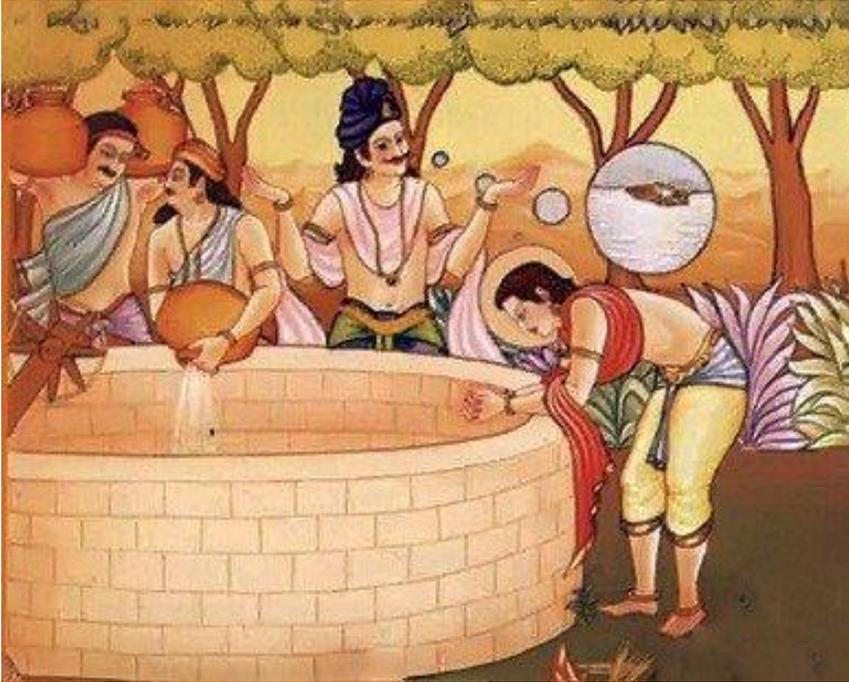


Mahamantri Abhaykumar



The message of Bhagwan Mahavir had spread far and wide and the impact was felt by the common people as well as the kings and the emperors. One of the chief devotees of Bhagwan Mahavir was Shrenik Bimbisar, the king of Magadh. His son Abhaykumar was also Mahavir's chief devotee and there are historical references about him in the records of the Svetambara and Digambara tradition, and also in the ancient Buddhist Majjhima Nikaya. It is also believed that Abhaykumar had once met and honoured Gautam Buddha.

This reflects his reverence for other religions.

The minister to king Shrenik, Abhaykumar, was an embodiment of supreme intelligence, religiosity and detachment. His keen intellect had helped to solve many a thorny problem. It, then, became customary to write the words may we be blessed with the intellect of Abhaykumar, in the account books worshipped during the festival of Deepawali.

Once father Bimbisar challenged his son Abhaykumar to retrieve a ring from an empty well without descending into it. Abhaykumar threw cow dung into the well and allowed it to dry. The ring stuck to the dung cake and now he filled the well with water. The cake, with the ring in it, swelled to the rim and thus the ring was retrieved. Similarly, he had helped the king to nab the thief stealing mangoes from the garden. Once the king wanted to learn the skill of mesmerism in order to attract people towards him from a person of low caste, but he could not. Abhaykumar found out the cause of his failure. He said: "You cannot learn any skill or art sitting on your throne. Install the person of low caste in a high seat as your teacher and then only the goddess of knowledge will be pleased with you." Thus, he established the supremacy of a teacher.

Abhaykumar was renowned as a highly intelligent, just, loving and an ideal minister. He used to learn about people's problem travelling incognito and this helped him to defeat conspiracies against his kingdom. There are many such instances to prove his razor-sharp intellect and ingenuity and Jain literature is replete with stories testifying to his qualities. He was also generous, courteous and self-abnegating. When king Shrenik thought of appointing him his successor, he, with the consent of all, instead became a disciple of Bhagwan Mahavir.

Abhaykumar travelled far and wide and spread the message of Mahavir. He visited a region known as Parasya in those days, and known now as Iran. The prince of Parasya was Abhaykumar's friend. The prince, influenced by the preachings of Mahavir, had also become his disciple later. It is said that, at the request of Adrak, Abhaykumar had sent a golden idol to him. The darshan of the idol caused the desire for vairag (renunciation) in Adrak and he set out on a journey to ancient India. The members of his family tried in vain to dissuade him. He, then, met Bhagwan Mahavir and surrendered himself to him. Abhaykumar, thus, proved himself a competent, intelligent minister and also a highly devoted monk.

In the Jain tradition, Abhaykumar symbolises an ideal blend of intellect, devotion and sacrifice. He renounced the worldly pleasures and chose the difficult path of penance. All the princes of Shrenik Bimbisar – Abhaykumar, Meghkumar, Nandisen and Varisen – led a life of renunciation though born into affluence and luxuries. Under the spell of Bhagwan Mahavir's influence, they gave up everything and walked on the difficult path of penance and spirituality.

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