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**The Cycle of four life forms**



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# AKRAM Express

## The Cycle of four life forms

Friends,

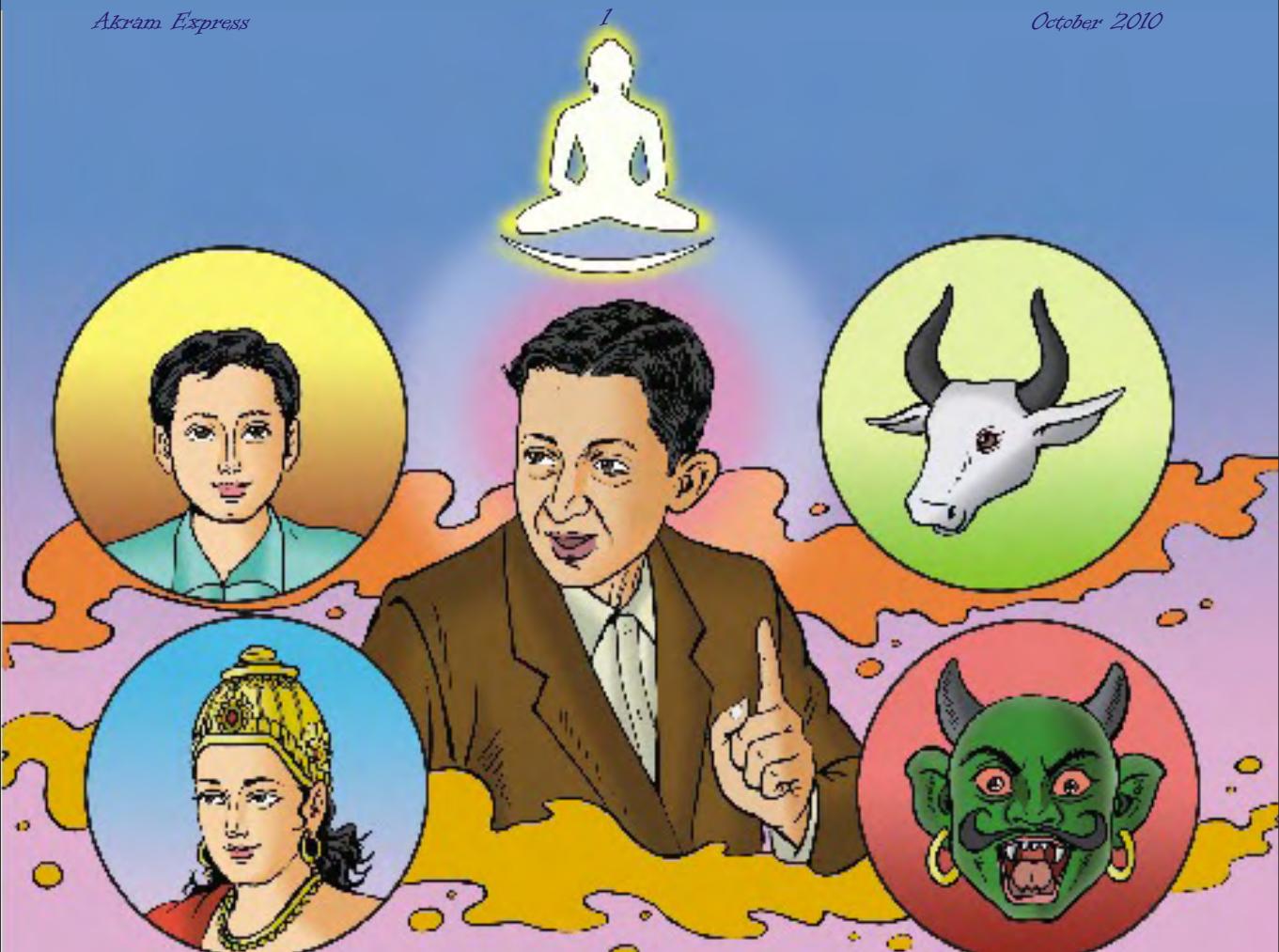
In the previous issue, we learnt that each of us has to suffer the results of karmas that we have bound. Depending on the karmas bound, one has to go to that particular life form in order to bear the fruits of those karmas. So, what is a life form? We see around us various types of living beings like humans, birds-animals, trees-plants, etc. So the question arises that who decides whether one is to be reborn in the human form, bird or animal form or in the tree-plant form? Our own karmas, who else decides? Whatever form one has to be born as in order to bear the fruits of karmas one has bound, is referred to as "gati" (life form). In this issue we will learn about the various life forms. How many life forms are there? What are their descriptions? What kind of karmas lead to which life form? etc are explained in this issue.

So, let's learn about the various life forms and also find out how we can become free from these life forms and attain liberation.

-Dimple Mehta,

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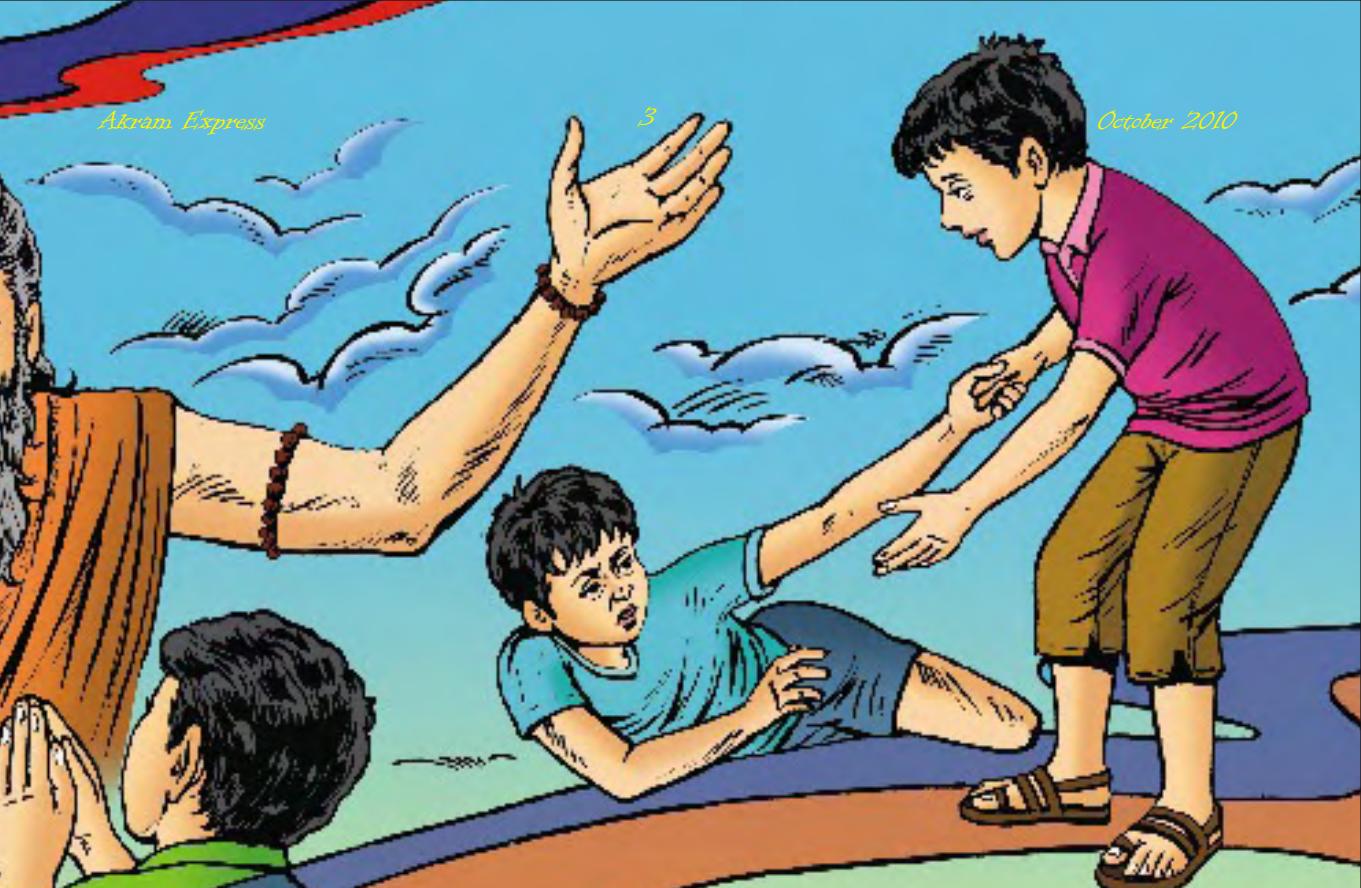
# Dadaji Says...

Questioner: What are the four life forms? How does one get these life forms?

Dadashri: You can take birth as a celestial being, a human, an animal or a hellish being. If one accumulates abundant merit karmas, then one goes to the celestial world. When the level of merit karmas outweigh the demerit karmas, then one gets the human form. When one charges more demerit karmas than merit karmas, then one will take form as an animal, and when one has charged only demerit karmas, then one is reborn in hell. These are the four states of existence or life forms and the fifth state is that of liberation (Moksh). Humans can attain any one of these four life forms. After attaining the human form, if one accumulates merit karmas, then one gets a higher life form, and if one accumulates demerit karmas, then one is reborn in a lower life form. However, if one closes the business of accumulating both merit and demerit karmas, then one can attain liberation (Moksh). These five states of existence are open, but the fifth state of liberation (Moksh) can only be attained through the human form.

# Human Life Form





I was being hit?", and acts accordingly each time by keeping this awareness in mind, then one can attain the human form again.

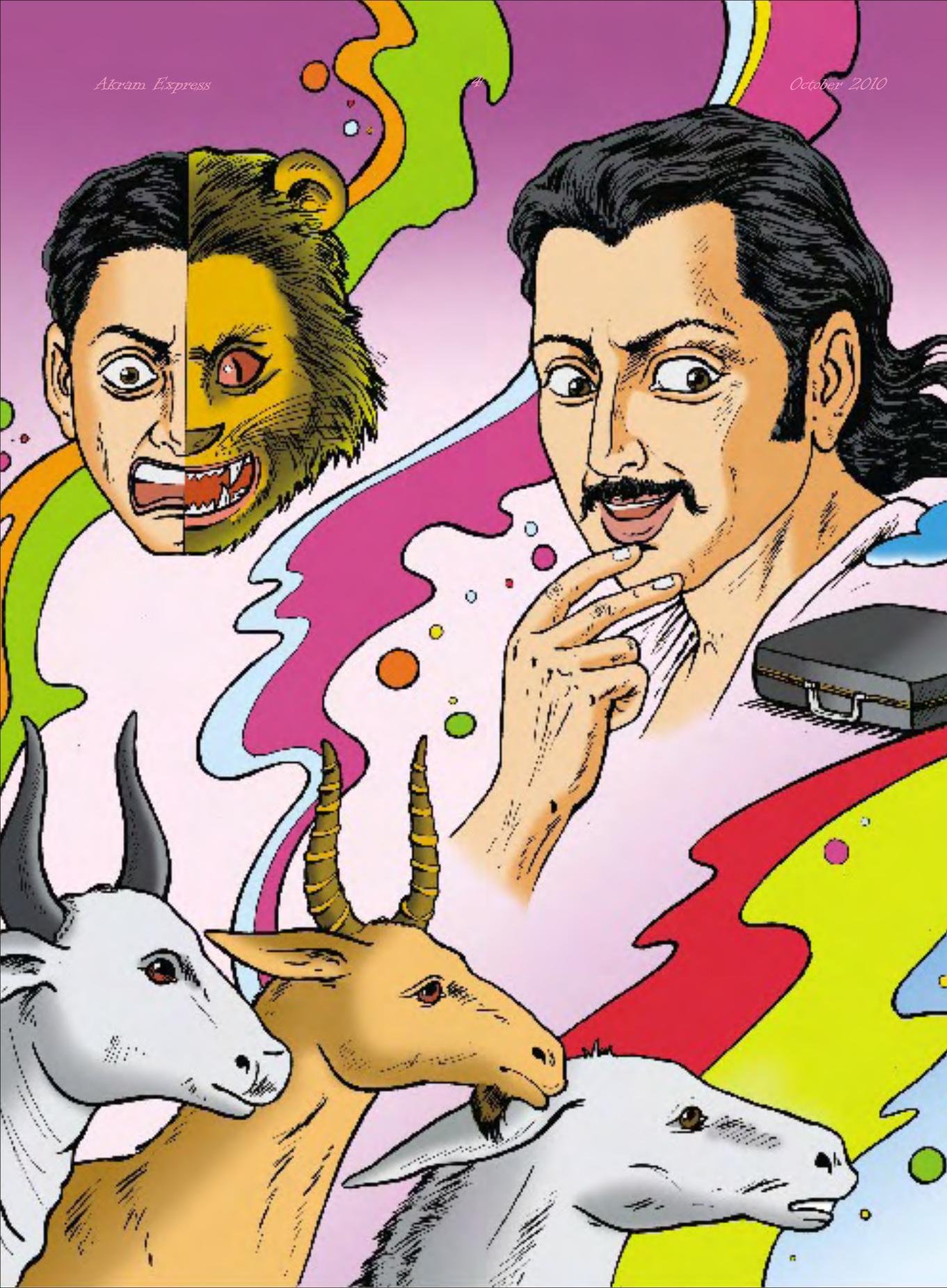
One can charge karma only in the human form. In any other life form, one does not charge karmas, but only suffers the results of previously charged karmas. In the human form, not only does one charges karmas but also suffers the results of previously charged karmas. Both happen. While suffering the results of previously charged karmas, one charges new karmas too. The one who has the right to charge karmas also has to wander in the four life forms. So it is from the human life form that one roams around in the four life forms. All these cows, buffaloes and all other animals, celestial beings and those living in hell are beings that departed from the human life form. Depending on the karmas charged, one attains a particular life form in order to bear the fruits of those karmas. So the present life form is a result of our own previously charged karmas.

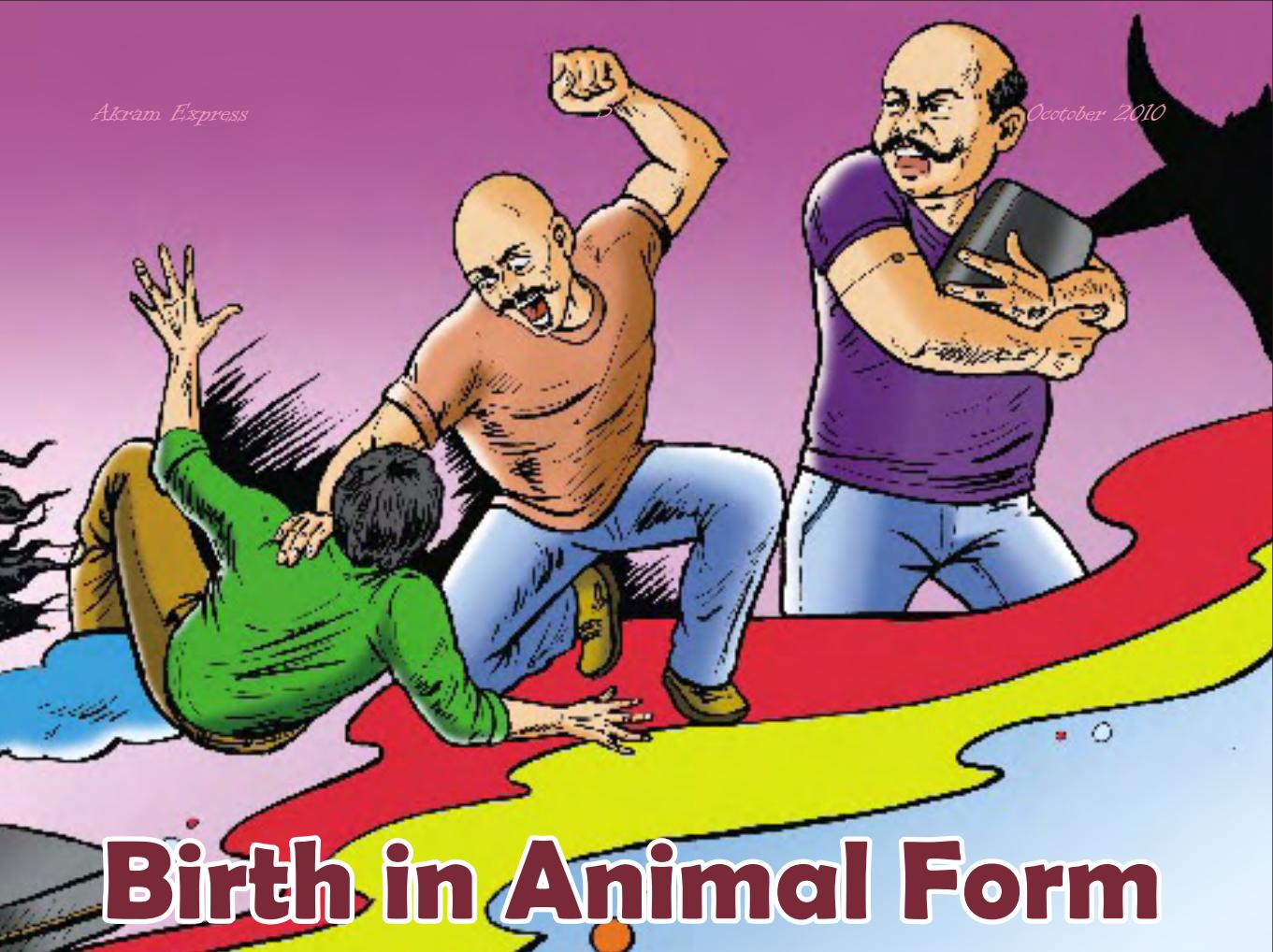
This human form is meant for attaining liberation (Moksh), not for wandering around in the four life forms! It is very difficult to attain the human life form again and again.

What are the criteria to remain in the human life form? When one consumes only what is rightfully his own, then one attains the human form.

'Rightfully his own' means one consumes or uses only that which is part of one's own share. As long as one has no desire whatsoever to consume/use someone else's share, then only can one remain in the human form.

Moreover, one should serve elders, parents and the guru (teacher) and have an obliging nature towards others. One should take care in interacting with others such that no-one is hurt. One is worthy of a human life form if one behaves in such a way that he treats others how he would like to be treated, and does not treat others in a way that he himself would not like to be treated. While hitting others or even before doing so, if one realizes that, "How would I feel if





# Birth in Animal Form

In the human form, if one falls into debt, (here, the word 'debt' implies demerit karmas) then one has to be born in the animal form in order to suffer the results of those demerit karmas.

Animal means beast. So while being in the human form, one constantly has beastly thoughts. All day long, one has thoughts of consuming things that do not belong to him. Only thoughts of, "Whose things shall I enjoy? Whose things shall I snatch? Where can I gather things from?" Then, all those who indulge in adulteration, cunningness, stealing, earning money by swindling others, get a birth in the animal form. From the human form, one has to be born into the animal form in order to suffer the consequences of these karmas.

A life in the animal form is bound when thoughts of theft, lying, deceit and fraud arise in the mind. Although, one is currently enjoying comfort and luxuries, if one's intentions are bad or wrong, then one will be born as an animal in their next life. From eating chapattis now, one ends up going to eat grass!!

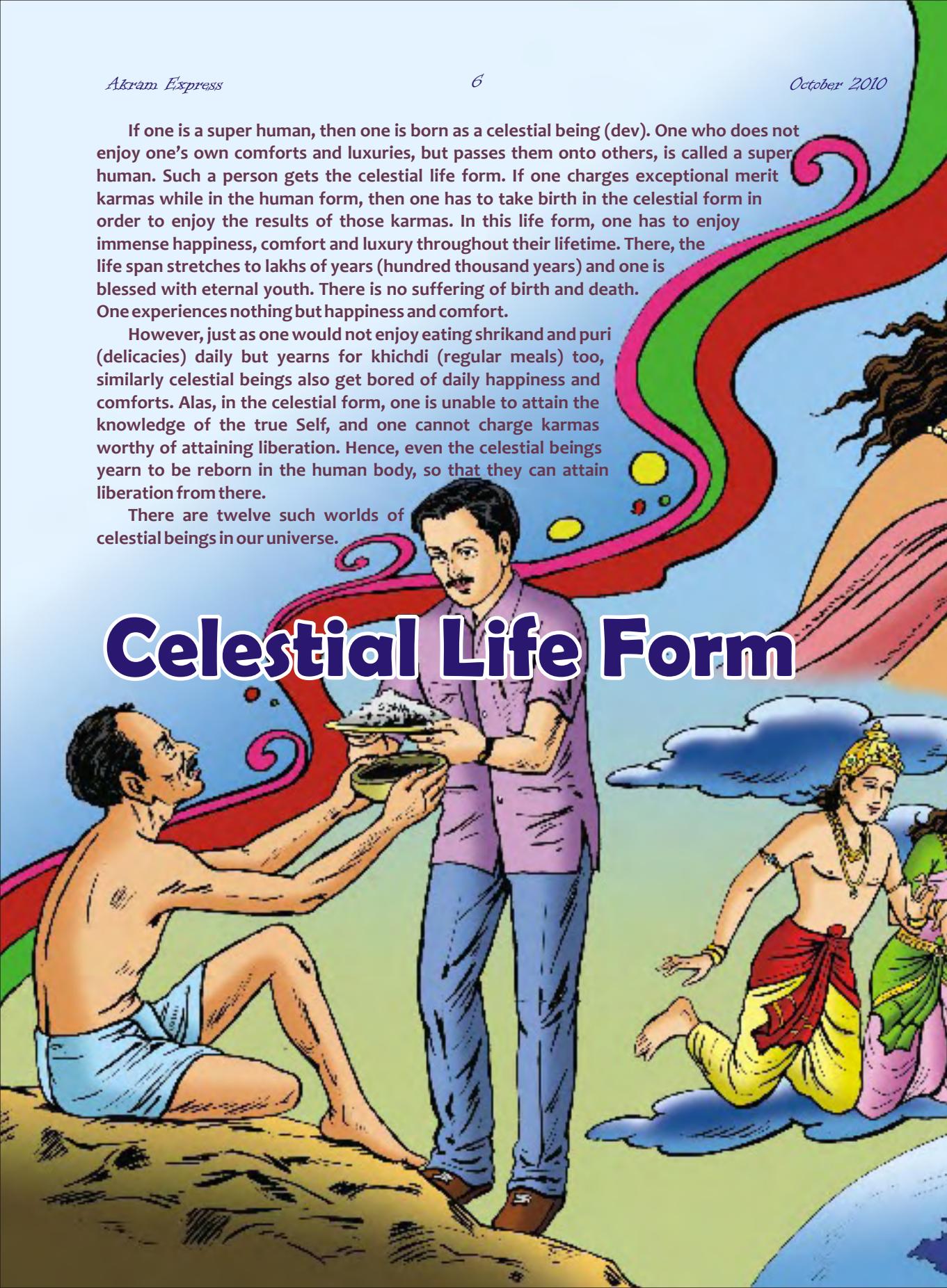
The more debt there is the more lives one has to spend in the animal form. For example, first one suffers a life as a cow, once that is over then one suffers a life as a goat, then as a donkey. Thus, one after another, a person suffers their karmas in the animal form. After wandering like this for 100 - 200 years, all the debt gets repaid! After this, one returns to the human form. In this way, after roaming around in other life forms for eight births at the most, one returns to the human form, such is the law of nature. Life in the animal form is like a severe prison sentence where the entire life is spent in total helplessness.

If one is a super human, then one is born as a celestial being (dev). One who does not enjoy one's own comforts and luxuries, but passes them onto others, is called a super human. Such a person gets the celestial life form. If one charges exceptional merit karmas while in the human form, then one has to take birth in the celestial form in order to enjoy the results of those karmas. In this life form, one has to enjoy immense happiness, comfort and luxury throughout their lifetime. There, the life span stretches to lakhs of years (hundred thousand years) and one is blessed with eternal youth. There is no suffering of birth and death. One experiences nothing but happiness and comfort.

However, just as one would not enjoy eating shrikand and puri (delicacies) daily but yearns for khichdi (regular meals) too, similarly celestial beings also get bored of daily happiness and comforts. Alas, in the celestial form, one is unable to attain the knowledge of the true Self, and one cannot charge karmas worthy of attaining liberation. Hence, even the celestial beings yearn to be reborn in the human body, so that they can attain liberation from there.

There are twelve such worlds of celestial beings in our universe.

# Celestial Life Form







# Hell

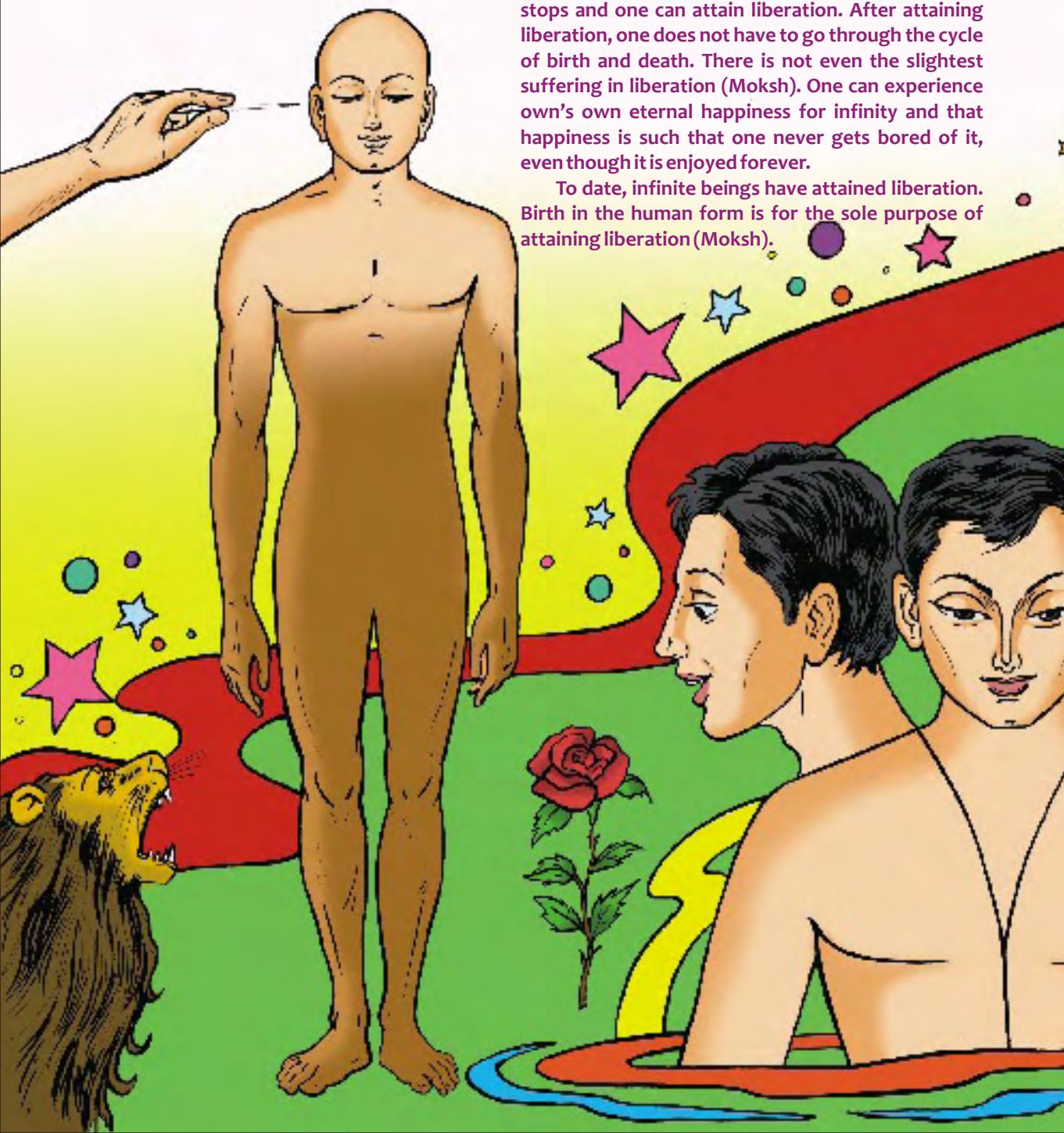
Those who enjoy that which does not rightfully belong to them for their own benefit, take birth in the animal form. Those who, without any reason whatsoever except for their own pleasure, enjoy or snatch that which does not rightfully belong to them or cause unimaginable damage to others for no reason –not only do they not benefit from it, but it causes a lot of damage for the opposite person, then those people are reborn in hell. When a person commits actions such as setting fire to people's houses, burning people alive, poisoning water in wells to kill the living organisms in it, blasting bombs to kill people and moreover derives happiness out of these actions, thinking, "Wow, I have killed so many in a single stroke" etc., such karmas invite a birth in hell.

Even in hell, the lifespan stretches over lakhs (hundred thousand) of years. One cannot die even after suffering the unimaginable pains of hell for such a long time.

There are seven such hells. The greater the demerit karmas, the worse is the hell one goes to in order to suffer more and more pain as a consequence of those karmas. After completing the lifespan in hell, one returns to the human form.



# Liberation (Moksh)



If humans do not charge merit or demerit karmas, and suffer previously charged karmas with equanimity, then they can attain liberation (Moksh). One can attain liberation only through the human form and not through any other life form. After the 'Gnani Purush' (enlightened person) imparts the knowledge of the soul, charging of one's karmas stops and one can attain liberation. After attaining liberation, one does not have to go through the cycle of birth and death. There is not even the slightest suffering in liberation (Moksh). One can experience own's own eternal happiness for infinity and that happiness is such that one never gets bored of it, even though it is enjoyed forever.

To date, infinite beings have attained liberation. Birth in the human form is for the sole purpose of attaining liberation (Moksh).



You must already know about King Raavan, but here is a beautiful episode of his life which you are probably not aware of.

One day, King Raavan and his wife Mandodari sat in their flying vehicle 'Pushpak' and went to Ashtapad tirth (a pilgrimage mountain range). King Bharat had built a beautiful Jain temple on top of this tirth. There, King Raavan, along with his subjects, worshipped Lord Shiv. Great devotion for the Lord arose in his heart, and he asked for a 'veena' (a string instrument). He strummed the 'veena' with his fingers and began to sing hymns devotedly.

Just then, the serpent king, Dharnendra Dev, arrived and after bowing down to all the twenty four Tirthankars, he sat down next to Raavan. Raavan asked him about the importance of Ashtapad tirth. The serpent king related the importance to him. Upon hearing the importance, Raavan's heartfelt devotion increased greatly and he began to sing hymns with elation and bliss. While strumming the 'veena', he became so engrossed in his devotion that it felt as though he had become one with the Lord.

Then, all of a sudden, one of the strings of the 'veena' broke and it could no longer be played. Raavan's eyes opened. Raavan thought, "Oh! May the flow of devotional hymns not break!", so he immediately slit his own hand, pulled out a vein from within, fixed it in place of the broken string and continued the devotional hymns. It was as if the string had not broken and he once again became deeply engrossed in his devotion for the Lord. His devotion for the Tirthankars reached such a high level that he charged the 'Tirthankar Naamkarma' (karma to become a Tirthankar in the future). Upon seeing this, the celestial beings showered flowers on Raavan and praised his devotion.

So friends, if one's intentions spoil, then one gets a lower life form, and if one's intentions are noble or good, then one gets a higher life form. King Raavan will become a

Tirthankar in the next cycle of twenty four Tirthankars.

Therefore, on 'Dusshera' day, one should not burn Raavan's effigy or enjoy watching it burn either.

# KING RAAVAN

There was once a shepherd who was illiterate but very straight forward and simple natured. His daily duty was to take the cows to graze. One day, he took the cows to graze in the forest. After releasing the cows to graze freely, he sat down to rest under a tree.

Suddenly, his attention was drawn to a hollow in the tree. There was a book lying in it. He took the book and went home. Thinking that, "This is some important scripture", he placed the book on a high book-rest and worshipped it, offered it flowers and bowed down to it daily.

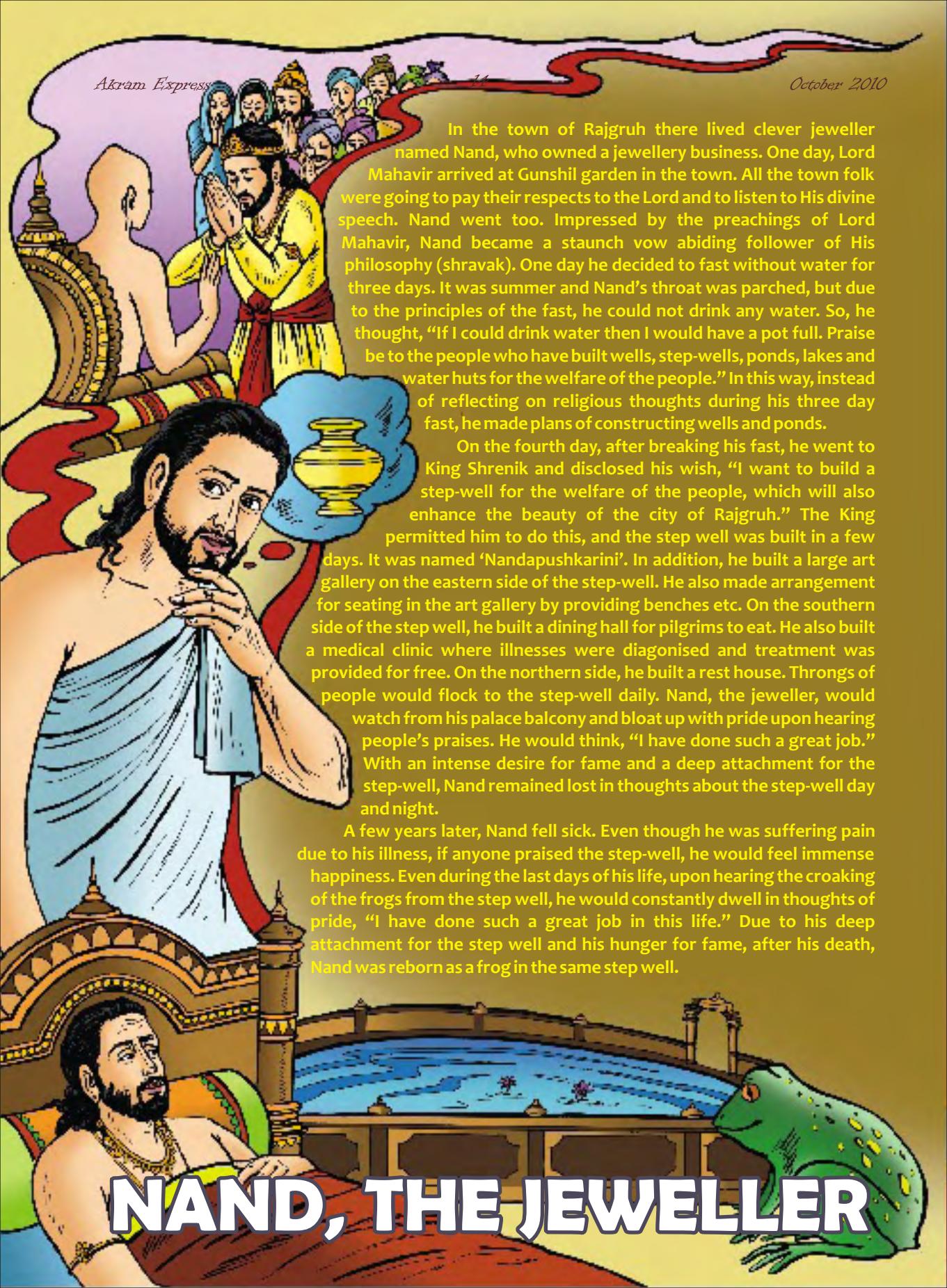
While he continued to do this, one day a holy sage arrived at his place. Although he could not read, he knew that this book would be of great use to the holy sage, so he offered the book to the sage with great devotion.

As the shepherd had worshipped 'Gnan' (knowledge) with such pure devotion, he was reborn as 'Gnani Kundkundacharya'.

Dadashri used to say that Kundkundacharya was a 'Gnani Purush' (enlightened person) who also had a connection with Lord Simandhar Swami.

# THE SHEPHERD





In the town of Rajgruh there lived clever jeweller named Nand, who owned a jewellery business. One day, Lord Mahavir arrived at Gunshil garden in the town. All the town folk were going to pay their respects to the Lord and to listen to His divine speech. Nand went too. Impressed by the preachings of Lord Mahavir, Nand became a staunch vow abiding follower of His philosophy (shravak). One day he decided to fast without water for three days. It was summer and Nand's throat was parched, but due to the principles of the fast, he could not drink any water. So, he thought, "If I could drink water then I would have a pot full. Praise be to the people who have built wells, step-wells, ponds, lakes and water huts for the welfare of the people." In this way, instead of reflecting on religious thoughts during his three day fast, he made plans of constructing wells and ponds.

On the fourth day, after breaking his fast, he went to King Shrenik and disclosed his wish, "I want to build a step-well for the welfare of the people, which will also enhance the beauty of the city of Rajgruh." The King permitted him to do this, and the step well was built in a few days. It was named 'Nandapushkarini'. In addition, he built a large art gallery on the eastern side of the step-well. He also made arrangement for seating in the art gallery by providing benches etc. On the southern side of the step well, he built a dining hall for pilgrims to eat. He also built a medical clinic where illnesses were diagnosed and treatment was provided for free. On the northern side, he built a rest house. Throngs of people would flock to the step-well daily. Nand, the jeweller, would watch from his palace balcony and bloat up with pride upon hearing people's praises. He would think, "I have done such a great job." With an intense desire for fame and a deep attachment for the step-well, Nand remained lost in thoughts about the step-well day and night.

A few years later, Nand fell sick. Even though he was suffering pain due to his illness, if anyone praised the step-well, he would feel immense happiness. Even during the last days of his life, upon hearing the croaking of the frogs from the step well, he would constantly dwell in thoughts of pride, "I have done such a great job in this life." Due to his deep attachment for the step well and his hunger for fame, after his death, Nand was reborn as a frog in the same step well.

# NAND, THE JEWELLER

Once, Lord Mahavir had stayed over in the town of Vishala during the monsoon season. The Lord in penance (fast) and did not reveal the details of His penance to anybody. A citizen of the town named Jeeran Sheth, who was an ardent devotee of the Lord, would go everyday to request the Lord to accept his invitation for offerings of food at his home, but the Lord would always remain silent. Everyone was eagerly waiting for the time when the Lord's penance (fast) would end. Four months passed by in this manner. It was the last day of the monsoon season. Thinking that on this last day the Lord's penance would definitely come to an end (he would break his fast), Jeeran Sheth once again invited the Lord to arrive at his home for offerings of food. He felt sure that the Lord would accept his request and come to his home for alms. After making all the necessary arrangements for the Lord, he sat down looking towards the road. As he eagerly waited for the Lord to arrive, he began to pray devotedly.

It is said that when one awaits someone, one's 'chit' is totally focused on that person, likewise Jeeran Sheth who was eagerly awaiting the Lord, slowly sank deeper in his devotion for the Lord.

Meanwhile, after completing His penance, the Lord set out to receive offerings. The Lord who is 'vitraag' (free from all attachments) goes wherever His unfolding karma takes Him. While walking, the Lord reached the home of Puran Sheth where He broke His fast. At that moment, the celestial beings played the 'Dundubhi' (celestial flutes) in the skies. Upon hearing the celestial flutes, Jeeran Sheth realized that the Lord had broken His fast elsewhere. He felt that, "The Lord did not come to my home."

Even though this happened, Jeeran Sheth's intentions did not spoil to the slightest extent. His deep love and reverence for the Lord rose to such a level that he charged merit karmas that would result in a birth in the twelfth world (top most) of the celestial beings. If he had not heard the celestial flutes, he would have attained 'Keval Gnan' (absolute enlightenment) there and then.

# JEERAN SHETH

Once, while Lord Parshvanath was travelling from one place to another, He arrived in the neighborhood of an ashram where ascetics did penance. Since it was already dusk, the Lord stood in 'kayotsarg' (penance while standing) under a lush banyan tree near the ashram.

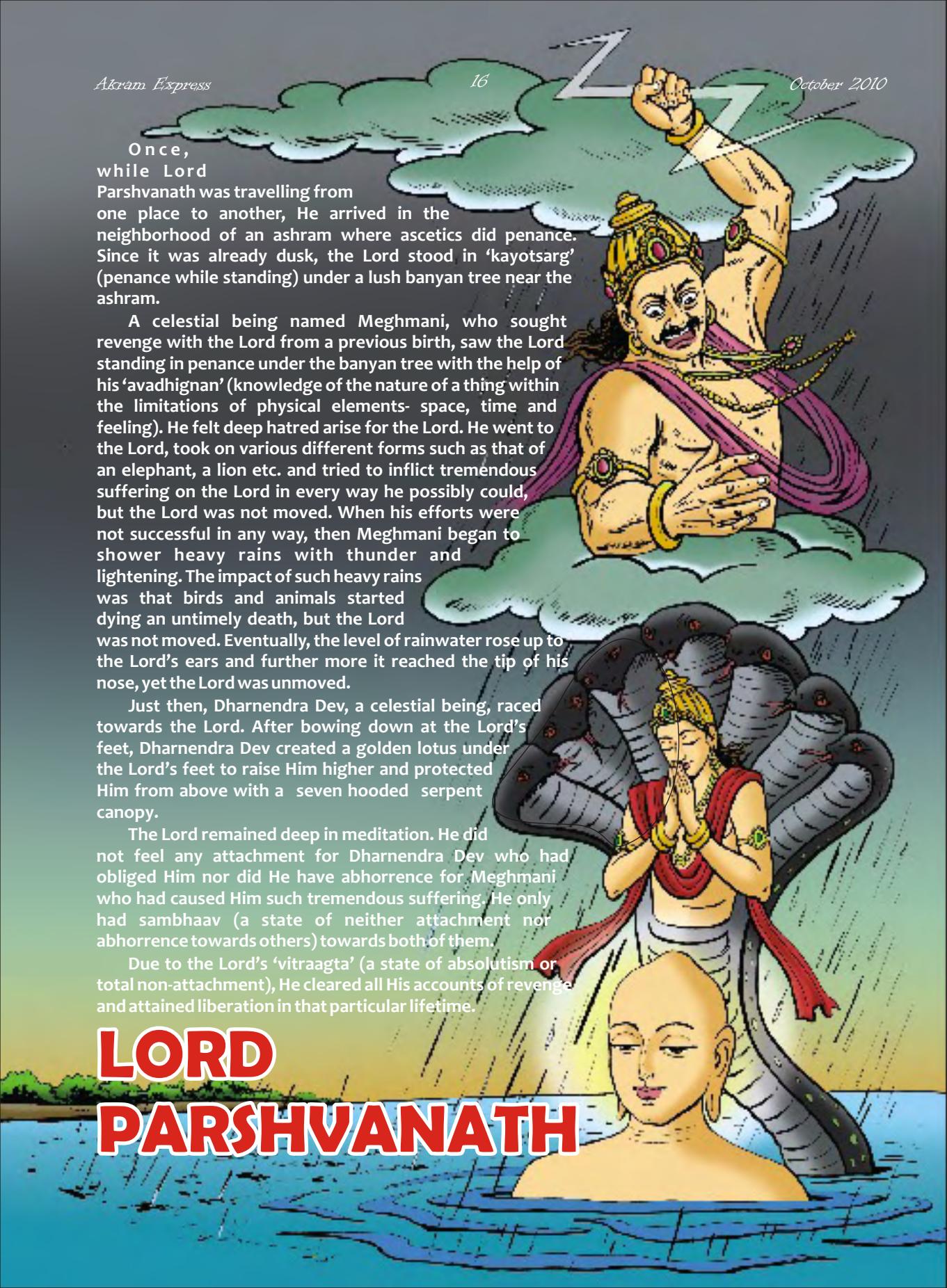
A celestial being named Meghmani, who sought revenge with the Lord from a previous birth, saw the Lord standing in penance under the banyan tree with the help of his 'avadhigan' (knowledge of the nature of a thing within the limitations of physical elements- space, time and feeling). He felt deep hatred arise for the Lord. He went to the Lord, took on various different forms such as that of an elephant, a lion etc. and tried to inflict tremendous suffering on the Lord in every way he possibly could, but the Lord was not moved. When his efforts were not successful in any way, then Meghmani began to shower heavy rains with thunder and lightening. The impact of such heavy rains was that birds and animals started dying an untimely death, but the Lord was not moved. Eventually, the level of rainwater rose up to the Lord's ears and further more it reached the tip of his nose, yet the Lord was unmoved.

Just then, Dharnendra Dev, a celestial being, raced towards the Lord. After bowing down at the Lord's feet, Dharnendra Dev created a golden lotus under the Lord's feet to raise Him higher and protected Him from above with a seven hooded serpent canopy.

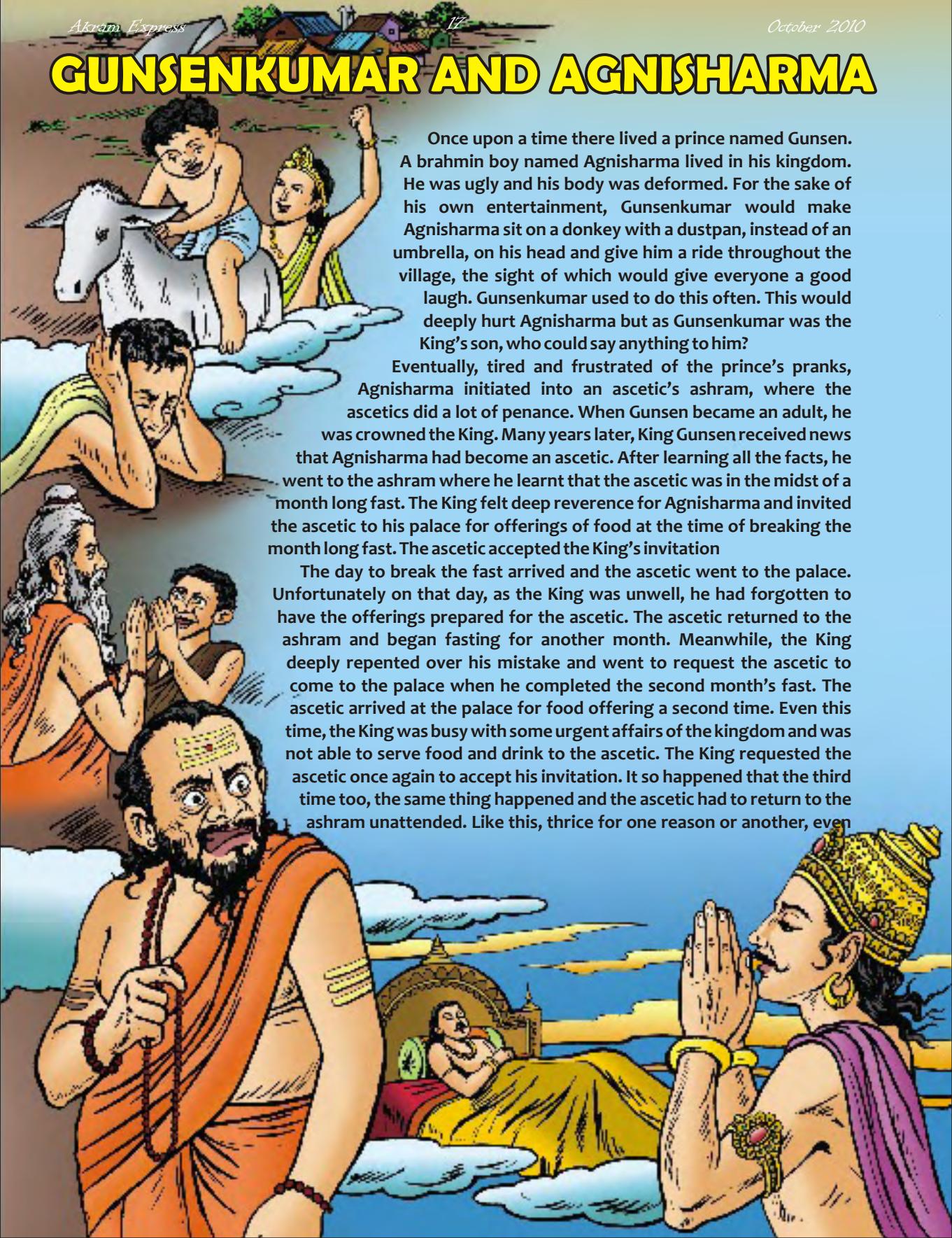
The Lord remained deep in meditation. He did not feel any attachment for Dharnendra Dev who had obliged Him nor did He have abhorrence for Meghmani who had caused Him such tremendous suffering. He only had sambhaav (a state of neither attachment nor abhorrence towards others) towards both of them.

Due to the Lord's 'vitraagta' (a state of absolutism or total non-attachment), He cleared all His accounts of revenge and attained liberation in that particular lifetime.

# LORD PARSHVANATH



# GUNSENKUMAR AND AGNISHARMA



Once upon a time there lived a prince named Gunsen. A brahmin boy named Agnisharma lived in his kingdom. He was ugly and his body was deformed. For the sake of his own entertainment, Gunsenkumar would make Agnisharma sit on a donkey with a dustpan, instead of an umbrella, on his head and give him a ride throughout the village, the sight of which would give everyone a good laugh. Gunsenkumar used to do this often. This would deeply hurt Agnisharma but as Gunsenkumar was the King's son, who could say anything to him?

Eventually, tired and frustrated of the prince's pranks, Agnisharma initiated into an ascetic's ashram, where the ascetics did a lot of penance. When Gunsen became an adult, he was crowned the King. Many years later, King Gunsen received news that Agnisharma had become an ascetic. After learning all the facts, he went to the ashram where he learnt that the ascetic was in the midst of a month long fast. The King felt deep reverence for Agnisharma and invited the ascetic to his palace for offerings of food at the time of breaking the month long fast. The ascetic accepted the King's invitation

The day to break the fast arrived and the ascetic went to the palace. Unfortunately on that day, as the King was unwell, he had forgotten to have the offerings prepared for the ascetic. The ascetic returned to the ashram and began fasting for another month. Meanwhile, the King deeply repented over his mistake and went to request the ascetic to come to the palace when he completed the second month's fast. The ascetic arrived at the palace for food offering a second time. Even this time, the King was busy with some urgent affairs of the kingdom and was not able to serve food and drink to the ascetic. The King requested the ascetic once again to accept his invitation. It so happened that the third time too, the same thing happened and the ascetic had to return to the ashram unattended. Like this, thrice for one reason or another, even

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though King Gunsen invited the ascetic for food offerings, he was unable to serve him any food or drink.

This hurt the ascetic and he thought, "He used to harass me in my childhood too, but he is not yet satisfied, and now, even though I have become an ascetic, he is still harassing me in this manner." Thus, in the fury of anger, he bound such tremendous revenge that, "I will rest only after I have killed King Gunsen."

Due to the intensity of the revenge bound, the revenge between them lasted for nine lives. In their following births, the brahmin's son Agnisharma and King Gunsen's incarnations were that of father and son, mother and son, husband and wife and of brothers. In every life, Agnisharma's incarnation would take revenge by murdering King Gunsen's incarnation. Eventually, King Gunsen was born as Samraditya in his ninth incarnation, when he attained 'Keval Gnan' (absolute enlightenment) and liberation (Moksh).

So friends, as King Gunsen repented deeply, he was reborn as a celestial being whereas Agnisharma's vengeance resulted in a birth in hell.

# Here it comes...bringing great joy... Dadashri's Birth Day!

Beloved friends,

Param Pujya Dadashri's 103rd Birthday celebrations will take place in Rajkot from 14th to 21st Nov, 2010. During the celebrations, a 'Children's Park' has been organized especially for all of you. A special feature of this year's 'Children's Park', is exhibitions exclusively organized for youngsters ranging from tiny tots to youths.

Be sure to come with your parents to see the exhibitions. Oh! And don't forget to bring your friends along.

Venue: Race Course Grounds, Rajkot

Timing: From 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm in the evening.

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