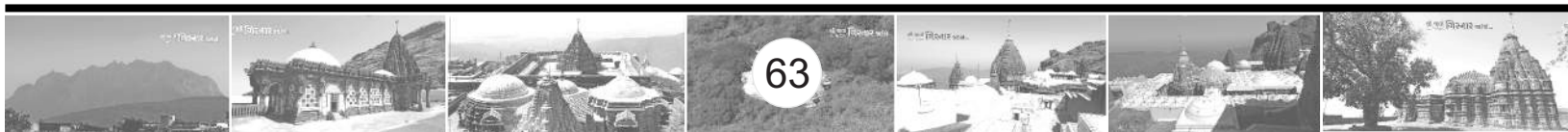
## VASHISHTA

The eighth Vasudev (ruler of three continents) Lakshman ruled on the land of Bharat Kshetra. On the banks of a river lived a sage named Vashishta, who resorted to various types of severe but false penances without the right understanding or correct faith in religion. Being well versed with chanting sacred hymns, and performing the traditional rituals of Vedas (ancient Hindu scriptures), he managed to gather large crowds that respected and honoured him as they were misguided by his ignorance.

The ascetic resided in a small hut and lived on roots, rhizomes, and fruits from the forest and quenched his thirst by drinking the pure water of the rivers. One day, a pregnant deer came in his compound to graze the grass and grains. Cruel and angry by nature, Vashishta quietly crept up behind the grazing deer and attacked her with a stick. The repeated blows injured the baby deer that was in the earlier stages of growth. He continued the beating and eventually they both succumbed to their injuries.

But on seeing the mother and the immature baby deer writhing about in pain, Vashishta's heart stirred. He was dejected on witnessing their pathetic death. The seeds of compassion and kindness were sowed in Vashishta's heart. On one hand there was repentance in his heart and on the other hand was the humiliation he faced at the hands of the crowd, that had gathered by. Everyone was expressing their disgust and fury seeing the brutal murder of the innocent animals. With his heart filled with remorse, he renounced his hut and proceeded for pilgrimages to holy places, hoping to wash away his sins.

Alone he roamed on foot over mountains, crossed rivers, passed towns, villages and forests. In the course of time, he paid homage at sixty-eight different shrines and then assuming himself to be pure, he returned once again to his old hut. A knowledgeable Jain monk who had been travelling on foot from place to place, came close to the hermitage of Vashishta for his spiritual, soul-centred practices and stood steady in meditation. After a while, many devotees from the neighbouring villages came to worship the Jain monk and to clear the darkness of ignorance in their minds, they asked him to narrate their past lives. Listening to his assertion, Vashishta also asked the Jain monk some questions in order to clear his doubts. He asked, "Oh holy ascetic monk! After going on pilgrimages to sixty-eight shrines,





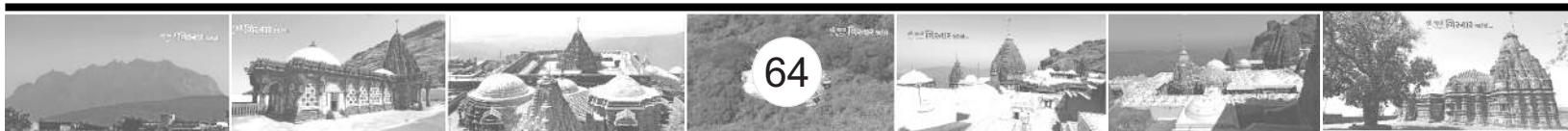
have I been able to get rid of all my bad karmas and sins? Has my soul been purified ?” The Jain monk replied, “By merely travelling via forests, mountains and rivers – without doing the correct penances and without paying homage to the real holy shrines one does not wash away all their sins. Travelling to holy shrines, with a wrongly acclaimed faith or by wandering recklessly, one does not only cause distress to his body but also causes an influx of bad karmas instead of destroying the bad karmas! If you really want to destroy your inauspicious karmas, purify your mind and inculcate feelings of forgiveness, compassion, truth, and inner satisfaction, think about the virtuous Lord who has transcended attachment towards all worldly pleasures and resides in the eternal bliss of his soul. Proceed towards the pious mountain of Girnar and resort to the right form of penance and meditation, which will lead to the decadence of your vicious sins.”

Vashishta respectfully asked the Jain monk, “Oh respectable monk! My saviour! Where is the great pious shrine located?” The knowledgeable Jain monk said, “The pious mountain Girnar is an illustrious shrine situated in Saurashtra and is adorned by the 22nd Tirthankar Lord Neminath! Refraining from the pleasures of the five senses and meditating with a pure intent, are the primary necessities for doing the right type of penance. If you want to get rid of all your sins and accumulate pure virtues, then you should take shelter of the pious mountain Girnar. It will lead you to progressive future lives!”

Inspired by the words of the knowledgeable Jain monk, Vashishta was filled with ecstasy. Thinking about the pious mountain Girnar and keeping Lord Neminath in his heart, he reached the foothills of the sacred shrine. After **circumbulating** the mountain he began his ascent from the north side. On his way, he took a bath in the pure and holy waters of the Ambakund (a pond named Amba). While bathing, he started meditating on the pure crystal like form of ‘Arhat’ (a supreme soul who has gained victory over all bad karmas and attained salvation). He got so engrossed that he surpassed the object of meditation and became one with it Vashishta muni’s soul assumed the form of Arhat. This is the ultimate success of meditation. As he stepped out of the pond, he heard a divine voice,

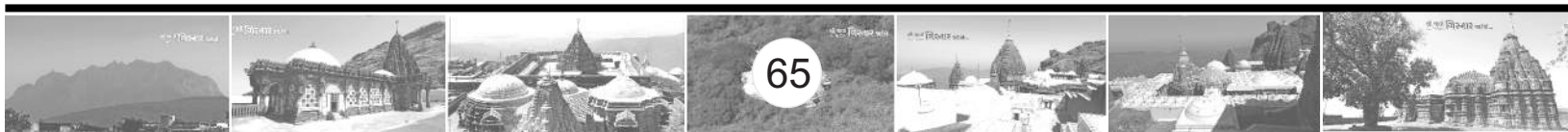
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\* Pradakshina- Going around the mountain.





which said, “Vashishta! You are pure and free from the sins of the murder you’ve committed and all your non- virtuous karmas have been destroyed due to the bathing in the holy Ambakund and observing pure meditation. Surrender yourself to the lotus feet of Lord Neminath!” Vashishta was in shock to hear the divine voice and it took him couple of minutes to believe what was going around. He was in high spirits and tears of happiness rolled down his cheeks. He rushed to Lord Neminath’s temple, bowed down and paid obeisance to him. Praying with a heart felt devotion and strong austerity, he sat in undisturbed meditation and attained clairvoyance (limited knowledge where in you can see a limited period of past and future). Completely immersed in the meditation of Lord Neminath, Vashishta died and became a celestial being. Due to the destruction of the sins of the murder done by Vashishta, Ambakund came to be known as Vashishtakund. On contact with these water severe diseases like gallstones, leprosy, itching are destroyed! If the sins of ruthless killings can be abolished by the touch of the miraculous waters of Vashishtakund , then how divine it would be!!.

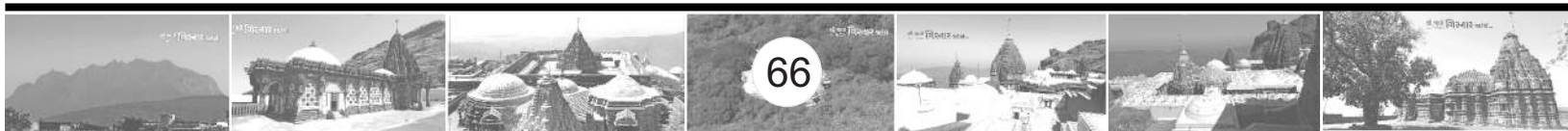




## CELESTIAL GUARDIANS OF THE GREAT GIRNAR SHRINE

Many souls have attained the right path owing to the inconceivable effect of the great shrine of Girnar. Out of gratitude and with the intention of repaying the debt of such benevolence of this shrine, such souls on becoming celestial beings, devote themselves for the protection and upliftment of Girnar. They strive relentlessly to promote this shrine's glory and to make Girnar world famous.

- 1) On the north west of the great shrine Girnar resides Indra (the king of all celestial beings) to vanquish all dangers.
- 2) On the Darmar gate of the great Girnar shrine, Brahmendra, having attained chasity due to the meditation of Lord Neminath, has installed his own idol for the prosperity of the Jain community.
- 3) On the Nandbhadra gate, the powerfull Mallinath is positioned as the Rudra gate keeper, (who became pure hearted through the meditation of Tirthankar Lords).
- 4) On the Mahabal gate of the great Girnar shrine, resides the strong Balbhadra who deflects the blazing heat with the lotus like feet of the lord that form an umbrella on his head.
- 5) On the Bakul gate of the great Girnar shrine is the most powerful Vayukumar who blows away peoples's bundles of obstacle as easily as the wind would blow away grass.
- 6) On the Badri gate, resides Badrish who destroys any hurdles with his weapons.
- 7) On the Uttarkuru resides the seven mother goddesses.

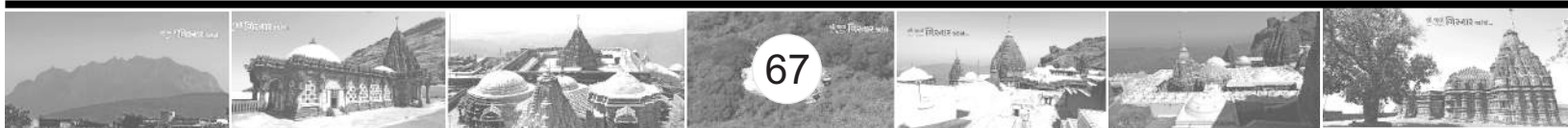




8) On the Kedar gate of the magnificent shrine, stands the Rudra named Kedar, protecting the great Girnar mountains.

Thus eight celestial beings dwell in eight directions. Just like the Tirthankar Lord is adorned by eight divine accompaniments these eight celestial beings become the eight accompaniments for this shrine and stay alert in the protection of this sacred shrine. Having attained sanctity and serenity through devotion to Lord Neminath, infinite celestial beings have a soft corner towards the devotees coming here and are always willing to fulfill their desires.

- 1) To the north of the main peak is the powerful savior of that direction called Meghnad.
- 2) The protector of the western direction is the wish-fulfilling Ratnameghnad.
- 3) In the eastern direction is the celestial being named Sidhivinayak.
- 4) In the southern direction resides the celestial being named Sinhnad. Due to these four celestial beings, the peak is imagined to be four faced.
- 5) In all four directions of the main summit, there are two-two smaller peaks. Any person who dies here or is burnt here is most likely to become a celestial being. The people who perform penance and contemplate on the name of Lord Neminath here attain the eight renowned accomplishments and eventually, progress towards salvation.
- 6) This mountain is like the nature's treasure house, It nests shade giving trees, leafy wish-fulfilling divine trees, black chitrak creepers, wish fulfilling climbers, divine craters filled with the liquid form of some metal & green plants etc. albeit these are not accessible to one and all, but can be obtained only through one's good merit (punya).
- 7) On every tree, every pond, every wall, every reservoir, every place, every peak of this mountain shrine, there are several beings celestial residing who are perpetually engrossed in the contemplation of







## Lord Neminath.

Just like the main gem lies in the centre of lady's necklace, similarly, in the middle of all of these on a high peak, dwells the graceful goddess Ambika, mounted on a lion and fulfilling the wishes of the Jain community.

The Avlokan peak is sanctified by an idol of Lord Neminath and is renowned as the place where Lord Neminath once turned and looked back.

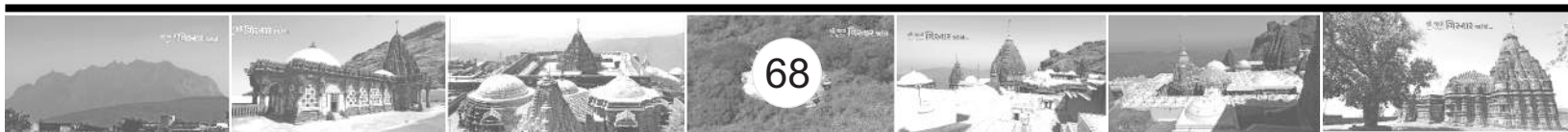
To the south of Ambagiri lives the demigod Gomedh, who has the power to stop a group of enemies and avoid attacks and wars.

In the northern direction is the clever goddess Mahajwala who has pleasant eyes and is empowered with the ability to destroy all obstacle of the jain community.

The boulder on which Krishnavasudev had kept his royal umbrella while worshipping and then taken it back is famous among people as Chhatrasheela.

On this mountain shrine, there are many such peaks and caves wherein celestial beings who are prompt in their service to Tirthankar Lords reside.

**This divine mountain is like heaven on earth.**





## THE POWER OF THE LORD NEMINATH'S MAIN IDOL

The glorious land of India was under the Mughals for about 4-5 decades. These Mughal kings were religious fanatics, and caused heavy damage to the religious order set forth by the Jain lords. They raised to ground several Jain temples and Jain idols. On the other hand, the pages of history also bear testimony to several other Mughal emperors who drew inspiration and were influenced by the Jain principles of Tirthankar and lives of Jain monks

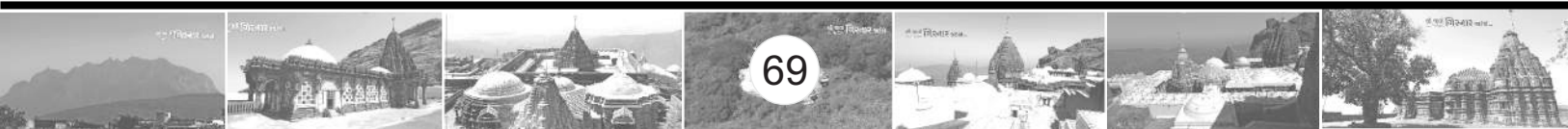
Acharya Jinprabhsuriji a prominent Acharya, tried his level best to spread the glory of the Jainism far and wide. He preached massive gatherings of people on various topics such as 'dharma' and 'karma'. Impressed by the talks of Suriji, the Mughal emperor Surtan respected him and the two would often engage in knowledgeable discussions. Once out of the blue, the emperor asked Suriji, "O respected teacher, several times I have heard you singing praises of the mountains of Girnar. Is there any (miraculous) effect of the Girnar mountains?"

Resolving the doubt of the emperor, Suriji said, "The stature of the great shrine of Girnar is beyond comprehension. Indeed the grandeur of Girnar has been demonstrated not only in Jain religion, but also in other religions. Girnar is the renunciation, enlightenment and salvation land of celibate Lord Neminath, the twenty second Tirthankar".

The emperor further inquired "But can anyone actually see or experience the effects of your stone idols and temples?"

Suriji replied "The power of this main idol of Neminath is incredible. No tool or weapon can drill or perforate it; no fire can burn it. Many celestial beings reside in this impenetrable idol!"

In a surprised tone, the emperor exclaimed, "Oh what are you saying noble one!? How is this possible?" He started thinking, how can a stone idol withstand the force of strong iron? This idol should definitely be tested.





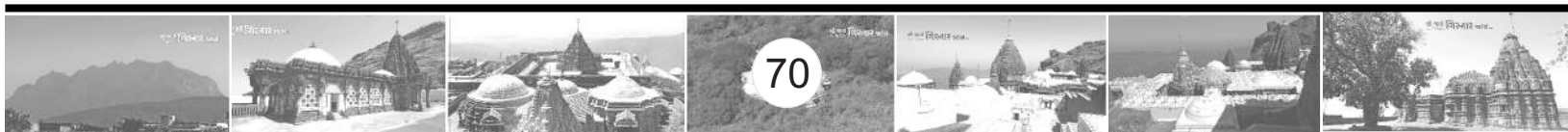
With the passage of time, the emperor expressed to Suriji, his desire to go on a pilgrimage to Girnar. With great pomp, he began his journey to Girnar. As he neared Girnar, (The pride of the state of Gujarat) just the wonderful sight of the Girnar mountains captivated his mind. The verdure vegetation around made it look as though a green bed sheet had been spread and this pretty sight made the emperor's eyes dazzle. In spite of the difficult and the tiring climb, he finally reached the courtyard of Lord Neminath's temple. As soon as he entered the main court of the temple, his eyes fell on the idol of Lord Neminath and he was spell bound. Oh, what an idol! Is this an idol or the Lord himself? How can I test such an idol? Thus began a duel between his heart and mind, but his mind took over and he finally decided to test the idol.

In order to test the idol, the emperor started using power of weapons and Suriji began the power on mantra. No sooner did Suriji become engrossed in the meditation of Lord, than the emperor started pounding the idol with heavy blows one after the other ... but alas, none of his blows were powerful enough to do any damage to the Lord's idol. On the contrary, his eyes started dripping with fire due to a bruised ego and due to the friction with the weapons, sparks emitted out of the Lord's idol. Seeing this miracle the emperor was left awe-struck. Fearing that the sparks might turn into a full fledged fire and burn his body, he immediately threw the weapons on the ground.

The scared emperor fell to Suriji's feet. On coming out from deep meditation, Suriji was delighted to see the situation in his favor. Suriji purged the poison of false belief from the emperor by placing his hand on the emperor's head and sowed the seeds of right beliefs in him. The emperor then ran to the Lord, fell into his feet, burst to tears and repented for his misdeeds, asked for forgiveness and accepted his grave mistake to test the power of Lord's idol. He eventually calmed down and offered gold at Lord's feet and left.

That night some of the emperor's companions who were Non-Jain religious fanatics got angry and started hatching a plan to diminish the influence of the idol in the emperor's mind, and prove that the idol's effect was just namesake.

They gathered all the black colored idols in the temple of Girnar and kept them all in a room. They





then threw an open challenge to the Jain community by announcing, “We will return all these black idols back to you only if they display some miracle tonight. Otherwise tomorrow morning we will crush these idols to pieces in the presence of the entire society”.

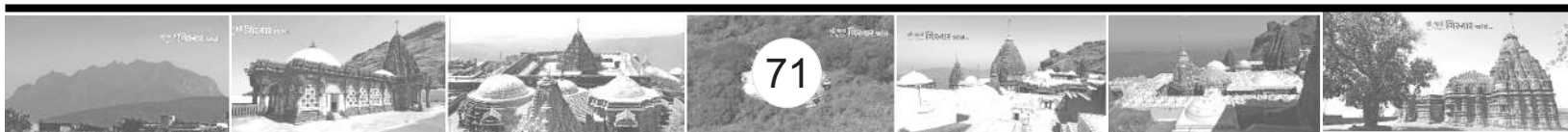
The entire Jain community got worried. “Who knows what will happen tomorrow?” Everyone was tensed. The gleaming rays of the sun lifted the envelope of darkness. Today was a day of unbridled joy for the Non-Jain companions of the emperor. None of the idols performed any miracle the previous night and they wanted to convey this to the Jain householders. They said “These stone puppets of yours stood unmoved like stones all night. Neither have they uttered a single word nor has a single hair moved. Now you will have the great fortune of witnessing them being destroyed. Be prepared for it”.

There was an eerie silence of fear in the Jain householder community. Everyone was shocked. They wondered what will happen. It would be better to die rather than witnessing the destruction of the beloved idols’s. They all went to Suriji and implored, “Now you are our savior. Anyhow, please stop the destruction of these idols!”

Hearing about this incident, Suriji became pensive. He immediately spoke to the emperor describing the situation in detail. It turned out that the emperor was entirely unaware of the misconduct of those religious fanatics. However after knowing this, he felt as if he was able to connect this event to the dream he saw the previous night. He ordered his royal soldiers to get those Non Jain religious fanatics in front of him immediately.

The Non Jains were very excited to receive an invitation from the emperor and came along enthusiastically. They described the incident that occurred the previous night and said, “The talk about the miraculous and divine effects of these idols, etc was nonsense. “Oh emperor, yesterday you were cheated. These black ghosts remained mute throughout the night”! The emperor then said sternly, “Only the fortunate ones can experience such miracles. Just last night I had a grave experience in my dreams”. The non Jains asked, “ Did you see some miraculous effects in your dreams?”

The emperor replies, “Yes! Last night, these black idols cautioned me that if tomorrow morning





your religious fanatics Non Jains cause even a little harm to these Jain idols, then tomorrow you won't be able to see your God (khuda) forever

Hearing such a staid warning from the emperor, the Non Jains started seeing stars in day light for they realized that they would be doomed if the emperor got annoyed with them. The emperor who was confused regarding the relevance of his dream until then, but they themselves clarified it and the emperor was now able to link to his dream and prove the truth in it.

The emperor was extremely furious. His facial expressions turned spiteful and their legs started trembling. The emperor exclaimed, "Who are you to call the effects of these Jain idols humbug? This god is real and alive. Who gave you the authority to hatch plans to destroy such magnificent idols? As a consequence of your misdeeds, I order that you be given capital punishment. Soldiers, take these goons to the gallows".

The emperor's eyes had flared up with anger. Everyone stood dumbfounded hearing his decision. Their hearts were overflowing with compassion. The citizens of the state and the Jain community householders, appealed to the emperor against such harsh punishment. Finally, the Jain house holders went to Suriji and requested him, "Oh Suriji, please help! The emperor is extremely livid with the religious fanatics for having done such a misdeed and has ordered that they be hanged to death. We begged him to change his mind, but he did not. Only you are everyone's savior now; please figure out a way".

Suriji was also worried hearing this. How could he, a messenger of Jainism striving to spread non-violence, bear such slaughter? He immediately went to the emperor and made him understand that the foundation of all Jain philosophy is compassion for every living being. Where even the smallest of creatures are cared for, how can human beings be killed? We live with the values propagated by Lord Mahavir and going by the statement 'Kshama Virasya Bhushanam' (which means that the ability to forgive is a jewel of the courageous), to be able to forgive instead of punishing the guilty is a symbol of one's bravery of strength. The words of Suriji made a deep impact on the emperor and at that time the environment reverberated with the happy chants of 'JAINISM JAYATI SHASANAM' which means victory to Jainism).







## THE POWER OF DEVOTION TO THE SACRED GIRNAR SHRINE

In the village of Dharmanuli, there lived a trader named Dhar. The righteous merit accumulated by him in the past bestowed on him tremendous wealth, so much so that he seemed to compete with Kubera – The God of Wealth! He magnanimously donated in good causes and also aided many people in sustaining their livelihoods. Deriving pleasure from such philanthropical deeds, he once embarked on a pilgrimage to Girnar along with his five sons and several other people. His group reached the foothills of the great Girnar shrine and was put up in tents at the base of the shrine.

While his group residing at Girnar was eagerly awaiting to catch a glimpse of the **22<sup>nd</sup> tirthankar** Lord Neminath, a king in that area attempted to prevent them from ascending the mountains of Girnar as he was a follower of the **Digambar** sect, whereas Dhar and his group were followers of the **Shwetambar**' sect. Dhar and his group yearned to see, touch and worship the Lord and with delivious hearts, continued their ascent to the mountain peak. This did not go down well with the Digambar King who ordered his troops to attack Dhar's group, which resulted in a battle between the two groups. Dhar and his group's unparalleled devotion to Lord Neminath, led to an explosion in their strength and empowered his five sons to fight with phenomenal vigour and dynamism. With faith and devotion for the glorious shrine, The five sons defeated several enemy soldiers but ultimately became martyrs themselves. As a result of their selfless sacrifices in their next incarnation, they were born as the presiding deities of that place and were called (1) Kalmegh (2) Meghnad (3) Bhairav (4) Ekpad and (5) Trailokyapad.

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\* Righteous Merit here is being used for punyanubandhipunya. Punya is the result of good deeds of previous lives. Such punya results in fulfillment of material desires in future lives. There are different types of punya, one of which is punyanubandhipunya. It results in the doer doing pious deeds in subsequent lives resulting in incremental punya.

\* Jain religion is primarily divided into 2 major sects called Digamber and Shwetamber who have certain differences.





## ASTUTE VASTUPAL

In the glorious state of Gurjar (Gujarat), King Veerdhaval ruled the state of Dholka. Aashraj, a minister in the court of King Veerdhaval, was a follower of Jain religion, He lived with his family, in the village of Sunhalak. His wife was Kumardevi and together they had three sons and seven daughters.

Being a very prudent and practical minister, Aashraj had put in every possible effort to provide the best upbringing for his sons Maldev, Vastupal, Tejpal and his daughters. As a result of good deed done in previous lives, Vastupal and Tejpal had built righteous merit which bestowed them with great intelligence and virtues, right from childhood. Such was their love for each other and their unwavering faith in Jain religion, that they became a subject of envy for everyone.

As Vastupal and Tejpal stepped into the throes of youth, they eventually chose their respective life partners named Lalitadevi and Anupamadevi. Both the women were extremely beautiful and virtuous as if Goddess Laxmi personified. Time passed and their father Aashraj left the mortal world. Vastupal – Tejpal, along with their families then settled in the village of Mandal. But alas, who knows what destiny had in store for them? Shortly after settling in Mandal, their mother Kumardevi also passed away. Unable to cope with the loss of their god like parents, both the brothers embarked on a pilgrimage to the great shrine of Siddhachal to alleviate their grief and lighten their heavy hearts.

The holy and empowered sight, touch and reverence of the unparalleled mountains of Shatrunjaya relived their sorrow to some extent. In order to seek employment, the two brothers left the village of Palitana and moved from one town to another to try their luck. Their fortune beckoned them to Dholka and they finally settled there. Emperor Veerdhaval of Dholka was in search of a discerning minister to manage his state's administration and a brave commander to be appointed as the chief of his army. In the mean time, Vastupal – Tejpal had established a cordial relationship with the royal priest. Sensing the dilemma of the emperor, the royal priest requested him saying, "In our kingdom, there are two virtuous young men with all the qualities you are looking for. They are absolutely fit for the post. They are gentle natured, efficient in their work and proficient in royal politics. Additionally, their ceremonial





mark on their forehead is indicative of their high lineage and faith in Jain religion. If you permit, I can bring them before you.”

Just like a jeweler can evaluate the worth of a diamond, the wise king read their fortune by reading their faces and willingly entrusted the responsibility of managing the royal affairs in the hands of these two virtuous and capable brothers.

The fragrance emanating from their efficient royal administration spread throughout, in every single village, kingdom and town. The elder brother Vastupal was appointed as the minister and competently managed the flourishing towns of Dholka and Khambhat whereas bright Tejpal was made the Commander in Chief of the royal army. These two brothers were considerably instrumental in the inclement of the royal treasury and with their combination of bravery, tact and good modesty, they won the hearts of the king as well as his subjects. Songs of peace and harmony reverberated throughout the kingdom. Along with their effective administration, due to their loyalty to Jain religion's commandments, their popularity started spreading everywhere. They not only observed fasts on auspicious days, but followed six obligatory duties of a Jain householder (6 Avashyak) and practiced the four fold religious activities such as worshipping the almighty, serving Jain monks and nuns, assisting fellow jains etc. To ensure progressive future lives, they got several temples constructed and spread the glory of Jainism far and wide. Once they got the opportunity to visit pious mountains of Girnar along with fellow Jains.

Meanwhile on the other side, several Jain monks, who travel by foot reached the foothills of the great Girnar mountains after a tiring and long journey. With an immense desire to see and worship Lord Neminath, they began ascending the holy Girnar – the renunciation, enlightenment and liberation land of innumerable Tirthankars (Jain Lords), with the faith that it could pave their path towards salvation. Their hearts brimmed with inexpressible joy but alas! Their dreams came crashing down as a giant man stopped them in their way. He harshly said, “If you want to continue your ascent to this mountain, you will first have to pay tax, or else you will not be permitted to go ahead.”

Bewildered, the great monks exclaimed, “Money! To be paid to reach lords door”? We have taken the vow of non possession and therefore how can we have money”? Unconvinced, the man thundered, “Stop your small talk, pay the tax and then move on”!



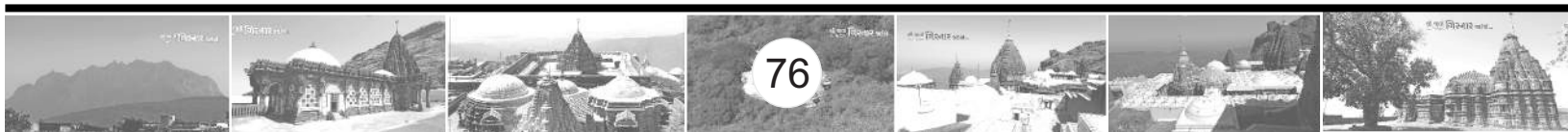


The monks had no option but to turn back. There was no way this obstinate man would change his mind. Their minds were filled with vivid thoughts... indeed how unfortunate it is that one is asked to pay money to worship the Almighty, the savior of the world. This cannot be tolerated at any cost and this forced and unfair tax on pilgrims of Girnar should be abolished as soon as possible. The next day, the monks experienced a sense of déjà vu as their ascent to the peak was again prohibited unless they paid tax. Needless to say, their resolution to take some action and abolish the tax strengthened. As if via telepathy, their wish reached the minister of Dholka.

The next day, as red hues filled the evening sky, the monks heard that the minister of Dholka – Vastupal would be arriving at the foothills of Girnar with a congregation of Jain pilgrims the next day. They also sensed that their desire of getting the tax abolished could soon be fulfilled. The noble Vastupal was also aware of this issue in detail and realized that it should be handled with tact and not power. The monks were to begin their ascent once again but, Vastupal informed them about the current situation with the traveler's tax and requested them to wait for some time and climb the mountain along with the entire congregation.

The tax was creating hindrance for the monks in their pilgrimage. Thus taking advantage of the fact that the minister was himself quite eager to get this tax abolished, the monks told minister Vastupal, "It is indeed very shameful that the devotees are asked to pay taxes to worship the Lord and pious shrine, when an extremely intelligent person like you is present. Today you might be able to get us to worship the Lord along with the community but what about the other noble souls who will come here in the future." Hearing the monks, the idea of abolishing the tax which was in the form of a tiny spark in Vastupal's mind, was now ignited and assumed the form of a huge flame.

Aware of his fury, the monks further pressed, "How unfortunate it is that we have been unsuccessfully trying to carry out this pilgrimage since the last two days! But we have decided to dauntlessly continue our fight till this tax is abolished. What we need now, is someone with steadfast valor like you who also has ceaseless devotion and faith towards the Lord. Success is not too far, if we get your support".







Agreeing to be supportive, the minister said, “Oh noble souls, your wish is my command, I am at your service. It will be the golden moment of my life, if my head was to be severed and if I had to become a martyr for the cause of the Lord”.

The minister and the monks discussed the possible solutions to enable the abolishment of the tax and thereafter the monks once again began their ascent to the mountain. No sooner had they begun, than they heard a voice commanding them to stop. Despite this, the monks with great determination and steady speed continued to march ahead. An angry shout fell on their ears, “Are you able to listen or are you all stone – deaf? You seem to be coming here everyday for no rhyme or reason, are you never embarrassed? How many times have you been told that unless you pay the tax charges equivalent to five dram(currency in those days), you cannot climb a single step more!”

Unmoved by the anger spewed by the officials, the monks retaliated and spoke equally fiercely saying, “Why should we pay any charges to see our supreme Lord? The Lord’s court is always open for one and all! On top of that, where does the question of us having any money arise as we are bound by our vow of non possession? We have even given away the ultimate symbol of one’s personal beauty, our hair – so what else could we now have for giving? How can there be any taxes charged to us bald people?” Fireworks continued from both the sides and at the end of this war of words, the monks openly disregarded the officials, did not pay the taxes, and eventually reached the top of the mountains after persevering for two long days.

On the other hand, the officials were extremely furious and their anger was at its peak as they were unable to gather the tax payment. They realized that their long lasting tradition of assessing a levy on all pilgrims had received a fatal death blow. They could not bear this humiliation and reached out to the minister in the hope of getting justice. The minister gave them an opportunity to vent their frustration and consoled them with the assurance that he would certainly look into this issue. This comforted the officials. Shortly thereafter, the minister summoned the monks and as soon as they arrived, cordially welcomed them, giving them due respect and honour.

The officials presented their case and complained, “Respected minister, these monks over ruled our long running custom of paying traveler’s tax and forcibly went ahead with their pilgrimage of the







mountain without paying the dues. They have openly disregarded our system that is prevailing since so many years. We, your humble servants ardently request you to provide justice in this matter”.

The practical Vastupal gave an opportunity to the other party (the monks) as well to present their case and asked them if they had something to say. Seeing the ball in their court, the monks said, “It is indeed right that we carried out our pilgrimage to the top of the mountains without paying the traveler’s tax. However, minister, how can there be any taxes levied on us bald headed monks? We do not own anything and have no possessions, how can we have any money? We have been patient and have tried to control our burning desire to see the Lord since the last three days, but there is a limit to our patience as well. How ridiculous is it even to think that one has to pay money to see the lord? It is extremely unfair. How can there be a charge to smell the soil of such a powerful and pious place where innumerable Lords have achieved enlightenment and/or salvation? Oh minister, not only is this shameful for our kingdom, but it is also shame for our King. If an intelligent and virtuous person like you will not provide justice on this occasion, who else will? This long standing but inappropriate custom should certainly be discontinued.”

The minister was spellbound hearing this relentless flow of words from the monks. After a short pause, he looked at the officials and asked, “What is your opinion on what the monk have just said?” “Oh minister, no matter how correct the monks are, but how can we tolerate a blow to our source of livelihood and income that has been ongoing since several years? We should definitely get five drams per head”, said the officials.

The minister closed his eyes and was lost in thoughts for a few moments. He then presented his dilemma “On one hand there are these monks who are the very basic of our existence and on the other hand, the officials who are this kingdom’s beloved subjects. While it would be extremely inappropriate to hurt the feelings of the monks, it will be equally irresponsible to ignore the reality that this is an issue of your livelihood. Under such circumstances, all of us should collectively think of a better solution acceptable to one and all.

Everyone was in agreement with the minister because even the officials had experienced difficulties in collecting taxes on a daily basis. So if there could be alternative to this, it would indeed be welcomed. However, no one was able to come up with a solution and so while everyone was busy discussing, the minister proclaimed, “What are you all still thinking?”



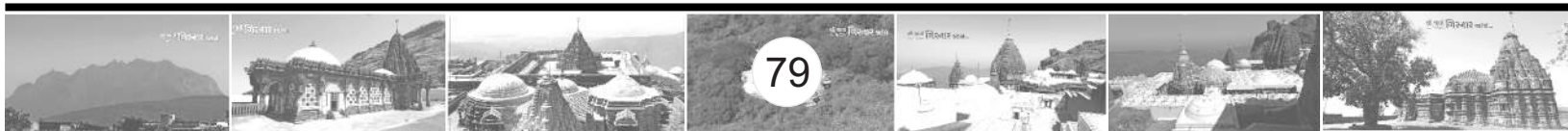


If you are unable to come up with an agreeable solution, can you ordain me with the reasonability? Will my decision be acceptable to everyone? But remember, there will be no room for negotiation thereafter – is that acceptable”?

“Oh minister, we are confident that there is no room for any bias in your decision and the feelings of these respectable, detached monks and the issue our sustenance will both be taken care of”.

Affectionately winning the trust of everyone present, the clever and astute minister Vastupal, secured everyone’s consent and announced that, “From this day onward, traveler’s tax on this sacred land of Girnar, is being abolished. Anyone found collecting taxes in disdain of this announcement will be prosecuted to the highest extent in law. To ensure that your livelihood is not affected, the village of Kuhadi, situated near Girnar, is being handed over to you. You will have right over all the income earned from this village of Kuhadi. From today you will be the owners of this village. Does this relieve you of your worries? Are you all satisfied now?”

The joy of people knew no bounds, hearing the words of minister. The officials became completely relieved as they received the official documents making them the beneficiaries of all income of Kuhadi village. The atmosphere reverberated with sounds of long live minister Vastupal and victorious slogans of Lord Neminath. Every cave in the mountain of Girnar echoed with these cries and the fragrance of peace and happiness permeated the entire universe.





## SHINING SAVIOUR OF GIRNAR

“A pilgrimage is a giant benefactor of a series of righteous merit; it is instrumental in destruction of sins, it effectuates the pilgrim’s birth, wealth, speech, thoughts and body and enables the achievement of **Tirthankar naam karma** ”

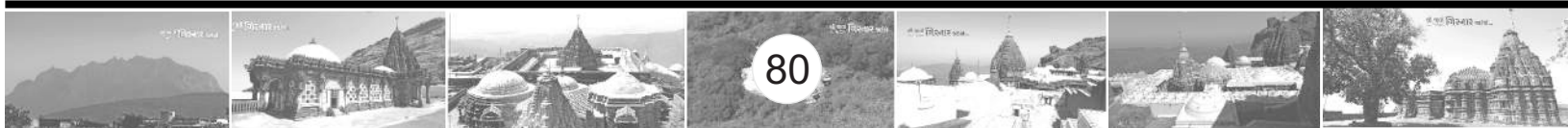
Minister Pethad was a stalwart of his time, had numerous charitable acts to his credit and had reserved an eminent position in the hearts of his teacher’s. Aware of such astounding results of a devotion filled pilgrimage, along with the members of the Jain community he embarked on a pilgrimage to the great shrine of Siddhachal. He eagerly ascended the mountain peak and worshipped Lord Adinath with great devotion and faith. He devoutly carried out all rituals and then embellished the temple of Lord Adinathji – the first Tirthankara of this era with **25 ghadis** of gold. This generous act of his, was greatly applauded by all the noble people present there.

They stayed at Siddhachal for several days in order to savour the fragrance of the innumerable souls who attained salvation there. After several days, they commenced their journey towards the great shrine of Raivatachal (Girnar). As days passed by, they became increasingly restless and eager to reach the divine Girnar mountains - the renunciation, enlightenment and salvation land of infinite Tirthankaras. They yearned to make their lives fruitful by touching the magical touch of this sacred land, which is also witness to the renunciation, enlightenment and salvation of the twenty second Tirthankar of the current era – Lord Neminath, 8 Tirthankaras of the previous time cycle and the salvation of 2 Tirthankaras of the previous time cycle. It will also be sanctified with the salvation of all 24 Tirthankaras of the next time cycle. Catching a glimpse of the peaks of Raivatgiri from far, they were swept with boundless joy.

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\* The cumulative consequences of one’s thoughts, words and deeds result in the formation of karma. There are 8 major types of karma, one of which is naam karma. This karma causes the individual diversities of the souls (i.e responsible for the type and kind of body). It is further divided into 93 sub types. Thirthankar naam karma is the type that enables one to become a Tirthankar, the Almighty.

\* Ghadi is a unit of measurement used in the olden days. 1 ghadi = 200 kgs. Share is also a similar unit of measurement used in the past. 1 share = approx 2 pounds.





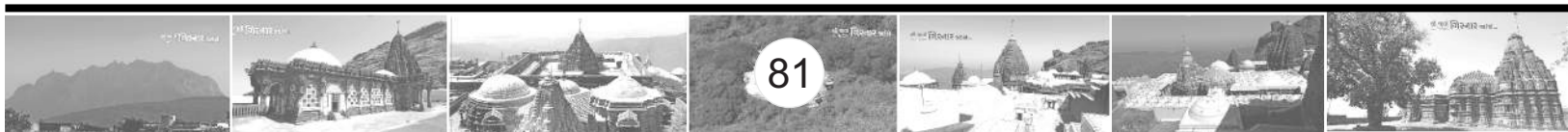
At the crack of dawn, the group along with minister Pethad, arrived at the foot hills of Raivatgiri. At the same time camping there with his group was a wealthy trader named Purna, who was born in Agrawal clan and hailed from Yoginipur – Delhi. He was considered to be a member of the inner circle of Emperor Allauddin and was a staunch follower of the **Digambar\*** sect. Due to the beauty and abundant wealth bestowed on him, he was intoxicated by the pomposity of his riches.

Both groups set out for their ascent to the mountain shrine early next morning, amidst the moonlight and cool breeze. Right then, the sentries of the Digambar group yelled and prevented the **Shwetambar\*** group (Pethad ministers' group) from proceeding. "This shrine belongs to the Digambers; as we arrived here before you did. We will ascend the mountain first". Ignoring the Digambar call, the Shwetambar's continued their march forward. Purna's ego was hurt and he lost his temper. He roared "Beware! Dare not move a step forward or we will sever your heads without a moment's delay!". Realizing that trader Purna was boiling with anger, astute minister Pethad decided to use his brains instead of brawns. He tried his level best to convince Purna by flipping through the pages of history bearing testimony to Shwetambar ownership of Girnar and recited various incidents where Digambers had lost the ownership argument, but to no avail. This was followed by various debates and counter arguments. A war of words ensued, the Digambers were getting fanatical and Purna was seething with rage.

With age comes experience and with experience comes wisdom; some wise old men from both the groups came forward with a proposal, "As a result of some previous good karmas, you both have had the tremendous fortune of leading groups on this great pilgrimage and are extremely lucky to be able to experience the divine touch of this mountain's shrine which is capable of destroying sins and bad karmas of innumerable past lives – then what is the point of such meaningless arguments? Drop this discussion and ascend the mountains together, so there remains no conflict about who goes first. For now, bear in your minds that this shrine belongs to neither the Digambers, nor the Shwetambers. With these thoughts, reach the court of Lord Neminath.

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\* Jain religion is primarily divided into 2 major sects called Digambar and **Shwetambar** who have certain differences.





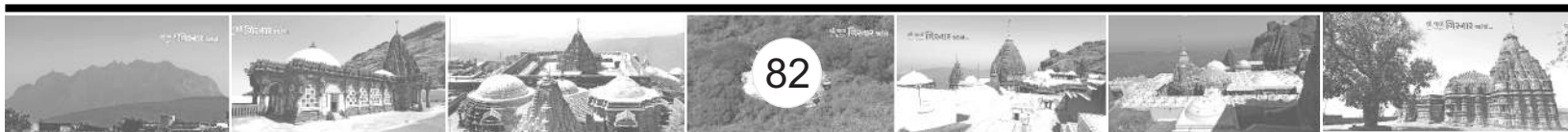


Then, when time comes to wear the celestial garland, the ownership of this shrine will be awarded to the one who bids to offer the most wealth! Warriors fight with weapons, scholars fight through scriptures, the menial men fight with their hands, women fight by using bitter words, animals fight with their horns and traders fight with their wealth. Since we are traders, it is justified that we resolve our argument using our wealth.

Both groups sportingly accepted such constructive advice from the learned elders. All the pilgrims commenced their ascent to the apex. They were left spell bound at the sight of the fascinating lotus like face of Lord Neminath. Bowing with great reverence, they got engrossed in performing various devotional rituals like worshipping, hoisting the religious flag, dancing and singing Lord's praises. It was now time to wear the celestial garland. Who will claim the ownership of this shrine today? Both sides became prepared to offer all their wealth at the feet of the Lord in order to answer this question. To prove the platitude "No one can undo, which is destined" and as an inclination of the outcome trader Purna took a seat on the left hand side of Lord Neminath whereas, minister Pethad naturally stood on the right hand side of the Lord Neminath, representing the victory omen.

To attain ownership of Girnar, both sides started staking gold, first gold coins, succeeded by shares of gold and eventually followed by ghadis of gold. Minister Pethad bid 5 ghadis of gold for the celestial garland. Trader Purna bid 6 ghadis, minister Pethad came back with 7 ghadis, thus escalating the bidding war with incremental offerings of gold. Minister Pethad finally bid 16 ghadis of gold! Hearing this, trader Purna started seeing stars in broad daylight! He requested minister Pethad to grant him a grace period of 8 days. Minister Pethad was in high spirits today and happily agreed to it, not only that, he extended the grace period to 10 days instead.

Trader Purna then began the process of collecting gold from all members of his supporting group. As it was for ensuring their ownership of Girnar, everyone started generously giving their personal ornaments like bangles, gold coins, necklaces, etc. and soon a mountain of gold ornaments was formed. Upon measuring the weight of the ornaments, the total came to 28 ghadis. Meanwhile, some gold had been dispatched from Delhi also, to help with the overall tally. Trader Purna held his head high, as he could sense how close he was to attaining the ownership of Girnar. The entire Digambar group was ecstatic.



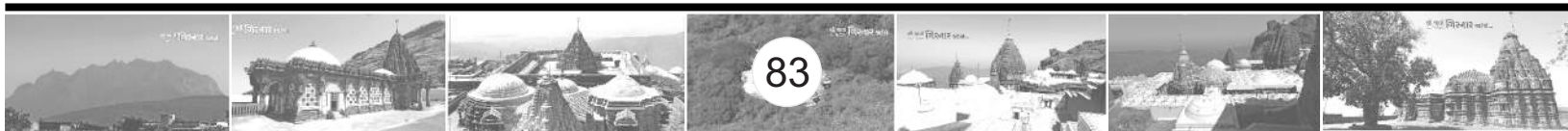


On the other hand, minister Pethad gauged the optimism in the Digambar group and realized that this would become a battle of equals. With great alacrity, he ordered a female camel to be dispatched which had an ability to cover a distance of 1 yojan (12km) in 24 minutes to bring gold from Mandavgadh.

With the passage of 10 days, the grace period to bid for the celestial garland came to an end and trader Purna challenged minister Pethad to play the final round in this high stakes game and thus permanently resolve the shrine's ownership. "28 ghadis gold", snarled trader Purna with a look of bloated pride that suggested that the shrine was very well within his reach. For minister Pethad, being the guardian angel for this shrine was the mantra that constantly echoed in his ears. He was now restless, and every moment seemed like ages. By incrementing the bid by 1 ghadi every time, he felt like time was being unnecessarily wasted. Resembling the roars of the lions in the mountains of Girnar, minister Pethad thundered, "56 ghadis gold".

Everyone was stunned and for a moment there was pin drop silence. All eyes were now on trader Purna. He was dumbfounded. What to do and what not to do? He seemed to suffer from a bout of amnesia. After some time he regained his composure. To defend his position, he appealed to his group for more gold but the Digambar group spoke, "We have no ability to support you now. If you have more wealth, you carry on! Even if we were to sell all our bullocks, carts and even men, we still would not have enough gold. And what is the point of owning a shrine when we have to lose everything and become paupers. It is not like we are going to take the shrine to our homes. Then why the futile exercise to burn our houses to build the shrine?"

Trader Purna felt let down, his face turned pale. With a heavy heart, he folded his hands with humility, accepted defeat and as if he was surrendering said, "Minister Pethad! Now you wear the celestial garland". The mountains of Girnar reverberated with the joyous cries of "Hail Neminath", coming from all ten directions. The celestial garland, which had now turned into victory garland, fell in the neck of minister Pethad. The entire atmosphere jingled with the noble sounds of musical instruments. Today minister Pethad was filled with pride. His life was effectuated and fulfilled by this invaluable opportunity to guard the religion and the glorious shrine. His joy was boundless. Wearing the celestial garland, he descended the mountains. At that time, fervently devout as he was, he recollected the words from a





scripture that said, “It is not appropriate to delay the commencement of a religious activity, destruction of diseases and attainment of prosperity. And the payment of any offerings made to God”.

“Anyone who is neglectful towards the destruction of Lord’s wealth, does not pay back the promised sum or misuses the income from Lord’s wealth is always stuck in the cycle of life and death.”

“The acts of destroying the assets of a temple, killing a monk, criticizing the Jain governance and breaching the chastity of a nun are like fire that will burn down the roots of enlightenment”.

“A foolish person who destroys the wealth of the temple or that of the religion does not understand religion at all, is bound to be born in the **first hell**”.

Remembering these words from the scriptures, minister Pethad pledged that, “I will not consume anything (food or water) until I am able to gather 56 ghadis of gold which I bid for the celestial garland and offer them at Lord’s feet!”

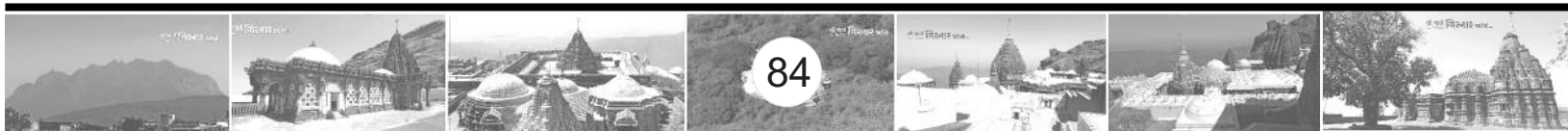
Everyone was stunned! They extolled at the minister’s conviction and bowed down to him. What an unyielding pledge – where lies Girnar and where Madhavgadh, they are so far off. When would the 56 ghadis of gold arrive and when would minister Pethad break his fast!!

Everyone waited with bated breath for the arrival of the camel. Pethad, filled with immense faith in the Almighty could not even think of putting a morsel in his mouth with the debt of Lord’s wealth hanging over his head? Every ounce of his existence, every drop of his blood and every single breath of his were fragrant with loyalty and allegiance towards the Lord and Jain religion.

Meanwhile, the female camels were traversing the distance with breakneck speed, covering a distance of 12 kms in the short time of 24 minutes. They reached Mandavgadh in Malavdesh, gathered the requisite gold and were now galloping back towards Girnar.

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4 Jain cosmology describes 7 hells, each one progressively worse than the previous, with seventh being the worst.



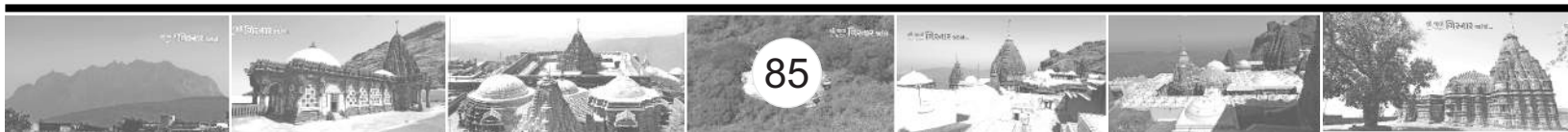


Despite being rewarded with the ownership of Girnar, how could minister Pethad be at peace until he delivered the promised payment? He was restless. Every moment seemed like eternity. Along with minister Pethad, all the pilgrims had fixed their eyes on the road leading to Mandavgadh, waiting earnestly just like the Chatak bird that fervently yearns for the rains, throat parched without water.

He thus fasted on the day of the bidding for the celestial garland. On the next day as well, it was past noon, slowly the evening sky descended and it would soon be time for the sun to set westwards. The sky had begun to adorn itself with orange and red hues and it was now only 48 minutes for the sun to set when everyone heard the sounds of the camels galloping. Just like the sunflower blooms with the rising rays of the sun, similarly minister Pethad brimmed with joy at the arrival of the camels. The galloping of the camels covered the entire road with clouds of dust and they soon reached the foothills of the Girnar Mountains. At once, everyone offloaded the female camels and weighed 56 ghadis of gold. Everyone was desperate to see minister Pethad break his fast, but alas, that was not meant to be, for the sun would not agree. Minister Pethad used to have his last meal of the day at least 48 minutes before sunset, in confirmation with the Jain principles and therefore had to fast for 2 days without food or water. The sun had now set, casting the sky in an orange glow at twilight.

Next morning, amidst melodious music playing and in the presence of the four fold Jain community, minister Pethad broke his two – day fast. That day a feast was arranged for all the people there.

**Thus shone Pethad Shah- the sparkling star of the Shwetambar community!**







## TRUTH ALONE TRIUMPHS

Two mountains holy and high, Girnar and Shatrunjay.

On one peak Lord Neminath we pray, Lord Rushabdev on the other.

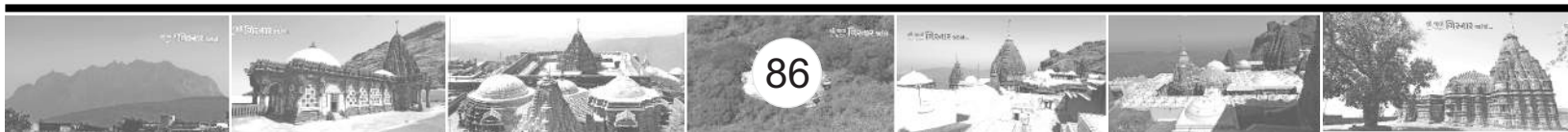
May the glory of the land of Saurashtra state, eminent for cradling in her lap, the world's two most distinguished and sacred mountains spread far and wide. The noble land of Saurashtra has been instrumental in augmenting Gujarat's honour and prosperity because of the series of historical events it has witnessed.

Atop the peerless mountain - shrines of Shatrunjay and Girnar, flutter the divine flags of Jain temples, as if inching upwards to propel the glory of the matchless Jain religion.

The Shrine of Girnar worshipped and served by crores of celestial beings, situated in the lap of nature appears to be talking with the fluffy clouds. Just as it fights out gusts of winds and storms, it has stood firm in the midst of innumerable threats and controversies surrounding it.

Once upon a time a group of devotees departed from the city of Hastinapur - a flourishing land ruled by great kings, and initiated a pilgrimage on foot to the mountains of Girnar. En route, they carried out several activities that enhanced the glory of Jain religion, paid homage at several Jain Shrines including the eternal Shatrunjay and eventually reached the foothills of Girnar.

At the crack of dawn the next morning, the head of group, Dhanseth along with the other devotees including Jain monks, nuns and householders began his ascent to the apex of the mountain. Desirous of touching the feet of Lord Neminath - a life long celibate and experience the pure vibrations of the salvation land of infinite Tirthankars, Dhanseth reached the court of the great Lord Neminath. Today all the pilgrims were jubilant. Enthusiasm and veneration filled the air. Dhanseth worshipped the Lord with the finest material and their sweet scent proliferated in the courtyard of the temple.





With exhilarated hearts the entire group was about to begin the third type of worship, when owing to their previous accumulated bad karmas, their flow of devotional reverence and worship was interrupted by another group entering the temple. Their leader, Varuneth who hailed from Malaypur region of Maharashtra was a staunch follower of the Digambar sect. Within a matter of moments, Varuneth dismantled the flower arrangements and scattered the expensive ornaments that Dhaneth, along with his group had offered to the Lord, Varuneth then hollered “What is the use of such material offerings which are sources of attachment, to the Lord who is detached”?

This enraged Shwetambar Dhaneth along with his group, “Who are you to disturb us in our worship”? Arrogant Varuneth replied “We Digambara are the true owners of this Girnar Shrine and it belongs to us, you all are just novices”.

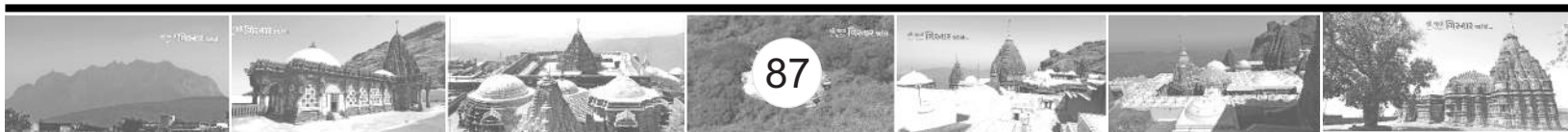
“If you believe that the Almighty becomes attached when adorned with ornaments, then how will he remain detached when touched by women”? thundered Dhaneth.

Hearing him challenge their ownership of Girnar, Dhaneth lost his temper. Indeed, how could one accept such an outright lie? Since when did the Digambaras become the owners of Girnar? Call it the mercifulness and generosity of the Svetambaras that Digambaras are yet able to visit Girnar and offer their prayers.

“If adorning the Lord with ornaments makes him attached, how can he remain detached during the chariot procession taken out by Digambaras? Why are you all desirous of seating the detached Lord in the chariot?”

Varuneth’s thoughts turned hostile. He retorted, “Beware! You will be allowed to worship the Lord only if you are willing to follow Digambar customs and rituals; if not, be prepared to bear the consequences and the punishments for your deeds”.

This further provoked Dhaneth, who jumped into the fray with the cry of “JAI NEMINATH ! To die for the cause of the Lord and his religion is not dying at all; we will happily be martyrs for this cause. Now





even if our heads are served, we are not worried”.

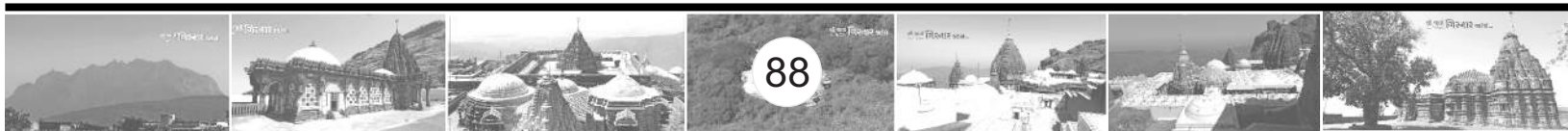
The court of Lord Neminath was turning into a battle field. On seeing this, some wise men from both the sides, came forward to bring a resolution through peaceful discussions. They suggested that they should approach King Vikram of Giri and tell him to take an appropriate decision regarding the ownership of Girnar.

As this proposal was acceptable to both the sides, they all dispersed and descended back to the foothills of Girnar. By now, the royal assembly had been adjourned for the day. However, they still went ahead and knocked on the doors of King Vikram, requesting him to hear their cases. The royal court assembled again to hear the case, On hearing both the sides’ arguments, King Vikram gauged that this was a grave matter and declared that he would announce his decision the next day. Hearing this, everyone dispersed.

It was dusk, and as darkness set in, the lamp of Dhanseth’s faith in the Lord shone brighter than ever. His unflinching faith that Girnar belongs to and will continue to belong to the Shwetambaras, and his extremely devotional prayers invoked Goddess Ambika, the celestial being who is the presiding deity of the Girnar Shrine. Pleased with his moral integrity and patience, Goddess Ambika appeared in front of Dhanseth. On seeing her, Dhanseth inquired, “O mother, who is the rightful owner of Girnar? Will you be present at the royal court tomorrow when the judgement is delivered”?

Goddess Ambika replied, “O holy man, please do not worry. Truth and falsehood separate like water and oil .Tomorrow in court, tell King Vikram that the Shwetambers pay their respect to Girnar everyday through the recitation of the holy hymn of ‘Siddhanam Buddhanam’. This will make evident that the ownership of Girnar lies in the hands of Shwetambaras”.

The golden rays of the morning sun heralded the beginning of a golden era for Shwetambaras. Dhanseth’s heart was filled with unwavering faith, endless devotion and optimism. In the royal court, everyone had gathered with anxious ears and eagerly awaited the ruling King Vikram arrived and as the proceedings commenced, Dhanseth spoke “A peek into the pages of history will show ample proof of the





fact that the ownership of Girnar lies in the hands of the Shwetambar. However, today even without flipping the pages of history, we can prove this very easily and end this controversy. In our customary homage to the lord, we Shwetambar remember Girnar everyday through recitation of the holy hymn of 'Siddhanam Buddhanam'. Even our kids recite this hymn and thus praise Girnar belongs to Shwetambar.

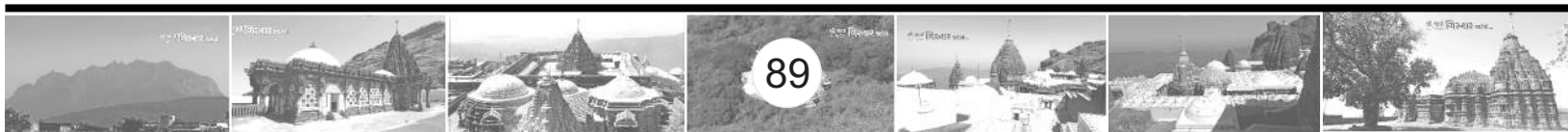
King Vikram was convinced and satisfied with this statement of Dhanseth. However, to offer consolation and to ensure that the other party is not ignored, the King asked Varunseth if he wanted to say anything.

Hearing the facts, Varunseth was left dumbfounded. Standing in the royal court, by no means could he force his incorrect views and thus he had no choice but to accept the decision of the King. In spite of this he presented the Digambar view, but he himself had no confidence in those arguments anymore. King Vikram too, found those arguments absurd and baseless and invited Varunseth to honor Dhanseth's words.

By now Varunseth face has lost its colour but a doubt arose in his mind "What if Dhanseth had his entire group memorize the hymn of 'Siddhanam Buddhanam' last night"? With this doubt in his mind, he agreed to accept that Girnar belonged to the Shwetambar on the condition that the King would ask someone from outside Dhanseth's group to recite the hymn 'Siddhanam Buddhanam'.

The royal servants went to the nearby villages and presented a young girl in the royal court. She was then asked to recite 'Siddhanam Buddhanam'. Without a moment's delay, the girl recited a verse from the hymn which meant, "I bow down to Lord Neminath whose renunciation, enlightenment and salvation took place on the auspicious on the land of Girnar". As soon as she completed reciting this, flowers were showered on her and the mountains of Girnar reverberated with the victorious cries of Shwetambar.

Dhanseth rejoiced and remembered Goddess Ambika.  
Thus King Vikram declared his judgment;  
"The only rightful owners of Girnar are Shwetambar!"







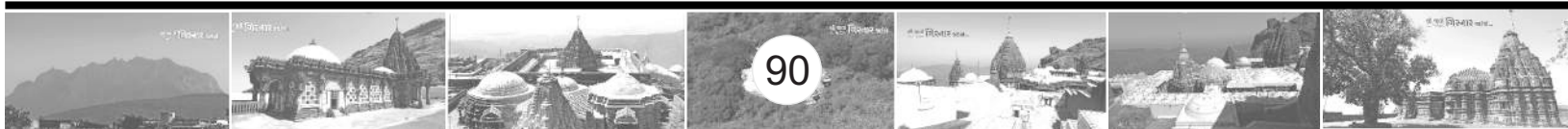
## Allegiance To This Wonderful Shrine

A series of historical events have unfolded on the gracious land of Girnar, making it witness numerous storms of arguments and controversies. With the passage of time, there have been pages after pages in history, documenting instances of dissention on the ownership of Girnar. Many groups have tried to stake their claim to the ownership of the great shrine of Girnar. This is one such instance describing the martyrs of that time who readily sacrificed their lives out of extreme devotion for this shrine.

There lived a Jain named Dhar in the village of Dhamnuli. As a result of his virtuous deeds in previous lives, he had built abundant righteous merit which had bestowed him with copious amount of wealth in his current life. Despite all his prosperity he was an ardent follower of Jainism. Because of the fervent passion he had for Jainism, every drop of blood that ran through his five noble sons was also infused with love for Jainism. The characteristic qualities of a true Jain were reflected in every breath he took and by fervently following the 12 vows set forth in the code of conduct for Jain householders, he lived a strict chaste life.

Like the gently flowing water in a river, the wheels of his life also kept blissfully chugging along. He once heard a Jain monk describe the incredible glory of Girnar and since then his heart kept pining to visit Girnar. He announced his decision to go on a pilgrimage to Girnar and invited all members of the Jain community to accompany him. The news of trader Dhar's announcement spread like wild fire all around and several devoted people, desirous of visiting Girnar started arriving in the village of Dhamunali.

The people of Dhanumali, old and young, men and women were jolly and jubilant. Every lane and by lane of the village was decorated with festoons. The joy brimming in the hearts of Dhar's sons knew no bounds. On an auspicious day and time, the ardent and loyal devotee of Jain religion, trader Dhar commenced the pilgrimage to the great shrine of Girnar along with his group. En route, they carried out several charitable and religious activities that enhanced the glory of Jain religion and thus happily reached the foothills of Girnar. But their hearts sank as soon as they reached there.

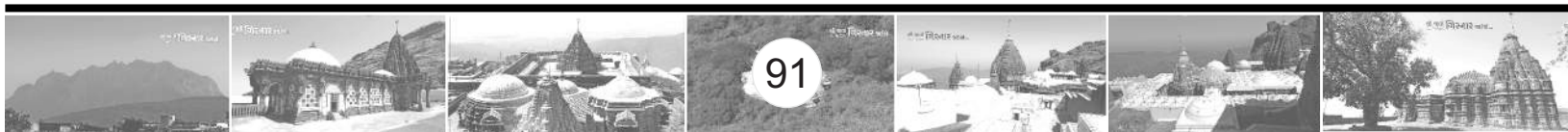




Another group had already put up their tents there and was camping at the base of the Girnar mountains. As Dhar's group who were Shwetambaras, attempted to ascend the mountains, they were prevented by the other group who were staunch followers of the Digambar sect and thus bitter opponents of the Shwetambar sect. With the evil intention to claim ownership and possession of the Girnar shrine, this group was well prepared even with artillery in the event of a battle. Trader Dhar's group was firm in their desire to ascend the Girnar mountains, but no sooner did they try to take the first step forward, than they heard a shout from the other group, "Beware! We have the sole and complete right to this mountain shrine. You have no right to carry on a pilgrimage here!" The Shwetambar group was taken aback, hearing these words from the Digambaras. Realizing that silence would further strengthen the opposition, they responded back in similar words. Fireworks in the form of words ensued. Unfortunately since no side could come to a conclusion, the leaders of trader Dhar's group decided to seek justice in the court of the King. But the malicious Digambaras had already won over the King's favours and he was therefore supportive of the Digambaras. When the Shwetambaras appealed to the King to provide justice, they realised that the King was partial towards the Digambaras.

Oh! This was like fire in water! But what options are open for the beneficiary when the benefactor himself turns selfish? This aggravated trader Dhar and his supporters. It was necessary to resolve this issue and under no circumstances could they afford to give up. What a shame that despite being the rightful owners of the shrine, they were prohibited from carrying on the pilgrimage. This aroused the flames of religious allegiance in the hearts of the youth. Now they made a firm decision to reclaim the ownership of the shrine even if it meant giving up their lives for the cause. Their hearts surged with devotion for the shrine. As the battle call was announced, the youth prepared themselves for martyrdom. The holy land of the shrine had turned into a battle field. Both the groups were at war for the ownership rights to Girnar. Chapters on unparalleled devotion to the glorious shrine were being inked down in history with the red blood of dead bodies falling one after the other on this pious land.

Trader Dhar and his supporter were no match to the huge army of the opposition, but their love for his shrine is what kept them fighting. Death posed no fear to them today, in fact their dream to court death fighting for the cause of Jain religion was coming true. The once pristine land of Girnar splashed in the red colour of blood. Their infinite allegiance and devotion to Jain religion inspired the 5 sons of Dhar





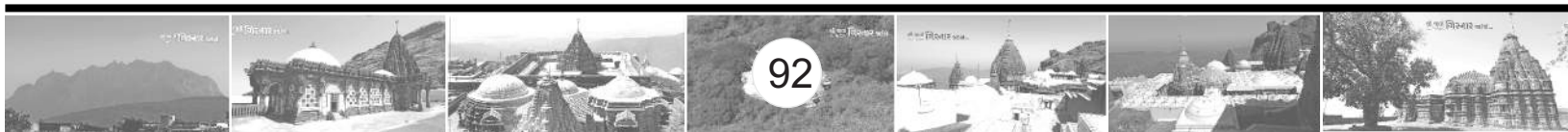
to fight the battle with unparalleled vigour and passion. One after the other all five sons of Dhar laid down their lives as the enemy forces severed their heads. As a result of their ceaseless devotion to the shrine until their last breaths, in their next incarnation, they were born as the presiding deities of that place and were called 1) Kalmegh 2) Meghnad 3) Bhairav 4) Ekpad and 5) Trailokyapad. Their sacrifices have been written in the pages of Jain history in the letters of gold.

Losing 5 sons to the cause of protecting the shrine, did not mean they were defeated. The five sons triumphed by conquering one each of the 5 peaks of Girnar and were accorded the crown of being the presiding deities of the shrine. As he watched the holy land that had turned into a battlefield and the five bloodied dead bodies of his brave sons, trader Dhar took pride in the valour exhibited by his sons. His deepest desire was still unfulfilled and in his retreat, lay his resolute and firm decision to come back and accomplish his dream of permanently conquering the shrine. Despite having sacrificed five sons at the altar of Jainism, Dhar was still not at peace. Every passing day sharpened his pangs to ensure Shwetambar ownership over Girnar. After the death of his five gem like sons, trader Dhar eventually reached the city of Kanyakubj. Being a stranger to this city, he wandered along the lanes and happened to reach a Jain **upashray**. Upon investigating he found that a Jain Acharya was giving religious discourse. Sailing across the assembly audience, Dhar managed to sit nearby the Acharya named Acharya Bappabhattachasuri Maharaj Saheb.

After listening to the pleasing words of the Acharya for sometime, Dhar stood up in the middle of the assembly and addressed the Acharya Maharaj saheb and said, “Today the ownership of the great shrine of Girnar is in jeopardy. The Digambars have staked their claim on the ownership of Girnar and are calling the Shwetambars frauds! They prohibit us from ascending the holy shrine. At such time, there is really no point in you engaging in such religious discourses. It will be meaningful to listen to your illuminating religious talks only once we have reclaimed our ownership of Girnar. Today it is time to set aside the scriptures and get set with weapons.”

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\* Place where Jain monks and nuns stay.

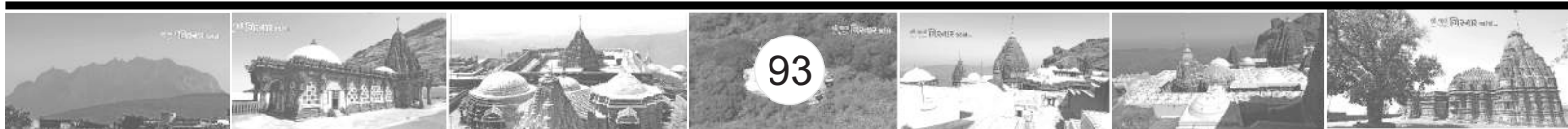




Seated in the assembly was King Aam who until then was listening to the discourse peacefully. He was stunned by hearing the furious words of the old trader Dhar. Unable to bear such humiliation of Acharya saheb, King Aam was about to retaliate, but the astute Acharya saheb sensed the gravity of the situation and gestured the King to remain silent.

Trader Dhar recounted the incident at Girnar and through his sharp words instigated the entire assembly and Acharya saheb to help him destroy the obstacles facing the pilgrimage of Girnar. He wanted everyone's hearts to be lit with the same spark of devotional fire that engulfed him. In trader Dhar's talks despite losing his 5 sons, there was no desire for sympathy or display of pain, but rather an ever increasing urge to protect the shrine. His heart felt narration made a deep impact in everyone's heart. For an Acharya, every fibre of whose existence bore allegiance to Jainism and for a King who was deeply influenced by this Acharya saheb it was an aye opener. The dire situation in Girnar touched their heart and Acharya saheb along with King Aam and members of the Jain community commenced their journey to Girnar. A man of mettle and conviction, King Aam took an unimaginable oath that, " I will not consume any food or water until I am able to see and worship the Lord of Girnar, Neminath". This was an incredible vow as the distance between Kanyakubj and Girnar was vast. Enroute, they carried out several activities that enhanced the glory of Jain religion, such as donations to the less fortunate in every village, compassion and non violence towards all animals, food for other Jains living in various villages etc. Days passed one after the other. Being born in a royal family, the king never had to experience the pain of hunger or thirst and today nature was testing his limits. When they reached the Stambhan shrine, the king thought mentally still strong, lost physical strength. He was inches away from death. Everyone including Acharya saheb was worried, but king Aam was unflinching in his oath.

He was determined to give up his life but not his oath. All devotees at the Stambhan shrine, the group members travelling to Girnar and Acharya saheb were distressed and in a dilemma. Finally, the dynamic Acharya saheb prayed with unprecedented devotion to invoke Goddess Ambika, the celestial being who is the presiding deity of the Girnar shrine and Lord Neminath. Goddess Ambika appeared in front of him. After listening to the incredible vow the King had taken, Goddess Ambika disappeared and within a moment, the sky was filled with a divine voice. "Oh blessed soul, I am the presiding goddess of the great shrine of Girnar, Ambikadevi. I am pleased with your moral integrity and courage. Seeing your







deep desire to protect the shrine and your extremely weak physical condition, I have brought with me the idol of Lord Neminath from Girnar. Your vow will be complete upon seeing and worshipping this idol.

Within a few moments, the resplendent idol of Lord Neminath was seen in the sky, making its way to land on earth. Just like a lotus blooms on seeing the sunrise, King Aam's body was renewed with zest and vigour on seeing the Lord's idol. People sprang from every corner of the Stambhan shrine and got engrossed in their devotion to the Lord. King Aam worshipped the idol with deep emotion and devotion in his heart but he was still hesitant as to whether his oath was fulfilled. Sensing his hesitation, the presiding goddess again spoke in her divine voice, "Oh son! Seeing and worshipping this idol is the same as worshipping Lord Neminath at Girnar. So remove all your doubts regarding the fulfilment of your oath!"

Trusting the divine words of the presiding goddess, King Aam broke his fast, albeit half heartedly and with renewed zeal and fervour, they continued their march towards Girnar. Acharya saheb and King Aam kept daily tabs on the grave situation in Girnar and were informed that the opposition was stronger than ever. King Aam and his supporters now reached the base of the Girnar mountain. As if to accord them a warm welcome, the opposition group comprising of 11 Kings and their vast artillery, armies, Acharyas and householders had already arrived at the foot of hills of Girnar and were camping there. No sooner did King Aam's group begin their ascent to the mountain, than they heard a booming voice from the opposition saying "Beware! We have the sole right to this mountain shrine. Dare not move a step forward or we will sever your heads!" Today even King Aam was fully prepared to take them on in the battle field, but a single gesture from Acharya saheb, and the obedient King remained silent.

Acharya Bappabhattsuri said "The root of every religion is compassion. What is the value of that religion for whose attainment one has to indulge in dreadful violence? Slaying of thousands of men for the purpose of any religious activity is absolutely inappropriate. The decision regarding who wins or loses will be determined by debating our scriptural knowledge. The Acharyas of the opposition having unwavering faith in Jain lords also agreed to this suggestion from Acharya saheb. On one side were King Aam and Acharya Bappabhattsuri with a few of his disciples and on the other side were 11 Kings and several Acharyas, scholars and householders. Instead of a war of weapons, today was a war of words in the court of Lord. Both groups began the discussions and presented their views and opinions.



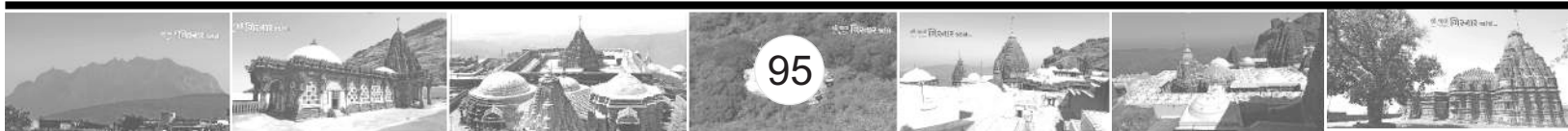


Acharya saheb was the beneficiary of many intrinsic powers and in his support was goddess Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and therefore in due course he was able to discredit the arguments of the opposition. Their faces turned pale and they were astounded by the impressive speech of Acharya saheb. After several days of religious discussion and debate Acharya saheb said, "I have one more suggestion," Let us invoke goddess Ambika and then publicly request her to announce her decision. Whatever her decision is, it should be accepted by all."

The disheartened opposition on hearing the words of the Acharya saheb got a new lease of life, renewing their hope for victory. Both the teams decided that they would send a girl from their side to the other teams side and whatever the girls would then say be accepted by one and all. Acharya Bappabhattasuri sent an impressive young girl to the other team's abode. The opposition team cast under a spell for 36 hours and thereafter asked her to speak. But at that time, the girl stood stupefied as if she was deaf and dumb. Then the Digambar group sent a girl to Acharya saheb and challenged him saying," If you have the ability, then make our girl speak". Acharya saheb looked at the girl with affectionate eyes and placed his hand on her head to bless her. No sooner did he do that, goddess Ambika spoke clearly through the girl's voice:

Even a single salutation made to the Jain Lord Vardhaman can help men and women cross over the endless ocean like cycle of life and death. I bow down to the supreme religious ruler Arishthanemi whose renunciation, enlightenment and salvation took place on the peak of Ujjayant mountain.

Hearing these rhymes, a wave of happiness spread across the faces of astute Acharya and his supporters. The opposition was incapable of understanding the deep mystery and the meaning of these hymns and therefore to help the confused group, Acharya Saheb spoke with intense composure, "Oh King, we in our sect believe that salvation of men, women and even the impotent eunuchs is possible where as your sect does not accept the possibility of the salvation of women. Through this young girl, goddess Ambika has clearly stated in the first hymn that, "Even a single salutation made to Lord Vardhaman enables men-women to achieve salvation." This hymn completely supports our belief and therefore this can be considered as goddess Ambika's seal of approval on the issue of ownership of Girnar, thus resolving it. The mediating intermediaries satisfactorily accepted the words of the Acharya saheb and announced the victory of Shwetambars. With this announcement, the mountains of Girnar reverberated with the triumph acclamation of Lord Neminath.





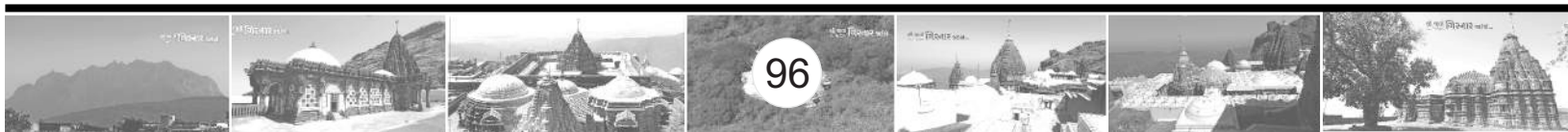
## WHEN THE SOUL LEAVES THE BODY

It was an auspicious dawn that winter. The Jain monk, respected Acharya Shantisuri Maharajsaheb on his way to Tharpadpur, reached a village. Due to repeated entreaties from the Jains residing in the village, a sermon was arranged. During the sermon, a celestial being, Nagini started dancing. Acharya saheb sprinkled some scented sandal dust hallowed by divine incantations (vasakshep) on her, to make her sit at an appropriate place. She settled down thereafter. This way whenever this celestial goddess started dancing Acharya saheb used to sprinkle the sanctified sandal dust on her to make her regain her position. Once though, for whatever reason, Acharya saheb forgot to sprinkle the sanctified powder on her when she was dancing and therefore she couldn't settle down. But who can stop the perpetual movement of the time cycle? The day lapsed by and finally at night when Acharya saheb was in deep meditation, Nagini entered the temporary residence of the Acharya to reprimand him for the suffering she had to go through since morning due to his failure to sprinkle the sandal dust on her.

While Acharya saheb was attempting to attain spiritual illumination by meditating deeply and contemplating on the supreme soul, a mystical flash of bright light suddenly seemed to have entered the place he was meditating. Seeing the ravishing figure, Acharya saheb asked his disciple, "Oh sage! Has any lady entered this place?" at that time, the disciple innocently replied, "Oh teacher! I have no clue" Right then, the celestial goddess said,

"Oh compassionate one! Since I didn't receive the sanctified dust from you today, I was left hanging high in the air which caused immense pain to my tender feet. An erudite scholar like you suffered from a lapse of memory and forgot to sprinkle the sandal dust on me! How strange!! Using the power of my intellect, I can deduce from this incident that you do not have more than six months to live. Therefore, I have come here today to request you to delegate the responsibilities of future administration of your entire clan to a capable soul and engross yourself in deep exploration of the soul". Having uttered this divine words, the mystical figure vanished.

The next morning, respected Acharya saheb gathered all the noble souls of his clan along with



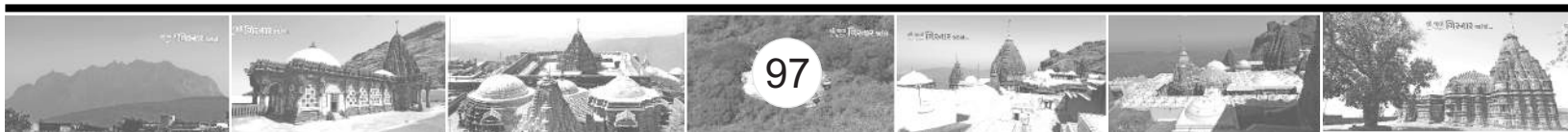


the entire Jain community and engaged in a discussion with them to ensure appropriate future management. Consequently, 32 capable candidates were identified. After considerable deliberation, 3 learned Jain monks were selected on the third position of Acharya from the five-fold hierarchy of religious authorities worthy of veneration. These three noble souls

- 1) Respected Acharya Veersuri
- 2) Respected Acharya Shalibhadrasuri
- 3) Respected Acharya Sarvadevsuri Maharajsaheb gleamed with extraordinary radiance emitted from the strength and sanctity of their virtues and vows they resembled the three gems of Jainism - right knowledge, right belief, right conduct.

Owing to the enormous righteous merit, Acharya Shantisuri Maharajsaheb had gathered through several years of incredible service to the Almighty and Jainism, he now had an earnest desire to devote the remaining period of his life to explore and experience the beauty of his soul. One after the other, precious ideas were coming to his mind. One such substantial thought was to spend the last days of his life peacefully in the lap of Girnar the pious land where innumerable Tirthankar Lords have attained salvation in the past and will attain liberation in the future and is also the place where the 22nd Tirthankar of the current cycle of 24 Trithankars, Lord Neminath renounced the world, attained omniscience and attained salvation. It is also the place where many devotees have observed deep penance and meditation and thus paved their way to salvation.

Thus Acharysaheb proceeded to Raivatgiri accompanied by Sodh - the son of a Jain householder named Yash. The villages on his way to Raivatgiri were blessed by his pious presence. Completing an arduous journey on foot, he soon reached the surroundings of Raivatgiri. He ascended the mountain and blessed his eyes with the enchanting sight of Lord Neminath. Acharysaheb commenced his penance to burn the toxic creeper like karmas that caused the cycle of birth and death by using the blazing flame of meditation derived from deep contemplation of Lord Neminath. Becoming oblivious to hunger, thirst and sleep, he surmounted the zenith in experiencing he soul and eventually after 25 days of his fast, on Tuesday, the 9th day of the first half of the month of Jeth in Vikram samvat year 1096, while the skies bore the Krutika constellation, the erudite scholar Shantisur Maharajsaheb who was an exemplary influence on Jainism, left his body for his journey towards salvation in refuge of the Lord of Girnar - Lord Neminath.







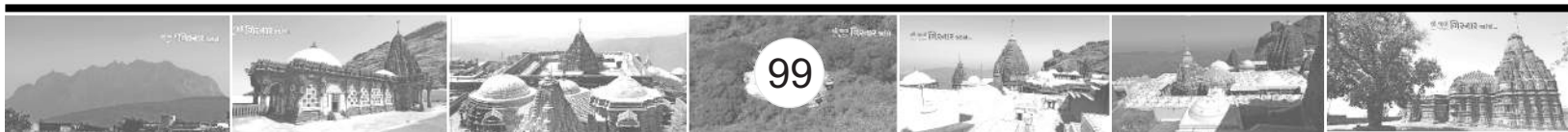
## GLORIOUS GIRNAR

After paying obeisance at the temple of Lord Adinath situated on the foothills of Girnar, as one enters through the main gate of the great mountains of Girnar, the temple of Chadav Hanuman can be seen on the left. To the right, next to the police station is a temple with the east facing footprints of Lord Neminath. Lakshmichand Pagji, who belonged to the Vishashrimali sect, built this temple. An idol of the guardian and presiding goddess of Girnar, Ambikadevi has been placed in a wall below the footprints.

**It is highly recommended that every devotee ascending this glorious mountain should without fail pay homage at this temple and pray to Goddess Ambika for an unimpeded pilgrimage.**

In the Vikram Samvat year 1212 (1156 BC) Ambad, a Jain householder, commissioned the construction of suitable steps thus making the ascent easier and more convenient. Thereafter, several references have been found documenting the restoration of these steps from time to time.

About 15 steps ahead of this temple, is the place where the palanquin bearers gather and about 85 steps further ahead is the temple of the five Pandavs i.e. five small temples, four of which are on the left and one is on the right. Currently, only the old foundations and ruins of these temples are visible. At the 200th step mark, there is the Chunodri or Tapsi water tank. Further ahead at the 500th step, one finds the Chhodiya water tank to the right, where recently a new resting place has been built. Up ahead on the left is a Rayan tree, where one finds a water tank as well. At the 800th step is the site of goddess Khodiyar. Further up near the 1150th step, is a small temple of Jatashankar Mahadev to the left from where one can access the road to go to the place of Jatashankar Mahadev. At the 1200th step, on the left, a new resting place has been constructed. Moving further upto the 1500th step, there is a place known as Dholideri (white temple) and even here a new resting place has been built. Proceeding uphill on the 1950th step, you reach the Kalideri (black temple) where you find a resting place as well. Here, relics of an old building bearing a name plaque, Dhaniparab are seen. At the 2000th step, there is a small track on the left that leads to the memorial monument of Velnath bapu. Who are courageous and adventurous enough, can go to Sahsavan via this shorter mountain route. Approximately at the 2200th step, is the cave of Bharthari, and at the 2300th step are the Maali water tank and the Ramji temple. Carved on a stone to the left of this water tank is an inscription that reads,





वि सं 1222 श्री श्रमालजातयि महं श्री राणनि सत महं श्री आंबाकेन पट्टा कारति (in the year of v.s 1222 (1166 BC) member of the Shreemal sect, son of Rami, Ambad made these steps). Nearby is a reservoir filled with sweet and cool water. A separate inscription there notes that this reservoir was built on the advice of Shri Prabhanandsuri Maharaj saheb in the Vikram Samvat year 1244.

After a somewhat steep climb and reaching the 2450th step, one can visualize the 'Kausaggiya rock' and the ancient 'Haathi (elephant) pahan'. Currently however, fearing the slippery slope of the mountain here, the administrative officials have covered the place with cement and concrete, thus completely obstructing the pahan. Further up near the 2600th step is the rock of Ranakdevi and a wall inscription near the 2650th step, which reads,

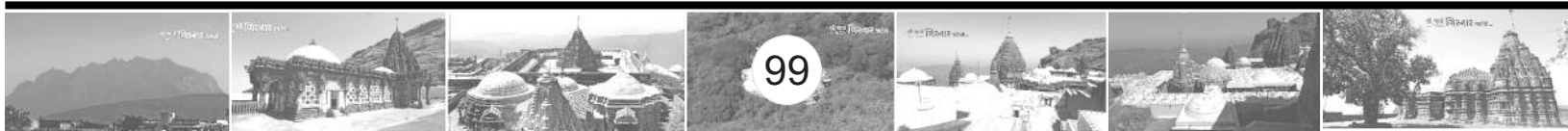
स्वस्ति श्री संवत् 1683 (1627 BC) वर्ष कार्तिके वदि 6 सोमे श्री गरि नार् नी पूर्व नी पाज् नो उद्वार्  
श्री दीव् ना संघे पुरुषा नमित्ति श्रमाल् जातीय् मां सधि जी मेघ् जी ए उद्वार् कराव्यो।

(On Monday, the 6th day of the second half of the Kartik month in the year 1683 (1627 BC) Singhji Meghji, of the Shrimaal sect and representing the Deev community, got the east boundary of Girnar renovated).

After a steep climb on the right at about the 2850th step, lies a small temple with a meshed iron grill and even today statues of Jain Lords can be seen engraved inside this temple. Further ahead is the Dholokund or the white reservoir located at step 2900. Up ahead at approximately 3100th step, Goddess Khodiyar is located in the hollow of a wall on the left. At the step number 3200 is a place called Khabutri or 'Kabutri Khan' where many hollows can be seen in a black rock. At about the 3400th step, past the water tank is a small shrine of the Suvavdi Mata where women pray for obtainment of a child. The place around the 3550th step is known as the Pancheshwar place and currently small temples Santoshimaa, Bharatmata, Khodiyarmaa, Varudimaa's, Goddess Mahakali and Kalika maa's are located here. Moving up ahead after the 3800th step, one comes to the gate of the Uparkot fort, also known as Devkot. Narshi Keshavji got a floor constructed above this gate, which currently houses the offices of the Forest Protection Division.

Yippee!! You have finally reached.

A series of splendid Jain temples which will catch your eye as soon as you cross this gate.



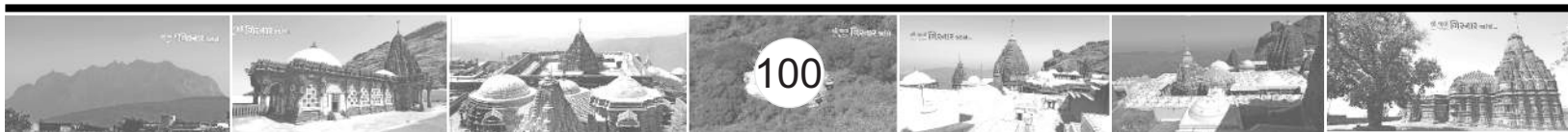


## THE ILLUSTRIOUS JAIN TEMPLES OF RAIVATGIRI

The Jain temples on the great shrine – Raivatgiri are an example of exceptional finesse and stunning craftsmanship. The dexterity, variety and beauty of the sculptures have lent an element of exclusivity to each of the Jain temples here. The splendid architecture seen here brings to mind fabulous bas reliefs seen in the temples of Abu – Delwara – Ranakpur and Jaisalmer. You just can't take eyes off the captivating and magnificent temples and various idols.

### 1) Lord Neminath summit:

Entering through the main gateway of this fort, the temple of Shri Hanuman falls to the left and the temple of Kalbhairav falls to the right. Situated at the distance of 15 -20 steps from there, is the main entrance to Lord Neminath's summit on the left. A sign on this entrance bears the words 'Shethshri Devchand Lakshmichandni pedhi Girnar Tirth'. Entering the main gate, on both sides are residential rooms for priests, security guard, manager and other administrative officials. Further ahead on the left side is a drinking water stand and at the ground level and levels above, are the pilgrims resting rooms. (In the past pilgrims used to stay overnight in these rooms, visit the place where Lord Neminath attained salvation i.e. the 5th summit on the next day. Earlier, there were also an arrangements by the administrative office to provide some sweets and savory snacks as refreshments.) On the opposite side, there are washrooms for the pilgrims as well. To the right one can see the administrative office of Sheth Devchand Laxmichand. Turning further to the right, are the bathrooms for men and women on the left, and up further ahead is a room where hot water is made available for bathing. On the right is a room where boiled water for drinking is available. Moving ahead, you cross the southern entrance of the main temple and thus land up in the breath taking pavilion of Lord Neminath temple. This pavilion is 130 feet wide x 190 feet long including 84 smaller temples situated on the periphery. Entering the main temple from this southern gate, on the right falls the small temple of Shri Ambikadevi.



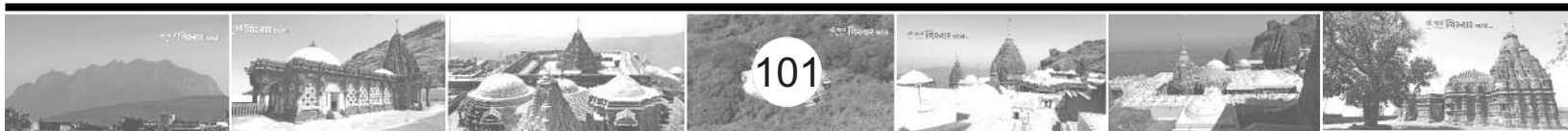


**The small temple of Shri Ambikadevi :** There is beautiful idol of Shri Ambikadevi, the presiding Goddess of this great shrine of Girnar and the attendant deity to Lord Neminath, whose impact is truly matchless. Pay your homage here, thank the Goddess for a smooth climb and enter the main temple.

- i) **The temple of Lord Neminath:** This magnificent and lofty dome shaped temple of Lord Neminath has a 41.6 feet wide and 44.6 feet long courtyard. The stunning 61 inches high idol of Lord Neminath – the jewel of Girnar is installed in the sanctum. Just by catching a glimpse of this tranquil and captivating black colored idol, tired pilgrims are not just revived from the weariness of the climb but the exhaustion of their constant birth – death cycle is also forgotten. This main idol of Lord Neminath is currently the most ancient idol in the entire world about 20 koda kodi sagaropams old. Head of the celestial beings of the fifth heaven – Brahmendra had got this idol made during the era of Lord Sagar – third Tirthankar in the previous cycle of 24 Tirthankars. 2000 years after the salvation of Lord Neminath, a Jain householder named Ratnasar came along with his congregation of pilgrims all the way from Kashmir and prayed with unprecedented devotion. This invoked Goddess Ambika, and with her assistance, he procured this divine idol and had it installed here. This idol has been worshipped for innumerable years in fifth heaven and thereafter during the existence of Lord Neminath, it was worshipped in the city of Dwarika in the home built temple of King Krishna. Lord Neminath has said that after the consecration by Ratnasar, this idol will be worshipped at Girnar for 1, 03,250 years until the end of the fifth era of this time cycle. Thereafter it will be taken by presiding Goddess of Jainism to Netherland (which is below the human land and above hell) and will be worshipped there. This way, this idol will be worshipped in all the three **planes of existence** the hell, heaven and human land. It has been approximately 84, 786 years since the installation of the idol here and many occasions of restoration work on this temple have taken place from time to time.

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\* The plane of existence where celestial beings or Dev lives is called Devlok, Swarglok or heaven, the general term for the abode of the demons is pata, a part of narak I lok or hell, while the collective space where the mortals lived is called mrutyulok or manushyalok. These are the three planes of existence or teen lokas.







In the periphery surrounding the main idol are several idols of various Tirthankar Lords, celestial God and Goddess guarding this shrine and statues of highly knowledgeable and great Jain monks are found. In the main temple, lies another sanctum 21 feet wide and 38 feet long. In the center of this sanctum are two platforms on which approximately 840 foot prints consecrated in the Vikram Samvat year of 1694, on the second day of the dark half or Krishna paksha of the month of Chaitra. In the periphery outside the temple, starting from the west, one can see marble carving of the Nandishwardveep installed in the Vikram Samvat year 1287, marble carved replica of Sammetshikharji and Shatrunjay, marble plates depicting the life of Lord Neminath and footprints of many great Acharyas who have come in Lord Mahavir hierarchy.

In a room located outside the periphery, there are footprints of Lord Adinath, nun Rajimatashriji and an idol of Acharya Nitisuri Maharaj, who was instrumental in getting the restoration of Girnar shrine done during 1920 – 1985(US). In the same room in an underground cellar, there is an ancient captivity idol of Lord Amijhara Parshwanath, 23rd Tirthankar of the current era which is 51 inches tall, white in colour and made during Samprati's reign. Such are its miraculous powers that anyone gazing at it continuously enters a trance like state and experiences a different level of spiritual happiness. One special feature of this idol are its finely carved nails.

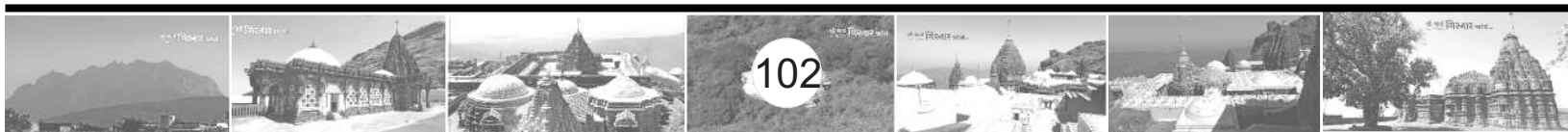
- ii) **The temple of Jagmal Gordhan : (Lord Adinath - 31 inches)** Right behind the main temple of Lord Neminath, lies the temple of Lord Adinath. The consecration of this temple was carried out by Jagmal Gordhan of the Porval sect, under the able guidance of Acharya Vijayinendrasuri in the Vikram Samvat year 1848 on Friday, the sixth day of the second half of the month of Vaishak. Jagmal Gordhan used to manage the administrative accounts of the shrine of Girnar and was even the care taker of the temples. A square near Uparkot in the city of Junagadh has been named after him as Jagmal chowk.

Heading outwards from the northern exit of the periphery of Lord Neminath summit, a flight of stairs lead you downwards towards 3 temples.

First on the left is Merakvashi summit.

2) **Merakvasi summit:**

Situated on the right, just before the main temple of the Merakvashi summit is the Panchmeru temple.





**I. Panchmeru temple : (Lord Rushabhdev – 9 inches)**

The construction of the Panchmeru temple is extremely elegant. There are five **Merus** in this temple representing the five of the highest peaks. At each of the four corners, four Merus - two of the Ghatki khand and two of Pushkaravard dveep and in the center is the Meru of Jambudveep. On each of the five Meru's, there are four idols, each facing one of the cardinal directions. Inscriptions have been found at this site which date the installation of these idols to Vikram Samvat year 1859.

**ii. The temple of Adbadji : (Lord Rushabhdev – 138 inches)**

Upon exiting the Panchmeru temple and before entering the main temple of the Merakvashi summit, on the left is a gigantic idol of Lord Rushabhdev which reminds one of the Adbadji idol located in one of the nine summits of the eternal mountain, Shatrunjay. Since it is reminiscent of the Adbadji idol of Palitana, the temple here is also called the Adbadji temple. Despite being sculpted out of black stone, currently it has been coated in white. Non Jains refer to this idol as that of Bheem's son Ghatotkach or Ghaghatuko. In front of this idol, is a yellow stone structure depicting 24 Tirthankar Lords along with an inscription dating its installation to the Vikram Samvat year 1468.

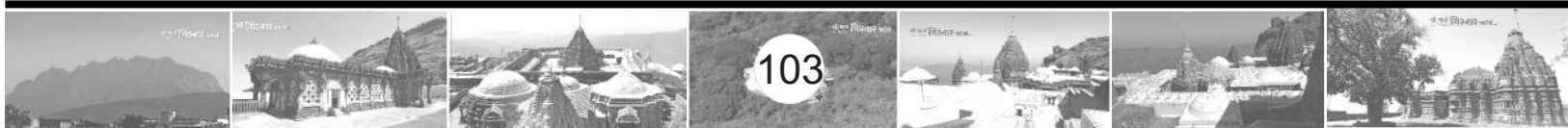
**iii. The main temple of the Merakvashi summit : (Lord Parshwanath with a 1000 snake hoods – 29 inches)**

One is left awestruck looking at the architectural splendor and the array of fine chiseling on the domed ceiling of this temple, which is built up of concentric rings, reminding one of the Vimalvashi and Lunavashi temples. The main idol of **Sahastrafana** Parshwanath and many other idols in the 52 small temples surrounding it were consecrated in the Vikram Samvat year 1859

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\* Based on Jain cosmology, Madhyaloka, where humans reside, consists of many continent-islands surrounded by oceans, the first few of which are Jambudvip – Lavan samudra; Ghatki Khand – Kalodadhi samudra, Pushkaravardvip – Pushkarvard samudra. Mount meru is at the center of Jambudvip. These are 2 additional Merus in the Ghatki khand and four more merus in the Pushkarvard dveep. However, since humans reside only in half of its meru (i.e. half of four = two) are considered totaling to five merus in all.

\* Sahastra means a thousand and fana means hood of the snake i.e. the one bearing hood of thousand snakes.





Under the presence of revered Acharya Jinendrasuri. Walking through the 52 temples starting from the left, one comes across a yellow stone on which the shrine of Ashtapad has been engraved with idols of the 24 Tirthankar Lords along with an inscription that dates it to Vikram Samvat year 1442. Further up in the center one can find the Ashtapad temple which is based on the 4-8-10-2 theme, meaning it has four, eight, ten and two idols in each of the four direction totaling to 24 idols thus recreating the theme of the original and divine Ashtapad shrine. Moving ahead you come across an idol of Lord Mahavir exactly behind the main idol. Further to the north, one is spellbound by the elaborate carvings in the ceiling of the smaller temples in the courtyard. Proceeding further, in the midst of several smaller temples, you see a large temple with a four faced idol (i.e. four idols in the four directions) of Lord Shantinath. Exiting from the main door of this temple, the left path leads to Sagram Soni summit. Behind the front wall is the new reservoir.

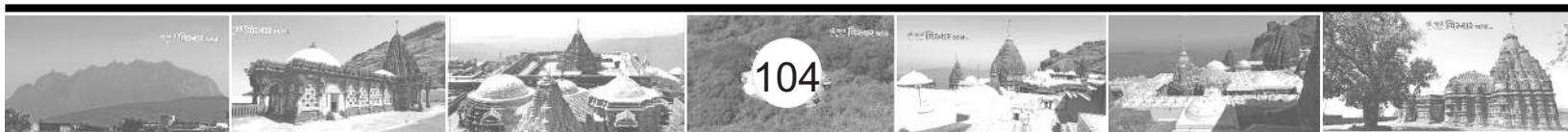
### 3) **Sagram Soni summit:** (Lord Sahastrafana Parshwanath – 29 inches)

There are 52 temples here and the main temple is designed with a beautiful two storeyed hall. This ensures there is adequate arrangement for the women, who are seated on the upper level while performing various rituals. Proceeding from this hall, as one enters the main sanctum the idol of Lord Sahastrafana Parshwanath catches your eyes. Acharya Jinendrasuri carried out the consecration of this idol in the Vikram Samvat year 1859 on Thursday, second day of the first half of the month of Jeth. The height of the dome in this sanctum ranges from 35-40 feet and appears to be far greater than the others, the steeple of this temple is the tallest among all other temples in Girnar.

The temple is named after Sagram or Sangram Soni but there has been enough documentative proof presented by experts to prove that it was actually reconstructed by Samarsinh Malde. The exit from the northern gate of the periphery of this temple, a path leads you to Kumarpal summit. To the right of this path are the Doctor and Girdhar reservoirs.

### 4) **Kumarpal summit: (Lord Abhinandan Swami – 23 inches)**

Here you first enter a huge pavilion surrounding the main temple on all four sides.





Crossing this pavilion, one enters the main temple and in the inner sanctum, an idol of Lord Abhinandan Swami is installed. This idol was consecrated in the Vikram Samvat year 1875 on a Saturday the seventh day of the first half of the month of Vaishakh by Acharya Jinendrasuri. In the northern courtyard of this temple, there is a well named Dedki vaav, where several damaged statues removed from the main temples during earlier restorations are found.

### **Bheemkund (The reservoir named Bheem):**

The large Bheem reservoir is about 70 feet long and 50 feet wide. It is believed to have been created in the fifteenth century. Even in the scorching heat of the summer, the water in this reservoir remains cool. In one of the walls of this reservoir, stone carvings of a Jain idol along with a male and female devotee with folded hands is seen.

Walking along the western banks of the reservoir, one comes across a series of north facing steps that leads you downwards to the small temple of Nagimata wherein a mass of stone is worshipped. An idol of Lord Neminath is seen in the hollow of the left wall and an idol of the presiding Goddess Ambika devi in the hollow of the right wall of this reservoir.

The unfinished dome on the roof of this courtyard indicates that some construction work was left incomplete due to some reasons. Further, is a crude path that leads you towards the temple of Lord Chandraprabha Swami.

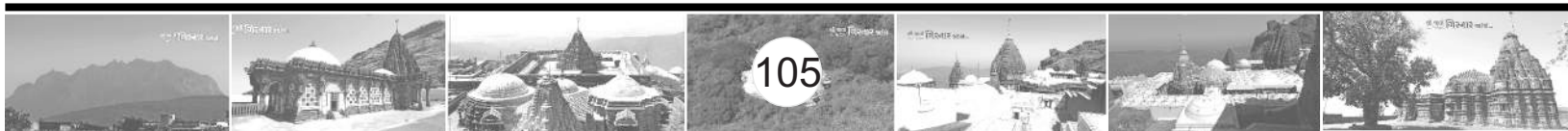
### **5) The temple of Lord Chandraprabha Swami: (Lord Chandraprabha Swami – 17 inches)**

This temple of Lord Chandraprabha Swami is situated in a very secluded spot which was consecrated in the Vikram Samvat year 1701. The ceiling of this temple is amazingly adorned with many artistic engraving and Colorful statues are placed on all four sides of this ceiling.

As you descend 30 – 35 steps from this temple you reach the Gajpad Pond.

### **Gajpadkund (elephant feet pond):**

**Meaning** - The one who touches the astounding shrine of Shatrunjay, bows down to the pious mountains of Girnar (Raivatgiri) and takes a bath in the gajpad pond becomes free from the birth and death cycle.







Gajpad pond is also known as Gajendrapad or Hathi pagla pond (Gaj- Hathi means elephant and pad pagla means foot prints). References obtained from various Jain scriptures and documents as well as the Prabhaskhand of Skandpuran shows that this pond was created approximately between 13 – 15th centuries.

स्नात्वा गजपदे कुण्डे पुनजन्म न वधियते ॥  
स्पर्ष्टवा शत्रुंजय तीर्थ, नत्वा रैवतकाचलं ।

In one of the pillars of this reservoir, engravings of a Jain idol are visible. According to the Jain scriptures Shatruiy Mahathya, during the event of consecration of Lord Neminath's main idol,

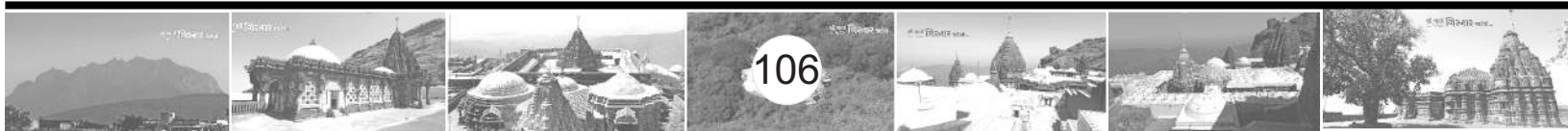
Empore Bharat Chakravati along with the chief disciples of Tirthankar had gathered. Even Indra, the King of all celestial beings, had came riding on his Airavan Elephant to witness the grand ceremony. To perform the ritual of show city, the idea with water constantly without any hindrances regarding the amount of water. Indra pressed one of the leg of his Airavan elephant firmly into the soil, thus creating a huge depression in which water from all the special rivers of the entire universe got accumulated. The Indra then used this divine water for the bathing ceremony of Lord Neminath's idol.

By consuming or bathing with this potent water several diseases, like cough, asthma, tuberculosis, leprosy are cured. The water of this reservoir is extremely sweet and pure. According to some stone inscriptions found dating back to Vikram Samvat year 1215, a wall was constructed surrounding this reservoir and several idols including that of Goddess Ambika were installed therein.

Returning from Gajpadkund, one can directly come to the road near the main entrance of Uparkot (Dev kot) by entering from the window of the Kumarpal summit and coming out from Lord Neminath's summit. Right across this main entrance, is a tourist rest house called Manoharbhuvan. Crossing this rest house, one can head towards the mansang Bhojraj temple via Suraj pond.

## 6) The temple of Mansang Bhojraj: (Lord Sambhavnath – 25 inches)

This temple was erected by Sha Mansang Bhojraj who belonged to the Visha Oswal caste of the Kutch-Mandvi region. A beautiful idol of Lord Sambhavnath has been installed here.





Suraj pond which is on the way of this temple has also been constructed by Sha Mansang Bhojraj. Exiting the temple of Lord Sambhavnath and proceeding northwards on the main road, the Vastupal – Tejpal summit is witnessed.

## 7) The temple of Vastupal – Tejpal: (Lord Shamla Parshwanath – 43 inches)

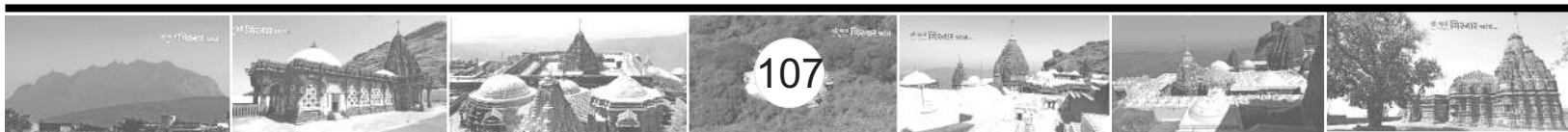
In this temple, there are three interconnected temples. These temples had been constructed by the efficient ministers of Gurjar state, Vastupal and Tejpal during the Vikram Samvat years 1232-1242. Currently the main idol is of Lord Shamla (black) Parshwanath. The consecration of this idol was carried out by the Jain monk Jayanandsuri Maharaj Saheb, a disciple of Acharya Devsuri who belonged to the disciple lineage of Acharya Pradyumnasuri. It was carried out on Saturday the third day of the first half of the month of Vaishakh in the Vikram Samvat year 1306. The hall of this temple is 29.5 feet wide and 53 feet long. The halls of the remaining two temples 38.5 x 38.5 feet in dimension.

There are about 6-7 stone inscriptions in this temple, which dates back to Vikram Samvat year 1288. Four of these inscriptions bear references to Vastupal and his wife Lalitadevi, who built the temples of Lord Ajitnath and others. There is a note crediting Vastupal and his second wife Sokhuladevi for building two other temples. Several other inscriptions bear testimony to the fact that they have installed several other idols and footprints of various Tirthankar (Lords) in different other shrines.

In the temple on the left of the main temple, a four faced idol (i.e. four idols in four directions) is placed in replica of the Samavasran. Three of these idols are of Lord Parshwanath, with inscriptions dating the installation to the Vikram samvat year 1556 and the fourth one is that of Lord Chandraprabha Swami, with inscriptions dating the installation to the Vikram Samvat year 1485.

In the temple to the right, all 4 idols are seen atop a round Meru. Of these, the idol of Lord Suparshwanath faces the west and there are two idols of Lord Neminath - one facing the north and the other to the east. All three idols were installed in the Vikram Samvat year 1546. The fourth idol faces south and is that of Lord Chandraprabha Swami.

The splendid carvings, artistically arched and colonnaded corridors, beautiful Jain idols, portray





various historical events. The carved pictures are absolutely enticing. The spacious arrangement with four idols in four directions is quite pleasing to the eyes.

This temple built by King Samprati has an idol of Lord Neminath as its main idol. The inscription on the base of this idol dates its consecration to Vikram Samvat year 1519. In a niche outside the sanctum of the main idol, there is an idol which has been identified as that of Goddess Chakeshwari in some scriptures and as Goddess Ambika in some others. Consequently, the hallow encasing the idol has been named varyingly at different times. Considering the information available, the idol can be clearly seen as that of Goddess Saraswati as the Goddess is shown mounted on a swan and has a lute in one hand and a book in the other hand. Besides these idols, there are 24 other wonderful idols, including one that is 53 inches tall in a standing meditative position. There is also another large hall built outside this hall.

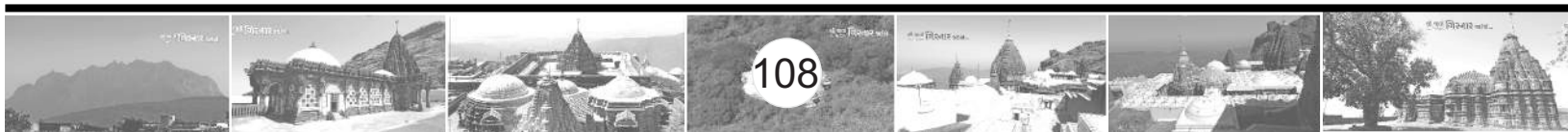
The entrance to this temple appears to be two storeyed. Although it has a west facing door,

#### **8) The temple of Gumasta: (Lord Sambhavnath – 19 inches)**

In the porch behind the temple of Vastupal – Tejpal, is the temple by the name of Gumasta which has Lord Sambhavnath as its main idol. Since it has been built in the name of Vastupal's mother Kumardevi, by Gulabshah from the region of Kutch-Mandvi, the temple is known as that of Vastupal's mother as well as Gulabshah's temple. (It appears that with the passage of time, the word Gulabshah got mispronounced and eventually got referred to as Gumasta.)

#### **9) King Samprati's summit: (Lord Neminath – 57 inches)**

Heading north from the temple of Vastupal – Tejpal, one comes to King Samprati's summit. King Samprati, the ruler of Magadh, belonged to the Chandragupta Maurya clan and was the grandson of emperor Ashok. He had accepted the Jain religion and lived his life according to the preachings and guidance of Aacharya Suhastisuri Maharaj Saheb. He used to rule the city of Ujjain, approximately in the Samvat year 226. His name went down in history as the benevolent constructor of 125,000 Jain temples and installer of 12,500,000 Jain idols.





currently only the south facing door of this temple is kept open. The walls outside this temple are exquisite carved. The connoisseurs of sculpting architecture are dazzled with the fragile delicacy of the chiseling here. The various forms of carvings here, serve as a tool for elementary sculptors in their pursuit to excel in the art of sculpting.

### 10) **The temple of Gyanvav: (Lord Sambhavnath – 15 inches)**

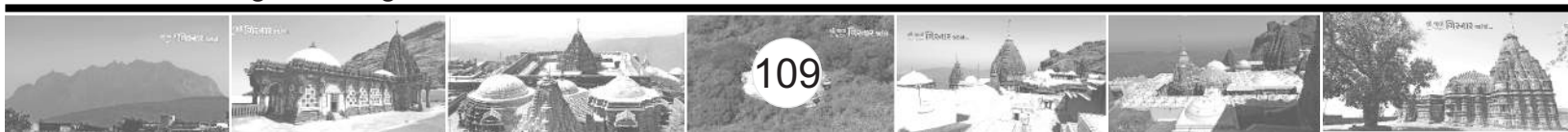
Descending down the northern slope near the temple of King Samprati, the gate to the right leads one to Gyanvav. Entering the open field from the northern gate, one comes across the temple of the four faced idol in which the idol of Lord Sambhavnath is considered as the main one.

One can reach the Bheem pond and the temple of Kord Chandraprabha Swami, walking downwards from this temple. It appears that there might have been plans to construct 24 temples of 24 Tirthankar (Lords) in the northern direction behind the Bheem pond, but that plan was aborted for whatever reason, yet unknown.

After paying respects at the temple of Gyanvav, one can reach the gate of the fort by walking up southwards from this temple, passing by the temple of King Samprati and then climbing additional 50 steps eastwards. Upon exiting the gate of the fort, one can see “Level 3100 feet’ and ‘2 miles’ engraved in Gujrati language on stones there. Located another 50 steps further, is the temple of merchant Dharamchand Hemchand on the left.

### 11) **The temple of merchant Dharamchand Hemchand: (Lord Shantinath – 29 inches)**

Exiting from the main gate, the first temple on the way is the temple of merchant Dharamchand Hemchand also known as the temple of Khada. The main idol is that of Lord Shantinath. Restoration work in this temple was carried out in the Vikram Samvat year 1932 by Dharamchand Hemchand, a merchant belonging to the Dashashrimali sect residing in the village of Mangrol.







## 12) **The temple of Malla: (Lord Shantinath – 21 inches)**

Climbing approximately 35-40 steps further ahead from the temple of Dharamchand Hemchand, one sees the temple of Malla on the right. The main idol in this temple is that of Lord Shantinath. Since the restoration work in this temple was carried out by Joravar Mallaji, it is known as the temple of Malla.

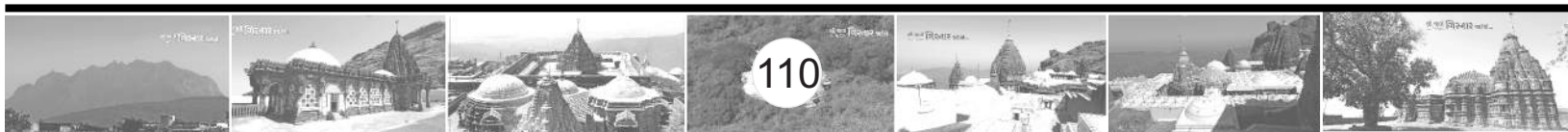
### **The cave of Rajmati:**

Moving a few steps further south from the Malla temple, a huge rock with a hollow underneath can be seen. One has to bend in order to enter the hollow. Inside the hollow is an idol of Rajul-Rahnemi, approximately 1.5-2 feet in height, because of which this place is known as the cave of Rajul.

### **The cave of Premchand (The cave of Gorji):**

Exiting the cave of Rajul, as you walk southwards, the narrow road to the left leads you to the Satpuda reservoir and the unpaved bushy road to the right takes you to a huge rock on the edge of the mountain. The famous cave of Premchand lies underneath this rock.

Since this cave is located close to the valley, one has to tread carefully to enter the cave. Many great souls have meditated in this cave. A noble saint, Shri Premchand Maharaj, was one of them. He was an expert in the science of Yoga and observed meditation here for a long time. He had come here in search of his peer Kapurchandji. It is believed that Kapurchandiji was able to take many forms (i.e. change the human body) and was even able to fly/ walk in the sky. This cave belongs to the Devchand Lakshmichand Trust and they have been carrying out restoration of this cave. (Right behind the office of Devchand Lakshmichand trust, located in the foothills of the Girnar mountains, near the Adinath temple there is a small temple with the foot prints of Premchand Maharaj. There is an inscription there dated Vikram Samvat year 1921 and besides it, there is another set of footprints belonging to Dayalchandji Maharaj which also has an





inscription bearing to Vikram Samvat year 1922). If you by pass the cave and head eastwards, the narrow road takes one to Bilkha, via Patvad.

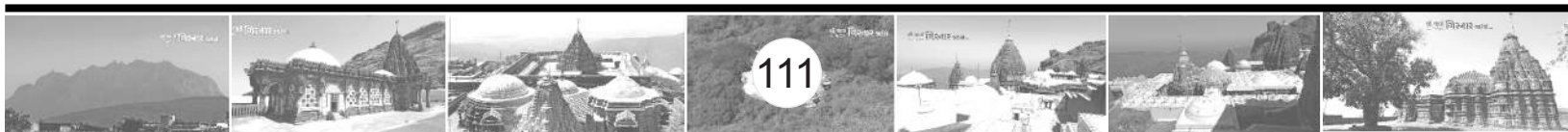
Coming out of the Premchand cave, the main steps of the mountain can be accessed. At an ascent of about 90 steps, is the Chaumukhji temple (the temple of the four faced idol). Along the way, to the right is a temple belonging to the Digambar sect.

### 13) **Chaumukhji temple (The temple of the four faced idol): (Lord Neminath – 25 inches)**

In the Chaumukhji temple, there are four idols, each facing one of the four directions. Currently, facing North is the idol of Lord Naminath, facing East is Lord Suparshwanath, facing South is the idol of Lord Chandraprabha Swami and West facing is the idol of Lord Munisuvrat Swami. There are inscriptions at the base platform indicating that these were consecrated in the Vikram Samvat year 1511 by Acharya Jinharshsuriji. This temple also goes by the name of Shamla Parshwanath. The reason behind this can be assumed that sometime in the past the main idol could have been that of Lord Shamla (black) Parshwanath, but this is just an assumption. The actual reason is yet a mystery. Inside the temple, one can see four pillars standing on four corners of the inner platform, each having idols of 24 Tirthankars on it, totalling to 96 idols in all. These four pillars resemble the 'Chauri' used in marriage ceremonies. Hence, this temple is also called the 'Chauriwala' temple.

During the Vikram Samvat year of 2058, it appears that while coating these idols with holy plaster, mistakenly, the symbol of Lord Neminath was engraved in the main idol and the symbol of Lord Chandraprabha Swami were engraved on the remaining 3.

At an ascent of about 70-80 steps from the Chaumukhji temple, on the left is the road that leads to Sahasavan, the place where Lord Neminath renounced the world and attained omniscience and on the right, climbing about 15-20 steps is the Gaumukhi Ganga.





## Gaumukhi (Cow faced) Ganga:

Entering Gaumukhi Ganga, several small temples with idols of Hindu Gods and Goddesses are seen. On the right of these small temples, is a pathway leading downwards to the basement. There you can see the footprints of 24 Tirthankars installed in a hollow on the left. In front of each of the pair of footprints, the name of the Tirthankar has been engraved. The administration of the Gaumukhi Ganga is currently managed by the saints of the Hindu sect whereas the administration and worship of the footprints of Tirthankar Lords is handled by the Office of Devchand Lakshmidand Trust.

### 14) The temple of Rahnemi: (The liberated soul Rahnemi – 51 inches)

At an ascent of about 350 steps from the Gaumukhi Ganga, is the temple of Rahnemi on the right with a black coloured idol of Rahnemi. This idol was coated with holy plaster during the Vikram Samvat year of 2058. Across India, this is probably the only temple where an idol of a liberated soul and not a Tirthankar has been installed as the main idol.

Rahnemi, the younger brother of Lord Neminath, renounced the world and embraced monkhood on this very land of Girnar. He then carried out penance with great restraint, destroyed the eight karmas and attained enlightenment and salvation in Sahasavan.

After the Rahnemi temple, further ahead lies the Ambaji temple. This temple of Goddess Amba can be reached via the strenuous climb of Sachakaka which is 535 steps.

## The summit of Ambaji (Goddess Amba):

The famous summit of Amba houses the temple of Ambika. The temple of Damodar near Damodar reservoir, the temple of Lord Neminath atop Girnar and this temple of Amba, are all said to have been constructed by King Samprati. After a study of the foundation stones and deciphering from the type of architecture, it appears that these have been constructed in the 12th – 13th century.





There are some scriptures that give credit to Vastupal-Tejpal for the construction of this temple where the idol of Lord Neminath's guardian presiding Goddess Ambika is installed.

In one of the passages of **Kalpasutra** , written in golden ink towards the end of the scripture, is the following:

श्री अम्बिका महादेव्या, उज्जयन्ताचलोपरि।  
प्रासादः कारतिः प्रौढ सामलेन सुभावतः ॥

It is clearly evident from this verse of Vikram Samvat year of 1524, that a wealthy trader named Samal, with utmost faith, reconstructed the large but dilapidated temple of a great Goddess named Ambika on the mountains of Girnar.

With the passage of time, to our utter shame and disappointment, Hindus now worship the idol using Vedic rituals and the administration of this temple is also in the hands of the Hindu saints.

The footprints of Lord Neminath have been installed behind this temple. Some say they are Shamb's footprints. References have also been found crediting Vastupal for installing idols of Lord Neminath and others on this summit during that period.

According to the royal edicts written by Vastupal and according to Jain articles of that era, the real names of the three peaks behind Ambaji temple, viz Gorakhnath, Oghadnath and Gurudattatreya are 'Avlokan', 'Shamb' and 'Pradyumna'. References from Harivanshpuran and Skandpuran written by Jinsen also indicate the existence of Shamb and Pradyumna peaks after Ambaji.

### **The summit of Gorakhnath (Avlokan peak):**

Atop the Gorakhnath summit, the footprints of Lord Neminath with inscription dated Saturday, the third day of the first half moon of the month of Vaishakh, Vikram Samvat year 1929, installed by Babu Dhanpatsinh can be seen. According to some people, these footprints are of Pradyumna. Currently, this summit is under the control of the saints of the Nath sect.

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\* The Kalpasutra is a Jain text containing the biographies of Tirthankaras, most notably Lord Parshwanath and Mahavir







Descending about 15 steps from the summit of Gorakhnath, a Jain idol engraved in a black rock in one of the walls on the left can be seen and after descending about 400 steps, another Jain idol engraved in a large black rock on the left catches your eye. Thus, one can reach the fourth summit by descending approximately 800 steps and then walking along an unpaved road with no steps.

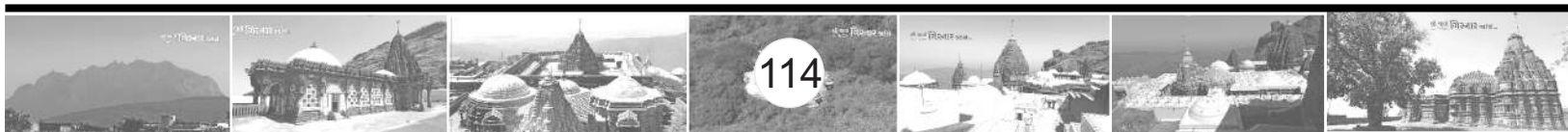
### **The summit of Oghad (Fourth summit):**

There is no paved pathway or steps to reach the Oghad summit and therefore a strenuous hike up the rocks has to be undertaken to reach this summit. It is a very treacherous path, only the most faithful and courageous souls attempt to ascent this summit. Atop this summit, an idol of Lord Neminath has been carved out in a big black boulder and footprints have been engraved in another boulder, inscribed on which are references dating its consecration to Vikram Samvat year 1244.

There is a direct path that takes one from the fourth summit to the fifth summit, however it is fraught with danger and taking this path would mean risking your life. A better way therefore is to descend the fourth summit and move further along. On the left, one comes across steps and climbing about 690 steps leads one to the peak of the fifth summit. However, ascending these steps is also quite difficult because of the steep slope.

### **The fifth summit (The summit of salvation):**

This is that sacred land from where the 22<sup>nd</sup> Tirthankar, Lord Neminath, attained salvation. According to (the book) 'Girnar Mahatmya' (Greatness of Girnar), there are inscriptions on the east facing footprints of the Lord situated atop the fifth summit, that date its consecration to Thursday, the seventh day of the second half of the Ashwin month in the Vikram Samvat year 1897 (1841 AC), mentioning that this consecration was carried out by Shah Devchand Lakshmichand. Currently, however, to our utter disappointment we have lost control and the Hindus have placed an idol of God Dattatreya in front of these footprints. On the wall behind this idol, a west facing idol of Lord Neminath has been carved which is now identified as the idol of Shankaracharya by the Hindus. Completing one circumambulatory of these footprints, on the left, a huge gong bell with an inscription of the Vikram Samvat year 1894 is eye capturing.





All Hindu pilgrims ring out the gong with great devotion and delightfully acclaim the completion of their Girnar pilgrimage. Currently, this summit is popular by the name of Dattatrey.

The Jains however believe that this place is called Dattatrey (Datta + trey meaning three) after the three chief disciples of Lord Neminath whose names all ended in Datta viz Vardatta, Dharmdatta and Nardatta. Some also say that the footprints atop this summit are actually those of the chief disciple, Vardatta. 60 years ago, entire management of this summit was handled by the administrative office of Devchand Lakshmichand trust and a Jain priest used to come daily from the first summit to the fifth summit to worship the footprints. However, unfortunately today the entire management of this summit, which is now famous by the name of Dattatrey, is handled by the Hindu high priest. Today the Jains have no choice but to be satisfied by merely visiting and just touching this auspicious place.

Descending from the fifth summit, if one takes the 350 odd steps on the left instead of getting back on the main steps to the right, it would lead to a place called Kamandal reservoir.

### **Kamandal Kund (Kamandal reservoir):**

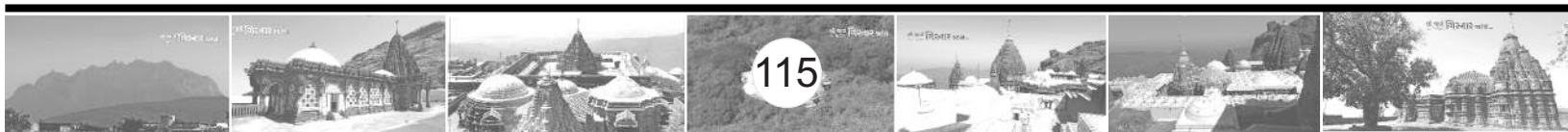
The administration of the Kamandal reservoir is handled by the Hindu high priest and there is perpetual pyre lit here. A free community kitchen is run here and scores of pilgrims take advantage of this facility.

Taking the dirty road through the forest from the South West corner of the Kamandal reservoir, leads you to Ratanbaug. The rough road makes the journey tedious, but this place is believed to be an abode of celestial beings. Unusual species of plantation and herbs grow here. In some scriptures, it has been mentioned that Lord Neminath's body was cremated on a rock called Ratan, here in Ratanbaug. Since 536 other noble souls achieved salvation along with Lord Neminath, it can be clearly deduced that even they were cremated in this area.

Ansuya's sixth summit and Mahakali's seventh Kalika summit can also be reached from Kamandal reservoir.

### **Kalika summit:**

The path from Kamandal reservoir to Kalika summit is extremely perilous and therefore it





is advisable to go along with a guide. The road has been tagged with vermilion marks at several spots to ensure that no one strays off-course. As the road is replete with thorns and stones, only extremely determined people are able to make it to the Kalika summit. Earlier, it was said that only one out of two who went to Kalika summit would return alive. Kalika summit is Goddess Kalika's spot and atop the summit, a trident can be found.

The road to Pandav caves can be accessed via Kamandal reservoir and evidence is found that these caves open up at Patanvav, a nearby village.

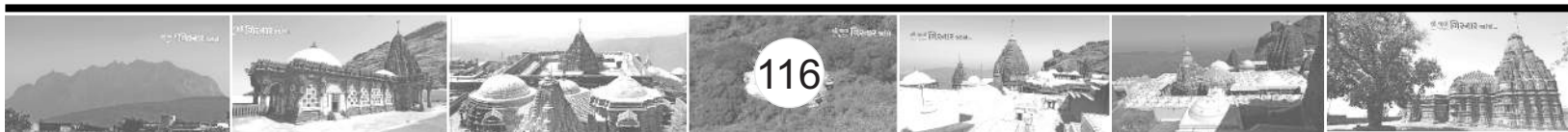
On the way back from Kamandal reservoir, by passing the Gorakhnath summit, Ambaji summit and then taking the road north from Gaumukhi Ganga, one would come across Anand caves, Mahakal caves, Bhairavjap, the spot of Sevadas and the stone of Chatti which derived its name from the fact that some time back a saint was living there by licking stones. Further ahead, descending 1200 steps, one would land at the wide Sahasavan expanse.

### **Sahasavan (Sahastra - amra - van): (The place where Lord Neminath renounced the world and attained enlightenment)**

It was at Sahasavan that Lord Neminath renounced the world, embraced monkhood and attained enlightenment. Sahasavan is also called Sahastraamra van because there are (sahastra = thousands, amra = mango trees and van = forest) abundant mango trees here because of which the place is breath takingly beautiful and cools down one's mind and body. The sweet sounds of the peacock and the cooing of the cuckoo that echo in this land is pleasing to the ears. The atmosphere here is charged by the positive vibrations of Lord Neminath's strong feeling of detachment from the material world and his consequent renunciation. Even today, the pious land reverberates with the words of Lord Neminath, as he delivered his first speech replete with 35 virtues after attaining enlightenment, here in the magnificent Samavasaran created by celestial beings.

At the actual spots where Lord Neminath renounced the world and attained enlightenment in Sahasavan, small ancient temples with his footprints are found.

In fact, in the temple at the spot of Lord's enlightenment, even the footprints of Rahnemi and nun Rajimati have been installed as they attained salvation here.





About 40-45 years ago, the great ascetic revered Acharya Himanshusuri Maharaj Saheb used to come here all the way from the first summit to pay obeisance to the renunciation and enlightenment land of Lord Neminath. However, he had to take the narrow, unpaved and treacherous dirty road in order to arrive here. Because of the difficulties encountered en route, no other pilgrims gathered courage to come to this place. Seeing this, Acharya saheb thought, “If this pious land of Lord Neminath’s renunciation and enlightenment continues to be ignored like this, the security of this great place with such historical significance will be in jeopardy”. Thus by divine inspiration, a thought was born in his mind that pilgrims are not enthused to just come to visit an ancient temple with footprints and therefore if two temples symbolising the renunciation and enlightenment of the Lord were to be built, it would be a strong incentive for the devoted souls to come and worship this place. Thereafter owing to his immense perseverance, land was procured at Sahasavan and a Samavasaran temple was built there as a symbol of Lord’s enlightenment.

### **Samavasaran temple (Lord Neminath – 35 inches):**

This Samavasaran temple has a four faced black coloured idol of Lord Neminath (four idols, one each in each of the four directions) dating back to the period of King Samprati. The consecration of this idol was carried out under the holy auspices of respected Acharya Himanshusuri Maharaj Saheb, Acharya Hemchandravijayji Maharaj Saheb and many other Jain monks and nuns on the fifth day of the second half of the month of Chaitra in the Vikram Samvat year 2040 (1984 AC).

Entering the Samavasaran temple, you actually get the feel of being present in the Lord’s Samavasaran. Climbing up the steps, the sight of the four idols of the Lord placed in the center under the Ashoka tree, makes one’s heart blithe. In the hall around the Samavasaran, 10 idols of Tirthankars belonging to the past cycle of 24 Tirthankars, a black idol of Lord Neminath, 24 alluring idols of the 24 Tirthankars of the future cycle and a yellow coloured idol of Lord Padmanabh , 1st Tirthankar of the next cycle of 24 Tirthankars has been installed. Also a wonderful idol of Lord Neminath, remarked as “Jeevit Swami” which means that this was created when Lord Neminath was living and an idol of Rahnevi catches one’s eyes. An exquisite wooden Samavasaran temple housing idols of the 6 chief disciples of Lord Neminath has been placed here.







Idols of Lord Neminath's presiding guardian Gomedhyaksh and Goddess Ambikadevi can be seen after entering the temple on the left and right respectively. In other halls, pictures and footprints of the respected elders and mentors of rev. Acharya Himanshusuriji Maharaj Saheb can be seen.

In a cave below, behind the Samavasaran, a captivating idol of Lord Neminath (11 inches) has been placed. Many great souls have carried out special meditations here for several days, while fasting for 3 days at a stretch and yet may souls come here frequently to contemplate and meditate.

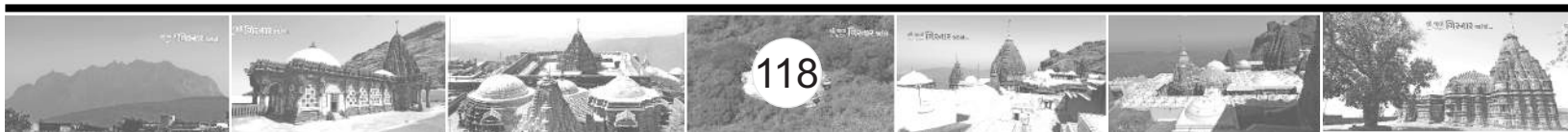
The construction of this Samavasaran temple has been carried out by the Sahasavan Kalyankabhumi Tirthoddhar Samiti – Junagadh (close meaning: the Sahasavan Shrine Restoration Foundation – Junagadh). This foundation was formed by the rev. Acharya Himanshusuri maharaj saheb's inspiration. This foundation manages the accommodation facilities for the virtuous souls who are desirous of staying back to carry out contemplation and penance. With prior permission, one can stay overnight and arrangements are also made for regular meals and even **Ayambil** . Light refreshments are also offered to all Jains who visit this place.

On the right, upon exiting and descending the steps of the Samavasaran temple, is the place where Acharya Himanshusuri maharaj saheb, who galvanised the formation of this temple, was cremated. His picture and footprints have been kept here.

Descending 60 steps from this cremation land, the road on the right leads one to the Bugada's rest house, 10 steps away. Many great souls rested here while carrying out severe penance and austerities like fasting for 68 days, 30 days, etc at a stretch. 30 steps down from here is the place where Lord Neminath attained enlightenment. An ancient temple is found here.

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\* Ayambil means a special type of meal in which no green vegetables are taken. Additionally, the food cannot contain oil, ghee, milk, sugar or other spices.





**The ancient temple of Lord Neminath's enlightenment:** In the center of this enlightenment temple, are the footprints of Lord Neminath and besides that are the footprints of his younger brother, Jain monk Rahnemi on one side, and Jain nun Rajimatishri on the other. Rajimatshri was affectionately attached to Lord Neminath since the previous 9 births but both of them renounced the world, attained enlightenment and eventually attained salvation on this holy mountain. 30 steps further down from this temple, an ancient temple of Lord Neminath's renunciation is seen on the left (i.e. the temple built at the place where he renounced the world).

### **The ancient temple of Lord Neminath's renunciation:**

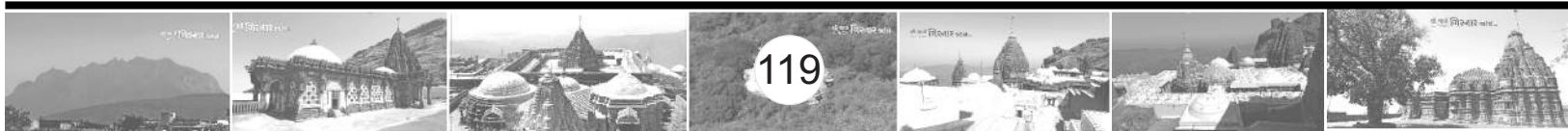
The ancient temple of Lord Neminath's renunciation is situated in a large courtyard and placed inside the temple are black coloured footprints of Lord Neminath. Noble souls wishing to seek salvation should definitely come here before their renunciation to pay their obeisance and touch this auspicious and extremely charged land.

Right opposite this place of Lord's renunciation is the Valmiki cave and on the left, as we climb down, we come across several revered Hindu spots like Bharatvan, Girnari caves, Hanumandhara, etc. Going down further, we come across a place called the Madhi of Jeenabava which is located on the road of the periphery of the mountains.

Ascending about 70 steps on the right from this temple of renunciation, leads one to the foothills of the mountain. Descending about 1,800 steps on this path, one finds arrangement for drinking water made on a platform under a Rayan tree, and even boiled water is available here. After a descent of another 1200 steps and a walk of about ½ a km, one arrives at the foothills of the Girnar mountains.

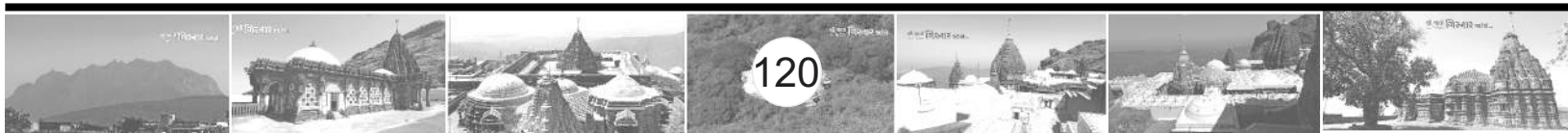
Besides being the place of renunciation and enlightenment of Lord Neminath, Sahasavan is also a witness to other significant historical events:

- Scores of celestial beings conjured the first and the last Samavasaran of Lord Neminath at Sahasavan.
- It was at Sahasavan that Jain nun Rajimati and Jain monk Rahnemi attained salvation.





- Krishna Vasudev is believed to have built three temples with idols made of Gold and precious gem stones, here at Sahasavan.
- At Sahasavan, in temples made of Gold, enticing idols of 24 Tirthankar Lords installed.
- Near Sahasavan, in a place called Laksharam, total 72 idols of Tirthankars belonging to the past, present and future cycles of 24 Tirthankars have been placed in a cave.





## Interesting Incidents & Miraculous Tales of Girnar

In the glorious Girnar mountains, there are innumerable caves and secret places due to which Girnar is believed to be hollow in many places. Many great saints and ascetics have resided here, made arduous efforts and have eventually succeeded in attaining self realization and spiritual upliftment. Evidences show that even today many such great sages, 100 – 200 years old are engrossed in severe penance and deep meditation here. Many celestial beings are believed to inhabit this sacred land.

Several miraculous incidents and shocking stories related to these saints and celestial beings are heard even today. Some of them are: -

1. Once a noble soul was meditating in the underground cellar of Lord Amizhara Parshwanath and the door of the cellar was locked by the temple priest. After sometime, he witnessed a divine flash of light descending from the sky and from within that ray of light eventually two Jain ascetics were seen emerging. They devotionally offered their prayers for sometime and swiftly returned the way they had come.
2. A Jain monk, doing the holy Girnar's 99 pilgrimages accidentally happened to enter a divine cave, where he saw a composed, well – built and dignified saint. The saint described the glory and eminence of this magnificent mountain, Girnar to the statted Jain monk.
3. A derout family from Ahemdabad had led a huge congregation of pilgrims to Girnar. Hearts filled with devotion and enthusiasm, they showered Lord Neminath with different superior liquids alongside the most exquisite ornaments. At that time, huge droplets of water trickling down from the walls of the temple. Even Lord Neminath's idol inspite of being wiped thrice, remained wet. Finally the rituals were carried out on the wet idol only.
4. Once several devotees were meditating in the rest room located in the campus of the main temple, when a continuous sound of the ring of the huge bell fell on their ears.
5. After the closure of the main temple some Jain nuns were engrossed in meditating near the small temple of Goddess Ambika adjoining the main temple. They clearly heard sweet and delightful sounds of music and dance with divine instruments for a continuous span of about 45 minutes.







6. In the Kartik month of Vikram Samvat 2031, a faithful devotee performed the ritual of showering Lord Neminath with water and also carefully dried the idol completely with a customized white cotton cloth (Angluchhna), but as he proceeded with the next ritual, 4 bowls full of divine water miraculously dripped down from the Almighty's feet.
7. Due to the magical effect of the vivid medicinal herbs available on this holy mountain, previously many great sages obtained the power to fly and could thus easily pay homage at different places.
8. Once, an ascetic residing here, was burnt alive, but the English Governor of Kolkata of that time was bewildered to see him easily stepping out of the raging flames.
9. Sages living in the secret caves of Girnar come out on the day of Mahashivratri and leave the people spellbound by demonstrating their miraculous powers.

Even today, many such saints come out of their caves only once a year, on the auspicious occasion of Mahashivratri to pay homage at the Bhavanath temple. They then dive into the Murgi Kund for a bath and are never seen coming out. (It is believed that they take the form of some invisible creature and reach their original destination.)

10. A sage discovered a strange potion in the dense forests of Girnar and filled it in his wooden vessel. On his journey, he halted at a jeweller's house for the night and proceeded the next morning. In the jeweller's house all those places which had directly come in contact with the sage's potion, miraculously transferred to gold. Realizing this, spellbound jeweler immediately left in search of the sage, but in vain.
11. Once a woodcutter, cutting trees in Ratanbaug, accidentally hit a monkey with his axe, as a result of which the axe fell into a nearby pond and to his surprise, turned to gold. The woodcutter left a marking on that place and returned the next day. But he could not find the marking and eventually lost his way.
12. In the dense and mysterious forests, a special type of plant which extracts milk can be found. If 3 – 4 drops of this milk are mixed with normal milk, then within a matter of 3 – 4 minutes the milk turns to curd.
13. Some pilgrims ascending Girnar, broke the branch of a tree and brushed their teeth. After





sometime, all their teeth fell off.

14. If the roots of a particular plant which exists here, cooked and consumed, the person does not feel hungry for as long as 6 months.
15. People worshipping Lord Neminath with utmost devotion and dedication make their human life fruitful. They achieved control over temptations of the 5 senses and experience detachment from this material world. Many noble souls, wishing to walk on the glorious path of renunciation visit this holy place, overcome obstacles they face by the faithful reverence of the life long celibate Lord Neminath.





## Directions related to the 99 pilgrimages of this holy mountain, Girnar...

The land of Girnar is purified by the mountain, enlightenment and salvation of infinite Tirthankaras as well the 22<sup>nd</sup> Tirthankar of the current era – Lord Neminath. All the 24 Tirthankara's of the next era will attain salvation on this sacred land. There are no references available in our ancient scriptures related to the performance of the 99 pilgrimages of this holy mountain, Girnar. But since this is the only land in west India which has witnessed the landmark occasions (renunciation, enlightenment and salvation) of a Tirthankar, this 99 pilgrimages are organized with the intention that devotees purify their soul with the sight, touch and worship of this great shrine. Considering the present scenario, the pilgrimage can be carried out as follows:-

- **5 Chaityavandan in Girnar (to be performed whenever you do the pilgrimage)**
  - i. In the temple of Lord Adinath at Taleti.
  - ii. At Jay Taleti, in front of the footprints of Lord Neminath.
  - iii. Lord Neminath of the main temple.
  - iv. Lord Adinath situated in the temple exactly behind Lord Neminath's main temple.
  - v. Lord Amijhara Parshwanath in the underground cellar.

- **General Instructions regarding the 99 pilgrimages**

After reaching and worshipping Lord Neminath on the main summit, descend towards Sahasavan or Jay Taleti and you will complete your first pilgrimage. Then again, ascend from Sahasavan or Jay Taleti after performing chaityavandan as shown above. This way, again reaching the main temple, worshipping and performing the chaityavandan there, as you climb downhill, you have said to complete your second pilgrimage. Similarly, you are suppose to worship Lord Neminath's main temple for 108 times.





## How to go about doing the 99 pilgrimages?

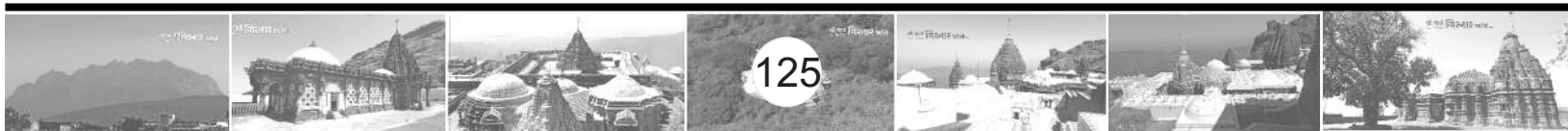
Are you scared hearing about the 99 pilgrimages? You need not fear . In fact, 99 pilgrimages of Girnar is even easier than that of Shatrunjay..

Yes!! Don't be startled, I am very serious...

- First pilgrimage of Shatrunjay (i.e. from Taleti to Lord Adinath's main temple) is about 3600 steps while Girnar's pilgrimage comprises of a climb of 3840 steps.
- For the second pilgrimage of Shatrunjay, you have to descend about 2800 steps towards Gheti Pag whereas you have a discount of 1000 steps flat and hence you have to go down only 1800 steps towards Sahasavan.
- That means, 3 pilgrimages of Shatrunjay is approximately to 4 pilgrimages of Girnar!!

Hence, do not be scared at all. Remove the impression of Girnar's pilgrimage being tough!!

Without any fear in mind, do not lose this golden opportunity of doing the 99 pilgrimages...







## Glory of GIRNAR

Girnar and Shatrunjay have an eminent position in our scriptures and devotees offering prayers to either of these sacred mountains has the potential to destroy all the accumulated sins of one's soul. Thus, according to our scriptures, even a single devotion filled pilgrimage of Girnar will be a stepping-stone to one's liberation. (Vastupalcharitra-prastav-5, verse-80/81)

Any soul meditating on Girnar – the lord of all mountains even while staying away from Girnar becomes omniscient and achieves liberation in the subsequent fourth birth. Long live GIRNAR! (Vastupalcharitra-prastav-5, verse-82)

Souls having the potential of attaining salvation can destroy the karmas attached to their souls in as less as four lives by meditating on Girnar or even sitting at home. Be victorious – the pious mountain GIRNAR (Shri Girnar mahatirthkalp-verse-19)

Blesses ones!!

Knowing about the eminence of the world famous Girnar Mahatirth, come on .. let's take a vow to spread the information we gained and thus create awareness about the less known facts of this holy land... Strive to visit Girnar and get engrossed in the worship and devotion of this great shrine... with the desire of attaining salvation at the earliest...

**Finally!! Take an oath to visit Girnar atleast once every year...!!**

