

Chapter 1 – Coronation of Infant Dasharatha

The very foundation of the social, cultural and religious aspects of human life was laid by the first Tirthankara Lord Rishabhadeva. Bharata, a chakravarti (sovereign king), was his son. He had many illustrious sons; one amongst them was Adityayasa, the founder of Surya dynasty. Many dignified kings were born in his lineage. During the regime of twentieth tirthankara, Munisuvrata swami, a very considerate king, Anaranya, ruled the kingdom of Ayodhya. He granted asylum to several kings and also helped his loved ones to be debt free. He had two sons namely, Anantaratha and Dasharatha, through his wife Prithvidevi.



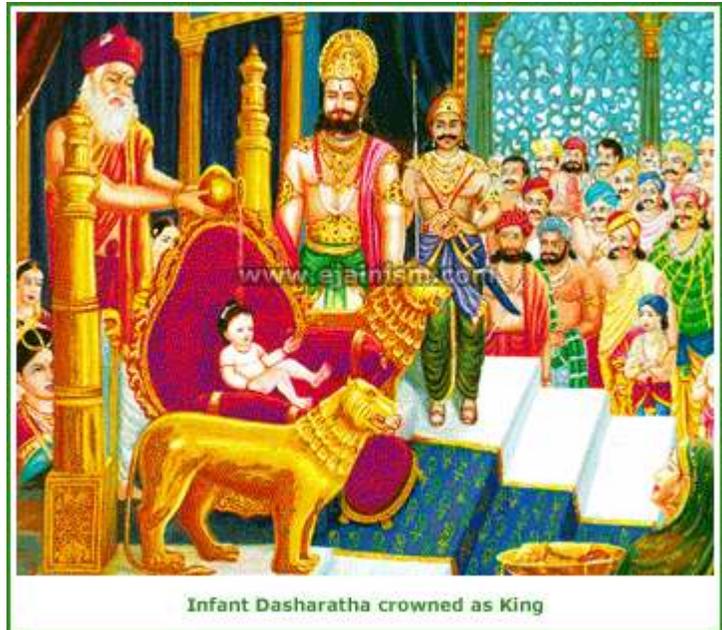
King Sahasramshu's messenger in King Anaranya's Court

King Anaranya and King Sahasramshu of Mahishmati were very good friends. They did almost every important work of their life together. Once, there was a war between King Sahasramshu and Ravana, the king of Rakshasa dynasty. Ravana defeated King Sahasramshu in that war. At that moment, his father Muni Shatabahu, who had renounced the world earlier, arrived. King Sahasramshu accepted Diksha (renouncement) under his aegis. He sent this news of his becoming an ascetic to his friend King Anaranya through a messenger.

After reaching the royal court of King Anaranya, the messenger offered obeisance to the emperor and spoke deferentially, "O Mighty King! Your bosom

friend and my lord King Sahasramshu have accepted the vows of asceticism, in order to put an end to all internal and external conflicts. According to his desire I am conveying this message to you in order to remind you your mutual decision of embracing initiation together." King Anaranya thought "Now, that my friend has renounced the world, I should also follow his footsteps and make my existence meaningful." He immediately sent for his family members and expressed his desire to accept the diksha (asceticism). King Anaranya's son, crown prince, Anantaratha, also realized the meaningless vanity of the material world. He decided to follow his father on the path of salvation.

Following this situation King Anaranya coronated Dasharatha, who was barely a month old, and accepted asceticism along with his son Anantaratha in the presence of Muni Abhayasena. Anaranya soon forgot the pleasures and luxuries of the palace and became indifferent



Infant Dasharatha crowned as King

towards his corporal self. He practiced rigorous fasts like Chatta, Aththama and Masakshamana (2, 3 and 30 days fast continuously) and thus reduced his karmas to ashes. His soul gradually became purer. Finally, he ended his entire ghati karmas and acquired the Kevala-Gyana (Omniscience). The young sage Anantaratha too followed his father's foot prints and made tremendous progress in the spiritual field.

King Dasharatha was a noble soul. As a result of his virtuous deeds, he acquired traits like unparalleled valor, courage and presence of mind. There was not even a single instance of internal or external revolt against this child king. In spite of enjoying the supreme authority, King Dasharatha was compassionate towards the poor and downtrodden people. No one who came to him to seek alms ever returned empty handed. Like the eleventh Kalpavriksha - a wish fulfilling tree, he spread happiness and content everywhere. He followed his duties as a ruler and a spiritual seeker diligently and maintained a perfect balance between the two.

Chapter 2 – Bibhishana's Vow

As King Dasharatha grew young he tied nuptial knots with three young princesses having impeccable family backgrounds. Aparajita alias Kaushalya was his first consort. She was the daughter of King Sukoshala, the ruler of Darbhasthala nagara and Queen Amritaprabha. The second was Sumitra, offspring of King Subandhutilaka of Kamalasanghata and Queen Mitradevi. Suprabha, the daughter of the king of Rathanupura was his third consort.

Ravana, the demonic king was born into the Rakshasa race. He was also called as Prativasudeva. He had many courtiers who excelled different branches of knowledge. One of his courtiers could foresee the future. Once, Ravana called him out of curiosity and said, "All



Sage Narada witnessed the vow of Bibhishana

the living beings in this universe are bound to die one day. Even the deities who reside in the celestial abodes are called Amara (immortals), but they too have a prescribed life span. All moving and non-moving beings are bound to diminish. Though death is a non-voluntary action, rebirth is completely a voluntary action. Through his deeds a person can escape from this endless cycle of life and death and seek salvation. In spite of my boundless power, I too cannot evade the death. Therefore, I would like to know how I would die." The wise foreseer answered, "The future generation of King Dasharatha and King Janaka will be the cause of your death."

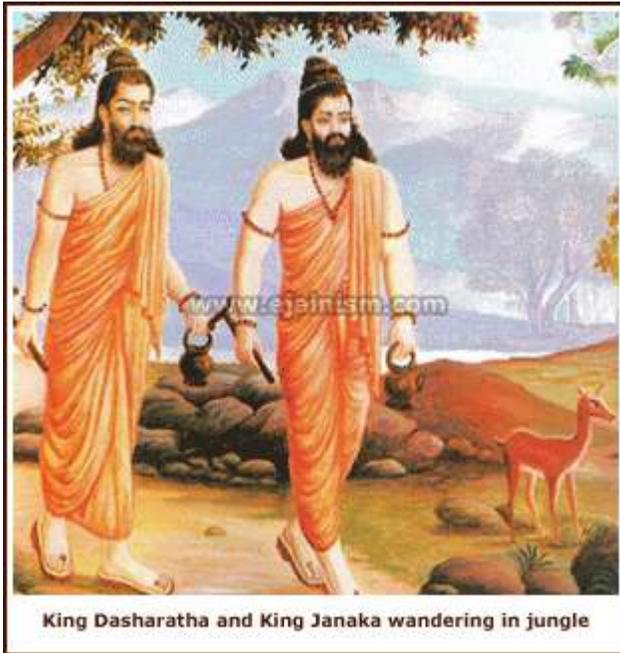
When Ravana's sibling Bibhishana heard this, his wrath knew no bounds. Out of anger he vowed to assassinate both King Dasharatha and King Janaka before birth of their offspring, so as to ensure that the cause of his brother's death could be eradicated. Ravana feared death like any other mortal. He therefore permitted Bibhishana to carry out his plan. Sage Narada ji, the wandering mendicant, was a witness to this drama in the court of Ravana. He, at

once left to inform king Dasharatha about what had transpired in the court of the rakshasa king Ravana.

Chapter 3 – Narada ji's concern for co-religionists

Narada ji, an ardent follower of Jainism, loved all his co-religionists more than himself. Therefore, he straightaway reached Ayodhya. Dasharatha welcomed him with great honor and after offering him a high seat in his court he enquired with due reverence the purpose of his visit. The divine mendicant replied, "O mighty king! I have been to the Pundarikini nagari that surpasses the celestial world in grandeur, to witness the Diksha ceremony of Sri Simamdharaswami. From there I reached the topmost summits of the mountain Meru and offered my humble salutations to the great Tirthankaras. Then I reached Lanka and after paying obeisance to Lord Sri Shantinatha, I reached the court of the rakshasa king, Ravana. A seer in his court prophesied that your son and King Janaka's daughter will be the cause of Ravana's death. On hearing this, Bibhishana rose, and shivering with anger, took a vow of killing you and king Janaka both. So I came here to inform you about this. Kindly stay alert, take care of you; and now allow me to depart, so that I can reach Mithila and alert king Janaka." With these words, he immediately left for Mithila and alerted king Janaka also about this.

King Dasharatha summoned his council of ministers to discuss the grave predicament. After a lot of discussion over the situation, they reached a conclusion. They advised that it was imperative that both King Dasharatha and Janaka should handover the burden of administration to the learned council of ministers, and leave their empire at once. They should retire to some forest, disguised as ascetics and return only when the circumstances



King Dasharatha and King Janaka wandering in jungle

were favorable. Accordingly both the kings donned the saffron robes of ascetic order and left for the forest. The news of their departure was kept a secret. Then, the ministers ordered the sculptors to prepare effigies of both the kings. The effigies prepared looked so authentic that no one would know that they were unreal. Aspects like the color and texture of hair, the toning and color of the skin, the height, and other proportions, the regal attire and finery were studied in detail by the artists before preparing the dummies. Both the effigies were placed on the royal couches so that whenever Bibhishana attacks he would find there effigy only.

King Dasharatha and King Janaka wandered from jungle to jungle. The news of their departure was kept a closely guarded secret by the council of the learned ministers. No one, not even the queen's knew this reality.

Two Kings, both noble and having impeccable background and sound knowledge, left their royal power and embraced a simple life of mendicants. If it is considered rightful to abandon ones kingdom to elude one death then why isn't it fair for the enlightened souls to forsake the whole world, viewing the infinite cycle of birth and death. They might enjoy the wealth, live a comfortable life and yet they do not forget the death even for a moment. Thus, gaining an opportunity they renounce the world and conquer death.