RAJARSHI PRASANNACHANDRA
(राजर्षि प्रसान्नचन्द्र)

A Story

Once when Bhagawān Mahāwīr (see end of story), together with his many disciples, was giving his discourses in a garden outside the city of Rājagrihi, among his disciples was Prasannachandra, who was once upon a time a king, but now was adorned by the jewel of perfect non-attachment (बैराज्य). The Rājarshi (i.e. king–asectic) was standing at one end of the garden in deep Dhyāna (meditation), which was carried–out while performing severe penance (तप – Tapa): He was standing on one foot, his two hands were held up, and his eyes were fixed on the sun!

The Lord of the kingdom of Magadha – of which Rājagrihi was the capital – Mahārājā Shreyāka, came to know of the arrival of the Bhagawān, and so with his full retinue and pomp, he set forth towards the garden for the holy Darshana (i.e. to see the holy presence).

There were two soldiers walking at the helm of the royal procession, and their eyes fell on the Rājarshi. One of them said: "Blessed is this muni (saint)! Who can emulate him in such severe penance?" When the other heard him, he said: "My friend! What is so great about this!? He left his helpless baby-son on the throne, to do such penances; and gave all the powers of the state to his ministers; and now the ministers are plotting to ānihilate the child-king. They will surely kill him and capture for themselves the kingdom of Potanpur, whose king was this Prasannachandra. Thus there will be a tragic end to his reign! So, I abhor and detest from the bottom of my heart this so called great asectic, who has not even cared for his own son! Let there be no son in this whole world, who gets a father like him!"
After the soldiers had passed, the Mahārājā also came to the same spot. When he saw the Rājarṣi doing this difficult penance, he was filled with veneration and he bowed down to him. Then, he went to Bhagawān Mahāwîr and after bowing down to him with the utmost respect in his heart; he started listening to his holy preachings.

When the opportunity came he asked: "O Lord! How exalted is the penance of Rājarṣi Prasannachandra! If he had passed away at the moment when I was doing my salutations to him, what would have been his next birth?"

The Lord of all the great saints (भ्रमण), Bhagawān Mahāwîr replied: "He would be born in the seventh hell (i.e. the worst possible birth)!

Hearing this answer, Mahārājā Shrevika was very much surprised (because he thought such severe Tapa and Dhyāna would have led to a high birth); and he asked again: "O Lord! If he were to pass away now, then what would be his next birth?"

The reply was: "In the heaven called Sarwārtha Siddha Wimān he would be born as a Deva (deity)."

The king's surprise grew considerably and he exclaimed: 'Why so!?'

After a very shortwhile, one could hear the beating of the heavenly drums (Dundubhi – दुंदुभि), and proclamations of Victory! Victory! (वधनाद) in the air. When the king of Magadha heard this he again asked: "O Lord! what is the meaning of these sounds of drums and victory?"

The Bhagawān Mahāwîr answered: "The Rājarṣhi has now achieved Omniscience (केवलम्प्राप्त – Kewalgnâna), and hence has put an end to all further cycles of births and deaths. It is because of this that the Devas are beating the heavenly drums and gloriously proclaiming his Victory!"
Being greatly puzzled, the Mahārājā exclaimed: “O Sire! All these happenings are fantastic and beyond my comprehension; be gracious and kind, O Lord, and please explain to me the mystery of it all.”

Then the compassionate Bhagawān said: “O king, when you were coming towards me, your soldiers were talking amongst themselves; and this talk fell on the ears of Rājarshi Prasannachandra; and there was a break in his Dhyāna. He started thinking: “Oh! the very men on whom I put all my trust, have now become ungrateful and turned traitorous. So much so, that they are prepared to even kill my infant-child, and usurp the kingdom. Oh! if I were only there, I would have done away with these treacherous ministers!” So thinking, there was profuse anger in his mind and this went on gathering strength. So he forgot the life-long vow (ब्रज – Wrat) of Sāmāyika (सामायिक/समता) that he had taken at the time of his initiation into the life of an ascetic. He visualized the ministers all arrayed infront of him, and he further saw himself giving battle to them. He fought a most gruesome battle......all in his own mind.......and used a numerous weapons in the process! So doing, he found he had no more weapons left and he thought: “Upon my head is the iron helmet; let me throw it and so kill the enemy!” In such a state of profound anger, he put his hand on his head — and this was the moment, Shrevika, when you did your salutations to the Rājarshi; and had he passed away then, he would have gone to the seventh hell.”

“As soon as his hand touched his head, he remembered that his head was hairless (for all Sādhus, at the time of initiation have their hair completely removed), and at once, his anger subsided. Not only that, but he started thinking. “Oh! I have taken a life-long vow of Sāmāyika and so have renounced doing any violence whatever through either the mind, or the speech or the body. Oh! What have I done! Oh Lord! I have broken my Dharma Dhyāna (i.e. the holy Dhyāna) and instead was enveloped in the clutches of Rāudra Dhyāna (the most impure of
all Dhyānas! I have to be full of Maitri (सेत्री – sympathy and friendliness) to all creatures, and in such a state where is room for rāga (राग – attachment) towards my son, and dwesha (द्वेष – aversion) for my ministers! Oh! Oh! I have done a great wrong! I am disgusted by it, and I deprecate it with all my heart! And I shall, and I am removing from my Atmā such dastardly thoughts!” So, O king, when he was at this point of such a chain of thoughts, you came and asked me your second question and had he passed away at that moment, he would be born as a Deva in the heaven known as Sarwārtha Siddha Wimān.”

“Moreover, the purity of this chain of thoughts continued to increase. The successive links in this chain led to holier and holier thoughts......till very shortly they reached their most intense stage! Hence all the four Ghati Karmas (घाती कर्म – namely Gnānāvarāniya – ज्ञानवारणीय, Darshanāvarāniya – दर्शनवारणीय, Mohāniya – मोहनीय and Antarāya – अन्तराय. These four are the harmful covering (आवरण) upon the pure Atmā and hence are called Ghāṭī. ) were destroyed, and so he has come to the condition of Kewalgnāna whereby he can see all the substances of the whole universe exactly as they have been, as they are and as they shall be!”

“So, O king, this shows that: "मन एवं मनुष्याणां कारण बंधनोऽयो: – The State of one’s mind (मनवति/भाव) is the prime cause of the formation and the destruction of Karmas.”* So be always full of holy thoughts. Those who try to cultivate the holy thoughts shall, without fail, reach the beatitude that is Moksha (मोक्ष).”

*No doubt the readers will find the same echo in Shakespeare: “There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so” [Hemlet II·2]
MORAL:

The importance of Bhāwa (भाव = मनःपरिणाम) in Spirituality is very well illustrated by this story. The importance is paramount at the moment of Death: this being the reason behind the recitation of the scriptures to the dying – a practice that one finds prevalent in all religions.

Acknowledgement & Source:

The story is given in section (पर्व) ten of Shri Hemchandracharya's (कलिकाल सर्वज भ्री हेमचंद्रचार्य) Trishisti – shalaka – purusha – charitra (त्रिशिस्तिशालाकापुरुषचरित्र); and the translation was gone through by Pujya Muni Shri Tatvanandavijayji, for which we are thankful to him.
Concept of the *Tirthankara* (तीर्थाकर).

The *Jain* tradition believes that there have been and there shall be infinite (अनन्त) cycles of time (कालचक्र) on this planet. Each cycle has two parts: one descending (अवसापिणिः), and the other ascending (उत्सापिणिः). These are so called, because there is, during its course, a continuous deterioration/amelioration in all substances – including the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of human life; as well as the munificence and bounty of the natural wealth of this planet.

Each such half-cycle is divided into six parts called ārā (आरा), which are of varying time lengths. The length of each cycle is far greater than what can be counted by the scale of “numbers of years” (अंकश्यात).

It is during the fourth ārā of every descending half-cycle and the third ārā of every ascending half-cycle that twenty-four *Tirthankaras* reach Omniscience (केवलम्ब्ध), and then, they re-establish the Relegation (तीर्थ).

*Bhagwān Mahāwīr* is, for the *Jains*, the twenty-fourth and hence the last, *Tirthankara* of the latest descending half-cycle, whose fourth ārā ended some 2500 years ago. He was, of course, preceeded by, and shall be followed by an infinite such *Tirthankaras*, during the course of the infinite time – cycles (कालचक्र).