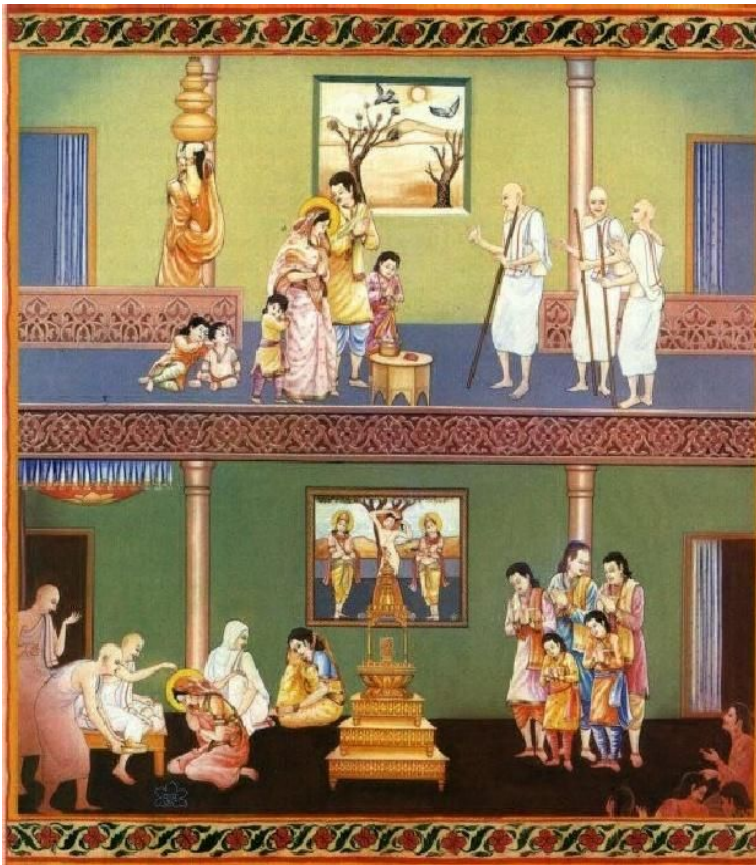


## Sadhvi Ishvari

Once there was severe famine not for a year or two but successively for twelve years. The family of Jindatt Sheth, a wealthy merchant of Soparak, was also caught in the grip of severe drought. It was very difficult to get even a mouthful of food. Finally, it was decided that Jindatt, his wife Ishvari and the entire family should die together by taking poisonous food. Even to mix poison with the food, some food was required. At last Jindatt could procure two fistfuls of rice by paying one lakh gold-coins. Ishvari cooked the food and just as she was going to mix the lethal poison in the food, she heard the sweet and soothing voice of Acharya Vajrasensuri who said aloud: "dharmalabh" (increase in righteousness). On hearing this Ishvari thought that even though life had been as bitter as poison, it was a great blessing that at the time of their taking poison the great Acharya had given them darshan. She regarded such a darshan of a sadhu at the critical moment of death as a great reward of her meritorious deeds. Overwhelmed and choked by emotions, Ishvari bowed to the Acharya respectfully.



As Acharyashri saw the poison in the hands of Ishvari, he asked her the reason. Ishvari narrated the fact and having heard Ishvari's statement, Acharya Vajrasen was reminded of his guru's forecast. The guru had told him that when he would find a Jain laywoman of a house ready to mix poison in the food bought at a cost of one lakh gold coins, it would mean that the scarcity of food consequent upon the drought would disappear the very next day.

Acharya Vajrasen told Ishvari that there was no need to mix poison in the food and eat it and that by the next day, everyone would get the

food they needed. Ishvari knew full well that Acharyashri spoke nothing but the truth and that his

utterances would never fail. That night ships full of food grains landed at the port of Soparak and from early morning all the people received the food-grains they needed. The shadows of a terrible crisis were dispelled. Jindatt also got the food-grains and the family satiated their hunger.

Jindatt's wife Ishvari was engaged in deep reflection regarding this incident. She thought that had Acharyashri been a little late, there would have been a very unfortunate tragedy. As they would have died an unnatural death, their souls would have gone to hell. Acharya Maharaj had arrived in the nick of time and saved them all from miserable and sinful death. Ishvari told her husband and all the four sons that Muniraj had gifted them each with a new life (jivandan). Now they should secure from him the gift of restraint (sanyamdan) so as to get rid of the miseries of the cycle of births.

All the members of the family felt that Ishvari was right. Along with Ishvari, Jindatt and their four sons named Nagendra, Chandra, Nivrutti and Vidyadhar accepted initiation from Acharya Vajrasen by rejecting infinite wealth and all the worldly pleasures and happiness. Thus the episode relating to poisonous food turned out to be a blessing.

The four sons of Sadhvi Ishvari are now regarded and respected as great saints. In the svetambara tradition four gaccha (a chapter of the monks) became famous, namely, Chandragaccha, Nagendrakul, Nivrutikul and Vidyadharkul after the names of the four sons. The life of Ishvari provides inspiration to all those who intend to follow the path of spiritual welfare.