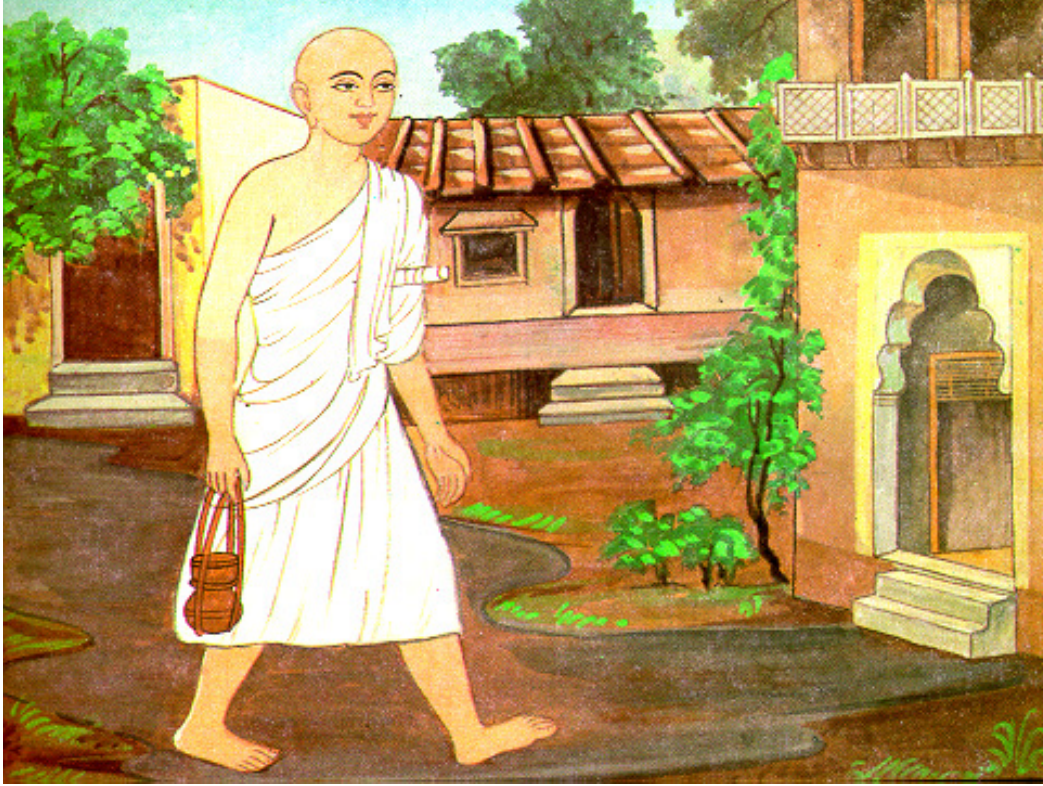


LESSON 03

MONK METARYA

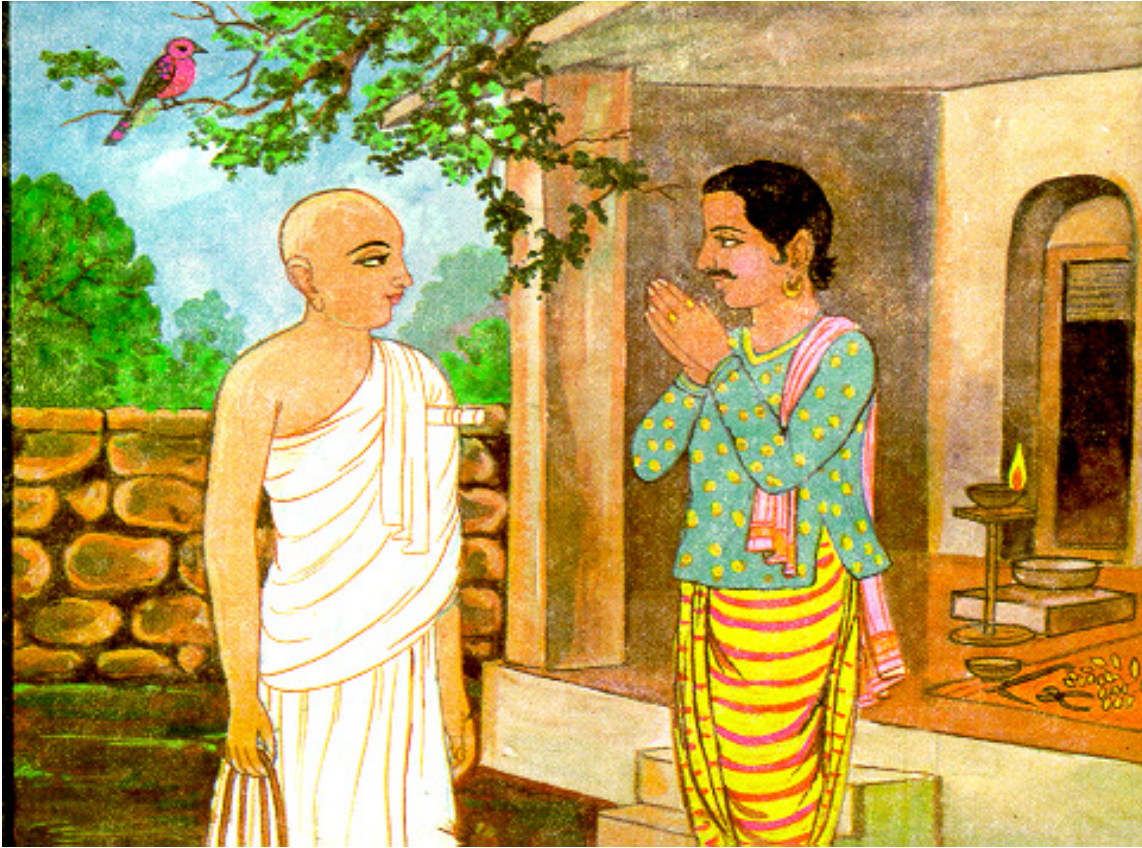
Monk Metarya was a pupil of Lord Mahavira. He was born in a family of untouchables. The Jain religion does not believe in any caste discrimination and accepts all souls as equal. So he was admitted as a monk.



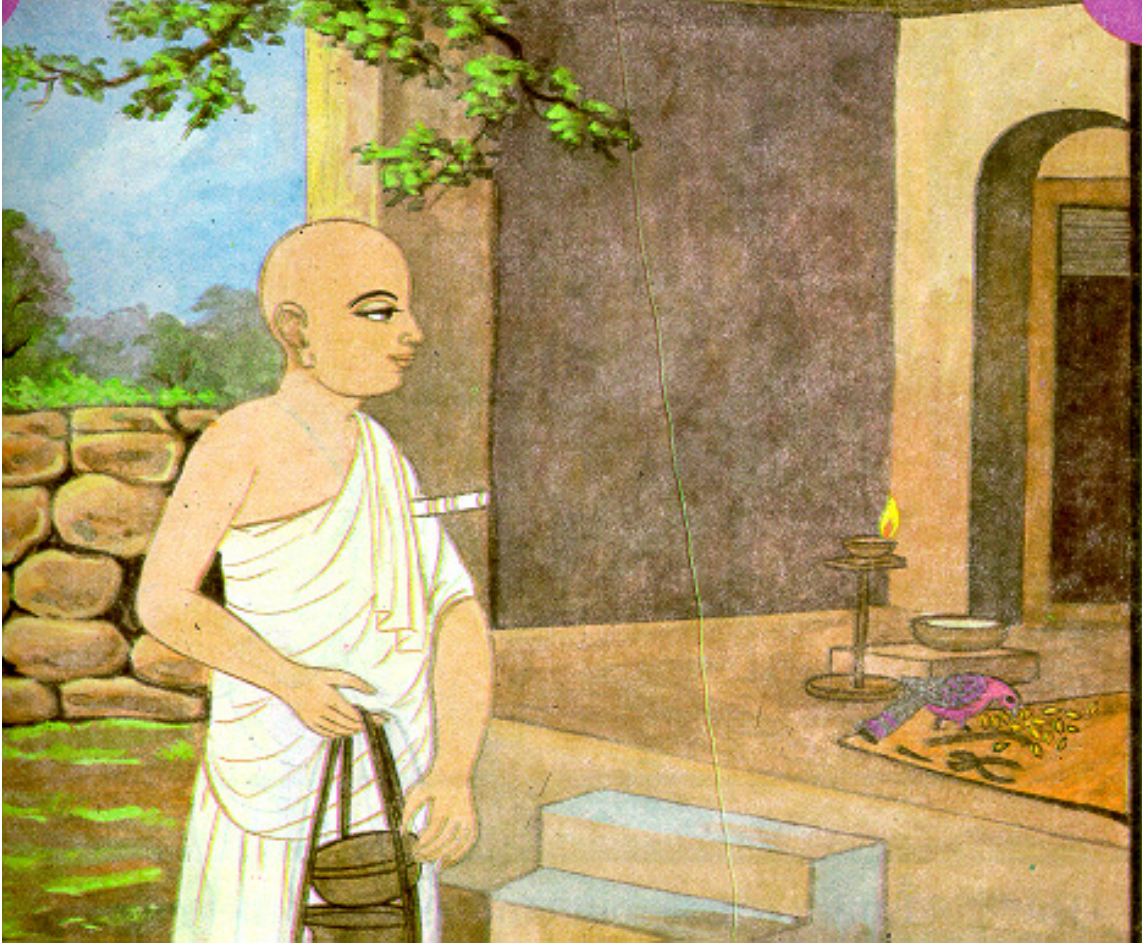
Once, on a very hot day, Monk Metarya was going out for alms. He was bare footed. His head was not covered and he had no hair. He was going from house to house regardless if they were rich or poor.

He came to the house of a goldsmith. The goldsmith was well known in the city of

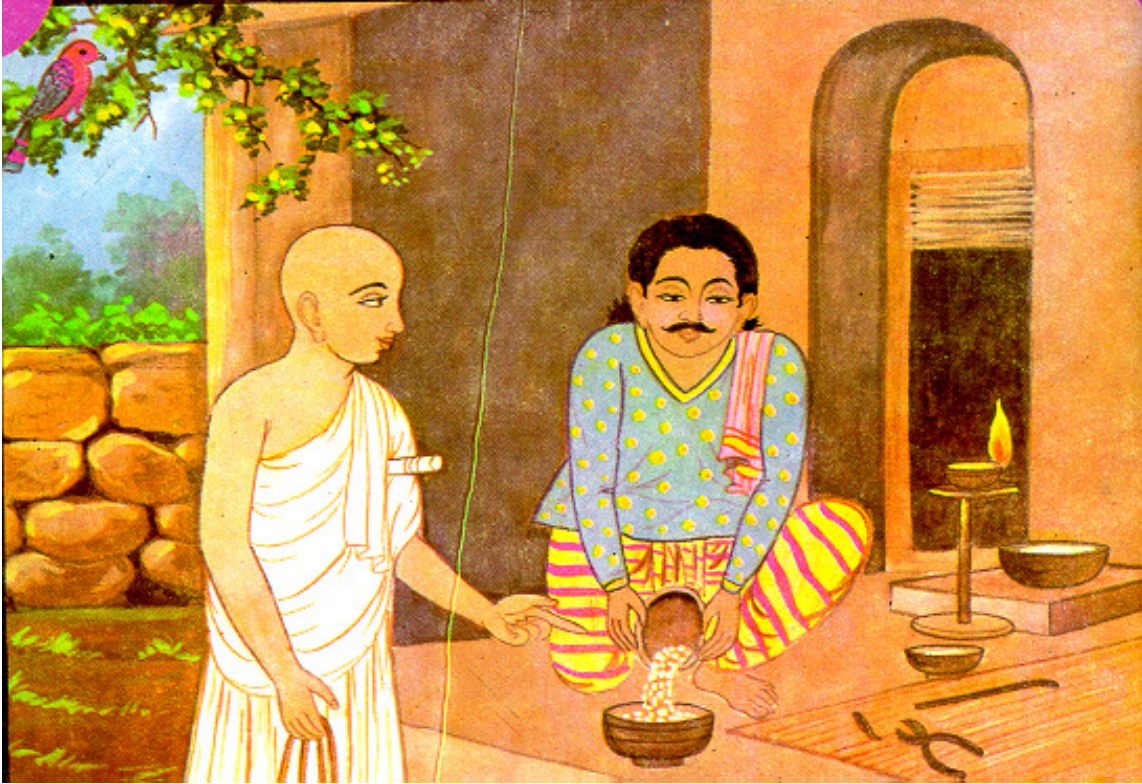
Rajgriha for his art work. Even King Shrenik admired his skill. When Metarya came to the house, the goldsmith was making barley shaped grains of gold for jewelry. When he saw the monk at his door, he felt very happy and fortunate.



He put his work aside, bowed down to the monk, and welcomed him for alms.



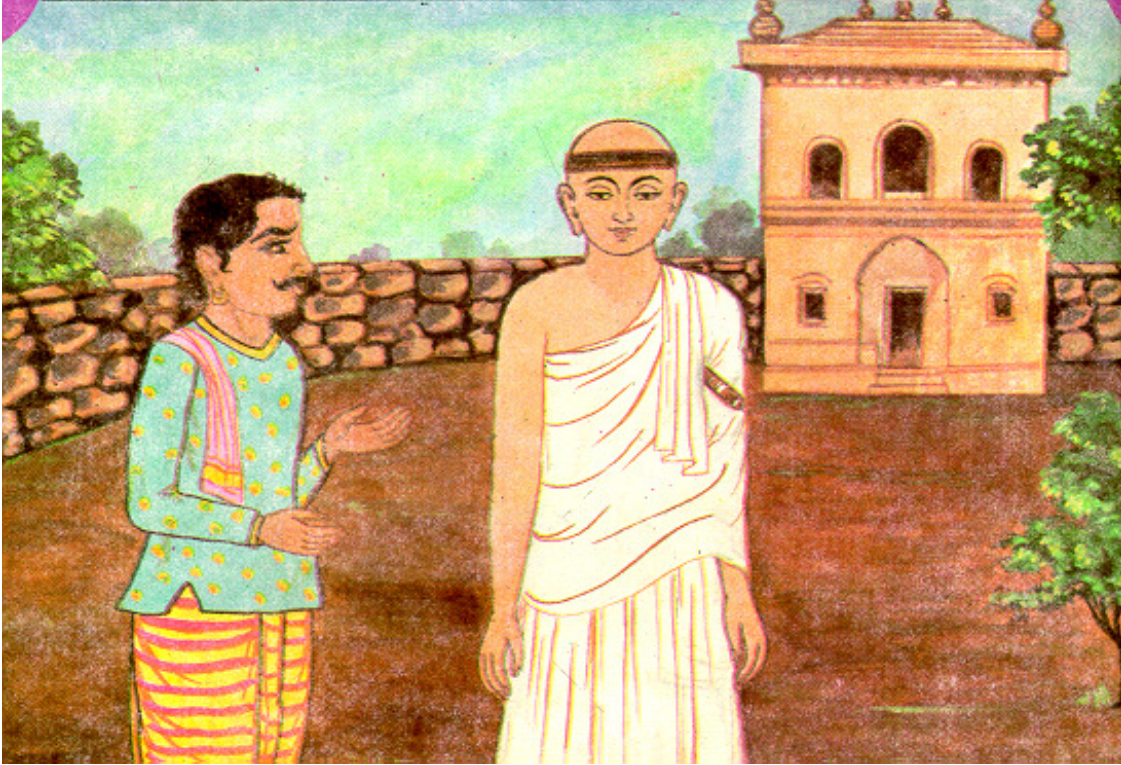
While the goldsmith went to the kitchen to get food, a bird came down from a tree and swallowed the golden grains, thinking them to be barley seeds. Then it flew back to the tree. The monk noticed this.



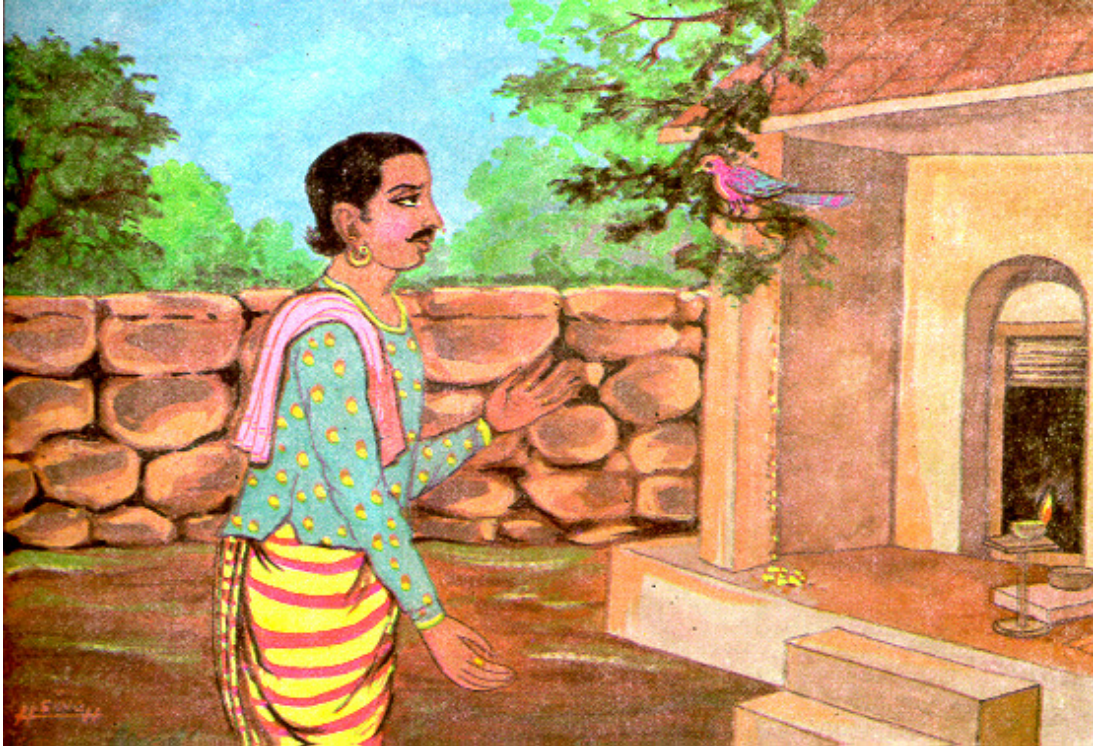
The goldsmith came out and offered the monk food acceptable to him. After accepting the food, the monk left. When the goldsmith went back to his work, he saw that the golden grains were missing. He looked everywhere but could not find them. He thought he might have put them away. So he once again checked everywhere but he still could not find them. Then he started wondering if the monk might have taken them. He thought that the costly grains might have tempted the monk. Or, he might not be a true monk and might be a thief disguised as a monk.



He ran after the monk and brought him back to his home. He asked the monk, if he had taken the grains of gold. The monk said, "No, I have not taken them." So, the goldsmith asked him, "Who has taken them." The monk thought that if he told the goldsmith about the bird, then he would kill the bird and that violence should not occur. So he kept quiet. The goldsmith thought that since he didn't reply the monk must be hiding the gold. He got angry and started hitting the monk. The monk still kept quiet. The goldsmith became furious and decided to teach the monk a lesson.



He made him stand under the sunlight and tightly fastened a wet leather band around his head. As the leather band got dried, it squeezed the monk's head very hard. The goldsmith thought that the monk would speak, when he could no longer bear the pain. But he did not realize that this monk was a real monk who was willing to give up his life, to save the life of a bird. The monk suffered the acute pain, but did not change his mind about telling the goldsmith what had happened. He didn't get angry with the goldsmith either. He maintained peaceful by thinking, "This body is perishable, and why should I worry about it?" He truly felt happy that the bird's life was saved. Under the impact of total equanimity the monk attained omniscience, Kevaljnan. Simultaneously, the pressure of the leather became so tight that his eyes popped out and, he died. His soul was liberated from the cycle of birth and death forever.



While the goldsmith was waiting, a wood cutter dropped a bundle of wood on his patio. The noise scared the bird and it purged the grains. The goldsmith could not believe that and repented his foolishness in doubting the monk. He ran to the monk to release him, but it was too late.

Questions:

- 1) Does Jainism believe in the caste system?
- 2) Where did Monk Metarya go for his alms?
- 3) What did Monk Metarya see while waiting for his alms?
- 4) Why did the goldsmith get angry with Monk Metarya?
- 5) Why did Monk Metarya not say anything about the bird?
- 6) How did Monk Metarya get Kevaljnan?