

Sulsa

Bhagwan Mahavir was once giving his discourses in Champanagari and he saw Ambad parivrajak (wandering monk) proceeding towards Rajgruhi. He stopped him and said, "On reaching Rajgruhi, tell Shrivika Sulsa that Mahavir has wished her dharmalabh".

Ambad parivrajak started thinking about Sulsa and her piety and devoutness since Bhagwan Mahavir also held her in high esteem. He thought of testing her devoutness and assumed the form of Yati and asked for sachitta (living matter), but Sulsa remained unperturbed. Then he assumed the form of Brahma and the entire city gathered for his worship but Sulsa was her usual self, undisturbed. Next day parivrajak was Shiva incarnate, and on the third and fourth day, he was Vishnu and Tirthankar (builders of the ford) incarnate. Tirthankar is worshipped by sixty-four Indras and the parivrajak assumed the form of the twenty-fifth tirthankar. He thought that Sulsa would at least come for the tirthankar's darshan but she didn't. The entire population of the city turned up for the *darshan* except Sulsa. Ambad, therefore, sent an invitation saying that it was strange that one who was so devout did not care to come for tirthankar's darshan. Sulsa replied to the messenger: "Gentleman! The man who claims to be the twenty-fifth tirthankar is no tirthankar but an impostor. When tirthankar arrives, the entire world comes to know about it. In the case of this impostor, nothing of the sort has happened. On the contrary, it is he who has to invite people for his *darshan*." Ambad, then, realized that Sulsa was no ordinary woman.

He at once arrived at Sulsa's house. He met her and said, "You are fortunate. Bhagwan himself remembers you and wishes you dharmalabh." On hearing these words, Sulsa was thrilled and overjoyed. She lay prostrate on the ground in the direction of where Bhagwan was seated and began worshipping him. Sulsa's devoutness and piety touched Ambad's heart.



Sulsa was a virtuous, peace-loving woman and her heart was filled with devotion. She could not beget a child and had asked her husband Nag to remarry but he declined to do so. Then she began severe penance and it pleased Indra so much that he praised her devotion before the assembly of gods, but Harinaigameshin dev decided to test her steadfast devotion.

He went to her, disguised as a monk, and asked for lakshapak oil. Sulsa brought a pot of oil but the God, deliberately, dropped the pot and the oil spilled over the ground. She brought four pots and each was broken by the god, but Sulsa was neither angry nor perturbed. She was calm and composed. The god was pleased with her behavior, her composure and above all her devotion. He blessed her and she begot sons.

Sulsa's sons were well-versed in religion, scriptures, ethics and even arts. But, unfortunately, they all died fighting king Chetak. Sulsa was drowned in grief. Abhaykumar consoled her and her husband Nag, saying grief results in the formation of karma. Sulsa spent the remaining years as a shravika and died while in meditation and went to heaven. She was to be born Nirmam, the fifteenth Tirthankar in next 'chovisi'. Sulsa's life is a shining example of steadfastness, utter devoutness, severe penance, nobility, and equanimity – an example worth emulation!