



Anand Shravak

Long ago and far away in the city of Vanijya, there lived a rich man named Anand. Anand was widely respected by the people of the city and even by King Jitshatru himself. But he was respected for the wrong reason, his wealth. Anand was so rich that one room of his house was filled with 4,000,000 gold coins and another filled with 4,000,000 jewels. His land was overrun with cattle, more than 40,000 cows amidst a growing herd. Anand grew richer by the day as he owned many successful businesses. Yet Anand was not a happy man, and he never felt satisfied or at peace in spite of all his wealth.

As Anand was checking on his businesses one day, he came upon Lord Mahavir teaching in Vanijya Square about breaking the cycle of birth, life, pain, misery and death. Lord Mahavir spoke of a blissful life, of universal love, things Anand had never known. He drew closer and listened to the teaching. As Lord

Mahavir spoke, Anand was ashamed to recognize himself as a man who sought pleasure in his possessions and his material belongings. Anand made a decision that day; to adopt and adhere to the twelve vows of the householder and renounce his worldly possessions.

For fourteen years Anand obeyed the vows he had taken in Vanijya Square while listening to Lord Mahavir teach. He stuck firmly to his pledge of non-violence, truthfulness, honesty, chastity, non-possession, merit, and discipline. Now Anand had grown old and wanted to spend what remained of his life in penance and meditation. He called his family - wife, and children - to him and turned over his business matters. He asked his family to not only take over his business and family responsibilities, but to allow him peace in his spiritual pursuit. Through his austerities, his pure mental condition, and the resulting

purity of his soul, Anand had attained Avadhijan, Limited Divine Knowledge, and was at last feeling satisfied and at peace with himself.

Lord Mahavir came again to the city of Vanijya. His lead disciple, Gautamswami, was sent to collect food for the ministry. On his mission, Gautamswami overheard the people of Vanijya discussing Anand's conversion. Anand was still greatly respected among the people of Vanijya, but for the right reason now, his spiritual purity. Gautamswami learned that Anand was aged, in poor health, and surely close to death. Gautamswami went to Anand's home to see for himself. Anand was delighted to see the disciple of his beloved Lord Mahavir. He asked for his blessings, and told him all he could of his spiritual journey. He told Gautamswami that, even though death was near, he had attained Avadhijan and could see the twelfth Devaloka, his heavenly

abode. Gautamswami was skeptical and certain that Anand was lying. He knew that Limited Divine Knowledge was possible for a householder, but he did not believe that Anand could see the twelfth Devaloka. He scolded Anand and told him that he must repent for telling such a far-fetched lie.

Now Anand was confused. He knew the truth of his pilgrimage and he knew what his own eyes and mind could see. He was reluctant to disobey or disrespect Gautamswami, who was a favored disciple of Lord Mahavir. Yet he knew it was neither right nor necessary to repent for telling the truth. Rather than argue, Anand asked Gautamswami respectfully, "Guru, is it necessary to ask forgiveness for telling the truth?" "No," replied Gautamswami, yet he was irritated by Anand's refusal to admit to what he believed was at best a runaway imagination, and at worst an outright lie.

Gautamswami returned to Lord Mahavir, bringing the food donated by the people, and he shared the news of his visit to Anand. He was surprised when Lord Mahavir did not share his doubting attitude. "Guatam," said the Master, "How could a wise man like you make such a mistake? Anand has surely attained Avadhijan and sees the twelfth Devaloka. It is you who should ask forgiveness." Gautamswami opened his heart and his mind and saw his mistake at once. He quickly returned to Anand's home without argument, humbly apologized, and asked for Anand's forgiveness.

Anand accepted Gautamswami's apology and forgave him with an open heart. He was again overwhelmed with Lord Mahavir's wisdom and fairness, in that he had chosen Anand's truth over the word of his trusted disciple. He was humbled that Gautamswami, a monk of high

accomplishment, had admitted his error without quarrel and asked for his forgiveness. Anand's soul rejoiced in his religion, his Lord, and his brother and sisters. He made a vow to fast and pray until his death.

Anand, once a lover of material wealth and possessions, died peacefully, rich in spirit. He was reborn an angel in the heavenly region of Saudharma Devaloka, and someday will be reborn in Mahavideh, where as a human he will seek to attain liberation.