

Shrut Panchami

By Meena Somchand Shah

Shrut Panchami is the day when the first Digambar Jain scriptures were written (roughly around 160 A.D.) in the small town of Ankleshwar in the state of Gujarat.

Following the liberation (*nirvana*) of Bhagwan Mahavir on the day of *Dipawali*, his prime disciple Gautam Swami attained omniscience (*kevalgnan*) on that same day. There were three kevalgnanis within 62 years following the *nirvana* of Mahavir Bhagwan: Gautam Swami, Sudharma Swami and Jambu Swami. After Jambu Swami there was absence of omniscience (*kevalgnan*) in Bharat Kshetra. The link of what is omniscience and its root was not broken, however, the intensity of knowledge started to diminish. After Jambu Swami there were five *shrut kevalis* over the next 100 years – Vishnu, Nandimitra, Aprajit, Govardhan and Bhadrabahu, of which Bhadrabahu Swami was the last – they all possessed knowledge of the 12 *ang* including the 14 *poorva* (also called *dwadashaang*). The flow of knowledge was intact up to that point.



Jain scriptures.

During the time of Bhadrabahu Swami there was a drought of twelve years and this knowledge started to diminish. In the lineage of Bhadrabahu Swami there were two great Acharyas – Dharsen Acharya and Gunhadra Acharya (around 700 years after the *nirvana* of Mahavir Bhagwan). By this stage the level of knowledge had reduced to partial knowledge of one *ang* only. Dharsen Acharya lived in the caves of the Girnar mountain. Until his time, knowledge was passed orally, but he then noticed that due to the reduction in brain power, this oral knowledge was diminishing and was afraid it would be lost altogether

so he called two monks from the South of India – Pushpadant and Bhootbali.

When they arrived he tested them by giving them two mantras, one which contained an extra word and the other one was a word short. Whilst both monks were carefully meditating upon these mantras, two *devis* (fairies) appeared before them – one with one eye and the other one with one tooth sticking out. Thus they immediately understood that these mantras were not pure. They added the missing word and removed the extra word from the two mantras, and as these became pure, two beautiful *devis* appeared before them. They then took these two mantras to Dharsen Acharya who upon reading them said “*Jai Ho Shrut Devta*” (long live correct knowledge). As he was satisfied, Dharsen Acharya gave them the knowledge of the fifth *mahakarma prakarti prabhurut adhikar* of *Agrayani poorva*.

The two monks then absorbed this knowledge and wrote the first scripture called the **Shatkhand Agam** (the foremost and oldest Digambar text). On completing this scripture in the town of Ankleshwar on the fifth day of the *Jesht sud* month (*Shrut Panchami*), the celestial beings (*devas*) performed a special *puja*. The scripture contains six volumes. Acharya Virsen wrote two commentary texts, known as *Dhaval-tika* on the first five volumes and *Maha-dhaval-tika* on the sixth volume of this scripture, around 780 A.D. From this scripture, many more scriptures were written and thus started the flow of written knowledge. On the day of *Shrut Panchami*, all Jain scriptures continue to be venerated. ■



Meena is a member of the Shree Digambar Jain Association and has been studying Digambar Jain philosophy for the last 23 years. By profession, she is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA).

This year, 28th May 2009 is Shrut Panchami in the Digambar Jain calendar.



The Shree Mahavirswami Jain Temple will be celebrating this occasion with a special *puja* from 8.30-9.30am. This will be followed by a taped lecture by Kanji Swami from 9.30-10.30am on the subject of Shrut Panchami.