

## LESSON 17

## YAKSHAS AND YAKSHINIES

Jains have erected temples for Tirthankaras, Arihants or Jinas. We see their idols as main deities there. But then we also see the idols of Manibhadra Dev, Chakreshwari Devi, Ghantakarna Veer or Padmavati Devi, etc. We know they are not Tirthankaras or Arihants, but then who are they? Those are yakshas and yakshinis (Shashan Deva and Devi).

It seems that as time passed by idols of yakshas and yakshinis were also installed. They are heavenly angels (Vyantar Deva). They are heavenly angels and are full of passions and are wandering through the cycles of births and death just like us. Since they are heavenly angels they have supernatural powers or ability to change their forms and sizes. They also help those who worship them. (It seems that way but Jainism explains that no one else can help you unless your karmas were destined that way.) There are various stories of Parshvanath and Mahavira where these heavenly angels caused them trouble as well as helped them in the time of trouble. Heavenly angel Dharmendra and Padmavati helped Parshvanath when heavenly angel Kamath caused him harm. Heavenly angel Silpani harmed Mahavira while others helped him various occasions.

We also hear stories that many people who went to Jain Tirths which were in mountains and while they got lost heavenly angel showed them the correct path. Because of their nature of being benevolent they might have got place in the temple to express our gratitude to them.

Now as time is gone by many Jains worship them for worldly benefits this is not a Jain-like. By erecting and worshipping Yakshas and Yakshinis, and asking for the materialistic gains from them, Jains are distracted from the spiritual path and attracted to the materialistic attachments. For a moment even if we look at the materialistic gain by their worship then everybody who worships them should get benefited, but that does not happen. Therefore, one lives in false belief (mithyatva). One should not forget that if at all the materialistic gain is attained then that is by the maturation of one's own shubha (good karmas). Some acharyas has advocated that a person with true insight would never worship Yakshas even when beset with the great calamities. Because as a Jain, we believe that our calamities are our own doing and we should overcome such calamities with calmness to stop the whirlpool of reactions which would do nothing but will bring more calamities. In conclusion, the guidelines which are set in Jainism tell us what is right and wrong, but it is up to each individual to decide which idols to bow down (worship) to and which ones we should just be admired.

One of explanations for restricting some spiritual worship at temples or not making temple a dirty area is that if sometime these heavenly angels are looking over these temples and find such things happening which are not acceptable to them then out of their passions to temple environment they may cause harm to worshipers.

Sthanakvasi and Terapanthi Jains of Svetambara sect and Taranpanthi Jains of Digambara sect don't believe in idol worshipping of even Jina or Tirthankaras.

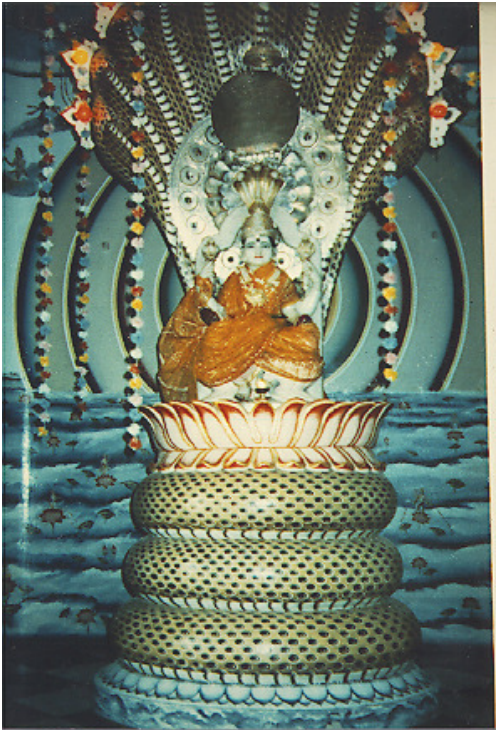
Some of the prominent yakshas and yakshinis\*:

### CHAKRESHWARE DEVI

She is the dedicated attendant deity of lord Adinath (Rushabhdev). The color of this goddess is golden. Her Vehicle is the eagle. She has eight arms. In her four right hands she holds the blessing mudra, arrow, rope and wheel. In her four left hands she holds the rein, the bow, the protective weapon of Indra and the wheel.

### AMBIKA DEVI

She is the dedicated deity of Lord Neminath the 22nd Tirthankara. Her color is also golden and the lion is her vehicle. She has four arms. In her two right hands she carries a mango and in the other a branch of a mango tree. In her one left hand she carries a rein and in the other she has her two sons.



### PADMAVATI DEVI

She is the dedicated deity of Lord Parshvanath, the 23rd Tirthankara. Her color is also golden and her vehicle is the snake with a cock's head. She has four arms and her two right hands hold a lotus and a rosary. The two left hands hold a fruit and a rein.

### SARASWATI DEVI

Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, is considered to be the source of all the learning. This divine energy is the source of spiritual light, remover of all ignorance and promoter of all knowledge. She is respected and adored by all the faiths, worldly persons and

saints. She has four arms, one holding a book, the other a rosary and two hands holding a musical instrument Veena. Her seat is a lotus and the peacock is her vehicle representing equanimity in prosperity. In some places it is mentioned that the swan is her vehicle.

#### LAKSHMI DEVI

Goddess Laxmi represents the wealth. The people worship her as the goddess of wealth, power, money etc. In the upper two hands, she is holding a lotus with an elephant, in the lower right hand a rosary and in the lower left hand a pot.

#### MANIBHADRA DEV

Shri Manibhadra is six armed yaksha with an elephant as his vehicle.

#### GHANTAKARNA VEER

This deity is worshipped for the protection and for driving away the evil influence created by the lower types of negative energy. His arrow indicates penetration of evil forces. The bow gives forceful momentum to the arrow. His symbol is the bell that resounds to create auspicious sounds in the atmosphere. Sometimes the people who are not aware of the facts call him by mistake Ghantakarna Mahavira that creates confusion between Lord Mahavira and Ghantakarna Veer. He is not connected to Lord Mahavira in any way.

#### NAKODA BHAIRAVA

This is the guardian deity of Bhairava. This deity is usually found near the entrance of the temple. People from far and near, visit the shrine and make offerings to the deity on fulfillment of their material desires.

#### BHOMIYAJI

This deity is in the shape of a mountain. It is the natural positive energy of the mountain Sametshikharji. This energy inspires and guides the believers and the travelers.