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7

SUPARSVANATHA CHARITRA

May the words of the teaching of Jinendra Sri Suparsva protect you, like the waves of the Ocean of *omniscience* overflowing its bank. I shall relate the life of Sri Suparsva, the seventh Arhat, which is a sunny day for the darkness of wrong knowledge of all creatures.

Incarnation as Nandisena

There is a city, Ksemapuri, in the province Ramaniya distinguishing East Videha in Dhatakikhandadvipa. Its king was Nandisena, delighting the world, *resplendent* as the sun, the sole *abode* of *splendor*. Dharma* was the minister, the right arm, as it were, of him always watchful in the business of the entire kingdom. When he destroyed persons, who had become thorns, for the people's happiness, even his *anger* was for dharma. How much more the actions in question! And what was extraordinary, the Blessed One, the Holy Saint, constantly located within the sphere of his memory, became lying in his heart. He was always the refuge* for removal of pain from the afflicted, but in no way at no time for the love-sick wives of others. As time passed, he, noble-minded, became tired of worldly existence and took initiation under Arindamana *Acharya*. Observing his vow *zealously*, the great *muni* acquired the body-

making karma of a Tirthankara^s by some of the *sthanakas*. The great muni fasted at the right time, died, and became a powerful god in the sixth Graiveyaka-heaven. Incarnation as Suparsvanatha

Description of Varanasi

Now in this Bharataksetra of Jambudvipa there is a city Varanasi, the ornament of the Kasi-country. In its house with jeweled walls filled with light a lamp, if it is present, is before a god in the eight-fold pooja. There the moon above high golden rods on the shrines attains a resemblance to an umbrella of Dharma* possessing the sole umbrella. Vidyadharies, resting on the watch-towers of fits walls, were delighted, forgetting the latticed-windows in the wall around Jambudvipa. In its houses the doves coo at night, as if reciting *auspicious* things* for the enlightenment of *Rati's* husband (Kama^s).

His parents

Its king was named Pratistha, devoted to justice, the kalpa-tree of celebrity for the worthy, possessing celebrity like Indra. The whole world remained in the shadow of his feet, as he was always unequalled 'in power, like Meru in size. When he made a-tour of conquest in all directions, the sky appeared to be marked with cranes from white umbrellas and with clouds from umbrellas made of peacock-feathers in dense array. In battle he, ornamented with heroic vows, never turned his face away from his enemies as if they were beggars. From birth, without any other assistance, long-armed, he supported the earth always as easily as a toy-lotus.

The king had a wife, named Prthvi, like a living earth, receptacle of virtues, firmness, etc. Her innate virtue beauty constantly became ornaments, and external tents reached a state of being adorned. In her, by nature, numerous virtues appeared like pearls in the river Tamraparni. Her form with lotus-face, louts-eyes, lotus-hands, and lotus-feet was like another lotus-pool of the goddess Sri with waves of loveliness, the thought, "Because she is the mother of a Tirthankara^s, may there be future servitude (to her)," and conquered by her beauty also, goddesses became her slaves.

His birth

Now, the *jiva* of Nandisena in the sixth Graiveyaka completed his life of twenty-eight sagaras. Falling on the eighth of Bhadrpada, the moon being in *conjunction* with Radha, Nandisena's *jiva* descended into the womb of Prthvi. Sleeping comfortably during the rest of the night, Queen Prthvi saw then the fourteen great dreams indicating the birth of a Tirthakrt. While the embryo was growing,

the Queen saw herself asleep on a couch of serpents which had one hood, five hoods, and nine hoods. On the twelfth day of the bright half of Jyestha, the moon being in Visakha, she bore easily a son, gold colored, marked with a svastika.

Knowing the birth of the Jina^s by clairvoyant knowledge, the fifty-six Dikkumaris came there quickly and performed the birth-rites. Likewise Sakra came there and took the Lord of the World to the rock Atipandukambala on the top of Meru. Holding the Supreme Lord on his lap like a nurse, Purandara^s sat on the jeweled lion-throne there. The sixty-three Indras in turn bathed the Lord of the Tirtha with water from tirthas, like waves of the Ocean a mountain on the shore. After placing the Lord on Isana's lap, Sakra bathed him with water rising from the horns of crystal bulls resembling water produced by fountains. After *anointing* him and worshipping him with clothes, ornaments, etc., the Indra of Saudharma began a hymn of praise to the Lord of the World.

Stuti

“The *desire* on my part to praise you who have undiscernible nature is like the leap of a monkey to take the sun. Nevertheless, I will praise you by means of your power, O Supreme Lord. For moon-stones trickle from the power of moonlight. How are you not giving the comfort to animals, men, and gods, which you give evert to hell-inhabitants, by all the kalyanas? Even the light in the three worlds at the festival of your birth becomes red from the sun of *omniscience* that will rise. All these heavens have now become favorable, as if from contact with your favor, Supreme Lord. These pleasant winds blow for the sake of purification. Indeed, who would cause anything displeasing to the world when you, O Lord, are giving pleasure? Shame on us negligent. These seats of ours, by the shaking of which your birth-kalyana was announced to us instantly, are blessed, O god. Now I make a *nidana*^{*} though it is forbidden, O god: namely, as the fruit of the sight of you, may I have unceasing *devotion* to you.”

Childhood

After this hymn of praise Sakra took the Lord, went quickly and laid him unperceived by Queen Prthvi's side, according to custom. Delighting the people by remarkable things, such as releases from prison, the King made a great festival, the tree with fruit of joy. Since his mother was 'beautiful-sided' while he was an embryo, Pratistha conferred the name Suparsva on the Lord. The Lord grew

by drinking nectar that had been put in his thumb by Sakra. The *Arhats* are to be praised even by the gods since they do not nurse. Getting down repeatedly from laps with the restlessness usual to children, tricking nurses again and again, the Lord played here and there. Lord easily defeated the gods who played (with him) mortal forms for wagers. Who, even in play, are the competitors of the Arhats? Gradually, the Supreme Lord passed his childhood, like a man dallying in the night playing various plays.

Youth

The Master, two hundred bows tall, marked with all the marks, attained youth, the ornament of beauty. The Lord married princesses from courtesy to his parents. Verily, the command of the parents must be honored even by the Lords of the Three Worlds. The Lord enjoyed himself with his wives to destroy his pleasure-karma. For the Blessed Ones are devoted to the destruction of karma. After five lacs of purvas* had passed while he was prince, the Lord assumed the burden of the earth imposed by his father who had requested it. The Lord spent fourteen lacs of purvas and twenty angas ruling the earth.

Initiation

Observing that the Master's mind was disgusted with *samsara*, the Lokantika-gods came from Brahmaloaka to the Master: "You, self-enlightened, are not enlightened by our *devotion*, but you are reminded. Found a *congregation**, Master." With these words, they went to heaven.

Then Suparsva Swamin, eager for the festival of initiation, the wishing-gem of liberality, gave gifts for a year. At the end of the year's giving Suparsva Swamin's initiation-ceremony was made by the Indras whose thrones had shaken. Then the Lord of the World, going to *emancipation*, got into the *palanquin* named Manohara, charming with varied jewels. Accompanied by gods, asuras, and kings the Blessed One went to the most excellent grove named Sahasramravana. The Master, the ornament of three worlds, there cast aside his ornaments, etc. and wore on his shoulder the devadusya placed by Sakra. In the evening of the thirteenth day of the bright half of Jyestha, (the moon being) in Radha, the Lord became a *mendicant* together with a thousand kings, observing a two days' fast. The Lord's fourth knowledge, mind-reading knowledge, arose; and then for a moment there was comfort even for hell-inhabitants.

On the next day the Lord broke his fast with rice-pudding in the house of King Mahendra in the city Patalikhatida. The gods made the five wonderful things, the” stream of treasure, etc.; and Mahendra made a jeweled platform where the Lord of the World-had stood.

Vanquishing the army of trials, like a mountain destroying heat, the Lord of the World became desireless even in the body, indifferent to gold, straw, etc. Alone, absorbed in silence, his gaze constantly directed on one object, devoted to numerous resolutions, not resting, fearless, firm, observing numerous pratimas, engaged in meditation*, the Lord of the World wandered over the earth as an unenlightened *ascetic* for nine months.

His omniscience

In his wandering the Lord came again to Sahasramravana and stood there at the foot of a sirisa tree^b, engaged in pratima accompanied by a two days’ fast. The Teacher of the World, occupied with the end of the second pure meditation, destroyed the destructive karmas, as if they were vital points of *samsara*. Then on the sixth day of Phalguna, the moon standing in Visakha, Suparsva Swamin’s *omniscience* arose.

The samavasarana

The Indras of the-gods and asuras came there at once like servants and made a *samavasarana* for the Master’s preaching. Then the Teacher of the World, a door to moksa, entered it by the east door; and gods, men, etc. by the doors suitable for each. The Lord, the earth’s Kalpa-tree, *circumambulated* three times the caitya-tree which was one kos* and four hundred bows tall. Saying, Homage to the *congregation**,” the Lord of the World, *resplendent* with the supernatural *qualities*, seated himself the best lion-throne. Then Sakra created over the great One’s head a serpent like the one that Queen saw in her dream, as if it were another umbrella.

From that time on, in other samavasaranas also there was a serpent, one-hooded, five-hooded, or nine-hooded. In the other directions also the gods made images of the Master like him by means of his very great power. There the blessed congregation remained in its proper place. There is no over-stepping of place at all in the assembly of even an ordinary man.

Then the Indra of Saudharmakalpa bowed to the Supreme Lord, placed his folded hands to his head and began a hymn of praise as follows:

Stuti

“Reverence to you, Blessed One, the holy seventh Arhat, sun to the lotus-calyx in the form of the globe of the entire earth. Everyone’s sorrow has gone and joy has appeared, O Lord. Now everything has been restored, as it were, by the restoration of the *congregation*.* The door of the Mt. Vaitadhya of nirvana^s will be opened today by the brilliant staff-jewel of your speech, O Dharmacakrin. The sight of you, O Blessed One, produces joy in the entire *animate* world by the destruction of pain, like the sight of a lofty cloud by the destruction of heat. O Blessed One possessing infinite knowledge, the speech of your teaching will be obtained by us after a long time, like wealth by the poor. By the sight of you and especially by your speech showing the door to *emancipation*, we shall have our desires accomplished today. Reverence to you whose *soul* possesses infinite *perception*, knowledge, power and bliss, the vessel of all the supernatural *qualities*, whose soul is self-concentration. Of what importance is the attainment of the station of Indra, etc., O Lord of the World, since people may become like you even by service to you?”

After this hymn of praise, Sakra became silent, and the Blessed One, the Omniscient, began a sermon.

Sermon on distinction between body and soul

“Everything here is distinct from the soul. (Yet) for the sake of other things an unintelligent person makes himself fall into the Ocean of existence by acquiring karma. When there is a distinction of the body because of the dissimilarity of the embodied, in that case the distinction of money, relatives, and friends is not difficult to assert. If anyone sees himself separated from the body, money, and relatives, to what point, alas! is his apprehension extended by the sting of sorrow! If there is a difference here, the separateness of the natures of soul, body, etc., which is characterized by their dissimilarity, follows perfectly obviously.

The body, etc. can be grasped by the senses. The soul has the sphere of understanding. How then could non-distinction between them arise? If the distinction in the natures of soul, body, etc. is clear, then how can the soul suffer from blows to the body, etc.? Certainly people who do not have knowledge of the separateness of the body, etc. suffer pain of soul from blows to the body, etc. One who does not know the distinction suffers when pain to his parents arises; he is confused in the case of pain to his servants from pride of ownership. Even a son that has been gained is really a stranger

because he does not belong. Even a servant is superior to a son because he does belong. However many connections of himself a man makes dear, so many sources of sorrow are produced in his heart. Therefore a keen-witted person would recognize that all this is distinct. Therefore he would not be confused on the path of fundamental principles by the loss of anything. Casting away the coating of mud of attachment like a *gourd*, a man observing *mendicancy*, pure-minded, crosses existence quickly.”

After they had heard the sermon to this effect, many people were enlightened. Some became mendicants and others laymen. There were ninety-five ganabhrts, Vidarbha and others, and they made the twelve angas in accordance with the Master’s speech. At the end of the Master’s sermon, Vidarbha, the head of the ganabhrts, seated on the Master’s foot-stool, delivered a sermon. When Ganabhrt Vidarbha had finished preaching, the gods and others bowed to the Lord and went to their respective places.

Sasanadevatas

Originating in that *congregation**, Matanga, dark-bodied, with an elephant* for a vehicle, with two right hands of which one held a bilva and the other a noose, and two left hands of which one held an *ichneumon* and the other a goad, became a messenger-deity at the side of Suparsva Swamin. Arising in the same way, Santadevi, gold colored with an elephant for a vehicle, with two right hands of which one was in varada-position and the other was holding a rosary, and with two left hands, one of which held a trident and the other was in abhayada-position, was a messenger-deity of the Lord, always in his vicinity.

The congregation

Then the Master wandered elsewhere in villages, cities, etc., awakening the *souls* capable of *emancipation*, as the sun awakes (day-blooming) lotuses. Three hundred thousand monks, four hundred and thirty thousand nuns, two thousand and thirty who knew the purvas*, nine thousand who possessed clairvoyant knowledge, ninety-one hundred and fifty who had mind-reading knowledge, eleven thousand omniscient, fifteen thousand and three hundred who had the art of transformation, eighty-four hundred disputants, two hundred and fifty-seven thousand laymen, and four hundred ninety-three thousand lay-women formed the Lord’s retinue as he wandered over the earth.

His moksa

When a lac of purvas* less twenty angas and nine months had elapsed after the time of his *omniscience*, the Master went to Mt. Sammeta. There the Master of the World, attended by gods and asuras, together with five hundred munis began a fast. At the end of a month, on the seventh day of the black half of Phalguna, the moon being in Mula, the Master and the munis went to an eternal *abode*.

Sri Suparsva passed five lacs of purvas as prince; fourteen lacs of purvas and twenty purvangas in governing the earth; and a lac of purvas less twenty purvangas in the vow. So his age was twenty lacs of purvas. Suparsva Swamin's nirvana^s was nine thousand crores of *sagaropamas* after Sri Padmaprabha's nirvana.

The Indras, Acyuta, etc., celebrated a great *emancipation* festival accompanied by the funeral rites of the Master and the munis.