

## *Mahavira attains Nirvana*

Lord Mahavira was 71 years and 6 and a half month of age. It was the rainy season and he was staying in Pawapuri, Bihar (India). Tirelessly and selflessly, Mahavira passed his days and nights in giving discourses and answering questions in a large hall. Many people had gathered, including the members of various royal families. All gazed at the sage, who was seated in the lotus position before them, and drank in his every word.

After preaching more than 110 sermons — the final one lasting no less than 48 hours — Mahavira entered into deep meditation and withdrew from his physical body. This is the fifth and final auspicious event in Lord Mahavira's life. Like the Buddhists, the Jainas refer to this state as *nirvana*.

When the assembled crowds realized that Mahavira's soul had departed, they said, "The light has gone from this world. Let us now light clay lamps." Countless small lamps were lit to soulfully observe the passing of their beloved Teacher. Some people believe that this is one of the origins of our Indian Dipavali festival.

Lord Buddha was residing nearby at Samagrama at the time. Within a few fleeting hours, messengers brought him the news that Mahavira had attained *nirvana*. Although Lord Buddha and Lord Mahavira did not meet on the physical plane, they had tremendous respect for each other