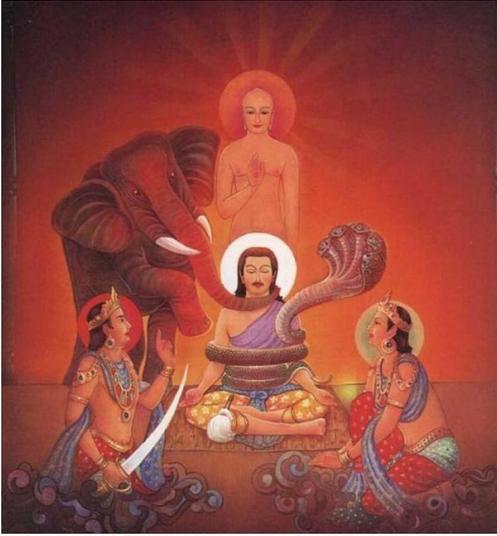


KAMDEV SHRAVAK



Kamdev Shrivak, a highly religious-minded and devoted soul was resident of the city of Champanagari. Kamdev spent fourteen years in the service of religion. Then he thought of renouncing everything and spending the rest of his life as an ascetic, observing the twelve vows of Shrivak. One morning he renounced the world and sat in meditation.

Once Indra Dev, during the course of his address before the religious congregation, praised Kamdev for his deep involvement in matters religious. But a doubt was raised about his commitment to religion. "Will it waver in the face of fear, wealth or a beautiful damsel?" asked the Indra Dev. It was therefore decided to test Kamdev's commitment. With this intention in mind Indra then assumed hideous form to frighten Kamdev.

He appeared before him and roared: "Give up your meditation, O Kamdev, or else this dagger will cut you into two! Forget your fake religion and be a householder again. Save yourself from an untimely death." But Kamdev was unperturbed. When the Indra Dev again tried to frighten him and threaten him with dire consequences, Kamdev said: "Don't threaten me. I have the bulwark of my religion to protect me. You cannot harm me. I am as steadfast as a rock in my resolution."

The Indra Dev was furious on being challenged and gave a resounding blow of the dagger but nothing happened to Kamdev. He was serenity incarnate, with no fear on the face. Then the Indra Dev assumed the form of an elephant. Then he said: "O hypocrite! I will trample you under my feet and crush your bones to powder." So saying the Indra Dev pounced upon him but Kamdev was calm and composed. At last the Indra Dev assumed the form of a serpent and started to entwine around Kamdev's body. Then he said: "Take refuge at my feet and give up religion. Else I will bite you at thousand places and the lethal poison will spread through your body. You will die a miserable death." But Kamdev was his usual self, unperturbed and calm. Now the serpent entwined around his entire body and began to bite him. The poison caused him intolerable pain, but he did not utter a word. He thought the pain was to the body, not to the soul. He was in deep meditation, thinking of Bhagwan Mahavir. Nothing happened to him.

Who can harm the staunch devotee of Bhagwan Mahavir? Indra failed in frightening Kamdev and in setting him off course from the path he had chosen. Indra finally conceded defeat, and realized his folly. Then he bowed to Shrivak Kamdev and said: "Forgive me. You are a staunch devotee of Bhagwan Mahavir. My pride has melted. You are like a sandalwood tree spreading its fragrance everywhere and bestowing coolness on one and all. I accept you as my Acharya and Guru."

Thus saying, he bowed again to Kamdev and left for his heavenly abode. Then Kamdev went to see Bhagwan Mahavir. Bhagwan, in the presence of his disciples, praised the steadfastness of Kamdev and told them: "A Shrivak suffers so much. What about you, then? You are all out to conquer the vices that beset the mankind and a lot is expected of you." The disciples got the message and were all praise for Kamdev's devotion.

At last Kamdev became a released soul.