The Biographies of the *Tirthankaras*

The life stories of the *tirthankaras* of Jainism conform to a pattern. In Jain literature they provide the following information:

* Details about the *tirthankaras’* former existences
* The five religiously significant moments of their lives: conception; birth; renunciation of material life; attainment of omniscience (*kevala*); and physical death, which results in complete liberation of the soul (*nirvana*)
* Their parents’ names
* The number of followers they had
* How long they lived
* The colors of their bodies (not restricted to typical human skin tones)
* Their heights
* The identities of the divinities that guard them
* The time elapsed since the previous *tirthankara’s* physical death and attainment of final *nirvana*

The stories of the *tirthankaras* also include unique aspects of their lives that especially demonstrate Jain teachings such as *ahimsa* and other ascetic ideals.

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