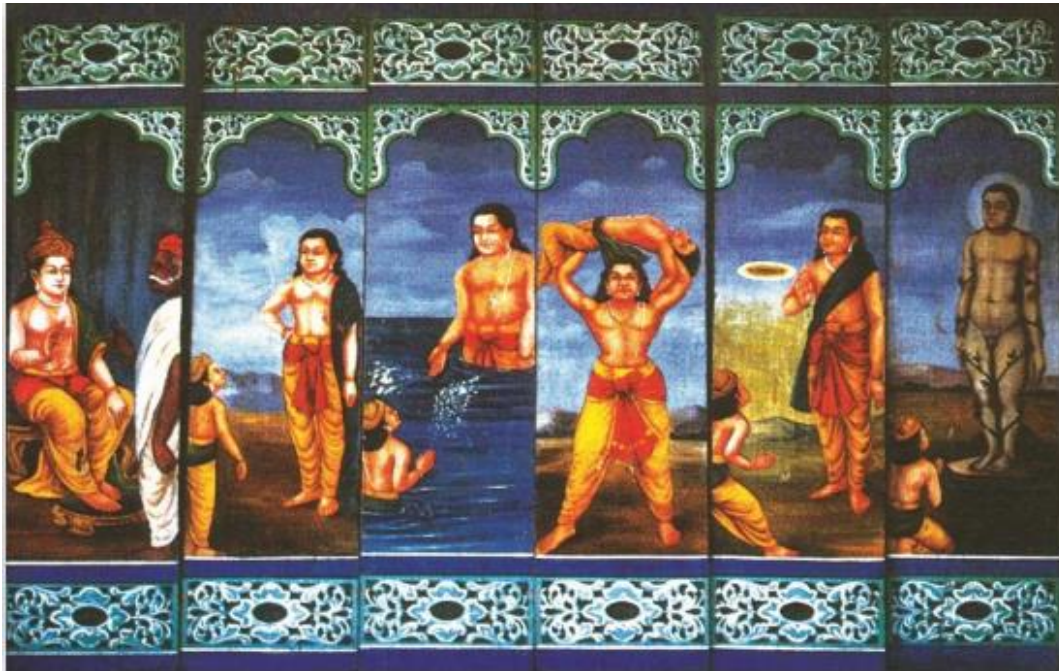


Bharat & Bahubali (Part 1)

Before his renunciation of worldly life, Bhagwan Rishabhadev or Adinath was known as King Rishabh and had two wives, Sumangala and Sunanda. By Sumangala, he had 99 sons, of whom Bharat was the eldest and the best known, and one daughter named Brahmi. By the second wife, Sunanda, he had one son named Bahubali and a daughter named Sundari. All of them were given proper training in different arts and crafts. Bharat became a great warrior and a politician. Sunanda's son was tall, well built, and strong, and hence was called Bahubali. In Sanskrit, "Bahu" means arm and "Bali" means mighty. Brahmi attained a very high level of literary proficiency. She developed the first known script, known as the Brahmi script. Sundari was very proficient in mathematics. After Lord Rishabhadev attained omniscience, both girls renounced their worldly lives and became his disciples.



Incidences in the lives of King Bharat and King Bāhubali

As a King, Rishabhadev had the responsibility of a large kingdom. At the time of his renunciation, he handed over the city of Vinita, also known as Ayodhya, to Bharat, and the city of Takshshila (Pottanpur according to Digambar scriptures) to Bahubali. He gave different parts of his vast kingdom to his remaining 98 sons.

Bharat quickly established control over Vinita. He was an ambitious ruler and intended to become emperor of the entire nation. For this purpose, he organized a strong army and started developing different types of fighting equipment. He also possessed a miraculous wheel called Chakraratna ("Chakra" means wheel and "ratna" means precious jewel) that would never miss its target. After developing his army and weapons, he embarked upon his journey of conquest. There was hardly anyone at that time who could withstand his well-equipped army. He easily conquered all the regions around Vinita. Then, he turned his attention towards the lands of his 98 brothers and asked them to acknowledge his superiority. They all turned to Bhagwan Rishabhadev to ask for advice. Bhagawan explained to them the importance of conquering their inner enemies (passions) and not external

enemies. He also advised them on how to attain liberation, a “true kingdom.” Having realized the futility of fighting with their elder brother, the sons surrendered their territories to him, renounced worldly life, and became disciples of Bhagwan Rishabhadev.

Now, only Bahubali remained. However, he had a different vision and would not surrender. He was conscious of his right to rule the kingdom handed over to him by his father. Moreover, he had the will and capacity to fight any invader. Therefore, when he received Bharat’s request to accept a subordinate status, he refused and began preparations to fight.

Both brothers were strong, and war between the two was sure to result in large-scale bloodshed. Therefore, counselors on both sides tried to dissuade their masters from resorting to war, but neither of them would give up his ground. War seemed inevitable as the brothers brought their armies face to face on the battlefield. Everyone shuddered at the prospect of the heavy casualties that would result from the imminent war.

The counselors then made one last effort. They explained to their masters that the main point of contention was to determine which brother was superior. Instead of assembling a large-scale war for that purpose, a fight between the two brothers would just as easily settle the issue and would avert unnecessary bloodshed. Both brothers thought this was an excellent idea and immediately agreed. The plan was to engage in a straight duel, and the victor of the duel would be acknowledged as the leader.

On the day of the duel, Bharat tried to beat Bahubali by using his various permissible weapons, but all his attempts to defeat Bahubali failed. Bharat contemplated on how unbearable and shameful his defeat would be. His ambition to rule the entire world was also at stake if he did not defeat his brother. He grew desperate and ignored the rules of the duel by unleashing his miracle wheel, the Chakraratna, at Bahubali. However, he had forgotten one important characteristic of the miracle weapon: it would not harm any blood relatives of the bearer. Therefore, the wheel returned to Bharat and Bahubali remained unharmed.

Bahubali became enraged by Bharat’s violation of the rules of the duel, and he thought of smashing his elder brother with his mighty fist. As he raised his hand for that purpose, the onlookers trembled at the thought of Bharat’s imminent death.

But just as he was about to unleash his wrath, a flash of insight came to him. “What am I doing?” thought Bahubali. “Have I gone mad? Am I going to kill my elder brother for the sake of some worldly possessions that my revered father willingly abandoned and which my other brothers have given up?” He shuddered at the prospect of the imminent death of Bharat, seeing the evil in killing a respected brother. At that very moment, he changed his mind. Instead of lowering his hand to hit his brother, he used it to pull out his hair (as the monks do during Diksha) as a symbol of giving up everything and renouncing the worldly life. However, Bahubali had not lost all his pride and ego.

To be continued...