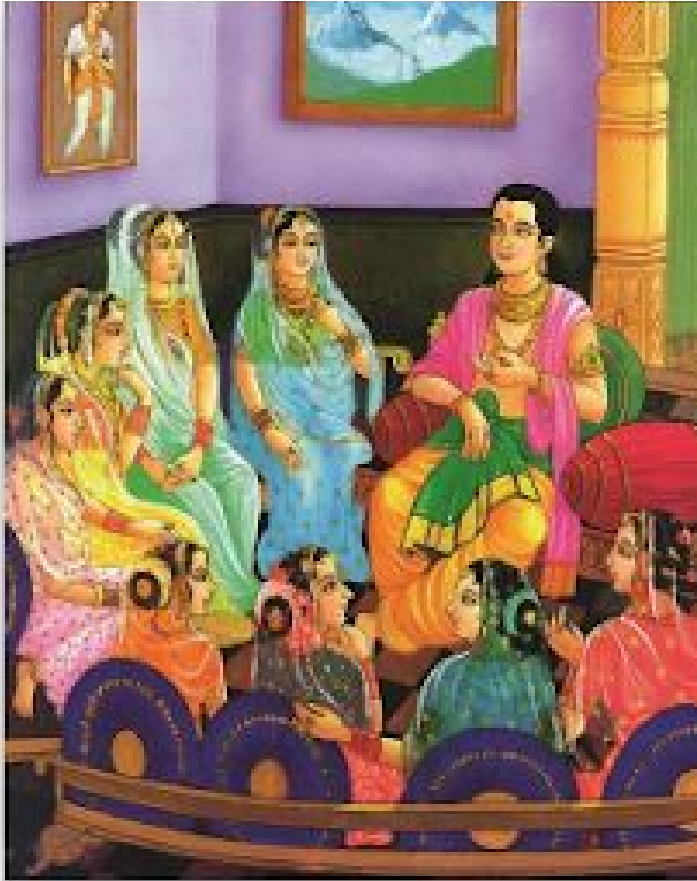


Kevali Jambu Swami



During the time of Mahavir-swami, there lived a wealthy merchant named Rushabhadatt in the city of Rajgrihi. In 542 BCE, his wife Dharini gave birth to a very handsome son whom they named Jambu. He grew up to be a very bright and intelligent young man well-liked by everyone. When he became older, many families were eager to have their daughters marry him. It was a normal practice in those days for a man to have more than one wife, so his parents selected 8 girls from reputed families. Jambu was duly engaged to all of them. It was a joyous time for all.

One day, Mahavir-swami's Ganadhar, Sudharma-swami, came to Rajgrihi to deliver a sermon and Jambu

attended the assembly. The sermon encouraged him to develop a very high sense of detachment towards worldly objects and family members and he decided to renounce his worldly life. However, Jambu's parents were dismayed to hear of his intentions to renounce the world at such a young age. The parents of the eight girls who were engaged to Jambu were also very worried that no one else would marry their daughters because of their engagement with Jambu. They all tried to convince Jambu to relinquish his plans of becoming a monk, telling him that the rigors of an ascetic life would pose a challenge for him and that he did not realize what he was sacrificing. They advised him to live a comfortable family life, reminding him of his obligations towards them and his future wives. Jambu patiently listened to them, but he remained firm in his decision.

Finally, the parents made one last effort to persuade him. Thinking that Jambu would change his mind after being married, they requested that he get married before they gave their blessing for his renunciation. Jambu agreed to get married with one condition: he would become an ascetic the day after his marriage. His parents agreed to this condition since they

thought he would fall in love with the girls once he was married and would give up the idea of renouncing the World. The wedding took place on a grand scale. Jambu's parents and those of the girls vied with each other to show their prosperity. Highly distinguished guests graced the occasion. The jewelry and other precious gifts showered upon the newlyweds were the envy of everyone in attendance. Rajgrihi had rarely witnessed such pomp and splendor. Everyone congratulated Jambu for marrying such beautiful and glamorous wives and wished him great happiness. Jambu spent that night in an elegantly decorated bedroom with his wives. However, he was unaffected by the glamour of the wedding and the beauty of his wives. He had firmly decided to renounce the world the next day and wanted to make use of the night to orient his wives for spiritual pursuit, so he began explaining the transitory nature of life and the miserable nature of worldly relationships.

While Jambu was engrossed in a discussion with his wives, a famous burglar named Prabhav and his 500 followers entered the palace. Once the prince of Vindhya, a neighboring city, Prabhav had a disagreement with his parents and left his palace, becoming a thief and a leader of 500 devout followers. Prabhav had acquired special skills that were very useful for his current profession. He could put anyone into a deep sleep and could break any lock. Upon hearing of Jambu's wedding, Prabhav had come to town to steal the fabulous treasures accumulated. He used his skills to put everyone in the palace into a deep sleep and opened the locks. Then, he along with his 500 followers quickly entered the palace to steal the wedding treasures. But as Prabhav approached Jambu's suite, he heard Jambu talking to his wives. Somehow, his power did not affect them! He came closer to the door in an effort to listen closely. To his utter astonishment, Jambu was talking about renunciation and the misery associated with worldly life. His words were so powerful that Prabhav became interested and continued listening. He pondered over the irony of how hard he worked to steal wealth, while the owner of such wealth was planning to renounce everything. Jambu continued to preach to his wives, and Prabhav quietly listened to the conversation. His men finished stealing from the rest of the palace and urged Prabhav to finish the job of stealing the jewelry located in Jambu's bedroom so they could leave before the guards discovered them.

By now, Prabhav had lost his desire for wealth, had developed a disdain for the life of a burglar, and was ready to change. He told his followers that he had decided to give up a burglary. They were free to go on their own. However, they said that they would not go anywhere without him. If he gave up robbing and stealing, they would also give it up.

When Jambu finished the religious discussion with his wives, all eight of his wives were ready to renounce the world. At this time, Prabhav came inside and said that he had come there to steal

but had decided to renounce everything after listening to Jambu's talk with his wives. He and his 500 followers made up their minds to become Jambu's disciples.

The next morning, the citizens of Rajgrihi awoke to some surprising news. Jambu, his eight wives, the famous thief Prabhav, and his 500 followers were ready to renounce their worldly lives that day. Jambu's parents were at first saddened and disappointed that their wish had not materialized, but they quickly realized the importance of Jambu's message and decided to join him. Hearing the news and understanding the message, the parents of the eight brides also renounced the world. A spectacular procession followed Jambu on his way to see Sudharma-swami.

Jambu bowed to Sudharm-swami and became his disciple. Prabhav and his colleagues became Jambu's disciples as well. Jambuswami studied the entire teachings of Lord Mahavir. Most of the original Jain scriptures (12 Anga Agams) are composed in the form of dialogues between Sudharma-swami and Jambuswami. Jambuswami became the head of the religious order when Sudharma-swami attained omniscience. He remained the head of the Jain order for 44 years and then attained Keval-jnan. He was the last omniscient (Kevali) of the current time cycle. He attained nirvana at the age of 80.