

# **From Vardhamana to Mahavira**

(a self emancipating reality)

“ Homages to the one who generated the concept of pilgrimage, the one and the supreme Tirthankara reaching the pinnacle of glory, deified and directed by early Tirthankaras, adorned by the supreme qualities, munificence personified and pining to attain the stage of eternity, evading rebirth, I bow with salutations and reverence to Shraman Bhagwan Mahavira.”

(Kalpasutra, p.p. 32-16)

In almost all the prevalent religions of the world, we find the existence of incarnated beings, messengers of ‘gods and holy persons,’ who were tuned with the supreme divinity. The remarkable exception in this religious legacy could be found in Jainism. It was by dint of sheer self confidence and gruelling self emancipating human will, that the originators and propagators of Jainism became living embodiments of divine eminence, transforming their mundane existence into superhuman entities. And this is the most pertinent facade of Jainism, which has helped to retain its originality amidst age old turbulence and inclemence, thereby demarcating the traditional religions on the one hand and Jainism on the other.

While commenting on the psyche of Jainism, Dr. A.N. Upadhyay emphasises on the psychological incitation that acts as a basic platform in Jaina philosophy ---

“Man is his own master, his thoughts, words and acts made him, what he is. It is in his hands to make or mar his present or future” .....

The traditional lineage of the Tirthankaras and their inclusion in Jain literature is rolling down from time immemorial to the present day. Tirthankaras were prevalent in every age and will be emphatically existent in the coming periods. During this time-period (The Avasarpini Kal), twenty four Tirthankaras were born, whereby their very existence, their penance and empyreal upliftment of the soul, brought a soothing and emollient effect on the sores and bruises of the decadent humanity. Padmapurana depicts the divinity of these Tirthankaras ----

“Here, in India, twenty four Tirthankaras were born in the Shravaka clan. They attained the ultimate knowledge and truth and thereby salvation of the soul by carrying out death defying penances by uprooting their hairs. When they meditated silently, big serpents used to shade their heads from the sun, by opening their hoods.”

(Padmapurana 5/14/389)