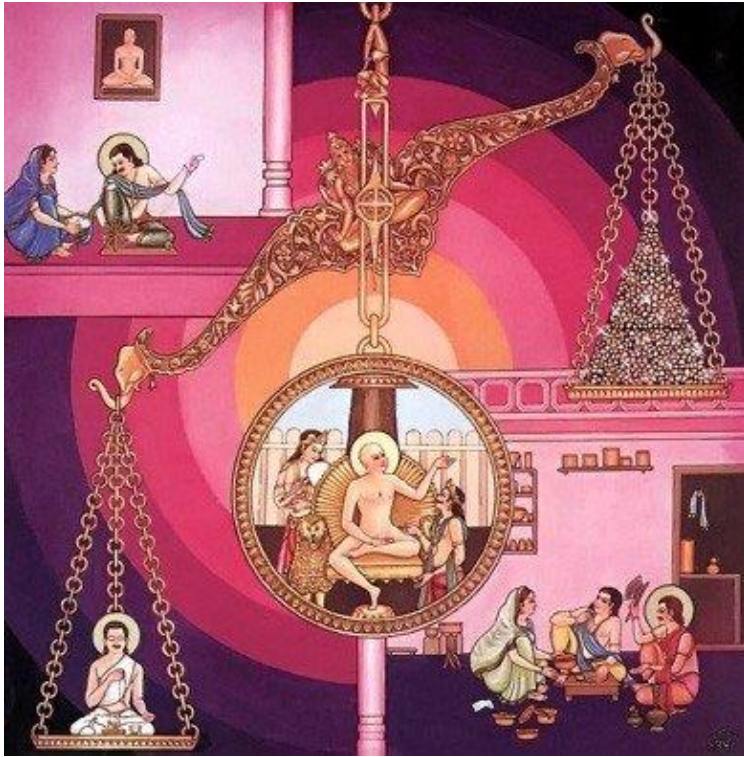


## JAIN STORY - PUNIYA SHRAVAK



Puniya Shravak symbolized ideal worship and devotion. He was a devotee whose devotion was praised by Bhagwan Mahavir himself. A resident of Rajagriha he came under the spell of Mahavir's discourses and began to practice aparigraha (abandonment of worldly possessions). He embraced poverty willingly and gave away all the wealth he had inherited from his father. He would be happy and contented with what he earned from making cotton threads. He believed that contentment had nothing to do with possessions, with wealth or acquisitiveness. It is simply a state of mind.

Being a truly devoted soul, he held co-religionists in high esteem and would invite everyday one of them and feed him with love and affection. He practiced samayik (maintaining equanimity for a set period of time) with a heart full of devotion. Once he could not worship with his usual concentration and was disturbed. He asked his wife to find out the reason. This set her thinking. After a long pause, she said: "I found in my way a few cakes of dung and since they belonged to no one, I brought them home." Puniya Shravak said: "You did not do the right thing. If no one had claimed those cakes, they must belong to the state. Go and deposit them back where you found them." It was then that his conscience stopped pricking him. A slight aberration, and he would be disturbed.

Once king Shrenik asked Tirthankar Bhagwan Mahavir about the state of his soul after death -where would it go? Thereupon Mahavir replied: "To hell." The king wanted to know what he should do to avoid such a fate. Mahavir replied: "You can avoid going to hell provided you get the punya (good deeds) acquiring from one samayik of Puniya Shravak."

The king approached him with the request. Shravak asked him to find out from Mahavir the real worth (value) of a samayik. Bhagwan said that it was difficult to set any value to his samayik as it was invaluable.

The value of one Samayik of Puniya Shravak was worth the value of piles of money as tall as the Meru (the tallest mountain). Bhagwan Mahavir explained it differently. He said: "One goes to buy a horse and the price of a leash for the horse will be equal to the total value of money in king Shrenik's coffers. But the price of the horse will be worth the value of one samayik." Shrenik realized that his entire wealth would not be able to buy even one samayik of Puniya Shravak. He felt the highest reverence for his devotion. Puniya Shravaks's life was a life of renunciation, self-denial and non-possessiveness, the life of a true shravak.

How great must be the one who was praised by Bhagwan Mahavir himself! The importance of samayik manifested itself in the life of Puniya Shravak. Only one samayik performed with a pure heart and devotion can put one on the path of liberation and help to ward off evils.

Scriptures say that if one donates gold every day and the other performs samayik, the one who donates gold cannot stand in comparison to the other who performs samayik.