

King Shrenik and Anathi Muni

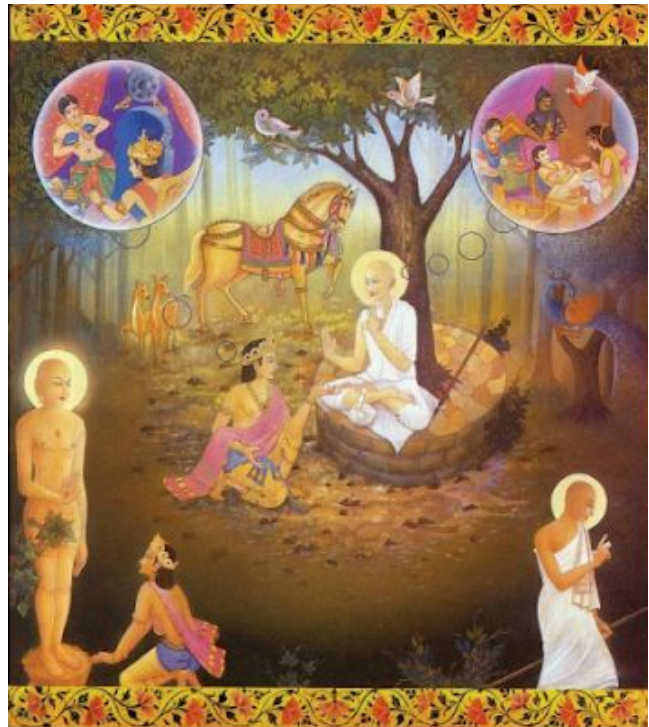
King Shrenik of Magadha set out for a forest outing on a horse. As he entered the Madikuli garden, he saw a saintly person in meditation under a tree. He was surprised at the sight of such a pleasant face with a glowing forehead and was impressed by the monk. The King wondered as to what heart-rendering and shocking experiences of worldly life might have led him to forsake the joys and pleasures of youthful life and resort to a saintly way of life dedicated to penance.

The King bowed before the monk and asked politely, "I request you kindly set to rest the doubt agitating my mind. What has compelled you to take diksha in the prime of your life? As I look at the unusual beauty of your body and your youthful age, I am prompted to ask as to what compelled you to forsake your family, wealth and dear ones at such a young age."

In a loving tone, the monk said, "O King, I was absolutely lonesome and a helpless being in this world. There was neither any protector nor a friend. I abjured the worldly life because of such helplessness."

King Shrenik laughed and said, "O monk, if you feel so insecure and unprotected (anath), I shall be your protector (nath). Moreover, a person like me as your protector will make all the difference and there shall be no problem in having sincere friends, near ones, and dear ones. In their company, you shall be able to enjoy all the pleasures like wealth, power and peace. Please renounce this sainthood you accepted at a youthful age and come with me to my grand pleasure place."

To this, the monk said, "O King of Magadha, how shall you be my protector when you yourself are unprotected? I also, as you do, possessed invaluable wealth and riches, but once when I had severe pain in my eyes and burning sensation in my limbs, none could help me. Neither could the riches of my father nor any medical help nor the sweet love of my mother help. My devoted wife renounced all the ornaments and my brothers and sister wept and wailed helplessly. I was helpless. They were helpless too. With a view to avoiding such helplessness, I decided to go for diksha which, I thought, was an unfailing remedy to all my pains. I made up my



mind to renounce the world if my pain subsided that night. To my utter surprise, it started subsiding immediately. By the time the day dawned, the pain had vanished completely. I was perfectly healthy. As per my decision earlier that night, I took diksha and thus one who was totally unprotected (a-nath) found his protector (nath) in Bhagawan Mahavir.”

Deeply impressed by the preaching of Anathi Muni, King Shrenik decided to seek refuge with Bhagawan Mahavir.