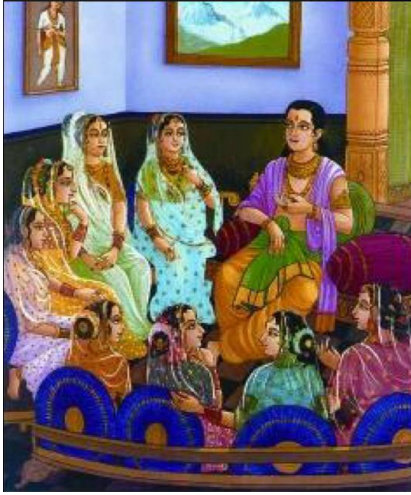


## KEVALI JAMBU SWAMI



In the city of Rajgrihi, there lived a wealthy merchant named Rushabhadatt. His wife, Dharini, gave birth to a very handsome son named Jambu in 542 BC. He grew up into a very bright and intelligent young man, well liked by everyone. When he became older, many families were eager to have their daughters marry him. It was a normal practice in those days for a man to have more than one wife. His parents selected 8 girls from reputed families and Jambu was duly engaged to all of them. It was a joyous time for all.

One day, Ganadhar Sudharma-swami came to Rajgrihi to deliver a sermon. Jambu went to the assembly to hear the sermon. The sermon encouraged him to develop a very high sense of detachment towards worldly objects and family members. He decided to renounce his worldly life. Jambu's parents were dismayed to hear about him renouncing the world at such a young age. The parents of the eight girls who were engaged to Jambu were also very worried that now no one else would marry their daughters because of their engagement to Jambu.

They all tried to convince Jambu to relinquish his plan of becoming a monk. They indicated the rigors of ascetic life that would pose a challenge for him. They tried to convince him that he did not fully understand what he was sacrificing for this ascetic life. His parents reminded him of his obligations towards them and his futures wives. They advised him to live a comfortable family life. Jambu listened to them with patience but he remained firm in his decision.

The parents made one last effort to persuade him. They thought that Jambu would change his mind after the wedding. Therefore, they requested him to get married before they gave their blessing for his renunciation. Jambu agreed to get married with one condition that he would become an ascetic the day after his marriage. His parents agreed to this condition since they thought that he would fall in love with the girls once he was married, and would give up the idea of renouncing the world.

The wedding took place on a grand scale. Jambu's parents and those of the girls contested with one another in showing their prosperity. No effort was spared in making the wedding a memorable ceremony. Highly distinguished guests graced the occasion. The jewelry and other precious gifts that were showered upon the newlyweds were the envy of everyone. Rajgrihi had rarely witnessed such pomp and splendor. Every one congratulated Jambu for marrying such beautiful and glamorous wives and wished him perfect happiness. Jambu spent that night in an elegantly decorated bedroom with his wives.

Jambu was unaffected by the glamour nor did the beauty of those lovely girls overcome him. He had firmly decided to renounce the world the next day and wanted to make use of the night to orient his wives for spiritual pursuit. He started explaining the temporary and transitory nature of life and the miserable nature of worldly relationships.

While Jambu was engrossed in a discussion with his wives, a famous burglar named Prabhav and his 500 followers entered the palace of Jambu. Prabhav was once the prince of Vindhya, a neighboring city of Rajgrihi. He and his parents had a disagreement and he had left the palace. He became a thief and a leader of 500 devout followers. Prabhav had acquired special skills that were very useful in his current profession. With his special skills, he could put anyone into a deep sleep and could break any lock.

Prabhav had come to town to steal the fabulous treasures accumulated on the occasion of Jambu's wedding. He used his skills to put everyone into a deep sleep and to open the locks. He and his 500 followers quickly entered the palace to steal the wedding treasures. As Prabhav approached Jambu's suite he heard

Jambu talking to his wives. Somehow, his power did not affect Jambu and his wives. He came closer to the door in an effort to listen closely. To his utter astonishment, Jambu was talking about renunciation and the misery associated with worldly life. His words were so powerful that Prabhav became interested and continued listening.

He pondered over the irony of how hard he worked to steal wealth, while the owner was planning to renounce everything. Jambu continued to preach to his wives and Prabhav listened to the conversation quietly. His men finished stealing from the rest of the palace and urged Prabhav to finish the job of stealing the jewelry located in Jambu's bedroom so they could leave before the guards discovered them. By now, Prabhav had lost his desire for wealth, had developed a disdain for the life of a burglar and was ready to change. He told his followers that he had decided to give up burglary. They were free to go on their own. However, they said that they would not go anywhere without him. If he gave up robbing and stealing, they would also give it up.

When Jambu finished the religious discussion with his wives, all his wives were ready to renounce the world. At this time, Prabhav came inside and said that he had come there to steal but had decided to renounce everything after listening to Jambu's talk with his wives. He and his 500 followers made up their mind to become Jambu's disciples.

In the morning, the citizens of Rajgrihi awoke to some surprising news. Jambu, his eight wives, the famous thief Prabhav, and his 500 followers were ready to renounce their worldly lives that day. Jambu's parents were saddened and disappointed that their wish did not materialize. They quickly realized the importance of Jambu's message and decided to join him also. Hearing the news and understanding the message, the parents of the eight brides also renounced the world. A spectacular procession followed Jambu on his way to see Sudharma-swami. Jambu bowed to Sudharma-swami and became his disciple and in turn, Prabhav

And his colleagues became Jambu's disciples.

Jambuswami, as he became known henceforth, studied the entire teachings of Lord Mahavir. Most of the original Jain scriptures (12 Anga agams) are composed in the form of dialogues between Sudharma-swami and Jambuswami. Jambuswami became the head of the religious order when Sudharma-swami attained omniscience. He remained the head of the Jain order for 44 years and then he attained omniscience (Keval-jnan). He was the last omniscient (Kevali) of the current time cycle. He attained Nirvana at the age of 80.