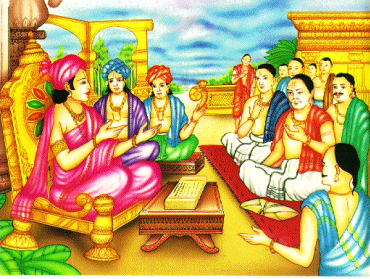


GAUTAM SWAMI

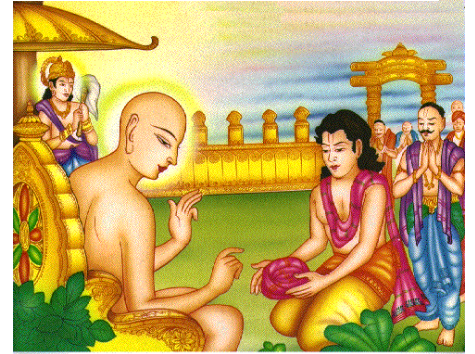
In 607 B. C., in the village of Gobargaon, a Brahmin couple called Vasubhuti and Prithvi Gautam (family name) had a son named Indrabhuti. He was tall and handsome. He had two younger brothers named Agnibhuti and Vayubhuti. All three were well versed in the Vedas and other rituals at an early age. They were very popular and great scholars in the state of Magadh. Each one of them had 500 disciples.



Once in the city of Apapa, a Brahmin named Somil was conducting a Yagna (sacrificial ceremony) at his home. There were over four thousand Brahmins present at the occasion, and there were eleven popular scholars among them. Indrabhuti stood out as a bright star. Somil was a staunch supporter of the Brahmin philosophy and was very happy during the ceremony. The whole town was excited by this event in which they were going to sacrifice the sheep and the goats. Suddenly, Somil noticed many celestial beings coming down towards his sacrificial site. He thought that this would make his offering ceremony the most popular in the history. He told the people, "Look at the sky, even the angels are coming to bless us." The whole town was eagerly looking at the sky.

To their surprise, the celestial beings did not stop at their site, instead they went further down. Somil's ego melted away as he learned that the celestial beings paid homage to Bhagwan Mahavir, who had come to nearby Mahasen Forest. Indrabhuti was outraged by this incident and his ego was bruised. He started thinking to himself, "Who is this Bhagwan Mahavir who does not even use affluent Sanskrit, but speaks the common public language of Ardha Magadhi." Everyone in the ceremony was overpowered by the mere presence of Bhagwan Mahavir. Indrabhuti once again thought, "Bhagwan Mahavir opposes animal sacrifices, and if he succeeds then we Brahmins will lose our livelihood. I will debate with him." He left to challenge him.

Bhagwan Mahavir welcomed Indrabhuti by calling him by his name even though they had never met before. Indrabhuti was surprised, but then he said to himself, "Who does not know me? I am not surprised he knew my name. I wonder if he knows what I am thinking." Omniscient Bhagwan Mahavira knew what was going through Indrabhuti's mind. Indrabhuti, even though a great scholar, had a doubt about the existence of Atma (soul) and was thinking to himself, "Can Bhagwan Mahavir tell that I doubt the existence of the soul?" The next moment Bhagwan Mahavir said, "Indrabhuti, Atma (soul - consciousness) is there and you should not question it." Indrabhuti was shocked and began to think very highly of Bhagwan Mahavir. Then, they had a philosophical discussion, and Indrabhuti changed his beliefs and he became Bhagwan Mahavir's first and chief disciple. Indrabhuti was fifty years old at the time, and from then on he was called Gautamswami, because he came from Gautam family.



Meanwhile in the town, Somil and other scholars were waiting to greet the expected winner of the debate, Indrabhuti. They were shocked to learn that Indrabhuti had become the disciple of Bhagwan Mahavir. The other ten Brahmin scholars, also went to debate with Mahavir, also became his disciples, the same way as Indrabhuti. The people present at the Somil's place began to leave, and Somil canceled the ceremony and set all animals free.