

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 on 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 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 Lord Mahāvīr, 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 Mahāvīr 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 Lord Mahāvīr. Indrabhuti once again thought, "Mahāvīr opposes animal sacrifices, and if he succeeds then we Brahmins will lose our livelihood. I will debate with him." He left to challenge him.

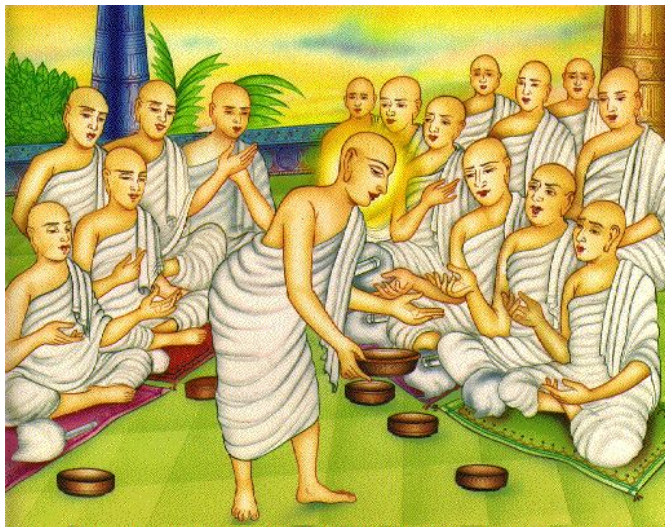
Mahāvīr welcomed Indrabhuti by calling him by his name even though they had never met before. Indrabhuti was surprised, but then he said to himself, "Who does not know me? I am not surprised he knew my name. I wonder if he knows what I am thinking." Omniscient Mahāvīra knew what was going through Indrabhuti's mind. Indrabhuti, even though a great scholar, doubted the existence of Atma (soul) and was thinking to himself, "Can Mahāvīr tell that I doubt the existence of the soul?" The next moment Mahāvīr said, "Indrabhuti, Atma (soul – consciousness) is there and you should not question it." Indrabhuti was shocked and began to think very highly of Mahāvīr. Then, they had a philosophical



discussion, and Indrabhuti changed his beliefs and he became Mahāvīr's first and chief disciple. Indrabhuti was fifty years old at the time, and from then on he was called Gautamswāmi 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 Mahāvīr. The other ten Brahmin scholars also went to debate with Mahāvīr, 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 turned all the animals loose.

One time, Gautamswāmi was going back after the gochari (getting food or alms), and he noticed many people going in another direction. He asked them what was going on. They said, "We are going to see Anand shravak. He has been performing austerities and has attained a special knowledge (Avadhignan)." Anand shravak was Mahāvīr's follower, so Gautamswāmi decided to go and visit him. When Anand saw Gautamswāmi coming to his house, he was very happy that his guru (spiritual teacher) was coming. However, even though he was very weak due to his austerities, he got up and welcomed Gautamswāmi. Gautamswāmi inquired about his condition. Anand replied, "With your blessings, I am fine." After some time, Anand told Gautamswāmi with respect, "Reverend teacher, I have attained Avadhignan because of which I can see as high as fourteenth heaven and as low as the seventh hell." Gautamswāmi thought, "A shravak can attain Avadhignan, but not to this extent." Aloud he told Anand, "You should do prayshchit (atonement) for your imagination." Anand was puzzled. He knew what he could see, but his teacher told him to atone for telling that. So, he politely asked Gautamswāmi, "Does one have to atone for telling the truth?" Gautamswāmi replied, "No," and then left the place thinking, "I will reconfirm this with Lord Mahāvīr."



Gautamswāmi returned to Lord Mahāvīr, who was sitting with his other disciples and asked about Anand. Mahāvīr said, "Gautam, Anand was telling the truth. How could a person like you with so much knowledge make such a mistake? You should atone for your mistake." Mahāvīr believed in the truth, and he would never cover up the mistake of his disciple just to make their group look good. Gautamswāmi put his alms aside and immediately went to Anand's house to ask for forgiveness for his doubt. Anand was proud of his humble teacher, who did not mind admitting his own fault to his followers.

On another occasion, Gautamswāmi went to town for the alms. He was returning with the

kheer (a sweet made from rice and milk) in a patra (bowl) when he saw fifteen hundred hermits. Gautamswāmi felt that they were hungry and offered them the kheer. They began to wonder how Gautamswāmi would feed all of them. Gautamswāmi requested all of the hermits to sit down, and then he served everyone with the kheer with the help of

Aksheenmahanasi (non-diminishing) Labdhi (special power). While serving the kheer, he kept his thumb in the kheer. To everyone's surprise, they were all well served from the small patra (bowl). The hermits

were all so impressed by Gautamswāmi, that all fifteen hundred decided to take Diksha (renunciation) from Lord Mahavir.

Many sadhus, including those hermits, attained Kevaljnan, but Gautamswāmi was still unable to achieve it. He was worried that he would never attain Kevaljnan. One day, Gautamswāmi asked Lord Mahāvīr, “There were eleven of us (main disciples – Gandhars) who accepted Diksha and most of them have attained Kevaljnan. Why am I so unlucky that I am not able to attain Kevaljnan?” Lord Mahāvīr replied, “Gautam, you have too much affection for me. In order to attain Kevaljnan you must overcome the attachment. So, until you give up your attachment towards me, it would not be possible for you to attain Kevaljnan.”

On the day when Mahavir was to attain nirvana (liberation), Mahavira sent Gautamswāmi out to preach to a man named Devsharma. On his way back, Gautamswāmi learned that Lord Mahāvīr had attained nirvana and reached the moksha (salvation). Gautamswāmi went into a state of shock and sorrow, lamenting, “Lord Mahāvīr knew this was going to happen. Why did he send me away.” Gautamswāmi could not stop his tears and started weeping. Within a few minutes, he came back to his senses and began thinking, “Maybe this was destined to happen this way. No one can live forever; no relationship is permanent. Why was I so attached to Mahāvīr?” He contemplated that he was wrong and gave up attachment for Mahavir. During this deep thinking, he burned his Ghati Karmas and attained Kevaljnan at the age of eighty.

Gautamswāmi taught and spread Jain principles for the next twelve years. He attained Moksha, at the age of ninety-two in 515 B. C.

