ANAND SHRAVAK

Once upon a time, there lived a king named Jitshatru in the city of Vanijya. There also lived a rich householder named Anand in the same city. He was so rich that he had 4 million gold coins, an equal amount of cash, an equal amount already invested in business, lots of jewelry, and many other assets. He also owned 40,000 cows. He was highly respected by the king as well as the people of the town.

One day, Bhagwan Mahavir visited this town and gave a sermon. After listening the sermon of Bhagwan Mahavir, Anand decided to accept the twelve vows of a householder. Anand observed these vows for fourteen years and then decided to renounce worldly affairs. So he talked to his children, handed over all his businesses and family responsibilities to them, and told them not to prevent him in his spiritual pursuit. He was going to spend rest of his life in penance and meditation.

After some time, he attained Avadhigyan (clairvoyance) due to austerities, pure mental state, and the resulting purity of his soul. It just so happened that Bhagwan Mahavir and his disciples were in town at this time. One day, while Gautam swami (one of Bhagwan Mahavir’s disciples) went to get alms (food), he overheard people talking about Anand’s poor health, and that Anand had attained Avadhijnan. So, Gautam swami decided to visit Anand. When Gautam swami arrived, Anand offered his salutation lying in bed. He told Gautam swami about his Avadhigyan and that he could visualize up to the twelfth Devaloka (heaven or celestial abode). Gautam swami told Anand that although such knowledge was possible for a householder to attain, it could not be possible to see that far. He told Anand that he should do Prayashchitta (repentance) for telling a lie. Anand was puzzled because he was telling the truth. He did not want to disobey his spiritual teacher but at the same time, he thought it was not fair to repent for telling the truth. So, he respectfully asked Gautam swami, "Guruji, is it necessary to repent even when someone is telling the truth?" Gautam swami said, "No." Gautam swami still did not believe Anand, so he went back to Bhagwan Mahavir to get advice.

Gautam swami told Bhagwan Mahavir about his conversation with Anand. Mahavir Swami said, "Gautam, Anand is right. He has attained such Avadhigyan that he can see that far. How could a knowledgeable person like you make such a mistake? You are the one who should ask for his forgiveness." Gautam Swami realized his mistake and immediately went to Anand to apologize and ask for forgiveness. Anand was very happy that Bhagwan Mahavir took the side of truth and not that of his first disciple, Gautam Swami. He was also happy that even a great monk like Gautam Swami, came back to ask for forgiveness. He felt very strongly about his religion and the monks who follow it. Anand fasted until death and was reborn as a heavenly being in Saudharma Devaloka (a heavenly region). After the completion of that heavenly life he would be reborn as a human in Maha-Videha and would attain liberation from there.

Key Message:

The essence of human life is to practice one or more of the twelve vows in daily life. This story tells us how householders (Shravaks) should have faith in truth. It also shows how simple, humble and a true follower of Bhagwan Mahavir, Gautam swami was. When Bhagwan Mahavir pointed out his mistake, Gautam swami went to Anand without any argument to ask for forgiveness, even though he was the first disciple of Mahavir swami. It also shows how impartial, Bhagwan Mahavir was because, even though it was the mistake of his first disciple, he did not cover it up. On the contrary, he took the side of truth and explained to Gautam swami his mistake.