

# Harikeshibal



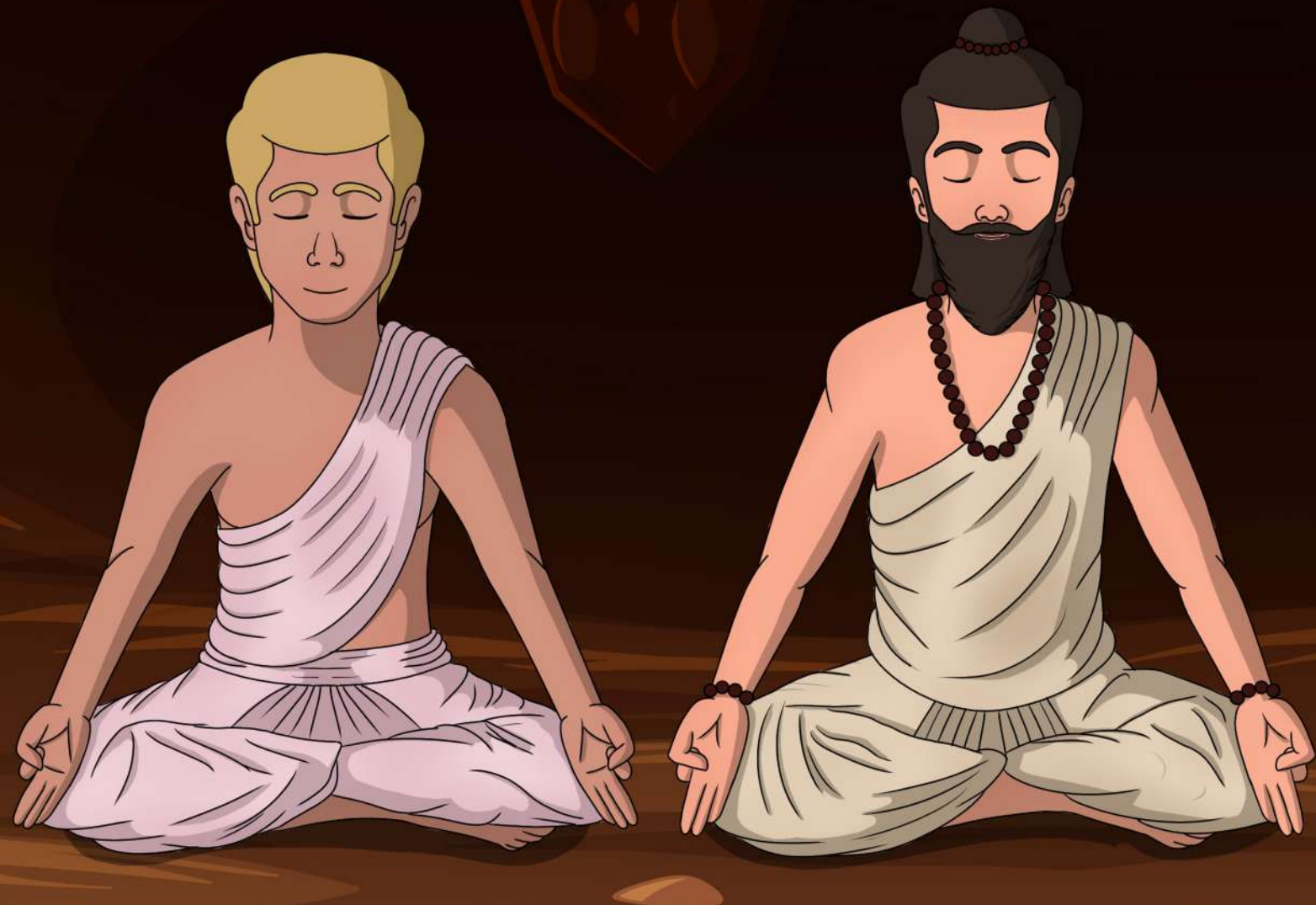
Harikeshi was a tribe of untouchables. The members of that tribe had yellow hair. So it was known as Harikeshi. The chief of the tribe was Balkoshtha. His wife was Gauri. She gave birth to a son. He was called Harikeshibal. He was ill-tempered. His complexion was dark. His face was ugly. No one liked his company. So he decided to commit suicide.



At that time a Jain monk met him. He told him that he was born in a bad family to bear the fruit of bad actions of his past life.



Harikeshibal was impressed and became a Jain monk. He was named Harikeshi. He did many austerities. He conquered anger and other passions.



Once Harikeshibal stayed in Tinduga Tree near Varanasi. An angel was the presiding deity of that Tree. He was impressed by the austere life of Harikeshi. He became his devoted follower. King Kaushalik was a devotee of the angel. Bhadra was his daughter.



Once, Bhadra came to the temple to pay homage. Harikeshibal was also there at that time. She looked at the monk with a frown. In order to punish her for this action, the angel entered her. She became crazy. No physician could cure her lunacy.



One day the angel told the King that she would recover only if she was offered to Muni Harikeshi, the monk, as his bride. The King agreed.

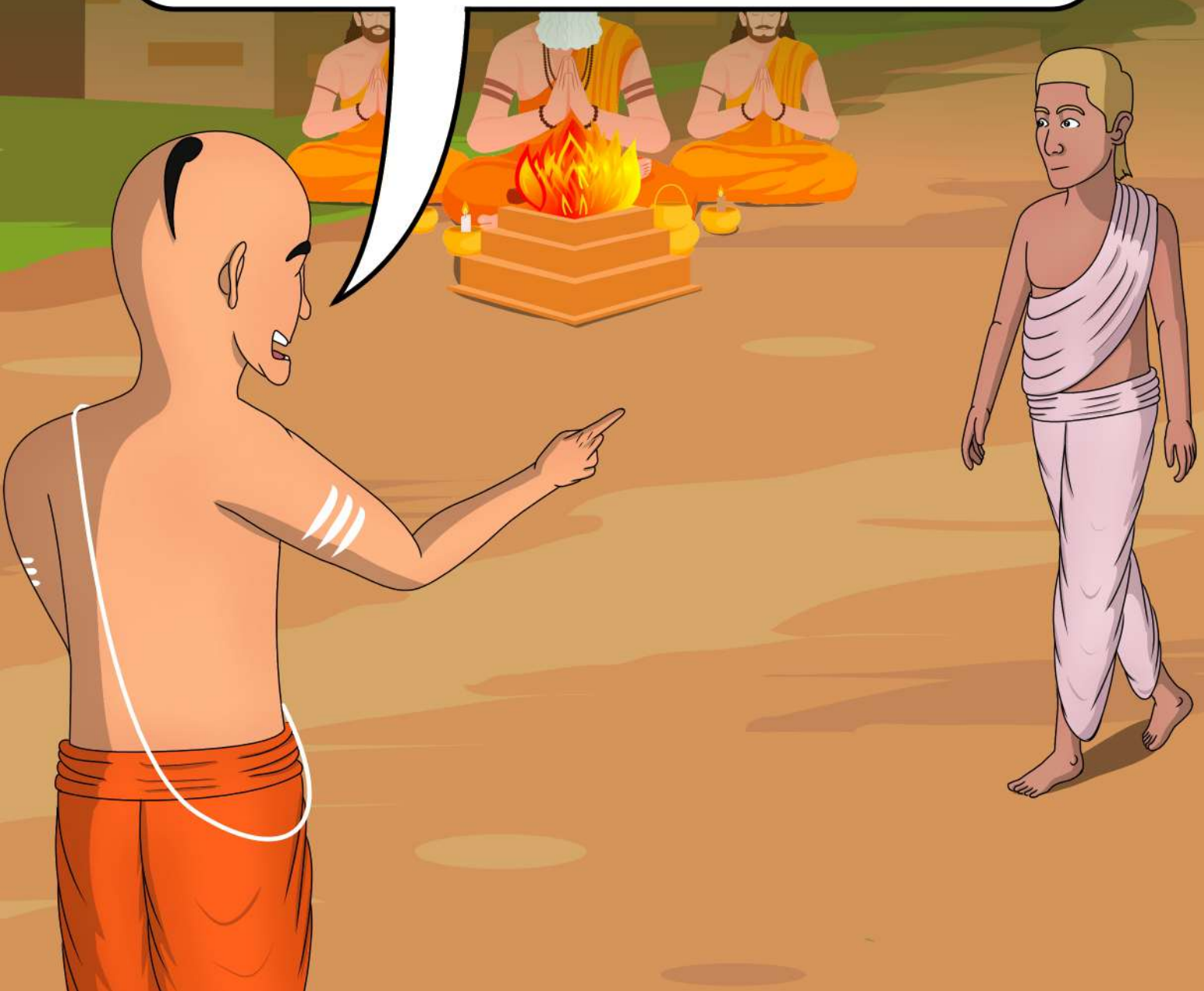


King Kaushalik went to the shrine with his daughter Bhadra. He offered Bhadra to the monk. But the Muni Harikeshi refused. Muni Harikeshi told him that Jain monks do not touch a woman so forget about marriage. The King then married Bhadra to his Bishop Rudradev.



Once Muni Harikeshi on his Bhiksha (alms taking) tour came to a Yajna. Brahmins saw him in the poorest outfit. Muni Harikeshi was also weak. His body was so thin due to austerities and his bones were visible. Muni Harikeshi was coming to the sacrificial place (Yajna) for Bhiksha. Brahmins were proud of their caste. They had no control over their senses and passions. They shouted,

"Who is the ugly person coming over here? He is dreadful. He is dirty. He looks like a devil."



When Muni Harikeshi came near them, they asked,

"Who are you?  
Why have you come here?  
Why are you standing here?  
Get away, you dirty man."



The angel who lived on the Tundak tree had respect for Muni Harikeshi, the monk. He made his own body invisible, replied.

"I am a monk. I have no property. I do not cook my food. I have complete control over my passions. I have come for food. You ate too much food and drinks. Give the monk that food which is left out."

Brahmins replied,

"The dinner has been prepared specially for us, the Brahmins. We shall not give you such food and drink. You should not stay here. Why don't you get away."



The angel in the monk said,

"The farmer throws the corn on the ground for a return. Consider me the ground. It may produce merit in return for your compassion."

Brahmins replied,

"We are the fields on which gifts sown grow as merit. Only Brahmins of pure birth and knowledge are the fertile fields."



Angel replied,

"You have learned the Vedas. But you do not know the basic meaning of Vedas. Those who are full of anger or pride, or kill for sacrifice or own properties are not true Brahmins. They are bad fields. Saints call on any houses for their needs are real fields."



Brahmins replied,

"Pest of the learned. How are you so bold to speak before us in this manner? Our food may get spoiled but we shall not give it to you."

Angel in monk,

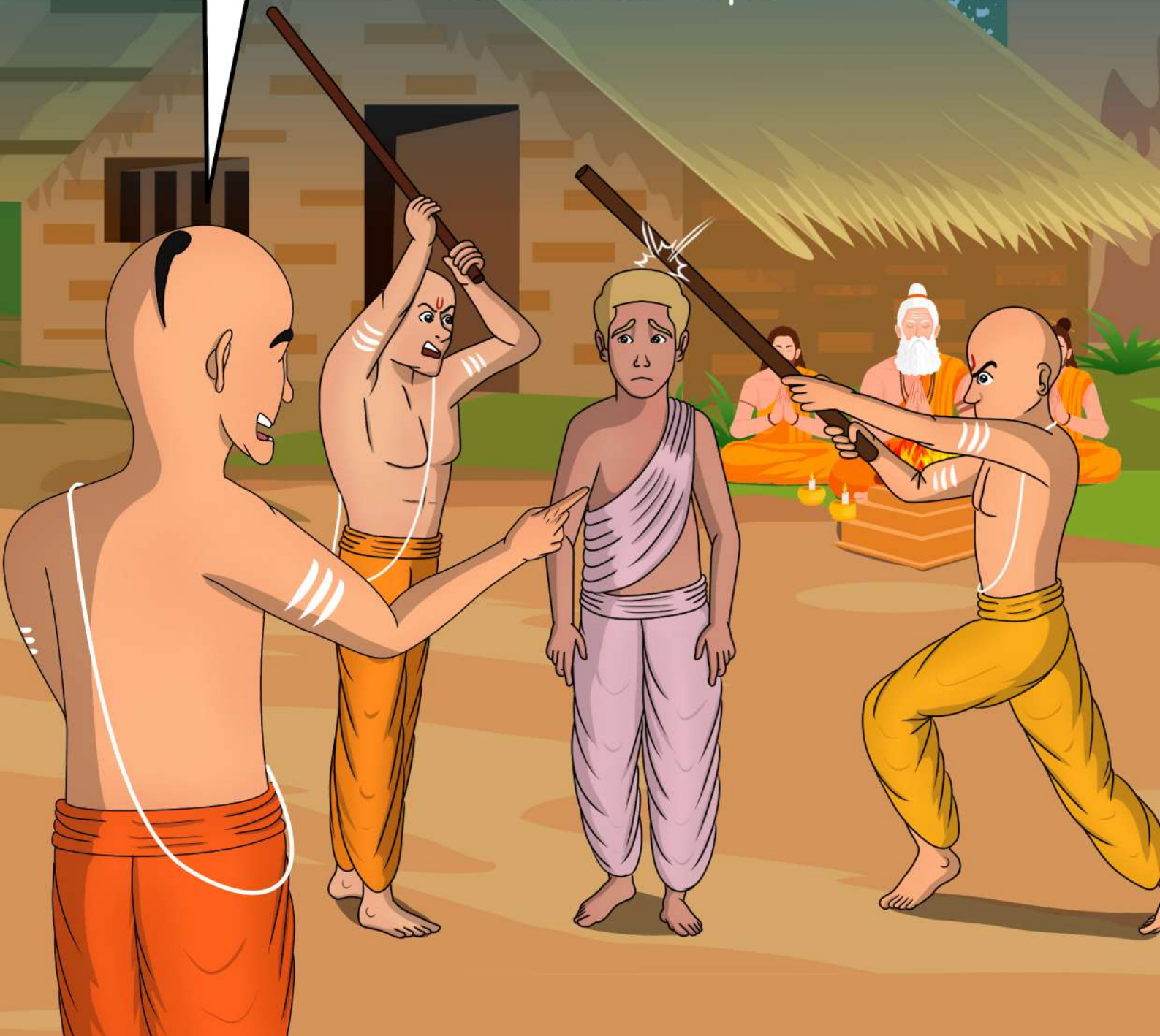
"I observe Samitis and Guptis. I have complete control over my senses. If you do not give me what I ask for, what will be your gain from sacrifices?"



Brahmins told their other Brahmins,

"O Priests, who are nurturing the fire, teachers and their disciples beat this ugly monk with a stick. Shower him with stones. Hold him by the neck and drive him off."

Many young Brahmins then rushed forward and beat Muni Harikeshi with sticks and whips.



Right at that time Bhadra came to the temple and saw the young Brahmins beating the monk. She shouted,

"Do not ill treat the monk. He is a great sage of severe austerities. He has excellent spiritual power. He did not accept me when I was offered to him by my father. If you beat the monk on his demand for Bhiksha, you will fall into the fire like a swarm of moths. You should stretch out face down before him and seek pardon immediately for your rude behavior. He with his curse can reduce the world to ashes."



Rudradeva saw the worst condition of the young Brahmins. He saw blood coming from their mouths. Their eyes were stationary like stone and their bodies motionless. He felt miserable. He came to the monk with his wife and said,

"Sir, forgive us and these young Brahmin boys. They are the fools. You are gracious. Be kind to us."

Muni Harikeshi replied,

"I have no hatred now, nor had it earlier or will never have in the future. The angel who attends to me has beaten the Brahmin boys."



Brahmins replied,

"You know the truth. You are not angry. You are compassionate. We seek your mercy. All of us bow before you. We worship you. There is nothing in you that we do not honor. Plenty of food is ready and we offer it to you. Do us a favor by accepting the food."



Muni Harikeshi was on one month's fast and that day he had come for alms to break his fast. He accepted food and drink with compassion. The angels celebrated the occasion. Brahmins then requested Muni Harikeshi to guide them on the path for purification. Muni Harikeshi said,

"You seek external purity by nurturing the fire. This is not the true path. You use grass, straw, wood and water. All of them are bodies of living beings. You injure them in ignorance. So you commit sins again and again."

Brahmins replied,

"You have given us the true meaning. We were fools. Now kindly show us the path for real happiness."



Muni Harikeshi said,

"Do not injure any living being. Avoid telling lies. Do not take what is not generously given. Wipe out pride and deceit. Do not keep women and property. Live under self restraint. Observe five Sanvars to check the influx of Karma."

Brahmins asked,

"What type of Yajna should we perform? Kindly tell us what should be our fireplace, and what should we sacrifice in the fire as fuel?"



Muni Harikeshi replied,

"Life is the fireplace, penance is the fire, body is the cow dung, karma is the fuel. Be pure by wiping out Karmas by observing self control."

Brahmins asked,

"Where is the lake? Where is the bathing place?"

Muni Harikeshi replied,

"Law is the lake. Celibacy is the bathing place."



The Brahmins felt happy. They became followers of Muni Harikeshi.

