

JAILER

ACHARYA VIJAY ABHAYSHEKHARSOORI

Why do such things happen only to me?
Why do I only have to suffer every time?
Why should I suffer when I am not at fault?

For a deeply convincing reconciliation of
such innumerable questions, one must definitely read

JAILER

On the Birth Centennial Year of Late Pujya
Gurudev Bhuvanbhanusoorishwaraji
A challenge to agitation of the mind
Peace in your hands

JAILER

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PREFACE

Shri Shantinathaya namah.

Shri Shankheshwar Parshvanathaya namah.

Sirsa Vande Mahaviram. Ainamah Siddham.

*Vijay Prem – Bhuvanbhanu – Jayghosh – Dharmajit –
Jayshekhar – Abhayshekharsoorishebbho namah.*

Translation: Veneration to Lord Shantinath.

Veneration to Lord Shankheshwar Parshvanath.

I bow my head to Lord Mahavir.

I venerate Goddess Saraswati and the liberated souls.

I bow to Acharyas Vijay Premsoori, Bhuvanbhanusoori,
Jayghoshsoori, Dharmajitsoori, Jayshekharsoori,
Abhayshekharsoori.

**An invitation to the ceremonious installation of
'Kshamadevi' (goddess of forgiveness)**

Chintu asked Pintu, "What would you call someone who does not admit to his mistake?"

Pintu replied, "A rogue!"

Chintu asked again, "And who is he, who concedes his fault?"

Pintu, "A wise man".

Chintu's final question was, "And who is that person who seeks forgiveness despite not having erred?"

Pintu answered, "A husband".

Whoever adopts this sacred formula of peace in married life is known as the husband. My assertion is that the person who believes himself to be at fault in daily

dealings despite not having committed any mistake or crime, definitely achieves peace in life. He does not remain a mere husband (master), he becomes the master of everybody's heart and develops a capability of becoming the master of the Universe in future.

To endure, as a result of someone's mischievous behaviour and yet to see one's self as the wrong-doer is very difficult, on account of following three reasons. Since infinite times, we have in us (1) a tendency to see other's faults, sins, crimes with the exception of our own, (2) a dislike or aversion for such souls and (3) an intense arrogance as the root cause of such behaviour. In such a case, forbearance is difficult but not impossible.

Anger may have resided within us since an infinite passage of time though it is not one of our inherent qualities. It is an aberration, which is not intrinsic to our nature. It belongs elsewhere. It is entrenched within us but is not the owner of our soul. It is an invader which can be driven away. We are competent to expel it from within and completely uproot it from our system.

Chanakya had vowed to totally annihilate the Nand dynasty. Would a firmer vow than Chanakya's, that is to uproot one's anger, be impossible for us to take?

Anger is synonymous to a quarrelsome wife who has alienated us from our dear mother, 'Kshama'. The lap of 'Kshama' lends us warmth. It is lifegiving. It gives us peace and happiness. It is capable of converting our misfortunes into our wealth, our calamities to a feast, our grief into a

great festival and our problems to opportunities.

What should one do to approach 'Kshama'? The answer lies within this book called "Jailer", where karma is depicted as the Judge, the person causing harassment as the Jailer, and we as the criminals. The most reverend Gurudevshri, who is the master of presenting tattva (substance) in a brilliant manner, has put forth this three-angled concept with reasoning, logic and examples in such a beautiful, unfailing and convincing way that one's attitude towards others will certainly change for the better after reading this book.

"There is no retribution without a crime nor gratification without a good deed."

"When you consider the deeds of others as wicked, punishment will be meted out to you. On the other hand, as often as you consider your own karma (deeds) as evil, you are worthy of a grand reward."

"Bearing oppression caused by others with equanimity is the easiest way for the soul to reap benefits."

"Karmasatta" (karma dispensing authority) will not tolerate your anger."

These infallible sentences should constantly remain etched into our hearts and minds and should be displayed on placards in our homes and offices. This book is resplendent with such sentences which are explained with logic and numerous examples, such as, the reason for depicting karma as the Judge or the reason why it is said that a person loses everything when he damages his moral behaviour, with anecdotes about the game show of nature, petrol-water-spark etc. These have

been elucidated in such a beautiful manner that they will be absorbed effortlessly unless you are extremely hard-hearted.

Pujyashri has not only taken well known as well as lesser known illustrations but has also highlighted the present issue by distinctly and minutely analyzed various examples, may it be that of Agnisharma or Nagketu.

Pujyashri's wisdom is a truthful reflection of his complete and unwavering belief in the precepts of the Jina. With exceptional clarity and agility of his intellect, he has touched new horizons. His compassion is like the everflowing Ganges. Reflecting on 'tattvas' (substances) is neither his subject of interest nor his profession. It is his innate disposition.

His book, **'Hamsa! tuñ jheel maitri sarovarman'** gained popularity as it became the instrument for removal of internal anger from many a soul. The 'Jailer' touches greater heights, aiming to eliminate anger which has been firmly embedded within so many of us.

People will now rejoice the departure of anger and their hearts will be lifted. The invitation to celebrate the occasion of the installation of Kshamadevi will be received and read with joy by many.

The only way to receive with grace Pujyashri's great kindness or to accept his beneficence with all one's heart is by constantly reading, promptly reflecting, immediately putting into practice and promoting it to others.

FOREWORD

Matang Siddhayika paripoojitay

Shri Vardhamanswamine namah.

Shri Vijay Prem – Bhuvanbhanu – Jayghosh – Dharmajit

– Jayshekharsoorisadgurubhyo Namah.

Translation: Veneration to Lord Vardhamanswami
who is worshipped by Matang, his dedicated demi-god
and Siddhayika, his dedicated demi-goddess.

I bow to Shri Vijay Premsoori – Bhuvanbhanusoori –
Jayghoshsoori – Dharmajitsoori – Jayshekharsoori.

It was almost sunset, the disciple waited with a bowl of water in his hand, requesting the Gurubhagawant (esteemed teacher) to drink some water. The guru was engaged in putting his thoughts, which were swirling in his head swiftly as a result of his profound reflection, to paper, “Let me finish writing this reflection, otherwise, I will lose my train of thoughts”. The disciple kept pleading with his Guru, but the water in the vessel remained untouched. In the meantime, the Sun set. Such incidents happened in the life of Mahopadhyaya Yashovijayji, who lived approximately 325 years ago, several times. He studied Jain scriptures alongside Buddhist scriptures and Vedanta in their entirety. He authored innumerable volumes. After devoting his entire life in worshipping scriptures, he wrote a divine book called ‘Jnanasar’ on the eve of his life.

The first half of a shloka (couplet) from the book reads as:

‘.. Samyam bibharti yah karmavipakam hrudi chintayan’

Translation: ‘A person who contemplates on fruition of karmas bears equanimity’.

The permanent remedy to alleviate worries, tension and depression of today’s man is to reflect on the effects of the deeds from his previous lives. This is an infallible remedy to achieve peace, which is so illusive that one cannot attain it by either roaming the world or by spending millions. The basic problem is that man has started attaching too much importance to intellect. He labelled faith as blind-faith and defamed it, which made it difficult for one to accept karma which remained unperceived by the senses. As a result, he became far removed from an amazing remedy which was like God’s own gift.

However this is of no consequence. A thorn will remove another thorn, not with faith but with intellect. The man will definitely accept karma if one can prove its existence with logic. The science of karma is backed by logic by a 100%. The ‘Jailer’ is an attempt to present this logic in today’s terminology. This book will tell whether the logic offered is faith inspiring or bereft of faith.

Circumstances do not ever dictate tranquility or agitation of mind. The state of the mind is only dependent on one’s own flow of thoughts. The disturbing circumstances may not have changed but an appropriate change in one’s chain of thoughts makes one’s mind calm and peaceful. I sincerely appeal to all the readers to experience this reality themselves.

Normally, reiteration in literature is considered an

aberration whereas in case of a cure for a disease, it is advisable to take medicine often till cured. The present essay is also akin to a psychological remedy and hence stories like Agnisharma's have been repeated many times as isolated references. These have been only included for clarification of that particular narrative. Hence, I believe that they will definitely prove to be beneficial.

This essay is not to be just observed, it has to be lived. It is not to be just read, it is to be reflected upon over and over again. It is not to be chewed, it is to be digested.

If this happens, one will surely experience unprecedented ripples of tranquility rising from within. Thousands of Jains as well as non-Jains have perceived the emotion of peace after reading '**Hamsa, tuñ jheel maitri sarovarman'**. This book will undoubtedly be the device that assists this feeling to be firmer, more persistent and permanent.

Epitome of supreme knowledge – Late Pujya Acharya Shri Vijay Premsoorishwarji M.Saheb.

Epitome of vigilance – Late Pujya Acharya Shri Vijay Bhuvanbhanusoorishwarji M.Saheb.

Living storehouse of knowledge – Param Pujya Acharya Gacchadhipati Shri Vijay Jayghoshsoorishwarji M.Saheb.

Epitome of simplicity – Late Pujya Acharya Shri Vijay Dharmajitsoorishwarji M.Saheb.

Successful accomplisher of soorimantra – Late Pujya Acharya Shri Vijay Jayshekharsoorishwarji M.Saheb.

The rightful credit for this essay goes to the incessant compassion of the well instituted lineage of these great

gurus. Credit is also owed to the devoted cooperation of my contemporary disciples in every respect.

Acharya Shri Vijay Ajitshekharsoorishwarji has read the entire essay from beginning to end and has offered his valuable suggestions. He has decorated it with a beautiful preface. I thank him for his contribution.

In the present times, man is in urgent need of mental peace. That is why, approximately 38000 copies in Gujarati and 7000 copies in Hindi of this book called 'Jailer' have already been published in a very short span of time. There was a demand for an English edition of the book. Therefore, it was decided to have the book translated in English. As a trial, three to four pages of the book were given to three persons for translation. It was realized that the translator should be well-versed in English Language as well as Jain technical words.

Attention was drawn to Sou. Sujataben Premalbhai Kapadia who had earlier done the English translation of '**Shripal Ras**'. She gladly accepted to translate this book. With great effort, she has made the translation fluid, by using precise synonymous words, to do proper justice to the language. Many many thanks to her for her fine contribution. Sujataben's daughter-in-law, Nandini, has diligently examined the linguistic quality of the English written work.

After having undergone one painful punishment, one can overcome it by making sure not to create more troublesome situations. We can thereby have ten punishments cancelled and become entitled to a grand prize. Most importantly, by developing

forgiveness and equanimity, one can achieve the unattached state of the divine. To know and to then live this unfailing remedy, I inspire you to read the present publication.

**Second Bhadrapad Vad Ekam,
Vikram Samvat 2068,
September 1, 2012
Ghatkopar**

Acharya Abhayshekharsoori

OPINIONS

One cannot help but feel that this book which is small in appearance, is like a factory which disposes off tons of agitation, perturbation and anger manifesting in a chain of further anger. After churning 6 Karmagranths, the butter which is skimmed and taken away as their choicest content is this booklet called 'JAILER'.

- A reader

Gurudev! After reading this book, her disposition has changed so much that she is amazed at it herself and we are experiencing a lot of peace.

- A female reader's husband

DEDICATION

The late Pujiyapad Gurudevshri Bhuvanbhanusoorishwaraji Maharaj Saheb transformed animosity of many enemies into forgiveness and amity, through his books like 'Amichandni Amidrishti', 'Gunasen-Agnisharma' etc. and his numerous editorials in the weekly, 'Divyadarshana'. I feel elated on dedicating this essay to him, which has blossomed out of his own seed of thoughts, on his very favourite subject, 'Forgiveness-Friendship', with a lot of faith, respect and reverence.

- Abhayshekhar

Shri Shankheshwar Parshvanathaya namah.

Matang Siddhayika paripoojitay

Shri Vardhamanswamine namah.

Vijay Prem – Bhuvanbhanu – Jayghosh – Dharmajit –
Jayshekharsoorishebhyo namah. Aiyam namah.

Translation: Veneration to Lord Shankheshwar Parshvanath.
Veneration to Lord Vardhamanswami who is worshipped by
Matang, his dedicated demi-god and Siddhayika, his dedicated
demi-goddess.

I bow to Acharyas Shri Premsoori – Bhuvanbhanusoori –
Jayghoshsoori – Dharmajitsoori – Jayshekharsoori.

I venerate Goddess Saraswati.

1. JAILER

The Saint asked the audience a few questions –

Saint: Who desires happiness?

Audience: Everyone, be it a poor man or a rich man, be it someone who is an infirm or is healthy, be it an educated person or an uneducated person. Each soul desires happiness.

Saint: When does one desire happiness? During the day or at night?

Audience: All the twelve months, round the clock.

Saint: Who desires unhappiness and when?

Audience: No one ever desires unhappiness.

Saint: There are numerous companies throughout the world. What kind of goods would any company want to manufacture?

A few persons from the **Audience:** The very best.

Some others: The most profitable.

Saint: No. The goods may be the best or profit yielding but what if there is no demand for them? A company would like to produce only those goods for which there is a demand in the market. No company ever makes goods for which there is no demand. Then why would a company called 'Nature' produce unhappiness, as there is no demand for it in the market? Even if you were to give it away for free, no soul would want it. Everyone desires happiness and happiness alone. The question then arises is that when not a single soul desires unhappiness, why does nature bestow it on the souls? The answer to this question is definitely 'karma', but we want the answer in common parlance. For this, we have to carry out a survey of any one jail and ask its prisoners, "How many amongst you desire punishment?".

What would the answer be? It would be, "No one!".

Now the question arises, "If no prisoner desires punishment, then why does the court punish him so?" "He is being punished for his crime."

The maxim that gets affirmed is, "If there is a punishment, a crime should have been committed". When someone is punished, we start imagining his/her crime. For example, on hearing a lot of commotion in

As you sow, so shall you reap.

our neighbour's house, we assume the father is hitting the son who is crying and shouting inconsolably. What has the son done? We may not know but what we tend to imagine is that the son may have failed his exam or broken something or he may have back-answered his parents. Similarly, if a log of wood is tied to an animal's neck so that it hits his leg on movement thereby hurting him, one imagines, "It may have been one amongst many, who was unruly and difficult to control". These examples affirm the maxim that there is no punishment without a crime.

Let us now think of a different situation. The father is not hitting his son. Instead, he is praising him and giving him gifts. What would one imagine?

"The son must have been good".

Hence, the second maxim that gets affirmed is, "There is no gratification without a good deed".

The erudite tell us to apply both these aphorisms in our lives. Our life is a sum total of situations - physical, financial, family-oriented or social. From within these, those that are good and satisfactory are nature's gift to us. Those situations, which torment us, are a punishment accorded to us by nature.

Sometimes despite being extra careful with one's diet, controlling one's blood pressure and sugar by avoiding certain foods, where often the list of eatables that one avoids is longer than the list of things that one consumes, there will be days, when either one's sugar has gone up or one has a running temperature. Everyday, one faces some problem or the other. On the other hand, another person, who does not take care at all about what or when he eats,

is absolutely healthy. He has no complaints at all. Is this possible?

‘Yes’.

How is this possible? Should a careful person be healthy or the one who is careless? Why does one see this contradiction? Nature wants to bestow the gift of health upon the second person. It tells him, “Eat whatever your heart desires. You will remain healthy”. Not just that, nature also tells him that, “Even if you were to eat a stone, you would be able to digest it and kidney stones will not be formed because I want to give you the gift of good health”. On the other hand, nature tells the first person, “I will not allow you to live in peace. You will have to undergo pain and hardship everyday”.

A young educated person, who was experienced and had started his business after a well thought-out strategy and thorough planning, could not make money. Another young man, who was not so well educated and was conducting his business in a haphazard way, became wealthy in no time. Why does such a thing happen? It is as if nature is telling the second young man, “I want to gift you riches even if you might not have run your business in an orderly fashion. I will make the people and the circumstances around you so favourable that all that you will make is a lot of profit”. Nature tells the first young man, “You might have carried out your business with diligence but I do not want you to succeed. I have immeasurable power, and can make even your extremely trustworthy agent commit a breach of trust against you. I will change market trends, and government policy if need

be but I will not allow you to earn money at any cost, because I want to punish you with poverty". Someone finds success easily and others do not achieve it even after striving hard and putting in a lot of effort. Why reward one and punish the other? Who is nature's own and who is alien to it? The answer is simple. People who have done good deeds are rewarded by nature and the wrong-doers are punished by it.

A man stole, plundered and even committed murder. The police arrested him and took him to court. The judge sentenced the criminal to ten years of rigorous imprisonment and ten lashes with a whip everyday. The jailer made the prisoner labour from morning to night. In the evening, he brought out his whip and told the prisoner to get ready for his punishment. If at that time the prisoner had asked the jailer, "What have I done to you that you are ready to even hit me? I will not be beaten, instead I will hit you back with the whip." Would it increase his punishment or lessen it?

"It will increase it".

Is the prisoner wrong in saying so? What has he done to the jailer? The prisoner can say, "Let the person, whose home I robbed, beat me. Why should you hit me? I have not committed a theft in your house". Why should the prisoner take the jailer's beating? At the same time, if he does not take the beating, why does his sentence increase?

"A jailer only carries out the sentence as per the court's order".

"That is correct. The prisoner should understand that the jailer beats him not of his own accord but because of

the court's order”.

If the Government proposes a resolution that there won't be a court in the entire country, there won't be any jail, jailer, or punishment and that people are free to behave in any manner they please and was to seek our opinion of that decision, would we agree or disagree with such a proposal?

“Definitely disagree”.

Why? This is because we know that in such a situation there will not be any law and order. There will be total anarchy and chaos. We will not be able to live our lives peacefully. The existence of law and order indicates that the court is active and if at all there is any degree of disorder, it is due to the courts being inactive and lax to that extent. There is law and order in all the countries in the world and even in the Universe. This means that there definitely has to be a court which is active. This court is what we know as ‘Karmasatta’ or karma dispensing authority. The Indian Government considers only human beings as its citizens. Nature, which has set up this court of ‘karmasatta’, considers all souls – may they be humans, animals, birds, crawling creatures, the tiniest insects, one sensed souls like vegetation and in effect all life, as its citizens.

The task of the court is only to authorise punishment, for example, the judge himself does not whip the prisoner. That job is assigned to the jailer. In the same manner, the court of karmasatta only decides the punishment but who

performs the task of the jailer?

The enlightened say that the jailer could be your own brother, your nephew, your partner, your servant or even your neighbour. It could be your mother-in-law or your daughter-in-law. All the souls around us are the officiating jailers of this court of karmasatta. Any one from amongst these jailers is ordered by the high command to administer punishment to you when required. The person so ordered might not wish to do so but he has to abide by the command. For example, the court orders someone to either abuse you or slap you or directs someone that this person has committed a crime for which you have to make him incur a loss of a large sum of money. The orders are obeyed, and your funds are misappropriated in such a way that you lose that amount.

The person misappropriating your funds is carrying out his duty as the Jailer. If we were to ask the abuser what harm had we caused him to abuse us in such a manner and that we would also abuse him back, what would be the outcome? Will our punishment be increased or decreased? “It will increase”.

“Do we want our punishment to be enhanced or mitigated?”

“Mitigated”.

If we want to reduce the punishment, what is the remedy? Think about the prisoner.

If he strikes a blow with a whip, his punishment increases. Perhaps he may not strike but even if he retaliates or escapes, his punishment will increase. He may even take the blows but if he tries to make mischief, his

punishment will not be abated. There is only one solution for him to get his punishment lessened and that is by bearing the blows patiently.

The only remedy to alleviate punishment allotted by 'karmasatta' is to bear it with equanimity.

Question: "If we have the power to retaliate with twice as much strength, why should we tolerate anything?"

Answer: "There is a possibility that the prisoner may be stronger and more athletic than the jailer. Yet, he must take the punishment calmly if he wants the sentence to be reduced. The question posed to you is, who was more powerful? Lord Mahavir or the cowherd who hammered nails in the Lord's ears?"

"Lord Mahavir".

Then why did the Lord allow the cowherd to put nails in his ears? If he had challenged the cowherd and mangled his earlobes, the cowherd would have screamed and run away. The Lord did not strike, did not retaliate and nor did he escape. He bore the terrible pain of being nailed with calm and composure. Why?

This is because the Lord knew that the cowherd was the jailer who was merely executing the orders given by karmasatta for his crime and that retaliation would only end up increasing his punishment.

What was the Lord's crime?

In his 18th birth, the Lord's soul was born as Triprushtha Vasudev, the Emperor of the three continents. Once, sleep eluded the Emperor. He called his musicians

Consume whatever has come on your plate,
suffer whatever your fate brings you.

and ordered them to play soft, soulful music to him so that he could fall asleep. However the Emperor knew that the musicians, having become engrossed in music, would not know when he fell asleep. He called a guard and told him, "Once I fall asleep, you can tell the musicians to leave." In some time, sleep overtook him. The guard realized that the Emperor was asleep but he became covetous to hear some more melodious music, "Let me listen to the music for some more time before I send away the musicians", he thought. The Emperor had just fallen asleep and was unlikely to wake up. The music thus continued to play. The guard had not had enough, in the meanwhile the Emperor awoke.

Let's say that an IPL match is being telecasted, and it is time for you to leave for work. Tempted, you decide to watch two overs, after which you would leave for the office. But would you definitely get up and leave after two overs? No. The two would become twelve, and the twelve would become twenty. Then it will be another twenty overs of the rival team. This way, you would end up watching the entire match.

From this, one can deduce that the senses enslave our soul. It is as if the senses are telling the soul, "You may have decided to get up after two overs but you are not free to act according to your will. You will not be able to get up till I permit you."

The same thing happened to the guard. "Let me listen to the music for some more time, then some more". And in the meantime, the Emperor woke up.

Digressing from the subject, a question arises – "Does

music induce sleep or does it wake one up?”

“It induces sleep.”

“Then why did the Emperor wake up?”

“May be, you lose sleep.”

Then why were the musicians called to put the Emperor to sleep? The reality is that music can either induce sleep or make it go away. One gets sleep only upto a point that the music is needed, beyond that, it can awaken you. This point is relevant to all the issues. Things are beneficial only to the extent that they are necessary. Beyond that limit, they cause harm, for example, “If you are used to eating six chapatis a day, and suddenly on your birthday, you decide to have twelve, will you gain from this or lose?”

“Lose”.

When you need new shoes, the cobbler measures your feet and says, “Sir! they are 9 inches in length.”

“Brother! Why nine inches? Make the shoes ten inches long.”

Will this cause you comfort or discomfort? The rule that then follows is that a thing is beneficial only if it is necessary and is proper.

Imagine that the expenditure incurred by you every month is fifteen thousand rupees, but you earn a lakh and fifteen thousand rupees. Will you make a profit or a loss?

“Excess is to be forsaken”. Does this rule also not apply to money? Those who amass wealth in the range of five to twenty five crores have been sufferers of many losses in all likelihood. However, one needs a certain viewpoint to decipher this.

A young man, from a very small, backward village,

whose childhood was spent in extreme poverty, came to a city to try his luck and fate favoured him. Gradually he became not a millionaire but a billionaire. He had a son. He had a palatial bungalow with a swimming pool and a huge garden. He had a gardener to tend to his garden. He had a bevy of servants and cooks for household chores. His son had a dog for a pet. If the son asked for water, milk was offered to him. If he called for one servant, four of them came forward. The son, who was brought up in the lap of luxury, grew into a teenager. The father reflected that even poverty was an important facet of life which he himself had experienced. He felt that even his son ought to experience it. He decided to send his son to live in the care of a poor family for a week, where there would be no luxuries or any conveniences. There would also be a lack of necessities, only then would his son realize what a struggle life was. He left his son with a known but poor family in his own village. The village was situated on the banks of a river, at the edge of a jungle and did not have any means of communication. A week passed before the father went back to bring his son home. He asked his son, "Were you comfortable?" The son replied, "Father, there is a vast difference between our lifestyles. We have a small swimming pool in our house which is filled with chlorinated water which stinks. My eyes burn everyday because of the water. Here, there is a river flowing right behind their hut where there is fresh, flowing water. Father, I had so much fun swimming. Besides, at home, I only have one pet dog. Here, I have befriended four dogs who I do not have to bother bathing or walking. Over and

above, there are parrots, crows and rabbits. This was really entertaining. At our house, we close the windows every night and switch on the air-conditioner whereas here, all of us used to sleep in the open, under a canopy of stars, in the moonlight with a gentle breeze blowing. I have never slept so well! The best thing was that the whole family used to sleep together giving each other warmth. At our home, we all have our separate rooms – sister, you and I. There is no way of knowing who is awake, asleep or in need. Here, someone suddenly got high fever one night. Everyone woke up immediately. I got to experience what a family is all about. One person was pressing the sick person's legs, another was pressing his head and someone else was applying wet, cold compress to his head. The fever went down in an hour, not with all this nursing but with all the affection and sympathy associated with it. In the morning, the patient was absolutely fine. Father, one day, the teacher had asked us which was the best therapy for healing. One student said, 'Allopathy', another student said, 'Homeopathy', while a third one said, 'Naturopathy'. The teacher, rejecting all the answers had said, 'Sympathy'. Father, I clearly understood the teacher's answer here. I forgot to mention one important thing. Every night, before retiring, the family used to gather together and talk about their experiences of the day. The conversation reflected everyone's love and trust for each other. Has our family sat together for even half an hour? There are times we sit together to watch television. The irony is that though the whole family is together, no one is talking to each other. There is no enthusiasm to talk or to listen to

anyone. Everyone is engrossed in the drama being enacted on the show. We become happy when the actors are happy and sad when they are sad. It is as if they are our kith and kin. Now there is not even a possibility of everyone sitting around together as each one has a T.V. in their room. If one thinks with an unfettered, free mind, from many points of view, one will realize that too much money is not a blessing, it is a curse. When one has excessive riches, each family member possesses his own independent and separate set of things. There is no need to either get together or to expect anything from anyone. Then how can there be affection between members?

There is one more thing I will miss at meal times when I return home”, said the son.

“What is it, son?”

“Father, it is love. At our home, we eat food which is prepared by the cook, then put in the refrigerator, heated in the micro-wave oven and finally served by the servants. Here, it is the lady of the house who cooks the food and serves everyone hot meals with a lot of love. The food served with such warmth tastes delicious and special. (One young man went abroad to earn some money. He lived there a long time, worked strenuously to make a living but his luck did not favour him. He had to return without earning a penny but his mother yet accorded him a hearty, warm welcome, since her son was returning after a long time. She could not afford to buy either mangoes or bananas at the market, so she bought a cucumber. She sliced the cucumber and fed it to her son lovingly. The son ate the cucumber happily and with as much enthusiasm.

In the end, there was one slice of cucumber left. The mother put it in her mouth and found it to be very bitter. She asked her son, "The cucumber was so bitter, why did you not refuse to eat it?" The son replied with a smile, "Mother, the cucumber was bitter but the hands and the heart of the person serving it were so sweet, wouldn't the cucumber then taste sweet too?" "Father, we have packaged milk whereas here, I had fresh milk twice a day. I have become flushed with a healthy glow in just seven days. It is good that you sent me here for seven days, otherwise, I wouldn't have known how poor and lonely we are. Despite having a family, we are without a family. How I wish I was born into such a wealthy family!"

Extremely wealthy people lack a family life and the affection of family members. They have irregular sleep and eating habits due to the nature of their business and therefore lack good health. They are forever worried about controlling their insatiable greed. If they fail in a new venture, they suffer tension and depression. Happiness to them is success and wealth. They are elated on seeing their wealth increase manifold. This also is a constant cause of worry. One hears of politicians, actors, cricketers, businessmen having stashed away millions in Swiss Banks. These huge figures make them joyous. Could they get any other kind of pleasure out of this wealth?

Audience: "One can only do a good deed if one has wealth."

Speaker: "This is a fallacy! Does poison give you life or death?"

Audience: "Death".

Speaker: “But poison administered by a physician can also give someone life.”

Audience: “Yes, but that is only one person out of thousands. The rest all die. The one person who lives, does so because of the effects of his past lives. Therefore, poison only results in death and not life.”

Speaker: “In the same manner, it is these very few, rare, extraordinary human beings who attain punya on account of their wealth. The majority of people commit bad deeds, even those performing good deeds with their wealth do more evil deeds than righteous ones. It is important to go inwards and think, whether one has carried out more good deeds or evil deeds after obtaining more wealth and how many of one’s sins could have been avoided if one’s income, which is more than is necessary, would be reduced. If one reflects on this honestly, the fact that manifests itself is that acquisition of more wealth gives impetus to increased impiety.”

Like it is erroneous to think that poison makes you live, it is also incorrect to think that one can perform good deeds due to wealth.

Let us go back to the story of Lord Mahavir. The Emperor lost his sleep as the music continued to play. The Emperor asked the guard, “Were you aware that I was asleep?”

“Yes, my Lord! I knew that you were asleep but ”

“But what?”

“I could not resist the temptation to listen to the music

for a longer time and therefore I did not dispatch the musicians.”

Hearing this, the Emperor’s anger knew no bounds, “You rogue! Is my command more important or your wish to listen to music? Let me disable you so that you can hear no more.” Saying this, the Emperor ordered extremely hot, molten lead to be poured into the guard’s ears. Whose soul is this? It is the soul of the future Tirthankara, Lord Mahavir. Karmasatta forgives no one, not even the soul of a future Tirthankara, let alone ‘Ganadharas’, ‘Devs’, ‘Indras’, Kings or the rich money lending businessmen.

“I imagine Karmasatta must definitely be letting one person off the hook.”

“Who might that be?”

“You”

“Maharaj Saheb! Why would you imagine so?”

‘Let me explain. Today, in our country, the sons of ministers and top officials commit indiscriminate crimes because they have the assurance that their fathers, being in important positions, will save them from punishment.’

“Correct”.

It is then established that a crime is committed by only those who are not afraid of punishment. Therefore, when I see people angry and committing deceit, fraud, breach of trust disregarding their consequence, I begin to think that may be Karmasatta favours them. This is my imagination.

Ganadhara = the chief disciple of a Tirthankara

Dev = demi-god

Maharaj Saheb = the reverend preceptor

Indra = King of demi-gods

Karmasatta spares no one. It even told Lord Mahavir, "You may become a Tirthankara but be prepared to bear the consequence of your sin." As a result, the Lord had his ears pierced with nails.

You have to answer this question truthfully.

The Lord's ears got pierced because (1) The Lord's deeds were sinful, or (2) The cowherd who put nails in the Lord's ears was evil. Which alternative is correct?

In the popular game show, 'Kaun Banega Crorepati', Amitabh Bachchan, the compere, became a billionaire, the owners of the Channel became billionaires. How many from amongst you, the audience, became billionaires? There is a game show being run by nature even in this world posing questions like the one just being asked to you. The correct answer wins you not only billions, but nature bestows upon you a reward that is beyond your imagination.

The answer is, the first option. "His deeds were sinful."

"Is everyone's answer the same?"

"Yes".

"Should we lock it?"

"Yes".

"You are absolutely correct. Now if we were to give some thought to our lives, for example, you have a daughter who is married far from where you live, she visits you after a year for a few days and starts complaining about her mean spirited mother-in-law, as so many daughters-in-law do. I know most mothers-in-law who listen to my discourses oppose this statement and say it's quite the opposite. The definition has now changed. It is the mother-in-law who

sheds tears everyday.”

“Is this correct?”

“Yes, it is.”

“Then I have a question to ask all the ladies, do you want to cry everyday?”

“No”.

“Then do not become a mother-in-law.”

“But Saheb! What if we have a son?”

“Then hand him over to us. It is a million times better and is a matter of pride and joy to be known as a ‘Ratnakukshi mata’ rather than be known as a mother-in-law who is the root cause of acrimony. All the Shravikas are hereby recommended to conduct a survey of numerous women, present in Shri Sangh even today, who have become Ratnakukshi matas. They have married off one son while consigning the other son to the path of restraint, i.e. monkhood.

Your daughter is complaining, “Mother! Father! I am harassed. My mother-in-law makes me toil from morning to evening. I have to sweep, mop, cook, clean utensils, wash clothes. She does not allow me to eat, drink or sleep in peace. Moreover, she hurts me all the time with her bitter, harsh words. Father! I am so fed up!” I now ask you a question, “Your daughter suffers at the hands of her mother-in-law because, A) Your daughter’s karmas are sinful or B) Her mother-in-law is wicked. Which of the two is correct?”

Shri Sangh = the Jain order

Ratnakukshi mata = mother of a monk

Shravika = a laywoman

“The first. The daughter’s karmas are sinful.”

“Will you only say this to me or will you also say this to your daughter? Will you tell her that it is not her mother-in-law who is wicked, it is her own karmas which are sinful?” This is the correct answer. Nature bestows a grand reward for such an answer. It is to be understood that in the show, ‘Kaun Banega Crorepati’, there were prizes for the correct answers but there was no punishment for the wrong ones. In this game show of nature, just as there is a grand reward for the correct answer, a terrible punishment awaits you for the wrong ones. The reward and the punishment, both, are beyond our imagination. We will reflect upon these later. This does not relate only to one’s daughter. It relates to everyone.

It could be a neighbour who is a nuisance and harasses you all the time or even your younger brother who has become your opponent. He instigates the other neighbours and your business associates by spreading false rumours about you because of which you have to suffer.

It could also be the elder lazy sister-in-law who shirks her responsibilities due to which the younger sister-in-law has to work hard all day. She is high-handed, and talkative and keeps maligning the younger sister-in-law in front of the mother-in-law, other relatives and guests. Due to all this, the younger sister-in-law is falling from grace.

In life, there are numerous such tales of oppression. Sometimes, such harassment comes from many people or it could come from just one person. In such a case, you should ask yourself: I suffer because, option (1) My karmas are bad or option (2) The person causing pain is

bad. At all times, it is the first option which is correct and for which nature grants you a magnanimous reward. This is because the pain giver is only a jailer. The Jailer may make you do hard labour, he may starve you or if the court has so ordered, he may even hang you. It is not he who is wicked, it is the prisoner's wrong-doing which is wicked and for which he has to suffer. This is applicable universally.

It is worth remembering and repeating that, "It is my own karmas which are sinful." This is the only remedy to get our punishment mitigated and to receive a reward. During the twelve and a half years of Lord Mahavir's arduous effort for the attainment of self-realisation, he had to bear excessive hardships but the Lord never regarded the persons inflicting adversities on him as evil persons – be it Sangam, Shoolpani, Vyantari Devi Katpootna or the cowherd. That is why he could safeguard himself from feeling any aversion or hatred towards them. He understood his own karmas were to blame. He was being punished for his own crimes. The above names were only jailers. He knew his punishment would be reduced only if he bore it with equanimity. Such thoughts fortify one's forbearance. A soul is then able to bear even terrible shocks with composure for which nature bestows on it glorious rewards.

Gold which gets heated in the fire gets the reward of pureness and luster. An unbroken stone which gets carved with a chisel gets the reward of becoming the idol of a

Vyantar dev = a peripatetic celestial

supreme, most revered being in the world.

What applies to a lifeless object is similarly relevant to all souls. In infinite times, there has not been a single instance where people who have borne pain with even-mindedness have not been rewarded and instead been punished. Inversely, there also has not been an incident where a person revolting against his tormentor has not been punished.

Question: If the other person troubles us at every step, without a reason, it tantamounts to gross injustice. For how long does one bear injustice?

Answer: Are we interested in justice or a reconciliation? Where justice is done, there is happiness in the home in whose favour the judgement is passed, whereas in case of a reconciliation, there is happiness and satisfaction in both the homes. Karmasatta believes in justice. In his birth as Triprushtha Vasudev, the soul of Lord Mahavir had extremely hot, molten lead poured into the guard's ears. So in his last birth, Karmasatta meted out justice by putting nails into his ears. Dharmasatta believes in a reconciliation. Lord Mahavir bore the terrible pain with extraordinary equanimity, reconciled to the fact that it was a punishment for his past crimes. Let it be reiterated that Karmasatta believes in giving pain to souls while dharmasatta believes in making souls happy. Shouldn't we decide which one we prefer?

There is nothing like injustice in the reign of nature. The question – “Why should I only suffer?” is absolutely

dharmasatta = religious authority/righteous authority

misplaced. “On the other hand, the jailer is not confined to a dark dingy cell, is not beaten, does not toil.” Is this type of an attitude by a prisoner justified?

“Why do I have to bear the pain of surgery while the doctor does not have to bear any pain?” Does the patient have a right to raise a question like this? What is the meaning of such a question when the karmas in the form of an abscess or a tumour are being removed?

The minister ordered Khandhaksoori’s five hundred disciples to be crushed in an oil mill. The disciples did not see injustice even in the unbearable pain that they had to endure, which resulted in their death. They all attained Keval jnana and ultimately, liberation. Their Guru, on the other hand, considered this to be a gross injustice and was punished because of this, to undergo cycles of birth and death. He requested the minister, “I will not be able to see the child monk being crushed in the oil mill, therefore you crush me first, and then the child monk.” However the minister wanted to cause maximum harassment to Khandhaksoori, so he refused to oblige. He crushed the child monk first. Khandhaksoori thought, “You crushed four hundred ninety nine of my disciples for no fault of theirs and yet I did not utter a word. This was my last and only request, how could you turn even that down? This was a flagrant injustice on your part and on part of the citizens who quietly watched this injustice being carried out and did not prevent it.”

When the mind sees injustice, it is unable to endure it

Keval jnana = absolute supreme knowledge, omniscience

and yet one can do nothing about it. That is why, when one is forced to bear it, the mind is all set to avenge it. Even Khandhaksoori prepared to take revenge. He avowed to punish the minister, the King who encouraged the minister and all the citizens who helped in abetment of injustice by not opposing it, thereby becoming an instrument of their destruction. This vow became a 'niyanu'. What was the outcome? Did nature reward him or punish him? This fact is quite well known.

Sangamdev inflicted 20 types of grievous physical sufferings on Lord Mahavir in just one night and harassed the Lord for six months. The Lord did not deem it as injustice. Was the Lord any worse for it? Just as Karmasatta is extremely cruel in dispensing punishment, inversely, it is extremely merciful in forgiving and mitigating the punishment. If we bear punishment for one crime calmly, Karmasatta forgives our abundant other trespasses.

Everyday, the jailer makes the prisoner labour strenuously, beats him with a whip. The prisoner does all the work assigned to him like an obedient servant. He even takes the beating quietly. This routine goes on everyday. Whosoever witnesses these occurrences within the jail, will feel that the jailer is being unjust. The person who will take his perception outside the walls of the jail and takes an overall view of the prisoner's crime and punishment allotted to him, will only see justice. The same applies here. Whosoever is complaining that a grave injustice is

niyanu = expectation of a material/wordly substance as a reward for any religious performance

being done to him, should understand that the present life is a jail. In the current jail, you may not have committed any wrong but do not limit your vision to this jail, extend it to your past lives, crimes committed during those lives and the punishment due to you. You will then understand that there is no injustice. If it seems like justice, the mind will be ready to accept the punishment and will bear it with composure.

Even the scholars from the Western World have started accepting this kind of justice. Let us examine a few examples: Following are a few excerpts from the book, 'The power within' authored by Dr. Alexander Cane who had conducted a study of past lives of more than a thousand people, based on hypnotic trance. In the book, he posed this question, "Can one attain a chosen birth?" While experimenting with regression, the answer to this question was got in the negative. "The next birth is never the one chosen by you, it depends on the way you lead the present life." By pointing out how a person becomes unhappy in this life for any misdeeds committed in the past lives by the law of action-reaction, the study of past lives indicates that perfect justice pervades nature. "Why am I facing troubles one after another?" When one examines the past lives of the person making this complaint, one comprehends that he must have committed some wicked karmas. Another person's life seems to be smooth sailing inspite of him behaving as he pleased. This could be a reward for the good deeds committed by him in his past life.

There is a demand in the Western World to accept the

principle of karma and rebirth because of psychological research. Dr. Paul Brunton avers in his book, 'The Hidden Teaching Beyond Yoga' that karma is a scientific principle, which is adopted by the religions of Asia. It was accepted even in Europe but five hundred years after Jesus, the Council of Constantinople removed it from Jesus's preachings.

This way, some foolish people deprived the Western World of this scientific doctrine but time has now come to reestablish this principle. It is the duty of all governments, politicians, teachers and religious teachers to give stimulus to this movement. When the human being realizes that he cannot save himself from the reaction to his behaviour/activities, he will become careful about the activities he undertakes. He will also become vigilant about his thoughts. When he realizes that aversion and hatred are such deadly weapons that not only harm the person whom they are directed at but they rebound and injure the person using them, then he will think several times before attaching any import to the misdeeds.

From this understanding will arise a very strong moral way of life. It is very important for the Western World to adopt the doctrine of karma and rebirth and that too immediately. These truths make human beings and a country aware of their moral responsibilities which no impropriety or other belief can.

There are no complaints in the life of a person who accepts this justice. His life becomes calm, composed and natural. As a consequence, he will be able to accept any

inconsistency in his life without lament.

A prisoner with an easy sentence does not do any laborious work in the jail. A person who is sentenced to rigorous imprisonment has to labour till it tires him out completely. Yet does he complain? He accepts it.

Tell your daughter who is complaining against her mother-in-law that if she wishes nature to award her a grand prize, she should truthfully accept her own misdeeds. If she does not wish to be punished, she should not think her mother-in-law to be evil.

Question: If our daughter is disobedient, is not industrious, is lazy, spoils work for which she has no talent, is back-answering, it is understandable to consider mother-in-law not evil, even if she is harassed. However if our daughter is being harassed by the mother-in-law despite being obedient, diligent, proficient in all her work, and so humble as never to back-answer her mother-in-law, it is hard not to see the mother-in-law as detestable.

(These incidents are a common occurrence. One may not be at fault, may not have committed any mistake but if the other person has a wrong notion about you, considers you to be evil and a cause of harassment, it is very difficult to pacify that person otherwise. At the same time, how do you convince your heart that the person, for whom you have made sacrifices with body, mind, soul and

“Karma vina Karsanbhai jaan kan ri jaay?

Karmaman tel lakhiyo to ghee katen thi thaay?”

Meaning: Without fate, Karsanbhai cannot get married. If you are destined to have oil, how can it become clarified butter?

wealth, have borne many difficulties and bitter insults and considered important matters as trivial in their time of need, is out to harass you in all possible ways?)

Answer: The jailer is never evil. The jailer makes the prisoner do laborious work and orders him thus – “Break all these rocks”, “Grind all this grain”, “Sweep the entire jail” – Day in and day out the prisoner toils without any argument, like an obedient servant and bears all the strikes calmly. Would this jailer be considered evil? Imagine an unknown person who has no clue about what a court, crime or punishment are or what a jail and jailer are. This person will observe that the jailer is making the prisoner work so hard, although the latter, in his eyes, is gentle, simple hearted and does everything without any argument. Yet, the jailer hits the prisoner with a whip every day, and harasses him all the time.

To a person who has no knowledge about a jail, a jailer, a court, the jailer must seem like a wicked person. He, who has no perception of previous births, crimes, the court of karmasatta, punishments given by that court and all the related souls who act as jailers, may think of all the souls inflicting affliction as evil. However, if he is aware of everything, he will consider the soul inflicting pain as only a jailer and not a wrong doer.

Query: Does this mean that knowledge of Karmasatta becomes detrimental? Can one assume that the person who is ignorant about it will not consider the giver of pain as the jailer and therefore even if he opposes him (jailer), his punishment will not be enhanced? On the other hand, can one presume that the punishment of the person in the

know will be increased if he opposes, as he must consider the giver of pain as a jailer?

Solution: Ignorance is not an excuse. A person who does not consider the pain giver as a jailer and therefore thinks him to be wicked will surely be punished. In the same way, a person, who retaliates cannot escape a punishment accorded by Karmasatta just because he is ignorant about it.

Wherever we see someone being punished, like a father hitting a child or an animal with a wooden yoke around its neck, we start assuming the crime that they might have committed. However is it fair on our part not to imagine our own wrong doing when we are punished? Whatever we do not like but yet have to undergo, is definitely a punishment and if there is a punishment, there has to be a corresponding crime. If it is so, there also has to be some authority or a court of nature who dispenses punishments, otherwise, there would be total mayhem and absence of law and order. There would be theft, plundering, violence and killing all around. If there is a court appointed by nature, there also has to be a jailer to carry out the order of the punishment. If we do not even bother to know and understand the above, that in itself becomes a crime. Hence ignorance is not an excuse.

One thing is established that whether one has the knowledge about the court of Karmasatta or not, the person inflicting afflictions is the jailer, nothing more, nothing less and that a jailer is never cruel. It is possible that a jailer of the worldly court may give you eleven blows instead of ten but a jailer of the court of Karmasatta

cannot increase the punishment even by a degree. He is empowered to give a punishment only to the extent that has been ordered by Karmasatta. Then how can one consider him to be evil? Also, there is no rule that a jailer is always stronger than a prisoner. A jailer may be weaker, leaner than a more athletic, stronger, ferocious prisoner and yet he has to strike the prisoner.

Brahmachakravarti was a ruler of 6 continents, possessor of 14 gems and 9 nidhans. 16,000 demi-gods were always eager to serve and protect him. Can one imagine the number of bodyguards that would be around him in his royal procession in his own capital? Yet, a boy, who was a tribal living in the jungles, blinded him in both his eyes with merely stones thrown with a sling. Is this possible? We can concur that such incidents suggest that it must definitely be the weaker jailer who is harassing the stronger person. Otherwise, how is such a thing possible without his authority as a jailer or without the backing of the court?

So it can be affirmed that the person causing harassment is the jailer and the jailer is never evil. If the court so orders, he may even impale a criminal on a stake and yet he is not wicked. He may even take someone's life if the Karmasatta so orders.

The person abusing is a **jailer.**

The person slapping is a **jailer.**

The person falsely accusing is a **jailer.**

The person insulting at every step is a **jailer.**

Nidhan = a wonderful large treasure

The person belittling you is a **jailer.**

The person demeaning you is a **jailer.**

The person causing a loss of property is a **jailer.**

The person causing trouble in business is a **jailer.**

The person causing bodily harm is a **jailer.**

If a person gives us a lot of trouble, harasses us time and again and causes a nuisance, we nurture a feeling of anger and revenge towards him. We feel like doing something really unimaginable but are unable to do it. This upsets and agitates our mind. Such a person, whatever his name may be, is only the jailer and is not evil. One should turn the rosary at least once during the day accepting the role of the jailer and one's own karmas to be sinful till such a time that one's hatred towards the person is destroyed.

Let me throw some light on another special quality. On the show "Kaun Banega Crorepati", a correct answer is rewarded once, not over and over again even though the answer might be repeated. However, in the game show of nature, you get rewarded as many times as you keep answering correctly. "The neighbour ^{is} a jailer." "The neighbour is not evil, it is my karmas which are evil". "Why would the neighbour harm me unless my karmas are sinful?" You will be rewarded as often as you repeat this. Nature keeps adding rewards to your account because these are correct answers. As against this, as many times as you think that "The neighbour is a rogue", "He is evil", "He harasses me all the time", nature keeps adding punishment to your account because these answers are incorrect.

One fact has to be understood that no authority in the

world, no organization or no affluent person can give you a reward which is as grand as the one that nature confers on you. In the same manner, no authority in the world, no court or enemy can punish you as severely as nature. In short, the power of nature to either present you with a reward or to inflict a penalty is immeasurable.

Would you rather have a generous reward or a terrible penalty from nature? This decision is entirely upto you.

सर्वं पुष्पकयाणं, कम्माणं पाव फलविवाणं ।

अवराहेसु गुणेषु य, निमित्तमित्तं परो होई ॥

Meaning: In your happiness and unhappiness the other person is only an instrumental cause. Everything that one reaps, is the fruit of one's own past karmas.

2. KARMASATTA

The only authority to punish

Question: In the wordly court, it is often seen that if the jailer is insolent, he may take advantage of the prisoner's helplessness and may slap him a few times even if the court has not ordered him to do so. He may make the prisoner do some of his personal work. Is the same not possible even with our neighbour or any other person causing harassment to us? Karmasatta may not have punished us as we may not have committed a crime and yet it is possible that the neighbour may have wished to harass us. Wouldn't he be considered evil at such a time?

Answer: No soul can subject another soul to any punishment which has not been ordained by Karmasatta. This should be etched onto our hearts. Only Karmasatta has the right to punish and no one else. However superior the authority, power, wealth or intelligence of any soul, however much he may wish and try to pester another soul but if Karmasatta has not ordered the other soul to be punished, even that superior authority can do nothing to harm him. The story of Aghat Kumar is an infallible example of this.

Once there was a country called Avanti whose capital was Vishalanagari. It was being ruled by a King named Sughatit. The name of the royal priest of that country was Jnanagarbha. Once when the royal court was in session, a servant came in and whispered something into Jnanagarbha's ear, hearing which Jnanagarbha's eyes

widened. With much happiness and astonishment, he uttered, "What are you saying? Can it really be true? It is not possible!" The King was very curious to know what it was all about. He asked the royal priest to relate what he had heard.

The priest replied, "My maid servant has given birth to a son. When this child was in his mother's womb, the mother had dreamt that the child would be a great person in the future. Today, this child is born. I have been informed by this servant that he has a disk, a bow and other auspicious marks on his body."

The King asked the significance of these marks. The priest said, "This child will become the ruler of this country and that too during your lifetime." Each of these words pierced the King's ears like a thorn, "So it will be the son of a maid servant and not my son, Prince Vikram Sinh, who will be the King? Impossible! Absolutely impossible!" He knew that a person born with marks like a discus or a bow was born for greatness. This thought made him fearful. In the end, he decided to kill the child. On the King's order, two servants abducted the newly born child from the priest's home, in order to kill him. They left the city but on seeing the child who was as beautiful as God's own child, they started thinking, "Such a small child! What has he done to the King for the King to want to kill him?" They did not have the heart to kill such a fair, beautiful and innocent child. They thought, "Let us leave him alone somewhere. Let him be at the mercy of the animals, birds." They left the child on the edge of an unused well, situated in a very old garden.

In the morning, on reaching the garden, the gardener was astonished beyond words. The garden was so old that rarely did any tree flower. That day, he felt as if Spring had arrived and the garden was in full bloom. Each tree was laden with fruits and flowers. What was this miracle? When he looked around, he saw a smiling-gurgling child at the edge of the well. The child who looked as beautiful as God's child was such that even an enemy would find him adorable. He picked up the child, bestowed him with kisses, took him home to his childless wife and told her, "From today, no one will call you barren." This happening was so unlikely that the child was named Aghat Kumar.

The gardener's wife whose joy knew no bounds, started rearing the child with a lot of care. One day, she went to the King's court to give him a garland, taking the child with her. When Jnanagarbha saw the child, he knew at once who the child was. He knew that the child had been kidnapped but he did not know his whereabouts. He could not take his eyes off the child. On noticing this, the King asked the priest the reason for his heightened interest in the child. The priest, who was forthright, said, "This child is the son of my maid servant who is going to sit on your throne." The King was again drowned in worry. He called the two servants who, on sensing the King's anger, admitted immediately to have left the child at the edge of the well. On further probing, it was found that the gardener had discovered a child there. It was established that it was undoubtedly the same child.

The King could not bear to have the child take the throne. He called for the cruelest executioner and ordered him to kill the child. The child was forcibly taken from the gardener's wife. The heartless executioner, who was no less cruel than the God of death himself, left for the jungle with the child. Aghat Kumar was handsome, playful and cheerful. He knew no fear and playfully pulled at the executioner's beard, calling him Bapa (father) in an innocent, child-like way.

Pulling the beard, if seen as a prank, becomes provocative but if seen as child-play, becomes endearing. The hard-hearted wicked executioner was more likely to take it as a prank. He could have admonished the child for causing him pain and for calling him his father, but Karmasatta had not decided to punish this child. In fact, the child was to be rewarded. As a result, even the very cruel executioner saw the painful act of the beard being pulled as the child being playful. "How can I kill a child who is calling me 'Bapa' (father)? It would be a sin to kill such an innocent child." At the same time, he knew that if he did not kill the child he would be disobeying the King's order. He feared losing his job and more importantly his life.

In this confused state of mind, he reached a jungle where there was a temple of a 'yaksha'. The child was thrilled to see the idol of the pot-bellied and bearded yaksha. Taking small strides, he reached the idol and climbed on it. He started playing with the

Yaksha = a demi-god

yaksha's beard. Seeing this, the executioner knew he could not commit the sin of killing this child and fled leaving Aghat Kumar engrossed in play, all alone in a terrible jungle.

The unfortunate people without 'punya' may lose sleep worrying whereas the fortunate ones, due to the power of their merit, cannot be hurt even by evil supernatural beings, let alone humans. Therefore, the learned advise you to stop committing sins. Once you have collected a treasure of merits there won't be room or need for worry. Nature will take care of you. Demi-gods are generally so engrossed in their own world that for thousands of years, their attention is not drawn to their own temples on Earth. Aghat Kumar was a virtuous person and had lots of merit to his credit. In his case, nature was ready and eager to serve him and it drew the demi-god's attention to the temple. The demi-god, with his 'Avadhi-jnana', saw that the child was all alone in the temple.

In this version of the story, it is shown that the executioner does not kill the child but just leaves him to his own device in the jungle. In another version, it is shown that the executioner, at the cost of his own life, not only decides not to kill him, but also raises and protects him secretly. It is the same executioner who does not have any kindness in him. When he was reproached for making killing his profession, he would show off his atheism, and announce that he had no belief

Punya = merit

Avadhi jnana = clairvoyance

in ‘punya-papa or parlok’. Who transformed such a cruel person, an atheist into a merciful believer?

This is the immeasurable power of Karmasatta. It proclaims to turning a heartless person into a kind person. It can convert an atheist to a theist and a perpetrator to a protector. It is as if Karmasatta is proclaiming, “What can’t I do if I wish to reward someone with long life?”

In July of 2006, in the region of Kurukshetra, a 6 year old boy called Prince fell into a 60’ deep bore. The mouth of the bore was so narrow that it was almost impossible to have the child lifted out. He was not the son of any minister, a big industrialist or an army officer. He was the son of a poor labourer. Poor labourers and their families aren’t valued by the elite in our country and no one would have been affected by the loss of this child. However, nature was on his side. It directed the Indian Army to undertake the most frantic and painstaking rescue operations of recent times. It involved everyone from villagers to firemen, from police to the army. Millions of T.V. watchers prayed for him. The Army dug a parallel well and reached the trapped boy, by drilling a tunnel. The little boy rode out of the black hole after 50 hours.

In 2010, 33 miners were trapped in a Chilian mine, two thousand feet under the surface of the earth. The people of Chile, the world and the miners themselves had lost all hope for survival. However, Karmasatta wanted them to live. By a unique, unimaginable operation, they were all pulled out alive 70 days later.

Papa = sin, demerit

Parlok = life after death

Nature really cares. It made sure that the demi-god was not offended by the child's playful behaviour. In fact, the demi-god felt affection toward the child and wished him to be looked after and reared with much care. He then made Devdhar, an extremely wealthy but childless caravaneer, who was camping in the same jungle, have a dream. He showed Devdhar that in one of his temples nearby, there was a beautiful child and that he should take him home and bring him up. Devdhar's happiness was boundless. He considered himself very fortunate to have been blessed with a child with radiant beauty. After thanking the demi-god over and over again and worshipping him with a lot of devotion, he left for his country. Devdhar's wife not only got a child, she got to experience the immense joy of motherhood. With passage of time, the child, who by then had grown into a young lad, developed an extraordinary sharpness for understanding along with qualities like humbleness. Due to his keen enthusiasm for study, he soon mastered all the scriptures and knowledge about weaponry. He started training under his father and honed his business skill. Once, while travelling for his business, he reached the city of Vishala. Aghat Kumar went to the King's court to gift him very expensive and thorough-bred horses which could run faster than the wind and also to seek his permission to do business in the city. The priest, Jnanagarbha, noticed Aghat and his eyes shone. On noticing the characteristic marks on his body, he knew that this definitely was Aghat Kumar.

If your destiny blooms, even the unfavourable become favourable.

Later, he spoke about it to the King in private. The King was shell-shocked, as if struck by lightning. He called for the executioner who had no choice but to speak the truth about what had transpired.

In the book, 'Shraddhavidhigranth', the history of Vallabhibhang is mentioned. In the village of Pali, in the region of Marwar, there lived two brothers by the names of Kakuak and Patak. The younger brother was very rich whereas the elder brother was poor. His bad karmas were so hard on him that he was forced to do arduous labour in his younger brother's farm. One day, after a hard day of work, he fell into a deep sleep, but at midnight, he was woken up and chastised by his younger brother, "Do you have any sense of responsibility? Water has started overflowing from all the farm-beds and you have fallen asleep as if with no care in the world. Is this any way to do a job? How can you expect a salary without doing any work? Get up and get back to the farm." Kakuak got up unwillingly. On reaching there, he was surprised to see some men working in the field, but none looked familiar. He asked, "Who are you all who are working in the middle of the night?" "We are the servants who have been bought by your brother because of his merit." Look at nature's ways! If it wishes to gratify, it can make Demi Gods to serve you.

Kakuak could not resist asking, "Is it possible for me to get people who also would work for me?" The reply was, "Go to Vallabhipur where your good fortune awaits you." Kakuak travelled a great distance and underwent a lot of trouble to reach Vallabhipur. He started selling assorted

things like oil and spices. His business grew and he set up a small shop. People found it difficult to call him by his own name, so they started calling him “Ranka Sheth”. He became famous by that name. Once a cloth merchant from Girnar came to the city. In Girnar, he had strived very hard to master the art of making ‘Siddharas’ (just a drop of which had the capacity to turn a ‘*mana*’ of iron into gold) and had finally succeeded in attaining it. He filled up an earthen pot with this potion and brought it along with him, guarding it with his life. The merchant found a home next to Ranka Sheth’s shop. Gradually, a friendship developed between them. In the meantime, having heard about the glory of the holy place of Somnath, he decided to go on a pilgrimage. He did not want to risk carrying the valuable pot with him. Instead, he decided to request the Sheth to keep it until his return.

Ranka Sheth asked him to leave it anywhere in the shop where he deemed fit. The cloth merchant tied the pot, secured it high up and out of reach in the shop and left for Prabhaspatan.

One day, Ranka Sheth decided to light a stove in the shop and put a griddle on it. It so happened that the stove was placed just under the pot. Due to the heat from the stove, the pot overflowed and just a drop of the potion fell on the griddle which instantly turned to gold. Ranka was truly amazed! He put another griddle on the stove and on the pot being heated again, another drop fell on

Sheth = a reputed merchant

mana = a measure of weight equal to 40 seers

Siddharas = a liquid which is magical/ a potion

the second griddle, transforming it into a golden one too. Ranka Sheth realized that the pot was filled with a magical potion which had the power to turn iron into gold. He became greedy. He removed all the necessary, important things from the shop and then set it on fire, making it look like an accident, leaving no possibility of returning the pot.

He pretended to be alarmed and shouted, "Fire! fire!" All the people gathered around and together, they extinguished the fire. Sheth made a new, bigger shop. He had made a heap of gold and had become a very wealthy merchant. The cloth merchant, on his return from the pilgrimage, went to Sheth to collect his pot in good faith. Sheth made a sad face and continued his pretence of the shop being gutted down in a sudden fire in which the pot had been destroyed. The cloth merchant noticed that there was a vast difference in Sheth's prosperity in the short time that he had been away. He realized that Sheth had committed a fraud. What could he do? He suddenly remembered that when he was drawing Siddharas from the well and filling a pot with it, he had heard a mysterious voice which had told him, "This one is in the name of Ranka". He had emptied out the pot and when he had started filling it again, he had heard the voice repeat, "This one is in the name of Ranka."

The cloth merchant reconciled to the fact that he was not destined to possess the pot. It was in Ranka's fate to have it. Whatever had to happen had happened. He had lost the potion which had the power to make gold worth billions and yet he accepted Karmasatta's verdict without

losing his composure. How many people can take such a grave loss lightly and refrain from reacting without feeling anger, aversion or revenge?

Reverting back to our story – Based upon Aghat's mother's dream and the characteristic marks on his body, the priest had made a forecast that the child was going to become King. Moreover, despite King Sughat's many attempts to kill the child, nature had not only saved him unfailingly but had also made the garden bloom in its full glory. The child had been handed over to the extremely cruel and heartless executioner, yet the executioner had risked his life by not obeying the King's order to kill the child. The King was aware of all of the above. He could have accepted nature's decision to make Aghat the King, understanding this to be his fate. "If it is his destiny to become the King, so be it". However he was not prepared to accept the fact that it was only nature's intention that prevailed. He had a false notion that since he was the King, he had the power to change his predetermined course, if he so wished.

He started planning other devious means to kill Aghat. He persuaded Devdhar to let him have Aghat as he was an expert at weaponry. He sent Aghat to Mathura to undertake the task of its systematic administration. Aghat received a very grand welcome there. He thought of appointing loyal, skilled officers and strong soldiers under him. He called for a thousand such men from his native place and designated them to different positions. He then started living as the ruler of Mathura. This irked King Sughat even more and fuelled his intentions to take

Aghat's life. He came up with a plan. He summoned Aghat to Vishala and told him that Prince Vikram Sinh was fighting on the battle field and he needed him to aid him in preparing the army.

Aghat Kumar was thrilled and did not for a minute think that there was anything amiss. He told the King, "You have obliged me by assigning me to this task. I will leave tomorrow morning itself". The King said, "Prepare to leave. I will write a message for the Prince".

Next morning, Aghat and his cavalry departed, taking a sealed letter from the King. Aghat did not have the slightest idea about the letter's content, in which it was mentioned that he was to have been given 'talaputa visha'. They journeyed on, the retinue reached the temple of the aforesaid yaksha and set up camp there. Aghat was totally unaware that in his childhood, he had played with the same yaksha's beard and this was the yaksha who had appeared in Devdhar's dream bidding him to bring him (Aghat) up. Due to his auspicious merits, he had become nature's creditor, so nature had no option but to be extra vigilant. It diverted the yaksha's clairvoyance ability to the said temple. On applying his 'avadhi-jnana', the yaksha recognized Aghat Kumar immediately and also learnt about the contents of the letter. With his divine power, he changed the content of the letter to an order that the Princess was to be married to the bearer of the letter.

Aghat reached his destination and handed the letter to Prince Vikram Sinh. There being no reason to doubt the

talaputa visha = a type of very potent poison

King's signature and his seal, the astrologers were asked to look for the most auspicious time, who then prophesied the present moment to be the most opportune one. The Prince assumed that the King knew that it was the most appropriate time, and since it was not possible for the King to recall the Princess to Vishala, the marriage was to be solemnized then and there. Thus, Aghat Kumar wed the Princess. When the King received the news, it was as if he had been hit by a thunderbolt. He still didn't learn his lesson.

He conceived yet another plan to finish Aghat off notwithstanding the fact that it would have meant that his own daughter would have been widowed. He invited Aghat to Vishala. Aghat was surprised and failed to comprehend the chain of events – First, the talk of war, then the marriage and now the departure for Vishala? Nevertheless, he left along with his wife and brother-in-law and reached Vishala where he was received by the King and his subjects with a lot of pomp and grandeur. The King told Aghat in private, “You are married but there is one more ritual to be performed”. “Which one?” “The ritual of offering eatables to our family goddess tomorrow, which happens to be the fourteenth night of the dark phase of the lunar month.” Aghat agreed to perform the ritual. The King got

*“Sitasamani sati kon shani, patipratignathi sada pramani;
Kurang hanava mati bhrashta kidhi, vinashkale vipareet buddhi.”*

Meaning: As one's time of destruction approaches, one's discretion gets adverse. This is what happened to a virtuous and wise 'sati' like Sita who had stood by her husband through thick and thin to uphold his solemn vow. However, her covetousness to possess the skin of the golden deer led her astray, resulting in her downfall.

the offering readied. He also summoned the executioners and instructed them to kill the person who brought the plate of offering to the temple at midnight. The King bid Aghat a farewell thinking that it was his last one. Aghat left with the plate of eatables and other devotional offerings. On his way out, he met Vikram Sinh who asked him where he was headed, at that hour. Aghat told him everything. "Brother-in-law! The temple is very far from here and the road is terrible. It is pitch dark now and you are new to the place. Give the offerings to me, I have been to this temple several times and I am familiar with the road. I will go and offer the eatables there myself," said Vikram Sinh. Aghat gave him the offerings. On reaching the temple, the Prince was pierced with arrows expelled from the bows of the executioners who were hiding.

The King was totally devastated on hearing this news the next morning. This sudden shock changed his way of thinking. It led him to repent and accept the eternal truth that what was ordained could not be altered. To make amends and to atone for his sins, he abdicated his kingdom in favour of Aghat and accepted monkhood. He accomplished omniscience after years of hard work and subsequently, visited the city of Vishala. King Aghat came to pay his obeisance along with his subjects and listened to the sage's nectar-like sermon. Finally, the King asked the sage, "O Lord! Why were there so many ups and downs in my life"? The venerable omniscient then brought up the past.

Once, there was a country called Vidarbha whose capital was a city called Kundinpur. It was ruled by King

Purandar, who had a son named Gajabhanjan (Aghat's past life). One day, while playing in the garden, the Prince espied a monk practising penance. Instead of noticing the dignity of austerity of the monk, he saw his body and his clothes which were smeared with dirt and dust. He felt a disgust towards the monk, "He is so filthy!" This was the crime for which he had the misfortune of being born as the son of a female servant in the next life. The Prince's friend, who was devout, paid his obeisance to the monk, touched his feet and sat there to listen to him speak. Seeing this, the Prince also followed suit. The sage then delivered a sermon manifesting the greatness of non-violence and kindness which touched the Prince's heart. He avowed never to kill an innocent, mobile creature. He also took the opportunity of offering the first meal to the great sage who had been on a month long fast.

A malpractice of slaughtering a male buffalo, on the occasion of 'Navaratri' was prevalent in those days. King Purandar ordered Prince Gajabhanjan to sacrifice the buffalo with a sword. The Prince was in a dilemma. On the one hand was his vow of non-violence and on the other was the command of his father, the King. He lifted the sword on King's insistence. The moment he thought about his vow, the sword stopped midway. The King gestured to him to try again. The Prince lifted his sword to strike again but it abruptly stopped, having come within an inch of the buffalo's neck.

Such a thing was repeated four times (for these past

Navaratri = a nine day festival preceding 'Dasahara'

acts of Aghat, there were four attempts on his life). Finally, the Prince told the King, 'Father! Pardon me but I won't be able to slaughter the buffalo. I will adhere to my vow even at the cost of my life'. He maintained his vow till the end of his life. On hearing about this incident from his past life, Aghat attained 'jatismarana'. Having totally immersed himself in detachment, he then accepted monkhood. After making arduous efforts to achieve his goal, he attained keval jnana and ultimately salvation.

What is apparent from the above story is that even a person holding a powerful position like that of a King cannot give an intended punishment even after many attempts if the Court of Karmasatta has not willed it so. On the contrary, all of those futile attempts prove to be the ones which give the other person a gratifying reward. Isn't it better to become a creditor in the eyes of Karmasatta by performing good deeds?

Another example reiterating the same theory is that of Mayanasundari. She does not accept her father's assertion that he could make somebody happy if he so wished and do the opposite if he so desired. She believed that whatever karma determined, would be what ultimately happened. The father thought - "Let me show her how unhappy I can make her and how happy I can make Sursundari for agreeing with me and acknowledging my power." King Prajapal, who was enraged at his daughter Mayana's answer, married her off to a leper, while pleased with his other daughter Sursundari, he married her to

Jatismarana jnana = past life recollection

Prince Aridaman. However, ultimately what transpired was what Karmasatta had willed.

The King wanted to destroy Mayana's life by marrying her to a leper, but Karmasatta did not wish that such a misfortune should befall Mayana. Karmasatta had planned a reward for her. Hence, Karmasatta sent the most fortunate, the most virtuous and meritorious Prince Shripal, in the guise of Umbarrana, to be Mayana's husband. Mayana not only was happy, on the contrary, her happiness was boundless. On the other hand, Karmasatta wanted to punish Sursundari. The man whom she wed, thinking him to be fortunate and brave, turned out to be a coward, so much so that she had to become a dancer to earn her livelihood.

We must etch this fact into our psyche that when Karmasatta wants to reward, it does not punish. A person may want to harass another person and may make umpteen attempts to do so but he will not succeed in his motive. It is thus evident that no soul has the authority to harass another soul and since he lacks the authority, he (the jailer) may move heaven and earth and yet he is unable to mete out a punishment which has not been ordained by Karmasatta. This establishes the fact that a jailer of the worldly court may harass someone more than what was ordered but a jailer of the court of nature cannot increase the punishment even by a degree at his own will. If Karmasatta wishes to punish, however much a man may try, he cannot save himself from it. At that time, even a protector becomes a perpetrator.

Who killed Indira Gandhi? Was it not her own

bodyguards? Was there a lapse in security? Her residence was on Safdargunj Road in New Delhi. For security reasons, no vehicles were permitted to ply in that area to safeguard against terrorist attacks. Security guards were put on a weekly drill, to check their readiness at all times to save the Prime Minister, in case of an attack. They were trained to take the brunt of the attack, in order to save the Prime Minister. The guards who were trained to be quick, nimble and quick-witted in an emergency could not display their prowess when the time came. An ambulance used to be parked outside the Prime Minister's home round the clock. The day she was killed, the ambulance was still there but the driver and the keys to the ambulance were missing. She had to be driven to the hospital in an Ambassador car.

All the V.I.P.s are treated at New Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences. The Prime Minister's residence has a wireless communication service with the Hospital whereby the Hospital can be informed whenever any incident occurs.

There is an idiom in English, "Man proposes, God disposes". A man may have intended something but God overturns that proposition. We disagree with this. God can never hurt us in any way. He, in fact, will improve the circumstances. We can certainly say, "Man proposes, Karmasatta disposes". It is Karmasatta who topples a man's intentions.

A young man wanted to get married and settle down.

It is easier to take the punishment given by a king but difficult to take the punishment meted out by one's own destiny.

His parents found him a suitable bride and got him married to her. A year passed by without any incident, but then her true inner disposition surfaced. She was so quarrelsome that she used to erupt in anger at the slightest provocation. The husband tip toed around her giving her little cause to fight. He would think several times before doing or saying anything, dreading its outcome. Yet the wife would find the smallest excuse to start a quarrel. The husband's life became unbearable. He lamented his fate and wondered why others' wives were so loving and peaceful and his own wife so discordant? What had he done to deserve such a belligerent wife?

Only one out of fifteen animals has a harness on its neck. This is not the fault of the harness. It is the animal's fault. In the same way, whose fault is it for getting a contentious wife? It is indeed the fault of the husband. A man married to such a wife should understand that he must have been an undisciplined person in his past life, who was totally out of control. This is nature's way to restrain this person by giving him such a wife in this life. Karmasatta deprived him of all his dreams of a happy life.

One might have a wife with an eccentric, doubting nature or may be a husband with an angry disposition who is home all day and does not do much with his time. Married life may be unhappy and insufferable for any one of the above reasons, but instead of blaming each other, one should accept the fact that it is one's past karma for which he or she is being punished by Karmasatta. By doing so, one can remain calm and avoid feeling animosity or aversion towards the other and save oneself

from more demerit.

The fact of the matter is “Man proposes and Karmasatta disposes”. There was a wireless communication service between the hospital and the Prime Minister’s residence for her security, but Karmasatta disrupted this foolproof arrangement. On the day Indira Gandhi was killed, the wireless service was out of order. The doctors at the hospital found out about what had transpired only when she was brought to the hospital in an Ambassador car. As a result, they had no chance to prepare for the emergency. Indiraji’s blood group was RH negative. The Hospital always used to be well stocked with it. But unfortunately, it had run out of it that day. Satwant Singh and Biyant Singh, who pumped 30 bullets into Indira Gandhi with a stengun, were not hired by the government to assassinate her. They were employed for her security. The bullets given to them were for her protection.

When Karmasatta is displeased, a protector becomes a perpetrator. A man may try to create favourable situations but if Karmasatta wants to punish, it can throw all the arrangements made by a man into disarray. It can transform a favourable situation into an unsuitable one or it can create new hindrance so that eventually the soul has to undergo a punishment. There are numerous such examples in the scriptures.

If your destiny is positive, your enemies are unable
to cause harm to you.

3. WAY OF METING OUT PUNISHMENT

There was a family of five – two brothers, their two wives and a widowed sister. Both the brothers and their spouses had a lot of affection and respect for the sister. One day, the sister, in her insecurity, thought, “Today, they all dote over me. What if tomorrow, they throw me out? Let me put them to test”.

Once, the elder brother was returning home. At that time the sister told the elder sister-in-law (bhabhi) loud enough for her husband to hear, “One should keep one’s hands clean”. The brother heard his sister’s advice and thought, “Why has my sister given such an advice? Surely, my wife must have committed a theft”. From thereon, he stopped talking to his wife and even kept his interaction with her to the minimum. After some time, the wife could bear it no longer. She was perplexed at her husband’s behaviour, so she had a talk with her sister-in-law (husband’s sister). The sister realized the situation. She told her brother, “It is not what you imagine. I had suggested very casually to never think of committing a theft”. The brother started behaving normally with his wife again. The sister was reassured that her brother and sister-in-law had respect and affection for her.

On another occasion, the younger brother was returning home from the shop. The sister advised her younger sister-in-law loud enough for the brother to hear, “Mind your sari”. The brother started wondering why his sister had spoken thus. Surely, it might be because

his wife was of immoral character. He cut off all relations with his wife. The wife was extremely worried. She confided in her sister-in-law. The sister then clarified to her younger brother, “Your wife is very virtuous. The advice to her was only so that she would not entertain thoughts of any other man in her mind”. The younger brother was satisfied and everything went back to normal with his wife. The sister was pacified that her brothers and sisters-in-law loved her and valued her advice. The widowed sister had behaved in a sinful manner by wrongly accusing both her sisters-in-law. She had offered a lot of worship during her widowhood but she failed to atone for this sin.

Now just examine the way in which the sister was punished by Karmasatta. In her next birth, this widowed sister was born as the daughter of a merchant. Both the brothers were born as the sons of another merchant in another town. One of the brothers was married to the daughter of the former merchant (his sister in the previous birth). On the night of the marriage a ‘Vyantar dev’, who was passing by aerially, felt like playing a prank. This was of course, at the behest of Karmasatta. The bride was awaiting her husband’s arrival in the bridal chamber. The ‘Vyantar dev’ entered the room in the guise of her husband and started talking to her. The bride was absolutely unaware and mistook the Vyantar dev as her husband and started talking to him lovingly. Her own husband who was outside the room, heard her talking lovingly to another

Vyantar dev = a peripatetic celestial

man. He thought, "If my wife is speaking so affectionately with another man on the wedding night itself, she must definitely be of an immoral character. I want nothing to do with her". He left, letting his in-laws know that the marriage was unacceptable to him. The wife was shocked beyond words when she heard this. Considering worldly life to be futile, she became detached from worldly things and happiness and accepted nunhood to live a pious life.

As fate would have it, with passage of time, the two brothers got married to the two sisters-in-law (bhabhi) from the previous life. The nun, in her travels, also came to the same city. Due to the affection the wives had for her in the previous birth, they had a lot of respect and devotion for her, even in the present birth. Hence, they used to go to serve her and request her to come to their home for alms everyday. On one such day, the nun went to their house and started preaching to them, when the wives went inside to attend to some chore, leaving a necklace outside. Sadhviji was left by herself with the necklace. A peacock from a painting on the wall came to life, took the necklace and disappeared (This was a trick played by some peripatetic celestial). The nun was blamed for the theft of the necklace. The head nun admonished the younger nun, "What was the need to stay in a householder's home for a long period of time? Now to wash away the blot of this blemish, you will have to undertake a 'Sagarika' fast". The younger nun started her fast, standing in

Sadhviji = a Jain nun

Sagarika = a kind of austerity

‘Kayotsarga’. Auspicious thoughts started flowing in her mind at that moment and increasingly, the pure thought process culminated in ‘Shukladhyana’, ultimately leading to attainment of keval jnana. In a while, the peacock from the picture came back and returned the necklace. People gathered in amazement to see what had happened. On being questioned about the incident, the omniscient nun narrated the story of her past life.

How was it that on the day Agnisharma was to break his fast, Gunasen developed an unbearable headache? And again, a second time, on the very day of breaking of Agnisharma’s fast – not a day earlier, not a day later – suddenly, a war was on the verge of breaking out. Gunasen had missed out on making the great austerite Agnisharma break his fast of ‘masakshamana’ twice. Agnisharma’s unbroken third ‘masakshamana’ had begun, because of which Gunasen’s devotion and respect for him had multiplied manifold. He was deeply repentant for having missed out on ‘paranu’ twice and hence had become extra vigilant about not missing it the third time. He was not only keen to perform the ‘parana’, he also had an intense desire to reap its benefit. The countdown had begun. He alerted everyone and made all possible preparations so as not to repeat the mistake again. It was five days, then three to the ‘parana’. On the day before, he sent out his instructions emphatically to everyone involved including

Kayotsarga = a posture for meditation where all activities of mind, speech and body cease

Shukla dhyana = purest meditation

Masakshamana = a month long fast

Parana/paranu = breaking of fast with either fluid or food

the royal family so that everything would go as per plan. He himself was very alert. Yet he instructed his family members to remind him about it constantly. He had kept reiterating to himself and also repeatedly reminded his family members. However, as was destined to happen, on the day of the 'parana' itself, his wife, the Queen gave birth to a son, their first born. Everybody was ecstatic and was so engrossed in celebrating the event, that they forgot about the 'parana'.

Is it possible that even at the time of a joyous occasion, something that had been repeatedly told to everyone would be forgotten by one and all? It was Karmasatta which did not allow anyone to remember. It was only when Agnisharma returned back without breaking his fast that Gunasen realized that he had missed the 'parana' once again.

This is to be very well understood that Agnisharma wanted to break his fast. All the 'Tapas', 'Kulapati', and even Gunasen and his royal family wished the same and had even made preparations for it. Yet his fast could not be broken at the hands of Gunasen. Why? Because, Karmasatta did not wish it and it is Karmasatta's wish that prevails. Karmasatta changes circumstances to suit itself for fulfillment of its wishes or it creates circumstances whereby its wishes are fulfilled. On the day of the first parana, he had an unbearable headache, the second time,

Tapas = an ascetic

Kulapati = the teacher who supports and teaches his pupils in a Gurukul (a residential teaching institution)

he set out to war and on the day of the third parana, the birth of the Prince. Every event took place on the day of the 'parana', not a day earlier, not a day later. If one ponders whole heartedly, with thoroughness and care, one will realize that nature is trying to suggest something. It is trying to convey that Agnisharma had to be punished.

Gunasen had wished to perform Agnisharma's 'parana' from the bottom of his heart and yet Karmasatta had made him miss it every time. This should indicate to us that the person who harasses us does not do it independently according to his wish but it is Karmasatta which makes him do it.

Query: Leaving the story of Gunasen aside, most people harass others only because they wish to do so. In this book, elsewhere, is it not mentioned that in Nagketu's previous birth as Kishore, his stepmother used to trouble him terribly and intentionally?

Reconciliation: Yes, the stepmother did intend to trouble him but even that desire should be considered as having been prompted by Karmasatta. Subhoomchakravarti was not satisfied even though he ruled over 6 continents. He possessed 14 'ratnas', 9 'nidhans', a huge army of 96 crore soldiers. At any given time, 16,000 demi-gods were ready and eager to serve him and yet he wished to also conquer 6 continents of

Ratna = unimaginable power possessing 14 types of miraculous substances

Nidhan = A wonderful large treasure

Yojan = a measure of distance of about eight miles

Bharat Kshetra in Dhatakikhand. He established a war camp admeasuring 12 yojans with 'charmaratna' and 'chhatraratna'. He sat himself down in the war camp along with his army of 96 crore soldiers and ordered 16,000 demi-gods to lift the entire camp and fly it over Lavana Samudra admeasuring two lakh yojans to reach Dhatakikhand. However, as the demi-gods got working and the camp passed over Lavana Samudra, the court of Karmasatta passed an order. One demi-god thought, "The other 15,999 demi-gods are lifting the war camp. It is not going to matter if I alone move aside". He moved away. He wasn't the only one who had this thought. The rest of the 15,999 demi-gods also moved away because they all had the same thought at the same time. As a result, Subhoomchakravarti with his entire war camp fell into Lavana Samudra and drowned.

The demi-gods are said to be very loyal and are never unfaithful. If any one of them had imagined that by his moving away, the whole army would drown, they would not have done so. No demi-god wished Subhoom to drown and die and yet each of them had the same thought which became the reason for this occurrence.

Who made them think like this? It can be assumed that

Charmaratna-chhatraratna = miraculous substances which are normally a span long. When touched by a Chakravarti, they both expand and become 12 yojans long. The Chakravarti's army can then position itself over charmaratna while the equally long chhatraratna becomes a canopy over it. Thus an entire camp is readied.

Lavana-Samudra = an ocean surrounding Jambu Dweep (island) which is twice as wide as Jambu and which has salty water

it was Karmasatta who made the demi-gods collectively stray because of which punishment ordered for Subhoom was carried out.

The saga of Bhimsen also establishes this reality. When he was going through a very difficult time, he heard that King Arinjay of Pratishtanpur city, which was situated 12 yojans away, was a very kind and generous ruler. Every six months, the King would move in a procession to alleviate miseries of his subjects. He used to give wealth to the poor, employment to the unemployed, food to the hungry. He used to offer a salary of 32 rupees to the employees whereas his son-in-law Jitashatru used to accord a salary of 64 rupees. Bhimsen travelled there with great expectation, but on his reaching, he found out that Jitashatru's procession had passed by just the previous day. He had lessened people's suffering and distress and now Bhimsen would have to wait another 6 months for his turn. He was dumb-struck. Seeing his condition, compassionate and courteous Dhanasar Shreshthi offered him shelter. Six months passed by. Bhimsen met King Arinjay and narrated his story to him. The truth in this narration was enough to melt anyone's heart. Moreover, this was a King who was the remover of others' troubles, and he was compassionate and benevolent. There was not even the slightest possibility that he would not relieve Bhimsen of his suffering.

However, Karmasatta had other plans. It made the King believe Bhimsen to be a rogue. The King wondered

Shreshthi = a great merchant/wealthy person

why he would come to him for help when the ruler of his own country King Harishena was so very generous. He worried that if he offered Bhimsen work, there was a chance he might be deceived. The kind-hearted King became miserly towards Bhimsen. He refused Bhimsen a job by saying that he had none to offer him. Dhanasar Shreshthi again came forward to take care of the disappointed Bhimsen. He told him, "Stay back for six more months. Jitashatru will surely remove your poverty". Bhimsen stayed there for six more months, hoping for fate to turn in his favour, but Karmasatta made even Jitashatru think otherwise, "If the King has not helped him, even I should be cautious. Something must surely be amiss". He also became unsympathetic towards Bhimsen. Dhanasar Shreshthi who was, till then compassionate and kind, became wicked and malevolent. He refused outright to return Bhimsen's arms or to pay him his salary and threw him out, calling him a rogue. Karmasatta did not allow Dhanasar to remember Bhimsen's faithfulness, good behaviour and service.

Then Bhimsen happened to meet Ratnasar who was a kind and generous 'shravak'. He was extremely pained to hear Bhimsen's heart-wrenching tale and was overwhelmed by his honesty even in those difficult circumstances. Karmasatta was unable to change its opinion about Bhimsen so it made Bhimsen himself commit a mistake. Sheth Ratnasar gave Bhimsen precious gems worth millions which Bhimsen hid in a quilt made

of rags. Protecting them with his life, by keeping them close to his chest, he reached the outskirts of the city of Kshitipratishthit where his family lived. There he saw a clean, pure lake. Karmasatta tempted him to have a dip in it. Thinking that place to be unfrequented and safe, he put the quilt along with his clothes on the bank and entered the lake. Karmasatta made a monkey take the quilt, which was his only wealth, away. The monkey did not wish to make Bhimsen so helpless, as for him to want to commit suicide. It was just a game for him, but Bhimsen was experiencing so much anguish that he thought of taking his own life. A mendicant with long matted hair saved Bhimsen from hanging himself from a branch of a Banyan tree with a string like shoot. Hearing his sad life story, he took pity on him and reassured him. He made Bhimsen his 'uttarasadhak' and with his help mastered the art of making four pots of Suvarna Rasa. He then generously offered one out of four pots to Bhimsen.

After reaching Kshitipratishthit, the mendicant sent Bhimsen to the city to arrange for some food. He had no bad intention behind sending him. But no sooner did Bhimsen leave, Karmasatta maligned the mendicant's inclination. At the thought of parting with even one pot of Suvarna Rasa, he disappeared before Bhimsen returned.

Uttarasadhak = a supporter who pursues spiritual discipline to attain the highest realization or helps someone to reach the end of a mission successfully

Suvarna Rasa = One drop of which converts a mass of iron to gold

4. BE AFRAID OF COMMITTING CRIME

Let us also reminisce about the tale of Sursundari and Amarkumar. Sursundari was a princess while Amarkumar was the son of the greatest and most prestigious merchant of the city. This tale goes back to their childhood. Amar picked up seven kodis belonging to the Princess when she was asleep, bought sweetmeats with them and distributed the sweetmeats among other children, making them all happy. When Sursundari awoke, he gave her, her share of the sweetmeats too. She asked, 'Who is hosting this feast?' "You", Amar answered truthfully and told her everything since they both shared a very close, cordial and loving relationship. Amar had imagined that Sursundari would be pleased with this fun-filled jest. It was quite the opposite. Sursundari was annoyed. She hurt Amar by uttering distressful words, "Where did you learn to commit such a theft?" Amar beseeched her not to give too much significance to such a trivial matter. The Princess retorted, "Do you consider seven kodis to be petty? I can buy a kingdom with that amount". The Princess realized her mistake and repented her words. The next day, she won over Amar's heart by apologizing. Neither took this incident to heart, nor did it affect their affectionate behaviour with each other.

With passage of time, both entered their youth and were married to each other. Both were virtuous, spiritual and adored each other. They had forgotten the earlier

Kodi = a kind of legal tender, currency

episode of seven kodis and loved each other more than their own lives.

Once during a voyage, they reached an island which was inhabited by a demi-god who used to devour humans. There, they went for a stroll in an extremely beautiful garden. The atmosphere there was so pleasant and charming that Sursundari's eyes began to close and soon she put her head on Amar's lap and fell asleep. Amar was looking down at his wife's innocent face lovingly, enraptured by her beauty and grace. Suddenly, he remembered the episode of the seven kodis. His own insult, Sursundari's ego and anger – all these filled his mind with bitterness. In just a split moment or two, he became so hard-hearted that he tied seven kodis at the edge of Sursundari's sari, who was fast asleep, along with a note challenging her to buy a kingdom with those seven kodis. He abandoned her and fled towards the seashore. He spun a story that a man-eater demi-god had suddenly swooped down on Sursundari, snatching her away and that he had barely managed to escape. He suggested that they should all leave the island immediately. Everyone got on to the ship as quickly as possible. The anchors were lifted and the ships set sail. The whole episode occurred in the blink of an eyelid. What was the outcome? Sursundari had to undergo terrible calamities time and again, reading about which would fill anyone's eyes with tears. Though Amar forsook Sursundari, he immediately felt a deep remorse. Not a day went by when he did not cry. His love for Sursundari was still intact because of which he was always dejected and sad. Sursundari, on the other hand,

guarded her chastity with her life and managed to save herself from the most dreadful disasters. She was erudite in her knowledge of 'tattva'. By applying consciousness to the science of karma, she realized that in each and every of her affliction, it was her own karmas which were to be blamed. Therefore, she was not angered or offended by Amar. Her love for Amar too was unswerving and unshakeable. After a long period of twelve years, the two united again. Nevertheless, due to Amar having abandoned her prior to their reunion, Sursundari had had to undergo untold miseries over and over again.

From all of the above examples, one thing is evident that all perpetrators are not necessarily the enemies of the persecuted. They have not acted in a certain way because of any enmity. It was always at the spur of the moment that they acted in a particular fashion but as a result of which the afflicted soul had to bear endless suffering.

One has to believe that in order to give a gross punishment to the afflicted soul, Karmasatta had stirred up such a wish in the perpetrator's heart. Karmasatta can awaken a wish in the mind of the perpetrator at that very instance or else, it can create a wish in the mind of the perpetrator to keep bringing on protracted punishment to the afflicted. If a prisoner has to be given a rigorous punishment of ten years, the jailer will make sure that he endures it for that long. Behind the Jailer's will to see the prisoner suffer for this long, it is the court's order which is the main force. So, it is established that it is only due to

Tattva = transcendental reality/fundamental verity/ascertained
reals

the order or inspiration of Karmasatta that any soul will execute the punishment meted out by Karmasatta either willingly or otherwise. This way it is affirmed that the soul of the perpetrator is only a Jailer. Nothing more than that. In other words, a soul, at the most, can become a Jailer but it cannot become a judge who can independently punish another soul (without the order of Karmasatta). This is also the reason why he cannot either increase or decrease the punishment even by the smallest degree.

Question: “All this is alright, but there is also a limit upto which one can suffer. If the pain is prolonged and there is no end in sight, how long can one tolerate provocation patiently?”

Counter-Question: “How much unhappiness do you desire?”

Reply: “None at all, We only want happiness.”

Counter-reply: “Here is a story for you to ponder over. A boy filled a large syringe (meant for filling colours) with dirty, black and foul-smelling water and ejected it upwards towards the sky. Then he prayed to the Lord, “O Supreme Lord! Let there be a shower of rose water upon me.” However instead, what fell on him was the same dirty sewage water. He complained to the Lord, “You are not effective any more. I prayed to you so much and yet only dirty water fell on me”. Now, what can one say to this boy? If you wanted rose water, why would you fill the syringe with filthy water?”

Whenever one has the time, one watches T.V., once more money is earned, one makes a trip to Water Kingdom (a resort), if one sees something beautiful, one's eyes are

glued to it, be it a temple. If someone says something provocative or if something is misplaced or displaced, your temper hits the roof. There is no let up. You want to keep on filling the syringe of life with sewage water and then you expect rose water. Is it fair? Alternatively, everything is blamed on God, "For five years, I have taken a pilgrimage on the fifteenth day of the bright phase of the lunar month (full moon day) but my miseries have not yet alleviated". You want to keep on committing crimes and do not wish a punishment. Such a thing has never happened in the past nor is it likely to occur in the future. Yet, just suppose that nature accepts this proposition, then you yourself will refuse.

"No, we will never refuse".

"Hold on. Can you define a crime?"

"No".

"You are in denial. Most of you know what crimes are. If I start naming them, you will acknowledge the first one to be 'Pranatapata', second 'Mrushavad', third 'Adattadan' and so on. There are 18 designated crimes. In short, everything prohibited by the Lord constitutes a crime, for which nature punishes you. In other words, what is considered as a crime, under the law of nature, is which has been prohibited and regarded as a sin by the Lord. Those who do not want a punishment have to refrain from sins altogether."

Many argue that they do not consider eating after

Pranatapata = violence

Mrushavad = untruth / False utterance

Adattadan = stealing

sunset a sin or do not consider eating root vegetables to be a sin or do not consider misconduct as sinful.

Let us say for example, you have committed a theft and you receive a punishment from the court. If you turn around and say, "I do not consider a theft as a crime, will the court pardon you?" No, the court will tell you, "What you believe or do not believe has no relevance. What is considered a crime under the law is punishable and so it will be".

In the same way, Karmasatta, which is the court of nature, commands that you and your beliefs have no worth. "Who are you? What is the worth of your belief? What is considered a sin in the law of nature will lead to punishment".

If the government was to announce that, "From now on, there won't be a court in the nation, no jail, no jailer, no punishment", and asked your opinion about passing such a resolution, would you agree or disagree?

"We would definitely not agree, our lives would be extremely difficult and disorderly in that situation."

Similarly, in case nature asks you whether the court of Karmasatta should be dissolved, would you say 'yes' or 'no'?

'No'!

Is this answer just lip-service or is it from your heart? Most probably, it will be from your heart. At the same time, in your heart, you believe that the court of Karmasatta should be for others but not you. It is easy to think that

The destiny makes one lose one's senses.

if someone harasses you, lies to you, misbehaves with you or is unduly angry with you, he should surely be punished, but the same should not apply to you. You can justify your actions and hope to be let go easy.

In fact, nature is very large-hearted. It is prepared to accept your demand that, "Others should be punished, but not I". At the same time, nature also says, "Whatever you demand is also demanded by your neighbour. All souls wish the same. For me, none is my own and none is alien to me. I have to heed everyone. Therefore, either no one is punished or else everyone is punished". If you were to choose one option, which one would you choose?

"Everyone should be punished."

"Do you know what choosing this option means? It means that we should reiterate it in the Lord's presence every day. It means committing to him, "O Lord! If I hurt anyone with mind, speech or body, I should definitely be punished. If I speak bitter, hurtful words, I should be punished, otherwise there will be disorder. Lord! If I lie, steal, commit a sin, betray someone, I should be duly punished which means that I should be punished ten-fold for the smallest of misbehaviour, otherwise there will be a total disruption of law and order in the world. Lord, if I ever look at someone else's mother, daughter, sister lustfully, I should be punished. If I ever feel anger towards anyone, I should be punished, otherwise there will be chaos in the world." All this should be repeated to the Lord every day. Therefore, it is established that to maintain order in the Universe crime must be punished. If one does not desire a heavy punishment or the pain of

misery, one must stop committing crimes/sins.

Some say, “We are so attuned to committing sins that it has become our second nature to commit them. What if nature changes its law? In other words, if nature, instead of considering sin as a crime, deems it as a good deed and rewards it, we would not have to face any consequences.”

A boy who had appeared for an exam, comes home and tells his mother, “Mother! Mother! What if Colombo were to become the capital of India?”

“Why son? Why do you say so? Colombo is the capital of Sri Lanka.”

“Mother! This is the answer I gave in the exam.”

Look at this! The boy desires that Colombo should become India’s capital as that is the answer given by him in his exam. Similarly, one does not want to leave sinning altogether and wishes that by changing its belief, nature should start viewing a crime as a good deed. No problem, nature has a generous disposition. On our saying, it will even change its beliefs. However, if nature were to ask you, “If someone slaps you, should I consider it a good deed and reward that person? Or, if someone commits a breach of trust and makes you incur a financial loss, is it alright for me to reward him ten times that amount?” What will your answer be? You would say, “No, how can he be rewarded? He should be punished.” In other words, shouldn’t there be a court of Karmasatta to chastise the offender? Shouldn’t there be an officer to enforce the punishment? Do you now agree that laws of nature are

A thing can be snatched out of your hand but who can snatch anything from your destiny?

proper and that if we do not want a punishment, the only remedy is to stop committing crimes/sins?

Let us move forward to our original subject. Let us discuss for how long and to what extent should one bear someone's unending harassment. The daughter says, "I am suffering at the hands of my mother-in-law for two years. How much longer do I have to bear it? For an answer to this question, let us also remember the prisoner. Till when should he suffer the misery of punishment? 'Till his punishment is not over.'" On being sentenced for ten years by the court, the prisoner says, "My Lord! Not ten years. I refuse to take that long a punishment. Reduce it to two years." Will the court accept the prisoner's plea?

Is the sentence based on a prisoner's wish or the extent of his crime? Similarly, should all miseries and oppression that come our way be based on our wishes or our wrong-doing?

A person, who does not want any suffering, should refrain from committing any sins at any cost. Sometimes it might be difficult to stop ourselves from sinning, however hard we try. Then one has to be prepared to take the punishment. If one wants the punishment to be limited, one also has to draw a boundary on committing sins. We do not want to restrict our crimes. We want to keep perpetrating the crimes, but we want our punishment to be confined. This is not justice.

"For how many years have you been watching T.V.? Do you plan to ever stop watching it? You have watched many a serials, matches, all the scintillating news. Can you give these up?"

“No, I want to keep watching T.V. till my last breath.” There is a devotional song which goes thus, “Bhakti karatan chhoote mara prana, prabhu evun mangu chhun” (meaning, “O Lord! My request to you is that when my soul leaves this mortal body, my mind is engrossed in praying to you). Many wish to change it to, “T.V. jota chhoote mara prana, prabhu evun mangun chhun” (meaning – “I wish to die while watching T.V.”).

You have become impervious to disgrace. Your goodness is not put to shame in watching indecent scenes. Would you like to see the same scenes being enacted by your wife, daughter or sister and being watched by others intently, the way you watch the other women? You wouldn't like it, would you? So understand that watching these on T.V. is a sin.

The foremost thing to be done is to relinquish it completely. You have watched and enjoyed it enough. Now enough, but you are not endowed with virtues that will make you stop. Do you really want to restrain your desires? I have two formulae you could try. If you have been watching a 30-40 minutes long episode, do not watch the last 10 minutes of it. In one-day matches, do not watch the last five overs.”

“That is when there is an intense contest to win, which is the most interesting part. How do we give that up?”

“Then do not watch the first forty five overs.”

Violence is taking someone's life. But the meaning of violence is not so limited. To cause hurt of any kind to anyone is also a kind of violence which is the worst type of sin.

“If we do not watch those, how will interest to watch it be generated?”

“Is it not better if there is no interest? Let me point out the second formula. After every one or two episodes, give up watching the next one. After making up your mind, be firm and stick to your decision at any cost.”

“Then how will the link be maintained?”

“You have never had a problem with that! Are you not quite used to missing episodes? During the four months of monsoon, whenever there are discourses based upon a scripture, each daily discourse is like an episode. Often you leave the episode midway by giving trivial reasons as excuses. You come in late, leave early. Missing out is acceptable to you, when it is at your convenience.”

This is no laughing matter. Watching T.V. is a crime. If you are not prepared to curtail watching it, be prepared to bear unlimited punishment in the future for it. Later on ‘crying over spilt milk’ will not help. Similarly, you have been in business for decades and you have been unscrupulous, involved in adulteration or betrayal in order to amass a lot of wealth right from the start, are you now willing to give up these sinful acts? If you still intend to continue doing business, in a manner which is contemptuous of what is right and honourable, Karmasatta will have no option and will be inclined to punish you accordingly. In the next life, extreme poverty will follow you like a shadow. One sees a lot of poor people who may be very astute and hard working but are unable to earn anything at all. Their past evil deeds prevent them from gaining success. A morsel of food having come close to the mouth is snatched away,

a cup after having come close to the lip appears to slip away. These people live through a series of similar events with intense feelings of helplessness, frustration and disappointment. They have to bend backwards to please others for money and flatter people. Despite bearing a lot of insult from people, money does not come their way. They have to beg for a few pieces of chapatis. Difficulties seem almost unending. Life may end but there is no end to their trouble. People, who do not want to give up their immoral ways, should keep in mind the helpless, worthless, unfortunate person who gets insulted by his own kith and kin. One should remember that an increase in wealth is not going to make any difference. All the fraud, treachery, deceit committed in order to attain it will not give you luxuries, comforts or convenience. It will not provide you with even the most essential basic things, which are necessary to live, by making them totally inaccessible to you, till the end of your life. This should not be forgotten by anyone. If nature was unmindful of all the dirty games being played or dishonest behaviour being committed for money and was not imposing punishment for them, there would be no justice in the world.

You have always had a feeling of displeasure and displayed anger for the smallest of things repeatedly over a long period of time. Is it not time to change your disposition? If you do not change it here and now, then when? One's innate nature goes where the soul goes. It does not leave you and will follow you wherever your soul travels. If you truly want to change, it will have to be done by you, right here. One should stop being

complacent. If this bad, intense, explosive and often destructive habit refuses to leave you, start punishing yourself for it, for example, fast without food and water the next day or seek forgiveness from the person you were angry with by bowing down to him. Start fining yourself 1,00,000 rupees each time you get angry. Do whatever you need to, but decide to give it up at any cost. Nature will tell people who do not forsake the habit of displaying anger, that even she is helpless in giving up the habit of punishing them.

One is deceitful and hypocritical with everyone on every occasion. There is never simple-heartedness or frankness, not with family nor friends. Even the wife, parents or Gurus are not spared. There is politics everywhere. One has practised deceit, hypocrisy for most of one's life. Is it not high-time that one thinks of desisting from it?

To speak bitter, hurtful words, to criticize, to harass either the brother, a colleague, the mother-in-law, the daughter-in-law, the sister-in-law at every step, to torture someone by taking advantage of his/her weakness thinking that person to be meek and in no condition to retaliate, to feel satisfaction and inner pleasure by watching him/her suffer mental agony, to feel elated at having an authority over others and to intimidate them – all of the above are serious crimes which we commit daily. We need to ask ourselves whether we are ready and willing to abandon them.

It is easy to keep committing crimes, not want to limit them, and want only to limit punishment to oneself.

One is not tired of committing crimes but one gets tired of bearing the punishment. This is not possible. The remedy to avoid punishment is being unwilling to put up with committing crime.

5. EQUANIMITY

A shortcut to the well being of the soul

Query: The worldly court tells one about one's crime, the extent of its punishment and the section of law under which the punishment is given. This mentally prepares one to bear the punishment. Also, there is hope that one will be free from the punishment after an ascertained period. However, the court of nature does not tell you anything of the sort.

Reconciliation: Yes. You are correct. As earlier said, there is no definite knowledge as to why the son is being beaten by the father. We imagine that a crime must have been committed. In the same manner, if someone is being punished, we must assume that a crime has taken place. By doing that, the mind prepares itself for a punishment which is inevitable. We are not told about the duration of the punishment. However, when the punishment is completed, we rid ourselves of miseries automatically. The behaviour of the jailer, who used to ruthlessly make the prisoner labour, changes on completion of the sentence. He releases the prisoner respectfully. The same principles apply to the court of nature.

Pavanjay was to wed Anjanasundari in a ceremony which included many of his relatives. On the night before the wedding, he was very anxious to see how beautiful his future bride was. That night, he and his friend Prahasit went over to Anjana's palace incognito. After seeing Anjana's beauty, he fell head over heels in love with her.

However, on reaching, they overheard Anjana's friends having a jestful discussion. What had happened was that Anjana's parents had received marriage proposals from two princes, out of which one was Pavanjay's and the other was Vidyutprabh's. Vidyutprabh was a 'charamshariri' because of which he was bound to be the most virtuous. Given his shorter life-span, Anjana's marriage was fixed with Pavanjay. Pavanjay was also virtuous and chivalrous. Anjana's female friends were talking amongst themselves and teasing her, "Let Vidyutprabh's life-span be shorter but he is a 'charamshariri' after all. You should get married to him". Pavanjay, who was disguised, overheard this conversation. He was intelligent and was not unaware about restraints observed by noble ladies. He was cognizant of the fact that on such occasions, silence was the most appropriate deportment of a virtuous lady. Therefore, Anjana's silence would not have irked him. However, Karmasatta had planned to penalize Anjana. It made even clever and loving Pavanjay to think otherwise, "Anjana is neither standing up for me nor is she stopping her friends teasing me. Surely, she must be in love with Vidyutprabh." The result? Anjana's punishment started from the night of the marriage. Pavanjay forsook her. However Anjana was a 'mahasati'! She had abandoned all sorts of ornamentation due to being separated from her husband. She had become lean, her face has become

Charamshariri = a soul who, after attaining keval-jnana, achieves liberation in the same birth

Mahasati = most virtuous and chaste woman, who is devoted to her husband

withered and dull from pining for her husband. By blaming only her own karmas for her misfortune, she had not only averted hatred towards Pavanjay, in fact she had kept her love for him intact. Twenty two years had elapsed but she did not desire any other man besides Pavanjay and when Pavanjay departed for war, she bent down at his feet to offer him her best wishes with as much love as before.

Even yet, at that time, Pavanjay not only lacked affection towards her, he scorned her with contempt and hatred. After being dishonoured in such a way, Anjana broke down and fell to the ground. Her friend Vasanttilaka barely managed to bring her back to the palace. Pavanjay departed. In the evening, the first camp on the shore of a lake was put up. On the strength of 'Vidyabal', Pavanjay even constructed a palace there. He, who was admiring the beauty of the lake standing on the balcony of the palace, saw a 'chakravaki' (a female chakravak) afflicted due to being separated from her lover. He heard her mournful wailing. "Chakravak and chakravaki spent twelve hours of the day together and yet they felt so much pain on being separated for twelve hours of the night", he thought. Suddenly Pavanjay thought of Anjana. His prejudice for her disappeared and in its place, love for her blossomed, so much so that he was not prepared to bear even a moment's delay. Due to the power of his 'Vidyabal' he immediately reached Anjana's palace along with his friend Prahasit.

Vidyabal = strength of knowledge

Chakravak = a kind of a bird (male) who on being separated from his female counterpart, pines for her and cannot survive without her

If we ponder deeply, it will become clear that Pavanjay, who so far held only prejudice and hatred for Anjana, would have probably thought on seeing chakravaki's lamentation, "How great is chakravaki's love for her husband that she could not bear even one night's separation from him and on the other hand there was Anjana who loved another man!" This was the person who did not heed his parents' or Prahasit's advice. Now all of a sudden, his bias had vanished and his thoughts had changed! How is this possible? This had become possible. This suggests that the punishment is over, therefore the Jailer's behaviour had changed and the prisoner was free from punishment.

Sometimes, a chronic or long-standing disease, which one has not been able to cure despite trying everything one can, including spending on expensive specialists and medicines, can be eradicated with an ordinary remedy prescribed by an ordinary doctor. This is because the punishment ordered by the court of Karmasatta is over. The cause can be anyone or anything, but the soul is certainly discharged from the punishment.

This is an incident which appeared in 'Gujarat Samachar' on 8.2.'04. In a foreign country, a truck driver named Edwin Robinson met with an accident. Despite being treated, he lost his eyesight in both the eyes. He also became hearing impaired. After being treated with many medicines, by many doctors, he could barely hear loud voices and sounds even with the help of a hearing-aid. The doctor informed him that he was blinded for life as

the nerves inside his eyeballs had been damaged. At that time, he was 53 years old. He could no longer drive. He had to use a cane to find his way around. He made a small garden in the courtyard of his house, which he tended to very lovingly. Nine years went by. Once, a tree under which he was standing was struck by lightning causing it to fall. He himself fell to the ground and lost consciousness. When he came to his senses 20 minutes later, he was able to see and hear very clearly. It was a miracle. His doctor was bewildered. Is it possible a person's blindness is cured on being struck by lightning? Once his punishment ended, he could go back to leading a normal life.

After two or three years of hardship, a soul may get impatient and unable to bear the punishment. He should be made to understand that he will be free when the punishment is complete. The length of the punishment depends on the gravity of the crime and it could last till the end of life. One must accept this to avoid agitation.

Question: What if the punishment is longer than one's life?

Answer: The punishment follows you even in your future lives. There are numerous examples in the scriptures where misfortune, poverty, unfavourable physical conditions are prolonged over life times. We can infer from the hidden meanings of the scriptures or from various other examples that if a soul bears miserable punishments (such as facing injustice time and again, heart-rending words spoken to him by others, torture,

Negative destiny makes one lose one's senses.

grievous physical, mental suffering inflicted by others) with acceptance and equanimity, by thinking that it is his own karmas which are wicked, even on being beaten to the point of death and is successful in averting his vexation, aversion and enmity towards the perpetrator despite being oppressed for years on end, then the court of Karmasatta mostly cancels his balance punishment, which was meant to last over not innumerable years but innumerable births, in just one strike. There is nothing disputable about the inference that Karmasatta not only cancels his punishment, in fact, it gives him a very respectable position by rewarding him grandly.

There is also no exaggeration in stating that, “Bearing tyranny unleashed by others with calm composure is a shortcut to the well-being of one’s own soul.”

Omniscience which does not manifest even after years of devotional practice is revealed in a very short time by maintaining equanimity at the time of a calamity. This fact is elucidated in numerous examples of Jhanjaria Muni, the five hundred disciples of Khandhaksoori, Khandhaka Rishi and many others.

Developing forbearance towards terrible, repeated, prolonged and unending afflictions, not allowing the feeling of irritation, maintaining equanimity are just some of the remedies to bring all of the above to a naught.

On the other hand, for people, who rue their unhappiness and keep hating their perpetrators, suffering continues even in the lives to follow.

If the perpetrator continues to cause you pain, inspite of many explanations, many compromises or oppositions

and in fact, he maximizes his harassment and causes mental annoyance, one should prepare oneself to bear the harassment. If one has to tolerate it, why not endure it with calm so that it comes to an end sooner? It is true that on such occasions, equanimity is very difficult. Yet, it is not impossible. Since it is so trying and demands arduous efforts to maintain it, nature is equally generous in granting grand rewards. In such a situation, keeping your even-mindedness is the most important achievement for you. By sustaining your composure, you can achieve much more 'nirjara' than the 'nirjara' and 'well-being of the soul' achieved by an austerite who performs a formidable self mortification of a month long fast. You can earn an immeasurable amount of merit by maintaining equanimity which is much more than that earned by someone donating billions. Losing one's calm is not going to decrease the level of harassment, it will stay the same. Then why not retain calm and composure? The soul can be saved from discord causing 'Arta dhyana' when one realizes that miseries or distress cannot be mitigated by crying, lamenting, complaining, wishing ill of the person who made you unhappy, or by desiring to take revenge or creating a feeling of enmity. On the contrary, a situation will arise in future, whereby one will have to bear much more misery than before, for a longer period of time, because of the complaint against punishment accorded by the court of Karmasatta. There is an implied opinion that determines the punishment to be improper and this will

Nirjara = Dissipation or dissociation of karmas from the soul
Arta dhyana – Sorrowful meditation

never be forgiven by Karmasatta. The reason for this is that Karmasatta over infinity has never committed an error whereby a criminal goes scot free and an innocent person is punished. Karmasatta is exceedingly proud of this track record, and therefore it cannot bear anyone pointing a finger at its procedural prowess. It gets annoyed and enraged with the soul who is unaware of its own crimes and is trying to prove punishment given to it as a mistake.

It is a test indeed but if you keep your practical wisdom and courage intact, you will certainly be able to surmount it. If you overcome it, you will become nature's loved one.

Some people ask us in an aggrieved tone, "Maharaj Sahab! We have not committed a sin knowingly, have not behaved badly or wished ill of anyone, as much as possible. We try and do good deeds and yet our lives are miserable. We are tired, Maharaj! Some calamity or the other befalls us always. There is no end to it. Sahab! Is it justice on nature's part? There has not been any crime in our lives and yet punishment is aplenty."

How does one find an appropriate explanation to the questions these good souls pose? One day a Sardarji passed a restaurant with a board outside that read, "Welcome to our eatery. Eat food, which you are sure to relish and you will not be charged for it. Payment will be recovered from your sixth generation". The Sardarji was ecstatic reading this. He thought, "Why should I go to any other place? I should just eat here". Then he thought, "Who has seen what may happen by my sixth generation? Who will keep

One can snatch from another's hand,
but one can't snatch away another's good fate.

tabs on who will recover the amount? I definitely want to have a free meal and why should I have it alone? I will bring my wife and kids here too". He went home and told his wife, "Do not cook our meal at home tonight. I am taking everyone to a restaurant where you can eat to your heart's content. I will not stop you, as we do not have to pay for our meal." The moment they were done with the meal, a bill of two thousand rupees was handed to the Sardarji. The Sardarji was dumb-struck. With a mixed feeling of shock and surprise, he went to the Manager and asked him, "The board outside says that the bill payment will be collected from the sixth generation, then why am I being charged?" "This bill is not for the food you ate, you are being charged for the sixth generation before you, who had eaten here and left the bill for you to pay."

We should remember that impoverishment, defeat, insult that we undergo in this life are mostly a payment due by us for deeds done by us in our previous births. The fruits of whatever good or bad we do in this life will be reaped in the coming births. Therefore if you don't commit sin or an evil deed, you will not be punished in the next life. However, for crimes committed in previous births, would you not be punished now and here? What sin had Lord Mahavir committed in his last birth? Who had he been wicked with? On the contrary, he was compassionate towards even those persons who had given him terrible afflictions and yet how many hardships had he to bear! Why?

"This is because the Lord's karmas were heavy."

"The Lord's karmas were heavy and ours are light?"

If a prisoner, who bears the punishment without any argument and behaves gentlemanly, asks the jailer what crime had he committed after his coming to the jail to be punished so, what would the jailer reply? It would be, "Thank you for maintaining peace after coming to the jail but you are being punished for your previous evil deeds."

Does this also not apply to our miseries here? For Lord Mahavir, we say that it was the fruit of his previous karmas. Should we not think the same for ourselves too? Then why complain? We should never forget that the punishment is for crimes - present or past.

Many years ago, I had read about a true life incident in a magazine. I will reproduce here whatever I can remember of it. It was a time when India was being ruled by the British. In those days, one Judge, a staunch Brahmin, used to go in the mornings to the dry, open banks of River Sabarmati, near Ellis Bridge, in Ahmedabad for his daily ablution. As was his daily routine, he went to the bank one morning. At the same time, a man was murdered on the bridge of the river. The Judge was able to have a good look at the killer in the light from the street lamp. Chance brought that very case to his court. However the man the police produced in the court as the murderer was not the same man he had seen. Seeing him, the Judge thought, "This man is definitely innocent as I've seen the killer to be someone else."

Surprisingly, the evidence produced by the police, testimonies of the witnesses and the accused person's

When disaster is to befall, the mind behaves adversely.

own words spoken during interrogation all led to the conclusion that the accused person was the killer. The Judge was in a dilemma. His conscience told him that the accused was not the killer but the procedure of the court proved otherwise and considered him fit for punishment. Eventually, it is not the justice that prevails, it is the law that supersedes. According to the legal procedure, he had to sentence the accused, but why hang an innocent person? Thinking thus and also for the appeasement of his own conscience, he sentenced him to only a life imprisonment. The accused was definitely not the killer, so why would he accept such a verdict? He appealed to the High Court. Based upon the proceedings, the Judge in the High Court thought, "Why was the accused given a light sentence of life imprisonment? This man should be hanged till death." Even in the Supreme Court, the sentence was upheld and the date of hanging was fixed. The Brahmin Judge was perplexed when he heard about this. His firmly rooted faith in the idiom, 'In the reign of the Lord, there may be a delay, but never anarchy' was shaken up. In the end, he paid a visit to the accused in the jail on the day before the hanging. He spoke openly to him telling him that his case had come to an end and that he would definitely face the death penalty. He told him he had come to him not as a Judge but as a curious person and he had a few questions for him. He hoped the prisoner would answer them truthfully. The accused agreed to tell him everything. He had nothing to lose and he would not lie in his last moments.

Then the Judge asked him, "I was a witness to the

murder. Is it not true that you did not commit this crime?"

"Yes, your honour! That is absolutely true. I am unquestionably innocent in this case."

"Then why were you adjudged a criminal by the court? Why did you say things that would prove you to be the murderer? How did your life imprisonment convert to death by hanging? Can you throw some light on this?"

With tears in his eyes, the prisoner replied, "Your honour! At the last moments of my life, I do not want to lie, nor do I want to hide my sin. Many years ago, I had committed a murder but I was declared innocent. I feel, I am now being punished for my earlier crime". The Judge's faith in the idiom was reaffirmed.

This is a fact. We may think ourselves to be innocent in the present but if there is a punishment, there ought to have been a corresponding crime committed either in the present or the past. There cannot be a punishment without a crime and if that punishment is for our crime, then the person executing the punishment has to be the jailer. If he is the jailer, one cannot consider him to be wicked nor can one take revenge on him.

Question: "Like us, even the opposite person would not be punished without a crime. If we slap him, don't we also become the jailer? When the jailer gives lashes with a whip, he is not punished. Similarly, we also won't be punished. Right?"

Answer: On the day after the marriage, the bride went back to her parent's house because she was offended. The parents asked her the reason. Even the groom could not find any reason for her behaviour. The people from the

groom's side went over to the girl's home. Her parents asked her the reasons for her displeasure.

"Your son-in-law says I am blemished", the bride replied with tears in her eyes. Everyone started looking at the son-in-law. He was bewildered, "When did I say that?" On being questioned, the bride replied, "Why? At night, didn't you say I was like the moon?"

Can a simile used to describe the beauty or joy of gazing at the moon be taken to mean 'blemished'? Any example is to be taken in the context of its relevance. If we try to take it in totality, sometimes there are chances of misrepresentation.

The same is applicable to the example of the jailer. When we have to bear appalling behaviour by others, we have to take the perpetrator as the jailer and be as even-minded as we can. We have to be free from anger and enmity. However when we cause distress to others, we are not the jailer. We become the judge. Karmasatta has not appointed us to be the judge. We are only a conduit. Karmasatta alone has the right to give a punishment. We cannot interfere in this matter, otherwise we are fit for punishment and will be punished.

The person, who has slapped somebody, has done it considering himself to be the judge and for this, he definitely will be punished in the future. However, just for our own peace of mind, we have to regard him as the jailer.

In short, the person harassing us is the jailer and if we harass someone, we are the judge.

Question: Isn't this odd? If the other person behaves

adversely, he becomes the jailer and if we are discordant, we become the judge!

Answer: No, this is not strange. This itself is 'Anekantavada'. Things are different for oneself and others, like, in the case of beneficence – if one has been good to someone, one should not remember it, one should forget it. If someone has done you a favour, you should remember it and never forget it.

One should never praise one's own good deed and should not miss out on praising someone else's good deed. It is thus affirmed that when someone behaves unfavourably with us, he is the jailer of the court of Karmasatta whereas if we behave adversely towards others, we are the unappointed judge who is interfering with the working of the court of Karmasatta.

Anekantavada = Doctrine of manifold predications/non-absolutism.

अघटितघटितानि घटयति, सुघटितघटितानि जर्जरीकुरुते ।

विधिरेव तानि घटयति, यानि पुमान्नैव चिन्तयति ॥

Karmasatta makes undesirable events manifest and blows away desired events. Only destiny can shape things which a soul may not have contemplated even in his dreams.

6. THE MOUSE SEEKS A CAT'S REFUGE

A mouse was once bitten by a bed bug. In his anger he decided to seek revenge. Unsure of how to go about this task, he thought it best to take some help to get even with the bug. Having spent enough time wondering as to who he should ask, he decided that the cat was the best option.

The mouse's idea to seek the cat's assistance in order to avenge the pain caused by the bug seems so inappropriate, foolish and filled with bitterness. The erudite say, "Taking support of anger as a retaliation for pain caused by any worldly loss is even more inappropriate, absurd and results in a terrible outcome. The mouse has to lose his life and die only once whereas a living being, who takes the support of anger, loses his virtuous soul, which is innately endowed with forgiveness. He has to die many a death, having gone the way of spiritual degeneration."

Yes, any worldly loss is just akin to a bug's bite, may it be suffering abuse, tolerating insult, accusation, waste, facing a large financial loss, bearing the pain of a slap or a blow with a stick, or even as much as losing one's life. At the end, it is only a bug's bite and to feel anger towards this is like a mouse seeking refuge from a cat.

Question: Not to let the loss of small sums affect us is understandable. It is important to let go of the little things. However, how can one say that we should remain calm even on losing millions or getting our limbs broken and that it is foolish to get angry? How can this observation be considered valid?

Answer: A soul feels anger not only on incurring a loss, but even at the mere thought of incurring a loss. It is not prepared to let go. Therefore it is natural for the mind not to believe that feeling anger is foolish and unworthy of indulgence. However, just because of that, it does not cease to be unwise.

A traveller had forgotten to put on his footwear. While walking on the road, his foot struck against a rock breaking a toe-nail. He was in complete agony but instead of thinking of the pain, he was relieved that he was not wearing any footwear otherwise the toe-strap of his sandal would have broken. Isn't this foolishness?

Of course, it is because at the end, the foot is a part of one's own body whereas the sandal is only a foreign thing.

Same is true of the present situation. Wealth and life are both foreign to the soul, and are going to be alienated from it. Kshama, on the other hand, is the soul itself which has the countenance of an attractive heavenly nymph. There is no wisdom in corrupting oneself by trying to stop the damage to a foreign thing. In other words, risking a loss of 'Kshamapari's' tenderness and adopting savagery of the monster of anger is not a sign of a good judgement.

This reality is well represented by a famous saying which is constituted in three sentences –

“If wealth is lost, nothing is lost

If health is lost, something is lost

If character is lost, everything is lost.”

Kshama = forgiveness

Kshamapari = nymph of forgiveness

This saying is very apt but what is the purport behind it? One can say that health is more important than wealth and character is more important than health. However, why is one more important than the other in this suggested order? I have given this some thought.

There are so many wealthy people leading opulent lifestyles all around the world. For the players of the share market, this is a way of life. Sometimes billionaires lose everything and in no time luck is back on their side restoring their earlier glory. The graph of the value of so many scrips follows the same pattern as a cardiogram of a heart patient kept in the I.C.U. The meaning of this is crystal clear. One can regain wealth within one's life time. What is lost can be recovered over and over again and recovered fast. But, what is lost by losing wealth? At nightfall, the light goes out on the world but nobody laments because the next morning, the world is going to be bright again.

It is said that if you have lost wealth, you have lost nothing. Health once lost is lost forever and cannot be gained back. An alcoholic, either after being inspired and influenced by someone or after experiencing a complete breakdown in all aspects of life, may abandon drinking but his blood which has turned alcoholic can never become normal again. An addict of tobacco may give up the habit, however, it is almost impossible to heal the cancer of the jaw, which he has contracted. He has to have a part of his jaw operated upon and removed. He faces no choice but to tolerate disfiguration.

Question: If this is the case, shouldn't it be said that

‘If health is lost, everything is lost?’

Answer: No, because lost health can be regained in the subsequent births. Life-long diseases like hypertension and diabetes experienced during this life are not carried forward to the next. When your soul leaves your body, even diseases are left behind and the soul regains its health back. This is why, ‘If health is lost, not everything is lost’. It is said, ‘something is lost’.

There is nothing to be lost by losing money and something to be lost by losing health. Therefore one can understand that health is more important than wealth.

The Gujarati proverb ‘Pahelun sukh te jate narya’ (meaning = The foremost happiness in life is to have a healthy body) puts physical well-being on a higher pedestal than the happiness derived out of wealth. It is true that one needs money to fill one’s stomach. However, how can one consider doing any business, which helps amass wealth, but at the same time leads to the loss of hunger, thirst or sleep? So many people lead restless jet set lives where they breakfast in Mumbai, lunch in Lucknow and dine in New Delhi. In today’s money-crazy world, this person may spend money freely, he may be a big industrialist and be given a lot of respect but Vyas Muni, in an aphorism, has called such a world traveller a fool and likened him to a person who has to earn his daily bread by working for someone.

Also, why should one plunge into the share market blindly where sometimes even a single knock-over can give a terrible blow from which it may be impossible to recover for life?

Query: Today, in the world, there is a predominance of prosperity and it is difficult to achieve prosperity without the spirit of enterprise.

Solution: However, one's health is always foremost. One should not give wealth more prominence than health. If you have incurred a loss in business, this loss should only remain a business matter. Do not make it a matter of the mind. Due to the disproportionate importance given to money, the mind does not remain unaffected on sustaining a loss. The loss, which has made a mark on the mind, also affects the body leaving behind a trail of diseases like hypertension and diabetes.

Rebuilding one's business, gaining profit and overcoming losses are all possibilities. It is impossible to reverse the deterioration of one's body and health. Is there a wisdom in this? One could experience a violent, unexpected blow due to a loss that could make one lose one's equilibrium. One could be lost in thought all the time disturbing one's mental faculties. Even an extremely astute and hard-working young man, who may only be in his twenties may have to stay home an entire day as he cannot function any more. He fails to understand his responsibilities. He becomes a subject of worry for his wife and family.

I remember an incident about a girl from a Jain family hailing from a city in Maharashtra. She was very intelligent and sincere. She wished to become a doctor, so she worked very hard towards achieving her goal. She appeared for her exams, and did well. Awaiting her results, she brimmed with confidence that she would definitely

be on the merit list and would gain admission into a reputed medical college. However, when the results were announced, she received a terrible jolt. The unimaginable had happened. She had barely managed to pass. All her dreams of gaining admission in a medical college were shattered. This blow was so terrible that she contracted Asthma. The first attack was so strong that she had to be hospitalized at once. While she was being treated, a doctor committed a fatal error, leaving her a permanent patient of Asthma. She would get frequent, strong attacks which then left her with a very weak constitution. The tragedy of the situation was that when her papers were sent back for reassessment and were rechecked, she had scored such good marks that she would have been on the merit list. Due to some confusion, an error had been made on her mark-sheet. Ultimately, she gained admission in a medical college and became a doctor. Now she cures many patients, but she does not trust her own constitution. She has crossed the age of 40 years, but she cannot gather enough courage to get married. Let us examine another example.

English Litterateur Jeremy Taylor was blessed by both Saraswati and Lakshmi. However, life had something else in store for him. The bank in which he had deposited his life's earnings went bankrupt. On hearing this news, his friend came to offer him some consolation. He was surprised to find Jeremy Taylor absolutely unrattled and

Saraswati = Goddess of knowledge

Lakshmi = Goddess of wealth

at peace. Not only his eyes, even his heart was unaffected by the fact that he had lost all his wealth. The friend asked him, "Aren't you depressed?" He replied, "All the necessities like air, water and speech are still available to me today. Liveliness and freshness are still flowing through my entire body. My limbs are as strong as before. My eyesight has not lost its power. My life is filled with ample natural wealth and prosperity. There is not a blot on my good character. Then why should there be any distress?"

The root, the trunk, the branches are all very safe. Why worry if a few leaves fell off?

When there is an issue of life and death, it can relate only to life. Undoubtedly, life is very precious in comparison to mundane things, like wealth and status. Does this need further explanation? It is very clear that to play around with one's health for the sake of wealth is unwise.

In the end, the person who safeguards his health may attain enough wealth for his existence by exerting himself. On the other hand, a person abusing his health may earn millions or billions and may spend his millions or billions on treatments but he may never be able to regain his health. It would not be surprising if he has to lead an absolutely dependent and helpless life. In short, one can get back wealth with health but we cannot earn back health with wealth. Therefore, if you lose health you have lost something.

From the worldly point of view, wealth is important because of all the conveniences, comforts, necessities and things of enjoyment that it can buy. However, the person, who has ruined his health, is deprived of all the

above despite having the means. His family and friends may enjoy the benefit of his prosperity while he can only sit back and watch.

He would have to depend upon a salaried servant for the smallest of movements he might need to make and not his loving wife because she, as the mistress of the house, is only concerned with the wealth that she can enjoy and the entertainment she can derive out of it. Tea, milk or sweet lime juice would be the only things he could digest and that too fed to him by a servant spoon by spoon. Therefore, after losing health, your wealth is as good as lost. That is why one says that a person who has lost health has lost something.

If a person loses good character, it is neither got back in this life nor in the lives to come. If the soul is inspired again, develops deep concentration of the mind to cultivate his virtuous qualities and makes a corresponding, continuous and excessive effort in that direction, then only can he attain it back. For most people thousands of births go by, even an infinite time may pass before this is possible. Therefore, it is said that if good character is lost everything is lost. If a soul has lost its virtuous character, it means that he has fallen prey to bad character. Till it frees itself from its captivity, the soul abounds in immoral behaviour and bad qualities. The effect of this is a bondage of karmas to the soul which are extremely difficult to get rid of, resulting in misfortune. In every birth, one is deprived of both health and wealth.

The most apt example of this is that from the life of Agnisharma. In his past, he was harassed terribly

by Gunasen. After he became a 'tapas', Gunasen had missed out on two of Agnisharma's 'paranas' (breaking of a month long fast on two occasions). Agnisharma had started his third, month long fast and had really progressed in cultivating equanimity. He had generosity, forgiveness which would gladden anyone's heart. However, when Gunasen missed out on offering him food for breaking his third month long fast, he got upset and turned hostile. What was the result? Gunasen kept surmounting peaks of achievements and virtues successively, kept rising to higher and higher 'devloks' and attained more and more prosperity. At the end, in his last birth as Samaraditya, he destroyed all his karmas and attained salvation. As for Agnisharma, in his various births that followed, he was either the son, the wife or the brother of the same virtuous, loving, prideless Gunasen. He was always restless due to his sinful nature, terrible 'vairanubandh', constant treachery and betrayal because of which he had to bear progressively greater terrible miseries of hell. Even after Samaraditya's liberation, he had to transmigrate in the 'samsara' for an infinite time, with a lot of suffering. Thereafter, by assimilating forgiveness, he achieved the well-being of his soul.

Let us also remember the serpent Chandakaushika.

Although Gobhadra Brahmin was not blessed to be

Tapas = an ascetic

Devlok = Heaven

Vairanubandh = It is a revengeful psyche manifested in this life due to fruition of karma, which causes binding of karmas afresh, which in turn perpetuates revengeful disposition in future lives.

born a Jain, he had a very virtuous personality. Despite his horrible monetary condition, his dexterity at many forms of handicrafts and his hard working nature, he was not inclined to make an extra effort to acquire wealth. He was as satisfied with his meager wealth as he was with his work.

One night in a secluded forest, a friend of Gobhadra Brahmin was engrossed in merriment with a young lady in a room next to his. The lady's younger sister, who was as beautiful as a nymph, offered herself to him (Gobhadra) for sexual pleasure, but he was unmoved and kept his morality intact. He even made the beautiful lady, who had no qualms in offering herself as his 'bharya', his genuine sister. He was not vain about his virtues nor did he indulge in any self-praise. He did not scorn others even on seeing them indulge in evil activities. He was always benevolent. Even when he was in need of money, he was not prepared to sell his art or beg for it. Two men, who had become extremely powerful due to their 'mantrik' and 'tantrik' destructive abilities, were on the verge of killing each other due to their intense enmity. Gobhadra had the perseverance and the skill to make them forget their deep-rooted, mutual hatred and become affectionate towards each other. When one reads about incidents from Gobhadra's life, in the book 'Shri Mahavir Chariyam', one cannot fail to admire his many such good virtues.

Bharya = wife

Mantrik = power achieved due to the accomplishment of a mantra; a spell

Tantrik = pertaining to occultism, a formula having miraculous power

When such a virtuous person accepts monkhood, would he leave anything undone? He developed his moral behaviour greatly. However, on Kshullakmuni's saying, "Maharaj! DedkiMaharaj! dedki" he lost his even-temperedness. He was enraged, because of which in his coming births, he lost not only his virtue of forgiveness but also his good moral conduct. His downfall led him to become a 'Drishti visha sarpa' named Chandakaushika. His only aim was to reduce to ashes, whosoever he cast his glance upon. What a difference between Gobhadra and Chandakaushika sarpa! He was fortunate to have encountered Lord Mahavir who sermonized to him and brought back his memory of his past births. Then he made his mind surrender to forgiveness completely which required a tremendous exertion on the snake's part. Chandakaushika was back on track. However, if he had not met Lord Mahavir, what would have been his coming births like?

Lord Mahavir's soul in his third birth was born as Marichi. He accepted an initiation from the first Tirthankara and his grandfather Lord Rishabhdev, and was completely wedded to the spirit of non-attachment. He made his soul great by his good conduct. As time went by, he started feeling a lack of bodily comforts while leading the life of a monk. He lost the moral behaviour of a Jain monk which he had attained after arduous effort over a

Dedki = a female frog

Drishti visha sarpa = a snake whose mere glance is so potentially poisonous that whosoever he gazes at, is burnt down to ashes in a matter of a moment

long period of time. Having slackened, he accepted the state of being a 'tridandi'. He regained the status of a Jain monk in his 16th birth.

There are numerous such examples. To regain lost good conduct and virtues even after life times is a very difficult task. Also, a person, who has developed moral conduct, may not attain good health or wealth in the same life because of intense past demeritorious karmas, yet in the births that follow, he may achieve more of both. Gunasen is an unflagging example of this fact. In his successive lives and intermittent births as a demi-god, he received life spans of 1, 5, 9, 15, 18, 20, 30 sagaropams which suggests his sequential progress. In his human births, in between his births as a demi-god, he advanced in his internal as well as external prosperity with the passage of time. This means that the soul of Gunasen did not abandon virtues like straight forwardness, friendliness and forgiveness despite suffering arrogant behaviour, betrayal and afflictions caused to the point of death, subjected by the soul of Agnisharma. He maintained his gentlemanly conduct at all cost. As a result, he kept achieving higher and higher levels of moral behaviour and greater prosperity in an uninterrupted manner. Thus a person, who upholds his moral behaviour even at the cost of losing his wealth, at the end, begets abundant wealth.

This proves that health has more significance than

Tridandi = a Brahmin mendicant who dons saffron clothes, bears a three-pronged lance in his hand, wears wooden sandals and leaves a lock of hair on the crown of the head after tonsure (of head)

Sagaropam = pit-based simile time unit, 10(15) palyopams

wealth and good moral conduct has more significance than health. Therefore, one must sacrifice anything and everything in order to preserve one's good behaviour.

Some musicians from another land travelled to a King's court. The King was extremely pleased with their act. He asked them to stay back in his kingdom and continue playing music for his entertainment. The musicians agreed. They were arranged to stay in a building next to the house where a merchant resided with his large family. The musicians performed at the King's court every day and for the rest of the time, they practised in their new home. The merchant's home would resonate constantly with the sounds emanating from that of the musicians. Sometimes the music and the songs that were being heard were even intoxicating. The merchant was dismayed. If the young daughter-in-law or young daughters of the house heard this kind of stimulating music, their minds would be polluted with passion and moral deterioration. He decided to safeguard everyone's good conduct and good thoughts at any cost.

He made enquiries and found out that the musicians were put up as his neighbours by the King himself so it would not be easy to remove them from there. However, he did not lose heart. He was prepared to pay any price in order to protect the righteous behaviour of his family. He took out some invaluable, rare gems from his treasure and filled a plate with them. He reached the King's court with this offering. The King was awestruck at seeing the luster of the gems. He asked, "O great merchant! What do you desire?"

“O King! I do not desire anything much, but I have a wish to build a temple in my home for which I seek your permission and blessings.”

“O Merchant! This is a religious activity. Why would you need my consent for it?”

“O great King! There would also be devotional songs being sung and music being played in the temple. Some may like it, the others may resent it. If someone complains later on, then there may be problems for the temple. It is best to seek your permission beforehand so that one doesn't have to worry later on.”

“You can build the temple and offer your worship. I am suitably inclined towards it.”

“I am obligated to you. O King!”

The temple was built. The deity was installed ceremoniously. Devotion was offered to the deity every day. The merchant called for the drummers and ordered them to beat the drums the entire day. Every day, one could only hear the loud sounds of drums being beaten all through the day. The musicians were greatly disturbed. They could not practise as was their daily routine. They complained to the King. The King said, “I have permitted the merchant to build a temple so I cannot deny him the right to play music.” He then ordered the Chief Minister to change the residence of the musicians. The merchant was relieved.

Today, the times are very unfavourable. It seems as if the order has been reversed. People want to adopt a hi-fi lifestyle but to lead such a life, a man's income is insufficient. In this rat-race to earn more money, even

the women have started working, but in the process, they are gambling with their moral conduct. There are several examples of male bosses misbehaving with their female employees at their workplace. The women have to put up with these inconveniences even if they resent them. However, later on, their youthfulness overtakes them and they begin to enjoy these acts. They start slipping till they can slip no more. Then a feeling of guilt nags at them their whole life. On being questioned about her chastity by her husband, a wife cannot answer truthfully and has to lie to her extremely dear husband. She has to lead a deceitful life which keeps tormenting her persistently. In the future, she will have to face a terrible outcome for her folly. Instead of going through the above impudence, would it not have been better to lead a less extravagant life? In reality, only a life led with moral conduct and virtues can be called 'high-flying'. One aims to earn wealth by casting aside all moral values to then build a grand bungalow, to possess a fancy new car, to have the interiors of one's home decorated beautifully, to dress so as to ape the perverse Western culture. People have fun at the cost of crossing all the boundaries of decency by touching a 'par-purush' or by indulging in an obscene, unrefined conversation and throwing grand dancing parties, in short, spending money freely in a quest for excessive enjoyment and comforts, which does nothing for one's soul. Does it not appear that a person considering the above mentioned lifestyle as highflying is crass himself? Should one be seeing the

Par-purush = a man other than one's husband

grandeur of a bungalow or furniture or the grandeur of the soul? The splendour of the soul is unparalleled.

At the time of the British rule, Vadalagam, as we know it today, used to be called Dungari. Post independence, the ruler of the village lost his power to govern. Two brothers of the royal Rajput family, who were the landholders of the village, gauged the situation and decided to separate. The village of Vadala, which they had inherited, was divided between both of them with their mutual consent and to their satisfaction. All the wealth, land, animals, precious metals were appropriately apportioned to both of them except for an estate admeasuring 100 'veeghas' which was located on the outskirts of the village. This piece of land went to the elder brother Veerabhai as he had won it as a prize from the State in a shooting contest. The younger brother Rambhai did not ask for a share in it, wisely, as he knew that the estate was not a part of the inheritance but was won by the elder brother because of his skill. Twenty years went by. Veerabhai passed away. The sons of both the brothers had grown up to be young men. They took charge of administering their own pieces of land. One day, Rambhai's heirs asked for a share in the estate. Veerabhai's sons tried to explain to them, "This piece of land was won by our father as a prize. Even our uncle, your father, did not ask for a share in it."

"We are now demanding it."

A case was filed in court. The case kept getting adjourned and the fees of the lawyers kept mounting.

Veegha = a measure of land, about 2/5 of an acre

The sons of the elder brother were wise. They told their cousins, "The case will never end but in the process, both our families will be wiped out financially."

"Then give us our share of the estate."

"If uncle says that a part of the estate belongs to him, then we will readily part with half of it."

"He has confirmed the fact."

"No, uncle has to say that to us in court."

"You will not go back on your words?"

"We swear by God, we will not fail to honour the promise."

Rambhai's sons were ecstatic, "God has been kind to us. Uncle's sons have lost their mind. Their ability to think has become dull. We are sure to get our half of the share and the value of the land would definitely have gone up in the last thirty five years."

Rambhai's sons came back to the village with joy in their hearts and told everyone in the village what had transpired. Everyone was stunned, "Veerabhai's sons have made a mistake. In this 'Kaliyug' should one be trusting someone so much?" People even asked Veerabhai's sons, "Will you part with your share if your uncle says so?"

"Yes, he is our uncle and we trust him."

Rambhai's sons went to their mother, "Ma! We have got our half a share."

"How come? Have we won the case?"

"No, we will win the case." They kept her abreast of the latest development and pleaded with her, "Ma! You

Kaliyug = the age of immorality and sins

must ask father to demand his share.”

“No, I cannot ask for such a thing, because I have not done so my entire life.”

“Alright, then we will ask him.” The sons went to the father and told him everything. Rambhai smiled at the thought of his nephews making him a witness.

“Father! You will have to come to the court.”

“Neither of us brothers has ever been to court.”

“Now it’s time for you to come.”

“I have no choice but to come since you are so insistent and they have made me a witness.”

The sons were happy. They were prompting their father from time to time, preparing him to testify in their favour, and were very confident of winning the case. The date arrived. Everyone reached the court. The defence lawyer introduced Rambhai as a witness and called him to the witness box. He was made to swear by placing his hand on the religious book. The sons were happy and looked at their cousins, thinking, “He is your uncle but he is our father. Now the money is almost within our reach.” The nephews were worried that the uncle’s attachment for his sons might win over his duty eventually. The defence

A mouse managed to make a hole in a cane basket with much effort by biting into it little by little. However, inside the basket was a cobra who was miserable due to many days of hunger. After succeeding to make a big enough hole, the mouse entered the basket little knowing what awaited him. The hungry cobra who was in readiness, with an open mouth, devoured the mouse.

After swallowing it, the cobra went to his abode in the jungle. Look at Karmasatta’s inscrutable ways! The mouse who had come to eat food, himself got eaten up by the cobra.

lawyer asked Rambhai, "At the time of separation, was this part of the estate not divided?"

"No, it wasn't divided."

"Is it true that you too have a share in it?"

Rambhai started thinking. The lawyer asked him, "Why aren't you answering?"

"Shouldn't I think before I answer? This is no small matter. It is our blood fighting against our own blood."

"Once you come out with the truth, the fight will end as what you say is agreeable to both the parties."

"We do not have a share in the estate and we also do not have a right to demand the share."

Both his sons were shell-shocked. With anger in their eyes, they told their father, "You sunk our ship which was almost ready to dock."

"You are the ones who were going to sink the ship. Sons, you were prepared to sell the self-respect and honour of our family for a mere sum of money. Our virtues are not for sale. All the nearby villages trust our family and that trust and faith will always remain intact."

This really is life led at an elevated plain. No bungalow or beautiful piece of furniture can procure this kind of hi-fi life, it is only the soul that can bring one that pleasure. This is the grandeur of a soul, this is good, moral behaviour and it is millions of times more priceless than wealth.

In the world, nothing is more significant than morally sound conduct or virtues, not even one's life.

This is why, 'Mahasatis' do not hesitate to give up their lives in order to shield their chastity. The soul which gives up its life for safeguarding its chastity does not suffer any

loss, in fact, it only attains limitless gain. This is because nature highly values the safeguarding of chastity especially at the cost of one's own life. Nature endows millions of times more prosperity and a better quality of life to the person who has given up one's life in this way.

It is never a bad bargain for a soul to forsake one's wealth, time, a dear one or one's body for the sake of moral conduct, good behaviour or virtues. In reality, the soul only reaps greater and grander benefit.

All the above facts determine the fact that health is more important than wealth and good behaviour is of much more import than health. Monetary loss may be to any extent, but it is no worse than a bug bite. Surrendering oneself to anger is like a mouse seeking shelter from a cat.

Query: This means that one must not do anything even if there is a likelihood of incurring a large financial loss and helplessly watch the loss being incurred.

Answer: Knowledgeable men never prohibit appropriate, wise business dealings. They never preach that "If the debtors are not paying up, do not collect what is due to you."

Query: However, one has to be stern while collecting the dues and sometimes one tends to get angry in the process.

Answer: If you have substance, you should give up collecting. If the debtor wants to pay up, so be it. Otherwise let there be a loss. One cannot afford to get angry. Guard forgiveness even at the cost of wealth.

Let not come to my abode, two betrothals and the third, animosity.

Nature will appreciate that effort.

Question: What if we lack substance? We, in turn, may have borrowed money from someone and that person may be after us to repay the money back. What if that person is harassing not just me, but the whole family?

Answer: That is why the learned have forbidden such financial dealings. To set out to acquire wealth being dependent on someone else's money and then to declare oneself as bankrupt if that money is lost due to either some error or carelessness, is a Western perversity. It is not our culture. Yet, experiencing anger while collecting dues cannot be considered as one's duty when put in such a situation. One should then regret it. While contemplating, one should think, "I am burning sandalwood to generate burning pieces of coal" or "I am demolishing an entire palace to obtain one nail".

O soul! You are not going to recover your amount till your obstacles are removed. Then why are you destroying your virtue of forgiveness by letting your anger overcome you?

O soul! Be cautious and careful so that anger does not transform into enmity. Do not feel elated at seeing your debtor in trouble. Do not even, by mistake, seek the help of such people who would threaten your debtor with death. Pray to God for his welfare. One should contemplate each thought, each action.

Despite trying to collect the money, you may not succeed in getting it back. You get angry once, then twice, then over and over again. Anger is a feeling which escalates over time as one's work is not achieved. Soon the

intensity of anger becomes so excessive that poor 'kshama' is stunned and scared beyond words. As a result, she is unable to gather enough courage to show her face again after days, months, years or even life times. In that much time, wealth may come and go several times. The most surprising thing is that by resorting to whatever means available, you have freed the money that was deposited with someone and now that you have cash in hand, you are faced with the dilemma of where to invest it. If your desire was to invest, then wasn't it already employed somewhere? Why did you bother to free it? So, 'kshama' is more important than wealth. Even if you are likely to incur heavy losses, it cannot become the cause of either anger or enmity.

An important fact which has to be borne in mind is that there are no separate markets for incurring a profit or a loss. There is no concept like profit is incurred in the office or the shop and a loss is incurred at home. Where it is possible to incur a profit, it is equally possible to incur a loss. In the same manner, there are no different markets for forgiveness or anger. The occasion, where one can get angry can also be of one where one can be forgiving.

The same behaviour in others, which infuriates us, has brought forth forgiveness in the minds of great souls of yore.

When someone abused us, insulted us, blamed us wrongly, spoke bitter words to us, censured us, broke our valuable things, slapped us, caused us to incur a loss, we termed them as actions that caused us anger. However, nature is not prepared to consider even one of

them as a cause of anger. It considers each of them as the motive for forgiveness.

A single person may be harassing us time and again because of whom we have to bear terrible afflictions and pain. By describing to the world what we are undergoing, we may be able to convince everyone about our plight. The whole world may be on our side and opine, "When someone causes so much annoyance, it is but natural for a person to get angry." However, Karmasatta refuses to grant us the right to be annoyed. It tells us, "Whatever suffering comes your way becomes the cause of forgiveness. You have to be forgiving. You have no right to be angry." How much had Agnisharma suffered? At first, he was the subject of everyone's jest, then he was the butt of everyone's harsh jokes and cruelty and to top it all, he had to miss out on breaking his 'masakshamana' with a parana on three different occasions.

Putting ourselves in Agnisharma's shoes, we must contemplate, "If an individual exercises extreme caution and solemnly confesses not to allow an error under any circumstances regarding a certain important matter and in that same matter, that individual, who earlier was responsible for causing you mental agony, by cruelly making you an object of amusement and laughter, fails to meet his commitment by giving you the excuse of a headache, then the second time round gives the excuse of a war, and yet again, passes up on his obligation, what would one think of this person? Not one day ahead, not one day later – but he gets a sudden headache that very day? Again, a

month later on the very day of breaking of the fast, a war suddenly breaks out? These in your mind would all be excuses. Even the headache was a pretense, the talk of a war was a made up story. First, the request to be allowed the chance to perform the 'parana', then an extreme persistence about it, then feeling of anguish at having missed the 'parana'. It was a ploy to make you accept the doing of 'parana' at his hands and then to cause you harassment by making you miss it. Wouldn't one have these thoughts? While thinking like this, isn't one likely to be irked? Would it affect only us or in general, any person? Agnisharma had to bear the brunt of Gunasen's errors by missing out on 'parana' twice and had to continue his austerity for the third month. By then his equanimity had reached new heights, but when the same mistake was repeated the third time, he lost his temper. This show of anger was not acceptable to Karmasatta who considered his anger to be a crime and gave him a harsh punishment.

The minister, who had a score to settle with Khandhaksoori, had caused the King to wrongly believe something that gained him the right to punish Khandhaksoori and his disciples. He constructed a mechanical oil mill to crush Khandhaksoori and his 500 disciples alive. Khandhaksoori's 499 beloved disciples were crushed first, for no fault of theirs. The last disciple was a child monk who was very young, tender and delicate. Khandhaksoori requested the minister, "Brother! I won't be able to see him being crushed, please crush me first." This small request was also declined. He crushed the

‘bal-muni’ first and then Khandhaksoori. The anger displayed by Khandhaksoori for this unfairness and terrible cruelty was not forgiven by Karmasatta. Even he was given a cruel punishment.

Kuroot and Utkuroot were brothers who were both monks. On account of performing extreme austerities and leading a pure, restrained life, while working towards their goal of attainment of ‘moksha’, they achieved many ‘labdhi’s. They did the ‘chaturmasa’ in a place called Kunala. The Rain God for some reason had been offended at that time. Not only was there not a single drop of rain, but there were no signs of any rain clouds in the sky. The ignorant people, desperate for rain, began imagining all sorts of things, like, “The monks must have control over the rain”. They began harassing the ‘mahatmas’, someone slandered them, while someone else abused them or pushed them. The two great souls were absolutely engrossed in their silent pursuit. Not only did they not hit the people back, they neither retaliated nor complained. They bore all their afflictions with equanimity. Days went by. The harassment from the people only increased to spitting and slapping them. This went on for days. Then, the people became uncontrollable. Mistaking the great souls’ calm and composure as their cowardice and helplessness, they started beating them with rods. The monks

Bal-muni = a child monk

Moksha – salvation

Chaturmasa = staying in a place for four months of the monsoon

Labdhi = power of the mind

Mahatma = a great soul

started bleeding heavily Suddenly, the monks' even-temperedness gave way. They summoned the King of Rain and ordered him to pour down for fifteen days and nights incessantly. They were the holders of many powers and their word was bound to bear fruit. The whole country was inundated and carried away in the waters, even the highly accomplished 'mahatmas' were not spared and were carried away to the seventh hell. Karmasatta did not forgive them their display of anger.

Karmasatta is very clear that justice has to be carried out. "The whole world may consider anger worth forgiving but in my law, it is not so. Under my law, anger is unpardonable."

Question: What if it is the other person who is instigating us?

Answer: It is not for us to see or think what the other person is doing. We were going to spend our chaturmasa in Palanpur in Vikram Samvat 2038. Pujya Gurudev Shri Vijay Bhuvanbhanusoorishwaraji Maharaj Saheb was travelling to Palanpur along with his disciples. On the way, they came to a middle-sized town. There, a very aged Acharya was already stationed with his big family of disciples. His health was quite critical due to his old age and physical condition. Swargastha Pujya Gurudevshri was proficient and enthusiastic about 'niryamana'. He decided to stay there for ten days for the

Acharya = a preceptor

Swargastha = now living in heaven

Niryamana = assisting souls on their death bed or experiencing deep pain to undertake practices with a pure conscience, leading to an equanimous and peaceful death

‘samadhi’ of the aged mahatma, who was critically ill and dying. There were some ascetics, in their twenties, who were also staying there. Gurudev was married to the Jain faith and was above seeing who belonged to his assembly of monks and who belonged to another assembly, “These may not be my disciples but they belong to my faith. If they study, they will bring fame to the order established by my faith.” He decided to impart knowledge to these young disciples with these noble sentiments. To know the hidden meanings of the scripture one needs logic.

In order to cultivate the power of reasoning, one normally studies scriptures of logic. However, learning the preliminary technical terms used in logic itself is so difficult and daunting that the students were likely to get nervous and give up. Even if they did not give up further studies of advanced scriptures, it would prove to be more profound to grasp. Pujya Gurudevshri was very competent at logic. He composed a volume named ‘Nyayabhoomika’ after a deep and repeated study of all the scriptures of logic. Even the most erudite pundits of Banaras were astounded on seeing the great volume and told Gurudevshri, “Simplicity that other pundits have not been able to bring forth in their books, in numerous years, has been brought by you.”

Gurudev approached the young ascetics and told them, “In my few days of staying here, I can teach you the volume of ‘Nyayabhoomika’ so that other advanced volumes become easier for you to grasp.” The young ascetics could not refuse the offer of such a great soul who

Samadhi = to steady one’s conscience in the ‘panch parameshthi’ and the religion.

was extremely reputed in Shri Sangh. The lessons began, but these young ascetics, instead of showing their faith and respect, behaved in an intensely malicious, hostile and disrespectful manner as if they were his sworn enemies. This behaviour, troubled Gurudevshri's disciples. One day, they complained to Gurudevshri, "You are such a vigilant, restrained achiever. You believe in working twenty four hours of the day so that not a minute is wasted. You have allotted your precious time from your tight schedule to teach these young monks, but they do not seem to care. Over and above, their behaviour towards you is disrespectful and insulting. Kindly stop teaching them. What is the need for it?"

The words that were then spoken by Gurudev, to enlighten his disciples, are worth noting down in the diaries of our hearts. He elucidated, "When Karmasatta accounts for everyone's deeds, it does not see who behaved in which way. It only sees what we have done."

This is worth understanding. When Karmasatta opens our file, it does not open anyone else's file. It is as if Karmasatta is telling us, "I will see what someone else has done, when I open that person's file. Just now, I have opened only your file. If I can read 'anger' in it, I will punish you severely for it. If I read 'forgiveness' in it, I will reward you grandly.

"I have done this karma and I only have to bear its outcome."

A soul which determines as such and endeavours to dissolve such karma (irrespective of undergoing any kind of suffering on manifestation of such karma), does not experience any pain or misery in his heart.

Gunasen had ridiculed Agnisharma over and over again. He had missed out on performing his 'parana' thrice. However, Karmasatta was telling Agnisharma, "Gunasen's file should be buried in some drawer of some cupboard for the time being. Just now, I have only your file in my hand and it is filled with terrible rage, a knot of violent enmity, a 'niyanu' to kill Gunasen life after life. I can read only such things which are grave crimes. You will have to bear frightful afflictions, for infinite times in hell as a punishment for your grievous crimes. I will read and think about what Gunasen has done, when I take up his file."

When a businessman has to draw up his 'profit and loss' account, he checks only his own books. Does he see the profit or loss his neighbour has incurred? Or does he see what a certain businessman's books reveal?

What would a patient, who has been hospitalized, be interested in? Would he be interested in the file of the patient lying to his right or to his left or would he be interested in his own file? He would get irritated if an expert doctor discussed his neighbour's health instead of discussing his own case.

On our day of judgement, Karmasatta takes up our file for inspection. Karmasatta turns to the golden page on which there is a note of all our good deeds. However, if at the time, it overlooks the same and starts taking even the slightest interest in someone else's file, would we like that?

When a poor speaks, he receives taps on his head and
when a rich speaks, he receives claps.

This is the reason why Karmasatta believes in looking at only that file which it has opened and not any other.

To get defensive and say, "He had abused me, had uttered taunting, hurtful words which were heart-piercing and had harassed me no end!" has no meaning. Karmasatta tells us not to open others' files. It tells you to talk only about what you have done, the account of which appears in your file.

With reference to the prisoner's example, if we ponder deeply, then it will become quite apparent that the abuser, the beater, the harasser are none other than the official jailers of the court of Karmasatta. The jailer punishes the prisoner according to the punishment ordered by the court. He can even hang the prisoner, if so ordered.

However, does the prisoner have a right to get angry at all? He has to undergo the punishment quietly. Even if he is given the capital punishment, the court does not give the prisoner a licence to get angry.

This is the unwritten law of the court of Karmasatta. A punishment may be mild or severe but at the end, it is a punishment. It is a punishment for your crime, so it is your duty to bear it with calm composure. Whatever the loss you might incur, you do not acquire a right to show your annoyance. You may have to tolerate a slap, your limbs may be broken or your life may be lost but under no circumstance, will Karmasatta accept your anger.

One must decide to be cool, collected and forgiving, when painful occasions arise, if one does not wish to be punished and instead wishes to be rewarded grandly by Karmasatta. In short, all the occasions, when one has to

suffer, become opportunities for one to display forgiveness and not outrage.

If you have ten reasons to be annoyed in a day, it is only resentment that is sent forth all ten times. Music of forgiveness is not played even once in your heart.

Indignation comes very naturally to one whereas it is a struggle to be forgiving. One may have resolved never to be provoked and yet when such an occasion arises, resentment pours out. One's determination, at that point, becomes fruitless.

One has experienced harm caused by anger many times. One has also been explained, in sermons, over and over again, how damaging and despicable anger is. Yet the heart cannot help but lean towards anger. It is believed, "No work can be achieved without anger. If we do not show indignation, we may be taken as cowards. If we are not angry, people may disregard us."

In the infinite time gone by, there have been infinite occasions when the soul has been wrathful willfully and has never exercised forgiveness, due to which its existence itself has become vindictive in nature. This is precisely the reason that even now the soul is more inclined, to feel anger and not forgiveness, even after understanding the terrible aftermath that anger can bring. If one desires one's existence to abound in forgiveness, then one needs to be repeatedly counselled about the damage caused by anger and the benefits reaped by pardoning. It is equally important for one to experience incidents in life, where one's forgiveness would be put to a test.

An ascetic had an as acrimonious disposition like that

of Sage Durvasa. It was as if he was a reincarnation of the sage himself. He needed only the slightest excuse for his fury to be unleashed. He became disgruntled by his nature and decided it was time to change. He decided to go live in an uninhabited region in the Himalayas. He stayed there for thirty years. In this long a period, he did not show anger even once. He thought that he had conquered his wild nature and was ready to go live amongst people. This was around the time the Fair of Kumbh was being held. The place was brimming with people. Someone in the crowd stepped on his toe by mistake and the ascetic's violent anger erupted like a volcano, "Are you blind? Couldn't you have been more careful?" Why was it that despite not showing his anger for thirty years, he had not imbibed forgiveness? If we think about it, it becomes quite evident that it was because no opportunity had arisen in the seclusion of the mountains, where forbearance could be cultivated.

Children, who are not used to walking without their footwear, right from a very young age, develop tender feet. Walking barefoot on rough, hard surface makes a child's legs strong.

Today, a child is introduced to a calculator right from a very young age, therefore his mind is attuned to it in a certain way. He may be perplexed even at solving a simple problem like 12×17 mentally, whereas a child who was taught to solve math sums mentally will have its answer in a blink of an eye. It is clear then, that more complex problems cultivate the mind and make it more agile.

Nature is applying the same rule, which is applicable

to the body and the mind, to the soul. It is as if it is conveying to the soul, “You have been abused, insulted or slapped by someone so that you can nurture the quality of forgiveness in you. Why don’t you think that without the abuser, it is difficult to foster forgiveness? Therefore, please understand that the abuse, the slap are means to achieve and strengthen forgiveness and not to display anger.”

To train or initiate one in Math, an easy sum like “two plus two equals four” is taught, followed by tougher ones gradually. Over time, one is given more and more complex, mind-wrecking ones which are almost impossible to solve.

Similarly, a soul, which has learnt to react with forgiveness on being slapped, is given further advanced lessons by presenting him with situations, where his limbs are likely to be broken. For a soul, which has not forsaken ‘kshama’ even on such dire an occasion, to progress to greater heights, an additional life-taking situation is created. One should also think in a similar fashion about an incurred loss which may increase sequentially. Therefore nature declares that be it a loss of crores of rupees or a fatal blow, these are all a cause for pardon and not rage. For this reason, nature does not spare a soul, which gets enraged in such situations, from getting punished. We have to decide what we desire from nature, a punishment or a felicitation.

Another way of thinking, so as to cultivate kshama, is that abuses, insults or financial losses do not affect our blood pressure or sugar levels but anger which is vented on such occasions is surely an invitation to hypertension.

Correspondingly, the harassment caused by others has no power to send us to a hellish existence whereas anger shown by us, at that time, can make us a candidate for hell. The Minister crushed the five hundred disciples in a mechanical oil mill but he could not cause spiritual degeneration in even one of them because none of them reacted angrily. They showed unprecedented equanimity. Khandhaksoori who also was crushed showed intense displeasure, due to which he got a catastrophic existence.

When questioned by Shrenik Maharaja about Prasannachandra Rajarshi's next existence, the omniscient Lord Mahavir replies, "He will go to the seventh hell." Who is responsible for sending Rajarshi to the seventh hell? Is it the betrayal by the ministers or is it the mental fierce battle waged by Rajarshi, due to his anger, to believe the ministers to be evil? On being questioned a second time, the Lord answers, "Sarvartha Siddha Vimana; vagi devni dundubhi tyan, Rishi pamyā keval jnana". In a fraction of a moment, after the Lord replied, 'dev-
dundubhi' started playing, heralding manifestation of omniscience in Rajarshi. What was the reason behind the change in his status where Sarvartha Siddha Vimana and keval jnana were attained? Was it because the ministers' behaviour improved or was it because he ceased to think

Rajarshi = a sage who previously belonged to a royal family or a warrior class

Sarvartha Siddha Vimana = the highest and the most sublime of the five highest empyrean heavens, which is the abode of the 'fully accomplished' who have achieved all goals

Dev-dundubhi = it is a musical instrument which is one of the eight attending splendours of an omniscient

the ministers to be evil and his equanimity reached the pinnacle of mind's purest mode? All this makes it very evident that it is not so much the discordant behaviour displayed by others as our own anger which causes the damage. It is quite straightforward. Is being abused a bigger loss or being consigned to a hellish existence? In the same way, is being slapped, having your limbs broken, losing money, being deprived of food a bigger loss or getting an existence in hell? A hellish existence is even worse than the loss of life. If, at the time of death, one has maintained equanimity, one is definitely going to achieve a more glorious, prosperous next birth but if one loses equanimity and attains hell, then one experiences the most terrible pain at death. Consequently, one undergoes the affliction of death infinite number of times. One fact is affirmed that any type of unfavourable behaviour by others is akin to only a bite of a bed-bug and to react angrily at that time is like a mouse seeking the support of a cat.

Let us reflect on another important matter. To say that, "I got angry because someone abused me", does not befit a person desirous of peace in the present and happiness in the future.

7. TANKER : OF PETROL OR WATER?

A cigarette smoker threw a burning cigarette butt on a heap of cotton in a godown without extinguishing it. In no time, there was a fire which spread rapidly. The entire godown was gutted down causing the owner a loss of millions. The owner had seen the smoker commit this act, so he filed a suit in the court claiming a compensation. The smoker was made to stand in the witness box.

He was asked, "Is it true that you were smoking a cigarette?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"Had you thrown the burning butt away, once you were done?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"Did the butt fall in the godown?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"Then you will have to make good the loss of Rs. five million, as the fire was caused by your burning cigarette."

"No, my Lord! It is not true that my cigarette caused the fire."

The judge, the lawyers from both sides and the entire court were stunned by the answer, "If your cigarette did not cause the fire, then what did?"

"My Lord! There was a fire because the godown was filled with cotton. If the godown had been filled with iron scrap, leave alone a cigarette butt, even a burning log of wood would have been ineffective to start the fire."

It is a reality that a fire does not ignite with either just a spark or petrol alone. It is a combination of the two which causes a fire to break out. Similarly, the fire of anger does not light up by merely getting a 'nimitta' of an abuse or by an inherent disposition of the soul to be angry. Anger is caused only when both unite.

Having refused a young man, who had come to ask for a burning coal from him once, the mendicant got angry with the man for asking him a second time, "Can't you hear? Didn't I tell you that the fire is extinguished? Yet, the man requested again. "Why are you being unnecessarily obstinate?" said the mendicant raising his voice. So the man said again, "Bapji! Why are you lying?. One can distinctly see the burning coal hidden under the ashes." "You seem to be a rogue! I told you clearly that there is no fire and you are still insistent about it!" The mendicant's ire crossed all limits. "Bapji! I can see the smoke with my own eyes. Why are you refuting the fact?" On hearing this, the mendicant raised his tongs and rushed towards the man as if to attack him. The man said with composure, "Now even sparks have started flying from your fire. How is that possible if you did not have fire?"

The fact that there is a fire within, means that there is inherent anger hidden within the soul and if these intrinsic qualities are existent, then even a small spark can become a blaze. To possess such an inherent quality and then to expect that no one should throw an ember on it to turn it into a raging flame is an impossibility. This is because this

Nimitta = a supporting cause; a casual factor; a reason

Bapji = a respected elder

is beyond one's control. There are thousands of people who we come into contact with.

There is no way of saying who will throw the ember, how, when and from where. It is not possible to restrain people forever. Furthermore, our improper behaviour, our past deeds are likely to instigate the other person to throw a spark. It is foolish to expect that no one will do so. Make your soul immune to abuses and the like, so that the destructive fire of anger is not ignited. Let there be no fire of anger, instead, there should be a flow of love and compassion from your heart for your enemy.

In this reference, let us examine a true incident which appeared in an edition of the Hindi monthly 'Kalyan', published from Gorakhpur, in its 35th year. This incident goes back 40 years. The son of a priest, by the name of Ramatanu, who hailed from a small village in the district of Hugli, went to Kolkata. While working, he simultaneously graduated with a Masters degree. He became the Principal of a government school at a monthly salary of Rs.200. In those days, that salary was considered to be big. He and his wife, both were extremely good-natured. They had no ego and never nurtured any evil thoughts in their minds. Over and above, they always thought of doing good for others and used to make an effort in that direction in every way they could. Therefore, they had become respectable and worthy of everyone's love and praise. However, one of their neighbours, Adharchandra, was very jealous of their popularity and good reputation. He plotted and planned to disgrace Ramatanu time and again. The world appears to you the way you behold it. Ramatanubabu's eyes were

always filled with kinship and compassion. Therefore, everyone appeared to him as a friend. He had no idea that Adharchandra was behaving in a maleficent manner towards him.

Once Adharchandra planned a secret and underhand scheme. He arranged for a couple of miscreants and an immoral woman from another town to participate in his plan. The plan was that the woman should dishonour Ramatanu by wrongly blaming him of misconduct and create a commotion and then Adharchandra and his colleagues would attack Ramatanu in the name of saving the woman. They picked a day to put their plan in action.

One afternoon, as Ramatanubabu was returning home, the woman was awaiting his arrival in a small uninhabited lane at a predetermined place. As soon as Ramatanu passed through the lane, the woman created a stir, screaming, "You scoundrel! Leave me! You are a Brahmin and yet you misbehave with me like this? You wish to molest me? Help!.... Help!..... Someone, please help me!". Saying so, she came very close to Ramatanubabu and disarrayed her clothes. Adharchandra and the rogues, came out of their hiding place and created a pandemonium. He started abusing and beating Ramatanubabu. The rogues followed suit. Ramatanubabu was utterly shocked. He could not understand what was happening and why. Hearing the commotion, people from the neighbouring homes came out. A big crowd gathered.

People were aware that Ramatanubabu was a courteous and honourable man. Everyone respected him because he had been helpful to almost everyone in

one way or another. Being Adharchandra's neighbour, he had also been kind to him and had helped him on many occasions. When an epidemic of plague had broken out in the village, Adharchandra was also afflicted by it. At that time, Adharchandra's family had behaved in a selfish manner and had forsaken him to fend for himself. It was Ramatanubabu who had nursed him for twenty hours and had proved his humanitarian nature by even paying for his medicines, thereby saving his life. Adharchandra's family returned only when he had recovered completely. Despite this, the envious and ungrateful Adharchandra was trying his best to disgrace Ramatanubabu.

However, nature has its own system of operating. Even after witnessing this debacle, people still considered Ramatanubabu to be innocent and virtuous and Adharchandra appeared to be guilty and wicked. A person even recognized the woman as a vagabond from a neighbouring village. She was renowned for her immoral way of life. Even the rogues were identified. People saved Ramatanubabu and were so angry with Adharchandra and his colleagues that they attacked him.

Soft-hearted Ramatanubabu could not bear to see this. He intervened, requested everyone with folded hands and barely managed to save Adharchandra and his two accomplices. On being recognized, the wicked woman had escaped. Two persons went to a police station located in a village two miles away and informed the police about the incident. The Chief Police Officer investigated the matter and arrested Adharchandra and his colleagues. Everyone was willing to be a witness. The woman was also found and

caught. She accepted her crime at once and admitted that she had been paid by Adharchandra to participate in the drama. She said that she had not expected Adharchandra and the other two men to beat Ramatanubabu up.

Adharchandra was put to shame and was disgraced. Tears started flowing from his eyes. Ramatanubabu was sad to see Adharchandra desolate and implored the Chief Police Officer to release him. The Chief Police Officer was polite with Ramatanubabu but he told him sternly, "Kindly do not interfere in our work. We have caught these people red-handed. We have enough proof and witnesses to implicate them, do not get involved." When Ramatanubabu pleaded some more, the C.P.O. said, "We have called the Doctors from Hugli to come and check on your wounds and all you want is to have the criminals released?" The C.P.O. respectfully sent Ramatanubabu home along with a police officer who was also given the job of bringing the doctor's report to the police station.

Many people from the village had gathered over at Ramatanubabu's house. Everyone's opinion was that the criminals should be punished but Ramatanubabu's heart wished otherwise.

He had a strong desire to save Adharchandra. He told people, "Everyone behaves according to their temperament, at the same time, everyone also feels pain. I was beaten up as a result of my past karmas. If my deeds were not evil, what power did Adharchandra have to hurt me so? Adharchandra is only a 'nimitta' but he and his family have had to face so much trouble due to this situation. He deserves pity and forgiveness. I am asking all

of you to request the C.P.O. not to take further action in this case. In case he refuses to comply, then we should see that no one appears as a witness against Adharchandra. I have still not given my testimony. I will hold that I was hurt due to a fall.”

People were shocked when they heard this. Some people were congratulating Ramatanubabu in their minds and others were blaming him for setting a wrong precedence fearing that the crime-rate would go up. Ramatanubabu had tears of compassion in his eyes. Amongst the villagers, there was a wise old man named Shri Haripad. He praised Ramatanubabu and tried to make the villagers understand the situation. Some of the villagers had a change of heart. The doctor who arrived in the meantime also knew about Ramatanubabu's gentlemanliness and had immense respect for him. Ramatanaubabu requested the doctor to give Adharchandra a favourable report but the doctor was not convinced. He agreed not to make the report immediately. He said, “If the C.P.O. accepts your request, I will not need to write the report.”

After the doctor left, Ramatanubabu and a few respected old men from the village went to see the police officer. They tried explaining Ramatanababu's thought process and pleaded with the C.P.O. to release Adharchandra without fighting the case. The C.P.O. was impressed by Ramatanubabu's compassionate nature. Coincidentally, the Circle Inspector of Police, Pramathbabu was also present. He was deeply affected by Ramatanubabu's wonderful deportment. The C.P.O. went aside and discussed the situation.

When Adharchandra heard about the chain of events, he was truly repentant. His heart was slowly becoming purer. Pramathbabu spoke to the wise men who supported Ramatanababu's request, "You are becoming instrumental in the increase of the crime-rate by wanting to get a criminal, who was caught red-handed, released. If such criminals are not punished, they will become bold, which could endanger everyone. Ramatanubabu is a soft-hearted person. He may not understand this, but why are all of you supporting him?"

To answer this question, Shri Haripad and Ramatanubabu explained, "Crimes can decline only with love and sympathy and not by a punishment. On unhappy occasions, only selfless service can transform criminals' hearts. We have decided that no one will become a witness for the prosecution nor will anyone produce any proofs against Adharchandra. What will you do then?" Pramathbabu, who was already suitably impressed with Ramatanubabu, was further affected by this statement. Yet he showed his sternness and said, "I have respect for all of you. I appreciate your large-heartedness and forgiveness. However, we cannot fail in our duty by releasing the wrongdoer. We will see what we can do. If you want to get him released right away, one of you will have to become a surety for him."

No sooner did he hear this, Ramatanubabu at once said, "Sir, I will put in the bail amount, whatever it is." Hearing this, the hearts of both, the C.P.O. and the Inspector melted. After all, they too were human. They told Adharchandra, "Did you hear all this? What

do you have to say to this?"

Adharchandra wept uncontrollably. He said in a shaking voice, "Sir! I am a rascal and he is a great soul worthy of being venerated even by demi-gods. I do not want to be freed. Give me life imprisonment. That too would be less for a grievous crime. File a case against me in court and I will confess my crime."

However the C.P.O. released all three men on Pramathbabu's bidding. He tore up all the case papers. Everyone departed feeling happy. Pramathbabu and the C.P.O. touched Ramatanubabu's feet.

This shows how Ramatanubabu removed the 'upadan' of anger from his heart completely. He made his soul akin to a tanker full of water. Now there was no need to worry that others might throw a spark. One would have needed to fear if the tanker was filled with petrol, but what does a tanker filled with water have to fear? In fact, it will only extinguish an ember, if any was still burning. The serpent, Chandakaushika, had not thrown a spark at the Lord, he had thrown fire itself. Not only was there no blaze but Chandakaushika gained such calm self-control that he himself became the epitome of forgiveness.

There is a need to transform a petrol tanker into a water tanker. Where would fire come from if there was no fuel? Meghkumar in his previous birth was an elephant. In that birth, his soul could recollect his past birth, also as an elephant. In that birth, there was a terrible, widespread forest fire in which all the animals of the jungle

Upadan = the intrinsic disposition

had died helplessly. The whole scenario played in front of his eyes. In the present birth, he decided to construct a safer haven for the animals to avoid trouble in the future. This was a precautionary step so that if at all a fire would rage in the jungle, the place would not be affected or there would not be a blaze. However, this was possible only if fuel was removed from an intended, designated place.

In a jungle, the main source of fuel is the trees themselves. So he uprooted all the trees from the area and threw them out of the region. He created a mass of barren land. Even if a tuft of grass grew anywhere, he would remove it at once. When a forest fire did erupt, thousands of animals residing in the barren land were saved miraculously.

Is it possible to convert a tanker filled with petrol into a tanker filled with water?

Yes, it can be done. If a person whose rage was so intense that when his sleep was disturbed on hearing more music than he wished, he had molten lead poured into the guard's ears, and then if the same person, whose anger was as violent as sage Durvasa, internalized forgiveness in such a manner that even on sharp nails being put in his ears, not a single line of anger formed on his face, then it proves the aforesaid possible!

In Chandrakaushika's earlier birth as a monk, his anger on the child-monk was like any ordinary, combustible fuel. In his birth as Rishi Chandakaushika, his inflammability worsened and he wished to kill anyone who plucked fruits from the hermitage. In his birth as a Drishti visha sarpa,

his anger became explosive. He wanted to kill whosoever he encountered. But then he imbibed compassion through every pore, which oozed forth from Prabhu Mahavir and which completely annihilated his easily aroused and excitable disposition. His nature became cool and calm like frozen ice. People threw stones at him, beat him with sticks, ants bit him all over, pierced his body and made it like a sieve, but there was not a single spark of anger coming forth.

If a Drishti visha sarpa, in his birth as a 'tiryan' can convert petrol into water to such an extent, why can't we? How to achieve this will be discussed in the next chapter.

Tiryan gati = sub-human destiny, animal destiny

Feodor Dostoyevsky, the Russian author, whose works combine religious mysticism with profound psychological insights, has written in his book, "Diary of a Writer" that,

"The experience of foreseeing one's future as dark and desolate is very traumatic. I desire to punish nature which has created this restless and contemptible condition for me. However, it is not possible for me to annihilate nature, therefore, I am destroying myself."

People who have not imbibed the philosophy of karma that, "Their unpropitious condition is but an outcome of their own past deeds and that no one else (nature or even God) has a hand in it," have to become victims of such terrible and unbearable mental turmoil.

8. PETROL-WATER

There was a fire in a building. It appeared as if the rising flames from the fire were trying to touch the sky. In that building, lived two brothers, who got into an argument. The elder brother blamed the younger brother, "It was your mistake due to which the fire broke out." The younger brother was not to be outdone. He said, "How was it my mistake? It was definitely your mistake." The neighbours protested, "First extinguish the fire." Both the brothers refused to do so, saying, "No, let us first resolve whose mistake it was, then only shall we put out the fire."

What should we call the brothers? Sane or insane? Where is the question? Both are mad because by the time it would be decided whose mistake it was, everything would be reduced to ashes. Then how would it matter, whether one could conclude as to whose mistake it was. This fact suggests that the first duty is not to ascertain who erred. It is to put out the fire. The learned say that just as a fire can break out in a building, there can be a fire of anger in one's soul. When such a fire breaks out, our first duty is to put an end to it. It is inopportune to say at that time that, "You abused me so I retaliated with anger", in order to decide whose folly it was.

Fire can be extinguished by sprinkling water over it. By fueling it with petrol, it becomes more inflamed. The same is true of the fire of anger. Which is that water, which when sprinkled, pacifies the fire of anger? And

which is that petrol which stimulates the fire of anger? To summarize, what is it that acts as water for the fire of anger and what is it that acts as petrol?

Audience: "Forgiveness, equanimity is the water".

Speaker: "No, this is only the outcome. Pacification of anger itself is forgiveness or even-mindedness. But, which water, when sprinkled, eases the agitation of anger?

Acceptance of one's mistakes acts as water for the fire of anger, whereas, blaming someone for the mistakes acts as petrol."

All the leaders from different fields had called a meeting to which even you were invited. You had decided to wear your brand-new white clothes. Since you were running late and you needed to hurry, you asked the servant, "Put my handkerchief, wallet and pen in the pocket of my trouser." He did what he was told. As you were about to leave, you noticed a blue ink mark near the pocket. The servant had put the pen inside the pocket but had forgotten to put the cap on properly. On seeing the blot, you lost your temper. A tight slap landed on the cheek of the servant, "You idiot! Why did you not close the cap properly?" Another time, on a similar occasion, it was you who had put the pen in the pocket but had forgotten to close the cap tightly. In no time, a stain had shown up. You noticed it, but would you lose your temper like before? Would you also slap yourself with the same force? Why not? Is it because you are not angry with yourself? Why not? It is because you have realized your mistake.

Let's say, you were on a month long trip. Your partner struck a deal, due to which a loss was incurred. On your

return, you learn about his bad decision and tell him, “Is this any way to do business? Why wasn’t I consulted? Could you not have waited till my return? There has been a small loss this time. Tomorrow, it could be bigger one, this way we could become bankrupt soon.” You become agitated in this setting. In an inverse situation, when the partner was away, you struck a deal and incurred a similar loss, upsetting your partner greatly. You tell him, “Why are you so upset? This is business and there are bound to be ups and downs in it. Sometimes losses will be incurred. Instead of fighting over it, we should pay attention to another deal so that we recover our losses.” How would we behave and what would our language be like when it is someone else’s mistake and then on realizing our own mistake, what would our deportment be?

It was a holiday. A father and a son, were sitting on chairs in the courtyard of their house, reading newspapers. Suddenly, there was a noise from the kitchen, of a glass jar falling and breaking. The father told the son, “Go inside and check who broke the bottle.” The son, without going inside, replied, “It was mother.” “Son! How do you know without checking?” “Father! I know this because there was no other sound after the jar broke.”

It is clear from these daily occurrences in one’s life that when a person sees his own mistakes, there is no fire of anger. On the other hand, the minute he starts seeing others’ mistakes, he cannot save himself from the fire of anger.

For all of the above matters, the example of Agnisharma is like a litmus paper test for us. Agnisharma had reached

a forest, where there were other austere ascetics practising penance. The ascetics knew that Agnisharma's month long fast had not been broken with a 'parana' and were disconcerted at the thought. Some people were offended, others were displeased with Gunasen. However, Agnisharma told them, "आरोगं से हवउ गुरुयणपूयगस्स, किं मम आहारेणं ति." "Let Gunasen, the devotee of the esteemed teachers remain healthy. I have now not to worry about food (It is not going to matter to me whether my fast is broken or not)". When Gunasen arrived at the hermitage, he was apprehensive about talking to the 'Kulapati' about having missed the 'parana'. At that time, the 'Kulapati' tells Gunasen, "वत्स! सव्वस्स जणणीभूओ खु होई तवस्सिजणो। तओ का तं पइ लज्जति?", "Dear boy! An austerite is like everyone's mother. Why should you feel ashamed or hesitant to talk to him?"

At the time of the second 'parana', Agnisharma arrived at Gunasen's palace but no one accorded him a welcome or gave him any attention. After waiting for some time, he returned without doing his 'parana'. In the meantime, Gunasen remembered that he had missed the 'parana', extremely upset, he started running towards the hermitage hurriedly.

He met Agnisharma on the way and requested him to return and give him the benefit to break his month long fast. Agnisharma, at that point, said, "सच्चपइन्ना खु तवस्सिणो हवन्ति, निव्विसेसा य लाभालाभेसु" "The austerities are true to their vows. The austerities follow and protect their vows completely (They do not make any concessions. Therefore I cannot come back for 'parana'). The austerites are even-

minded about whether a ‘parana’ is done or not done (It has not made any difference to me that the ‘parana’ has not been done. I am as composed and happy as before).”

Let us reflect on Shri Haribhadrashree Maharaj’s words on the third ‘parana’ being missed, “एतन्तरमि य अन्नाणदोसेणं अभावियपरमत्थमगत्तणेण य गहिओ कसाएहिं, अवगया से परलोयवासणा, पणट्ठा धम्मसद्धा, समागया सयलदुक्खतरुबीयभूआ अमेत्ती, जाया य देहपीडाकरी अतीवबुभुक्खा.” Due to his ignorance and having not immersed his soul in the supreme path of attaining liberation, he became bound by ‘kashaya’, his keenness to improve his next birth was completely destroyed, so was his faith in the religion. In its place, animosity, which is like the root of the tree of unhappiness, was generated. Intense pangs of hunger, caused him physical pain, making him covetous of food.

He forgot the Doctrine of Karma taught to him by the ‘Kulapati’, that is why, he was possessed by ignorance. “To have missed his ‘parana’ thrice and as a result, having to bear the affliction of pain and misery are all due to the deviousness of Karmasatta and not of Gunasen. Gunasen is merely a jailer.” Such a thought process is ‘paramarth’. To maintain equanimity as a consequence of this thought process is the ‘paramarthik’ path, leading to the welfare of the soul and achievement of glorious future births.

He fell short in assimilating with the path. He started

Kulapati = a sage who keeps, maintains and educates numerous pupils at his hermitage

Kashaya = 4 passions viz. anger, ego, deceit and greed

Paramarth = path of self-realisation

Paramarthik path = path leading to realization of the pure soul from an absolute point of view; omniscience

thinking of Gunasen as guilty. Seeing Gunasen's mistakes, his anger was ignited. He became incensed. There ended his thoughts about his future lives or his faith in the religion. Enmity, which is the origin of all miseries, pain and afflictions, possessed his mind.

The result of the litmus paper test is clear. Till his 'parana' was missed twice, he saw it as his own mistake and considered it as a fruit of his past karmas. His mind till then was calm, contented and pure. However, the third time that his 'parana' was missed, he started seeing it as a mistake on Gunasen's part. The fire of anger spread within him, which engulfed the peace and beauty of his mind, his composure and happiness. Instead, his mind was soiled with the blackness of agitation, cruelty and a feeling of animosity.

The virtuous souls of Luv and Kush were developing as foetuses in the womb of Mahasati Sita, as an effect of which, Sitaji had keen desires like enforcing 'amari-pravartan' in the kingdom, having grand devotional festivals, doing supatra-dan, and, undertaking pilgrimages. All these desires except for the one for going on a pilgrimage had been fulfilled by Ramchandrajai. In the meantime, people were blaming Sitaji. "How could Sitaji's morality have remained unblemished since she stayed at Ravana's palace for such a long time?" How long does it take for gossip such as this to spread like wild fire? When Ramchandrajai heard of it, he decided to abandon Sitaji.

Amari pravartan = enforcement of non-violence

Supatra-dan = offering of food and other requisites to monks and nuns

He revealed his intentions to the Commander-in-Chief of his army, Kritantavadan. The Chief prepared a chariot and requested Sitaji, “Devi! You have a desire to go on a pilgrimage, the chariot is ready for you so kindly come and be seated”. Sitaji not suspecting anything, settled down in the chariot. The Chief drove the chariot to the middle of a jungle and then abruptly stopped, “Brother! Why have you stopped here? There is no ‘teerth’ in sight here!” The Chief had tears in his eyes. He related everything to her. It was a very dense, uninhabited jungle. One could hear roars of violent, wild animals all around, the creeping movements of poisonous snakes could be heard and it was an uncertainty whether she would survive even one night in such a ruthless place. Sitaji was being abandoned, to be all alone in this terrible jungle, while she was pregnant. Who should be consoling whom? Should the Chief be consoling Sitaji or should Sitaji be consoling the Chief?

The amazing thing was that on realizing her own mistake, Sitaji calmed the Chief down, who was still crying, “Brother! Why are you crying? It is not your fault. You are just carrying out your duty by obeying your master’s order, which is also my duty as a wife. How can you blame even the master? He is just performing his duty of satisfying his subjects who he rules over. Why even blame the subjects? These are the same subjects who had hailed me earlier, by such names as ‘Jagadamba’, ‘Mahasati’, ‘Sita Maiya’. No

Teerth = a place of pilgrimage

Jagadamba = The Goddess Durga

Sita Maiya = Mother Sita

one is to be blamed, it is Karmasatta who is making them change their views.”

While returning, the Chief asked Sitaji, “Do you have any message for Ramchandrajī?” Even at that time, there was no sarcasm or abuse from Sitaji, like, “What kind of justice is this? You just heard one side and then ordered me to be banished? I should have been heard too! Besides, even a common man who wants to abandon his wife, leaves her at her parental home. You are a great king so you have the prerogative to leave your wife, alone in the middle of the jungle? Your propriety is indeed praise-worthy!” How could she be this peaceful, calm and collected? The answer is – through ‘Swabhooldarshan’.

When a person sees his mistakes and prepares his mind to bear any affliction, fully realizing that, “It is my own mistake and I have to bear the result of it”, then it becomes easier to withstand that affliction. If a person, who is walking, is told that the distance to be travelled is twelve kilometres and if it turns out to be fifteen kilometres, he would get annoyed. If he is told from the beginning that the distance is fifteen kilometres, he covers it with ease, because he is mentally prepared for it. This is to say that a person, who admits his mistakes, is mentally prepared to bear the pain with ease and therefore is able to maintain his composure.

When a person who sees other’s mistakes, thinks, “Why should I bear the consequence of his mistakes?”, he is not only unprepared mentally to bear the pain, he

Swabhooldarshan = to realize one’s own mistakes

also develops a mental inclination to avert pain or resist it. Yet, it is not possible to avoid the pain. At that time, his ego gets hurt as his desire to avoid the pain is crushed. He experiences helplessness. All these forces make his misery all the more unbearable. When an elder sister-in-law, who is trying to avoid her own chores, is forced to do even the younger sister-in-law's work, how painful would the situation seem to her? When the situation of undergoing pain presents itself, one is bound to experience agitation and confusion.

When you think of someone as the root cause of all your troubles, he is going to appear to you only as an enemy. Who would be prepared to endure afflictions given by an enemy? There is no choice but to suffer them. This makes the soul perplexed. He becomes extremely impatient to get even, and therefore, till he is able to avenge himself, his mind is not at rest. Besides, he had committed the mistake way back in the past. Now, there is no possibility of its diminution. Therefore, there is a mental acceptance of the fact on his part that it is not in his hands to reduce whatever he has to bear as a punishment. However to a person who sees someone else as the perpetrator of his difficulties, the other person's present deeds in the form of strange words or behaviour only seem as the root cause of his afflictions. He believes that if these strange deeds stop, his afflictions would also lessen. His desire to see his afflictions reduced also prompts him to make an attempt in that direction. However the other person does not relent as a consequence of which his troubles continue. This situation becomes intolerable for him and

he starts considering the other person more wicked. His ego is hurt. His aim is only to see his pain alleviated. So when the pain starts becoming more intense instead of getting mild, it appears to be more and more unbearable. For all these reasons, his mind always remains angry.

Sitaji always saw the fault of her own karmas. Therefore, she was absolutely calm and composed. She did not feel either displeasure or anger towards Ramchandraji (Is the gain of seeing one's own faults any less grand, that we would be foolish to see other's faults at its cost?). She sends a beautiful message to Ramchandraji, "O master! You have forsaken me, listening to people's hearsay. It does not matter. You will find a better life partner than me. Also, there is no dictum that your liberation will be withheld. These are people after all, tomorrow they may start slandering the Jain religion. Kindly do not forsake Jain religion by listening to them because there is no other religion which is superior than or even equal to it. By abandoning it, the attainment of your liberation will definitely be obstructed." What magnanimous words, there was not a single word of complaint, sarcasm or abuse.

Don't we all desire such composure of mind?

Monghiben lived in the area of Shahpur in Ahmedabad. She had tremendous faith in Bapji Maharaj. She would put a morsel of food in her mouth only after paying obeisance to him. If Bapji Maharaj had already sat down to do a 'besana' during the austerity of

Besana = to have only two meals in a day, sitting down

‘varshi-tapa’, he would show his hand from behind the curtain. Monghiben would respectfully bow to his hand. As was her fate, she was married to a young man who had no faith in the religion. She came to live at Borivali in Mumbai. The husband had a disregard for the religion. He would get very angry when Monghiben visited the temple or if she did a ‘samayika’ or did ‘swadhyaya’, and he would beat her for it. So she used to perform all of the above in her husband’s absence. She had studied 6 ‘karmagranths’ and ‘Kammamayadi’. She would even teach others. One afternoon, she was reading a manuscript of ‘Kammamayadi’. Suddenly, the children warned her by shouting “Kaki! Kaka has arrived!” She quickly tied up the 400 page manuscript in a piece of cloth and put it on a shelf when she became aware of his untimely arrival. Her husband had seen the whole thing. His anger touched the roof. Closing the door behind him he shouted, “Is this what you do behind my back?” and he started beating her mercilessly. He abused her, spoke outrageous words, took out his rage on the religion and kept beating her over and over again. The children kept knocking on the

Varshi-tapa = a year long austerity in which the person fasts on alternate days and has either one meal or two meals a day on the other alternate days

Kammamayadi = a great treatise authored by Shri Shivsharmasoori on the nature of karma

Samayika = steadying one’s mind, body and speech for 48 minutes while performing any religious activity; avoiding all sinful actions

Swadhyaya = self-study of scriptures, etc.

Kaki = paternal uncle’s wife

Kaka = paternal uncle

door, "Open the door, otherwise we will break it." Yet, he did not open it. Monghiben took refuge in Shri Arihant and her Gurudev in her heart. She knew it was not her husband's fault. He was not evil. It was her own karmas which were sinful. Therefore there was no complaint or feeling of anger or offence on her part. The abuse and beating continued and the terrible torture lasted for over an hour until he left for the office. However before he left, he threw the transcript in a water-tank. The neighbours came to check on her, but Monghiben was calm and composed, as if she had received only light slaps. When they looked for the manuscript in the water tank, they found it and were pleasantly surprised to see that not even the cloth, in which it was wrapped, had become wet. She had been beaten black and blue umpteen number of times (without leaving any outward mark on the body). Yet, she had nursed and taken care of her husband lovingly, when he had contracted cancer at a later age. One day, he told her, "What should I call you? A wife? A mother? A Goddess? A Bhagwati? I did not look back while torturing you. You never complained. On the contrary, you have always given me happiness. On my death-bed, what can I do to please you?" "If you are really pleased with me, then pardon the person living in room no.4 in our chawl, who you have a quarrel with. Tell him, 'Micchami dukkadam'."

Isn't Monghiben an infallible example of how a person, who sees the fault of one's own karmas, can remain composed and on a given occasion, can propose a beneficial solution even to a person responsible for her miseries, with a compassionate heart? A person, who can

see one's own fault, does not even find this surprising. The reason is very clear. He perceives someone's appropriate behaviour towards him as an act of kindness and develops an affection and affinity for the person whereas he sees someone's unfavourable behaviour only as a fruit of his demeritorious karmas. Hence, he does not feel an iota of enmity towards that person. He considers everyone as his friend and no one as his enemy. Then how can the feelings of anxiety, fear or worry come anywhere near him? The imagination that, "Everyone around me is my friend and no one is my enemy," is so delightful! The persons who see animosity in others' strange behaviour themselves face harassment. Those who are able to see their faults stay calm and composed.

This incident took place in Agra, a few years ago. A widow worked hard to educate both her sons. Both got good jobs in banks and earned a good salary. Sustaining life was no problem. The widow had only one desire left and that was to get both her sons married to daughters of rich businessmen so that they would get a good dowry and their days would pass happily. Both the boys were virtuous, respectful, set in their jobs and straightforward so it was not impossible to have her desire fulfilled. The mother arranged her elder son's engagement with a girl from a well-to-do family. It was decided that the new daughter-in-law would bring a dowry of a determined amount with her.

The mother had lived a very hard life and had not seen even quarter of that amount at one time before. So for her, the thought that the daughter-in-law would bring

such a large sum at one go was so exciting that she would slip into a golden world of dreams.

Late Pujyapad Gurudev Shri Bhuvanbhansoorishwaraji Maharaj Saheb describes 'samsara' in the following words, "Samsara is that where many imagined and unimagined events occur." His words came true. There was a raid at the bride's home just before the marriage and the father incurred a loss. All his capital was wiped out. The marriage took place at the appointed time but the father of the bride failed to bring the dowry. The mother's dreams were shattered. All her expectation and dreams came to nothing.

However, there was nothing that she could do. The daughter-in-law entered the house but was unable to make a place for herself in the mother-in-law's heart, which was then filled with dislike and a hidden hatred for her. Undoubtedly, the daughter-in-law was very cultured, quiet and virtuous. She loved her mother-in-law from the heart and served her more than even a daughter would. She was enthusiastic about the household chores and was even dexterous at them. Despite having so many qualifications, she was unable to win over her mother-in-law's heart because the mother-in-law failed to see any good in her. She could only think of how her hopes for a good dowry were destroyed. The learned tell us, "Do not have any expectations, because even if one expectation is bespattered, we will fail to notice the other good things. We will be unable to appreciate the uprightness of a person

Pujyapad = one whose feet are worthy of reverence

nor will be able to have a bond of affection with him.”

After some time, the younger son got married. His wife brought in a dowry even higher than that determined for the elder daughter-in-law. The mother's expectation was more than fulfilled. Just for that reason, the younger daughter-in-law became the mother-in-law's favourite. As a result, the mother-in-law became partial towards her. From morning till evening, all the chores had to be done by the elder daughter-in-law. If she was resting for even a little while, she would be scolded, “Why are you lying down? Clean the vessels.” If her friends came to visit her, she would be insulted in their presence with bitter words and be told, “Send your friends away. They seem to have nothing better to do. If you keep gossiping, who will cook?”

As for the younger daughter-in-law? She had brought a large sum of money with her so she was treated like a queen. All the important things, which would bring honour to the family, would be performed by her. If some auspicious function had to be attended or if an invitation for any two persons had been received, it was the younger couple which would be given the opportunity. The younger daughter-in-law's parental family was welcomed with much enthusiasm but if the elder daughter-in-law's family visited, they were made to feel unwanted. Everyone could see the bias. However the elder daughter-in-law was cultured, and well conversant with the science of karma and had imbibed it. She understood that what was happening was only due to her own evil karmas. Nothing untoward that happened in her life was attributed to her

mother-in-law. She had devotion for her mother-in-law, therefore, she did not feel belittled even when the mother-in-law made her perform unpleasant or burdensome tasks.

Anandghanji's averment that 'Man sadhyun tene saghalun sadhyun', meaning, 'a person, who has attained self-discipline and control over his mind, has attained everything', is proven by a hundred per cent here.

Along with the elder daughter-in-law, even the elder son was being neglected. The mother was inclined to be partial to the younger son. The elder son started noticing this behaviour. He had not absorbed the science of karma to be able to bear this partiality. The result? Agitation and hatred occupied his mind. The reverence and respect he held for his mother disappeared. For the elder daughter-in-law, injustice was a daily occurrence. The elder son used to be vexed by this. At these instances, the elder daughter-in-law would pacify him. The son used to blame his mother while his wife would blame herself. Both would have long discussions about these matters.

Son: You are so obedient and follow her bidding. How are you then to blame?

Daughter-in-law: My fault is that my karmas are evil.

Son: How is that?

Daughter-in-law: If my sins were not wicked, my father would have been able to present the dowry and then mother would have loved me equally.

Son: That is fine. But mother is being unfair even to me. What is my fault?

Daughter-in-law: Even your karmas are sinful.

Son: How are my karmas sinful?

Daughter-in-law: If they were not evil, wouldn't you also have married a wife who brought a large dowry?

Yet, the husband was unable to imbibe in his heart, his wife's convincing advice and thus agitation and agony became his fate. One day, some sweetmeats were sent over to the house. The better ones were kept by the mother for the younger couple whereas the ordinary ones were given to the elder daughter-in-law. The elder son could not bear this. He said, "Mother! I have watched you being partial for a very long time. If you want to continue in the same manner, we will have to separate out." The elder daughter-in-law was appalled to hear this. She said, "What are you saying? How can you talk about separating from the mother who bore you in her womb for nine months, who raised you, educated you and gave you good values? One must not think like this."

On hearing this, the husband started thinking. His wife received no appreciation from his mother even after toiling all day, in fact, she had to bear all her abuses. On the other hand mother never tired of lauding the younger daughter-in-law who lived like a queen. This was a daily occurrence, yet his wife's composure, keenness for work and her reverence for his mother remained unchanged under any circumstance. He used to ask her, "Why do you bear all this?" The wife would reply, "Where am I bearing anything? All this comes naturally to me because I have adjusted myself."

"Why do only you have to adjust and not Mother?"

"This is because mother is our mother. Don't we have to adjust to her?"

This matter needs to be understood. The eyes do not have to adjust to the pain of spectacles. It is the other way around because (1) the eyes already existed, spectacles came later, (2) one does not choose the eyes but one chooses the pair of spectacles. Similarly, (1) your mother has been around right from your birth, the wife enters your life at a later stage, (2) you cannot choose your mother, but you can choose your wife. Therefore, the chosen wife has to conform to your mother. This means that, it is the wife who has to change so as to fit in and not the mother.

The wife was calm because she did not see the mother's faults and had learnt the golden motto of life, 'In any situation, learn to adapt.' The husband became uneasy and restless and therefore talked of separating, because he saw the mother's fault in everything. He himself failed to learn to adjust. The learned say, "जम्भावेण कया पुण किरिया तम्भावुडिद्धकरी". "When an act is performed with a specific feeling, then that act becomes instrumental in intensifying that feeling."

Time and again, the mother had shown inequality between the two sons, resulting in the elder son developing a dislike and disrespect for his mother in his heart. So when he again broached the topic of separating, the mother welcomed it. Despite the elder daughter-in-law's displeasure and disagreement, the house was partitioned. The mother started living with her younger son and his wife.

On the very first day, the younger daughter-in-law went in for a nap without cleaning the utensils. The mother told her, "First clean the utensils, then go to sleep later."

“Mother, I am not used to it. I am going for a nap.”
Such chores used to be done by the elder daughter-in-law. That day the mother had to do it. At 4.00 p.m., the daughter-in-law woke up and got ready to go out.

“Beta, where are you going?”

“To a friend’s place.”

“But what about dinner?”

“I am having dinner at my friend’s house and your son has an office dinner to attend.”

“What about me?”

“There are ‘khakharas’ in the house. Make your tea and have the khakharas with it.”

The next day, the mother told the daughter-in-law, “Beta, these clothes have to be washed.”

“Ba, I am not used to doing these chores. Why don’t we keep a servant?”

“Beta, our income is not that big. How will we manage with this small a salary?”

“But Ba, I have brought a big dowry with me. We will pay the servant from that amount.” The younger daughter-in-law did not know reverence, affection or hard work. She wanted to live a life which she was used to, in her parental home.

The mother started worrying. How long would it take to exhaust the dowry amount? She fell sick worrying about their financial situation. The son was very particular about administering the medicine. However, the daughter-in-

Khakharas = thin, dry chapatis which can be had as a snack

Beta = child

Ba = Mother

law had not learnt that just by administering the medicine, one could not cure her disease. "Beta! I have to take the medicines four times a day, please give them to me at the appropriate time." "Ba! I have kept them on the table next to you. Keep taking them at the fixed time." At the time of taking the medicines, the mother called out to the daughter-in-law, "Beta! Can you give me some water for the medicines?" "I am leaving a pot of water for you. Do not constantly call on me." The younger daughter-in-law had not learnt to serve anyone. She was lost in her own world.

Till then, the mother had not conveyed the news of her illness to the elder son and daughter-in-law. However, the daughter-in-law somehow found out and she immediately visited to enquire about her health. She brought 'ukala' from her home and somehow managed to finish her household chores to come and sit beside the mother-in-law for entire days. She would talk very sweetly to her, would press her legs and see to all her needs. Slowly, the mother started recovering and one day, was absolutely fine. She bowed down to her daughter-in-law with tears in her eyes. "Mother! What are you doing? Why do you cry so?"

"Beta, I did not recognize your good virtues. I harassed you a lot, said bitter and harsh words to you. How can one compare your greatness with my pettiness? Please forgive me."

"Mother, why do you ask for forgiveness? It was my

Ukala = a decoction of milk and medicinal herbs

karmas which harassed me and not you. Where does the question of forgiveness arise?” Truly, she had never seen her mother-in-law’s fault in any of her afflictions. Therefore, she did not harbour a grudge or complaint for her mother-in-law in any corner of her heart.

The mother said, “I have to make a request. Will you accept it?”

“Mother, you do not have to make a request. You just have to bid and we, as children, just have to obediently follow your command. Tell me whatever you wish.”

“Beta, my wish is that this partition should be removed.”

“Yes Mother, it shall be done at once. Why delay a good deed?”

People, who stay calm and collected in this life, achieve a beautiful outcome. And what about in the lives to come? Let us now enunciate this doctrine to learn about the grand rewards bestowed by nature in lives to come, by citing Nagketu’s example.

9. GRAND REWARD IN FUTURE LIVES

During the auspicious festival of 'Paryushana', there are discourses on the extremely sacred volume of 'Shri Kalpasootra', which contains the examples from the life of Nagketu. In his last birth, Nagketu was a fifteen year old boy, whose mother had passed away. He had a stepmother whom he obeyed and respected. Whenever he was asked to perform any task, he left aside his games and completed the task enthusiastically. Yet his stepmother only bore aversion for him in her heart. She scolded him for everything, slapped him, sometimes beat him hard, kept him hungry and even locked him up in a room. The stepmother's inflictions increased day-by-day and the poor lad was really harassed. Eventually, he went to his friend to seek his advice. To his good fortune, his friend was a Jain, who had not only listened to the words of the Jina but had also understood them, got immersed in them and imbibed them. He had foresight. He did not just think about the present and was prudent even about the distant future. Rejection of present afflictions which would invite more dire afflictions in the future was not acceptable to him. He wanted to resist it in such a way so that there was

Kalpasootra = A great Shwetambar treatise, which is read during the eight days of Paryushana. It elucidates the conduct of a monk and contains the biography of four Tirthankaras (including Shri Mahavir Swami)

Paryushana Parva = eight/ten days of a Jain auspicious festival which falls in August/September

no misery in the present, no agony in the future and over and above, he would receive a grand reward from nature.

“मयैवेतत्कृतं सोढव्यमपि मयैवेत्येवं जातनिश्चयानां कर्मक्षणोद्यतानां न मनसः पीडोत्पद्यत इति॥”

“A soul, which has determined that it has to endure the consequences of its own karmas, then exerts itself to annihilate those karmas. That soul does not experience any pain or misery despite having to bear a lot of afflictions as a result of its demeritorious deeds.”

“Is it possible to fend off present miseries?”

Yes, certainly! His ‘kalyana-mitra’ showed him a way to keep away the miseries permanently and made the lad the enjoyer of eternal bliss in the very next birth. He put two alternatives before himself. The lad was being harassed because (1) his own karmas were evil, or (2) the stepmother was wicked. The well-wishing friend understood that if he wanted the youth to acquire a grand reward from nature, only the first alternative should be firmly embedded in his mind. However, the lad’s mental inclination was to believe the second alternative. Generally, the whole world blames someone else for one’s woes and considers that person malicious. This answer is incorrect on all occasions and leads living beings to get punished terribly by nature. The lad also had the same fixed attitude and therefore kept complaining about the stepmother all the time. He reiterated how obedient and respectful he was as opposed to his stepmother who was cruel. He asked his friend what to do next.

The friend could have said, “You are so obedient and

Kalyana-Mitra = a well-wishing friend

humble and yet your stepmother torments you persistently. Aren't your arms strong enough to beat her up once and quieten her down for life?" This advice would have gone down the lad's throat quickly. He would have loved it since his own mental state also reflected the same thought. Moreover, a soul is attuned to believing the other as the wrongdoer, from time immemorial. Therefore, to make his friend see the truth, by telling him, "Friend, it is not your mother who is odious, it is your own karmas which are blameworthy," was like swimming against the tide and yet the friend thought it appropriate to make this youth comprehend the reality, wherein lay his welfare.

He gave his friend advice in a sentence for his benefit, "Friend, your mother is not evil. Your karmas are evil. One has to offset the force of only that which is nasty. If we also start opposing what is not evil, then in all probability, even others may start opposing us."

Query: If one does not oppose the mother, then the badgering caused by her will persist. It will not give us the desired result of "no miseries lasting in the present" and "no new miseries being inflicted in the future."

Answer: No, it will become a resisting force. The meaning of this is that pain, disasters, sufferings that befall you are considered a source of unhappiness only if they make you unhappy. If the soul does not feel sorrowful, they are not regarded as the cause of unhappiness.

Alexander was returning to his homeland after conquering another country. He had with him the treasury of the defeated King. One labourer was made to lift a sack of jewels and was ordered to walk alongside him. They

came upon a hillock on the way. The labourer was panting breathlessly. The Minister took pity on him, "Sire! Kindly lighten this labourer's burden."

"It is you who is saying this. Is he complaining?"

"Shall I ask him?"

"Yes, ask him but first make an announcement that whatever wares each labourer is carrying, will be gifted away to him by the Emperor." The announcement was made. Then the Minister asked the labourer, "Would you like to remove something from your sack?" The labourer refused point-blank. Not only that, the dejection, exhaustion and helplessness which were earlier visible on his face, had disappeared. In their place, one could see freshness, lustre and vitality. Did the heavy burden remain painful for him anymore?

A Hindu wife, on her husband's death, wanted to commit 'sati'. The English Officer did not grant her permission to do so, saying, "The woman is not committing 'sati' on her own accord. It is society which is forcing her to do it." The wife, who was adamant, said, "It is my wish alone to do so." The Officer said, "This is a momentary ardour. The moment the fire scorches you, your resolve will evaporate." However, the woman was very firm. The Officer then said, "I will permit you if you pass my test." He lit a fire, told the woman to put her hand in it and instructed her not to withdraw it till she was asked to do so. If she withdrew it before, she would not be granted permission. The woman put her hand in the blazing fire.

Sati = a woman who sacrifices her life by burning with the husband's corpse

Her fingers started burning, then her entire palm, but the woman did not withdraw her hand. Not only that, there was a remarkable smile on her face. Eventually, the Officer agreed and with a smile on her face, the woman jumped into the fire.

Didn't Bhagat Singh also meet his death with a smile? In our extraordinary Jain order, we come across numerous such examples. Each one of Khandhaksoori's 500 disciples was eager to be the first to be crushed in the mechanical oil mill, before his other colleagues. If death appeared to them as a source of unhappiness, there would not have been a competition, like the one between the disciples nor would there have been a smile on the woman's face before jumping onto the pyre.

So, the fact that, only that which makes a soul unhappy can be considered as unhappiness, is affirmed,

(1) If, by thinking the stepmother to be evil you retaliate, nature will give you greater punishment. Instead, by thinking your karmas to be wicked and suffering the stepmother's afflictions with equanimity, nature will compensate you in a big way. It is equally true that when one hopes for a great reward, the badgering taken by one does not feel like unhappiness.

(2) A person, who is not used to lifting even 2-3 kgs. of weight, will find it cumbersome lifting 5 kgs. of weight. On the other hand, a person who is capable of heaving a load of 10 kgs., does not find it painful. One saint has prayed to the Lord in the following beautiful words, "O Lord! I do not ask that my burden be lessened. I only ask for my back, which carries the burden, to be stronger."

Elsewhere in this essay, it is mentioned that, “Forbearance of the person, who starts realizing his own mistakes, increases. Once he achieves the ability to endure, no harassment appears to him as suffering.”

(3) After cultivating a mental disposition that, “This pain has to be borne”, thereafter, bearing the pain umpteen number of times becomes a routine and does not seem like pain any more. When a person is maimed, he feels the world has come to an end for him. However, on realizing that the situation will remain unchanged forever, and that there is no possibility of any betterment, one learns to accept the situation. After the person is used to it, the situation does not appear as grim as before. It becomes miserable only when the person hopes for it to get better and when that hope is shattered. When a person having made a mistake, admits to himself that a mistake has indeed been made but that there is no possibility of changing that, he does not expect any improvement in the situation. Since there is no expectation, the situation does not remain unbearable any more. This is because “अविक्खा अणणंदे-परापेक्षा महादुःखं”. Such sentences from the scriptures describe expectations only as unhappiness (For more logical understanding of the subject, read the book ‘Avikkha Ananande’).

Therefore, if one does not want to make present and future suffering seem like unhappiness and wants to avoid misery, the best remedy is ‘Swabhooldarshan’. When one is not miserable, the possibility of feelings like worry, tension or perturbation are also averted. For that reason, it is said that the infallible remedy for peace is to see only

one's own fault in all of one's pain.

If the youth developed the mind-set that, "My mother is not evil but my karmas are evil", then the pain inflicted by the mother would definitely not seem like suffering in the present. A little ahead in the book, we will observe how his changed attitude turns his fortunes for the better in the future.

Question: How do you cultivate such a mental attitude? At the time of acute tormentation, the heart may still be prepared to believe that, "My karmas are blameworthy." However, when one cannot really see where one could have gone wrong and yet, one has to keep on suffering, how will the mind then be ready to believe that the tormentor is not evil? Would it not keep identifying the other person as a rogue or an evil person?

Answer: Yes, since we have such attitudes inherently embedded within us, from time immemorial, our mind also keeps reiterating the same and therefore it is difficult to cultivate the aforesaid mentality. Nonetheless, with proper understanding, it is possible to develop a sense of discrimination, which in turn, cultivates this positive mental disposition. Thinking about the 'Jailer' is a step in the right direction for one to discern that it is also necessary to develop these intellectual capabilities. This is because the friend knows that when there is a fire, he can only sprinkle water and not petrol. Only then will he prove to be a true friend.

Tired of Gunasen's terrible oppression, Agnisharma was left with no option but to run away, leaving his city, his home and all his belongings. He reached the hermitage

and went to Kulapati. When Kulapati enquired, he narrated his good and bad experiences. Though Kulapati did not belong to the Jain order, he had attained a birth in an Aryan country and had imbibed Aryan culture. He understood that when there is a fire, only water can be sprinkled, even though it may not be to the other person's liking, only then would he prove to be his true well-wisher. Therefore, he started sprinkling water on Agnisharma's fire of anger, "O child! Why does Gunasen make fun of you?"

"Guruji! It is because my body is clumsy."

"Child! Many may be ugly, but all the parts of your body are unusual. Isn't it?"

"Yes, revered Guruji, not one of my body parts is straight or good. I don't like myself when I look in the mirror."

"Child, Isn't Gunasen to be blamed for your ugliness?"

"O teacher, what would Gunasen have done? It is my karma which is crooked." "Very true, my child, Gunasen makes fun of you because of your ugliness and helplessness, please understand that it is your sinful deeds which are at the root of your displeasing looks and helplessness. If you had not committed those sinful deeds, you would not have had an unsightly appearance and if there was no deformity, you would not have been made fun of."

"O teacher, what you are saying is so true! But can all this be due to one's karmas?"

"Yes child! You get what you deserve. 'As you sow, so shall you reap.' If these two rules did not exist in nature, no one would have been unhappy as no one

desires unhappiness.”

Kulapati impressed the fact on Agnisharma’s mind, that only his past deeds were responsible for his afflictions. It is human psychology that one feels like resenting what seems evil. The performance of a ‘tapa’ is a powerful way of resisting karmas. Agnisharma thought, “My karmas are extremely evil, so to offset them I will undertake a ‘tapa’ which requires a tremendous effort. I will do ‘Masakshamana’. At the end of one month, after breaking the fast, I will again take it up the next day and this I will continue to do till the end of my life!” Agnisharma had no disgruntlement or complaint against Gunasen. Lack of these ill-feelings made him experience unequalled peace of mind.

Just imagine if Kulapati had not given Agnisharma this wisdom or that it was not accepted by Agnisharma. He may have been physically away from Gunasen and he would not have had to suffer any more but he would have certainly remembered all the suffering he had undergone at his hands and that would have caused him mental agony. He would have experienced frightful troubles and held a grudge at not being able to do anything about them. He would have faced terrible jealousy at witnessing Gunasen’s meteoric rise to fame and seeing him become king, especially since he considered him an enemy. This is a point to be pondered upon. The person, whom we consider to be dreadfully unjust and an evil foe, is going to appear to us as mean, unworthy and tyrannical, because

Tapa = austerity

we are going to see him with coloured glasses of enmity. However others do not see him with those glasses and therefore do not think of him as a tyrant. On the contrary, they think of him as being virtuous and therefore they hail him, offer him their salutation and felicitate him with garlands. Moreover, when one's close relatives, dear ones and friends are also amongst this group of people, the situation becomes extremely difficult to bear. Sometimes, the other person may not be as virtuous but due to the arising of his good merits, people may think him as virtuous and therefore may shower praises on him. He may be successful everywhere and may forge ahead due to being meritorious. A soul is unable to see the success of the very person whose failure, slander and financial ruin he has been wishing on account of his deep-seated hatred. When that person succeeds often, there is a terrible turmoil in the mind. When he sees only good things happening to the person whose ill he has been wishing, he even starts detesting nature strongly. If he believes God to be 'the Doer, the Protector and the Destroyer' of all things, a great tumult is caused in his mind whereby he even feels like abusing God. Sometimes, all this torment seems worse to him than even the irritation caused to him by the other person.

Even if one were to keep aside the benefit accrued to one in the other world, when one realizes and accepts one's fault, are the gains like freedom from repeated mental agony and experiencing unparalleled peace of mind in this life worth discounting?

All those people whose minds always remain highly

indignant due to annoyance caused to them by one or many persons are hereby sincerely encouraged, with an extremely compassionate heart, to do the experiment of seeing Swa-karma-dosha. Make an honest, adequate effort to explain to your soul that “No person is evil, only one’s karmas are evil”, based upon a course of reasoning which is put forth in this book. An astounding mental phenomenon will be experienced by you. Peace of mind, which has been eluding you despite using potent medicines, will be easily achieved by you, without the support of medicines.

The Jain friend understood this reality very well, therefore, he started sprinkling water on the youth distressed by the harassment caused by his stepmother, “Friend, Your mother passed away in your childhood, your father remarried, the new mother was not loving and was filled with hatred for you, and your father never took your side. Would all this have happened if your karmas were not demeritorious?” In this way, by explaining in multiple ways, he pacified the fire of anger that the youth harboured in his mind for his stepmother. The moment the youth accepted the fact that all his woes were the result of his own previous karmas, his grudge towards his stepmother disappeared. He then readied himself to fight all those sinful previous karmas.

The friend also advised him with a favourable solution – ‘tapa’. He told him to take upon himself the austerity of ‘attham’ to destroy his previously accumulated bad

Swa-karma-dosha = fault of one’s own karmas

karmas. The young man at once accepted the friend's golden advice and resolved to do an 'attham', during the great festival of 'Paryushana'. On realizing that he was being punished for his own past deeds, he was prepared in his mind to accept the punishment. Therefore, going forward he had no complaint against his stepmother or the badgering he was subjected to by her. His mind had become calm, tranquil and exceedingly pacified.

Once, the stepmother saw him sleeping in a hut made out of hay. Her heart was always filled with aversion for him and she saw this as a golden opportunity to cause him harm and in a cold-blooded manner, she torched the hut. The young man was burnt to death along with the hut. At the time of dying, he kept repeating only one thing, "Paryushana attham, Paryushana attham". Nature awarded him for his correct answer, "My mother is not evil, my karmas are evil."

There was a city by the name of Chandrakanta, which was ruled by King Vijaysen. The Sheriff of the city was a billionaire named Shrikant. His wife was Shrisakhi. They were married for many years but were childless and yearned for a child. They tried many remedies. After a passage of time, the young man was reborn as the Sheriff's son. He was named Nagketu.

A poor young man, who in his previous birth, lived in a hut was now enjoying living in a billionaire's palatial house as Nagketu. In his previous birth, he had to bear the loss of his dear mother, then he had to bear his stepmother's

Attham = a three day fast with or without boiled water

atrocities and was deprived of his father's love (If his father had loved him, his stepmother would not have been able to pester him). In the present life, since his parents had borne a son after a long wait, he had the love of his parents as well as the entire family. Also, the whole town rejoiced at his birth. This was just the beginning. Let us see how nature bestows even grander prizes upon him.

Nagketu was about 3-4 months old and was being breastfed when the auspicious festival of 'Paryushana' was fast approaching. A family member voiced his wish to do an 'attham', then a second person said, "I too will do an 'attham' during Paryushana", followed by a third. On repeatedly hearing the same thing, the words, 'attham' and 'Paryushana' started spinning in his mind. He had a past life recollection. He recollected the harassment by his stepmother, the advice given to him by his friend and his resolve to undertake an 'attham'. The memories were vivid and alive. A child who was being breastfed, decided not to wait for Paryushana but to start the attham on the same day. Mother Shrisakhi tried her best to feed the child, but the child refused to have any milk. Mother's milk is considered to be very light and easy to digest and a child becomes hungry within 2-3 hours. Imagine the physical endurance of this child who was still a baby! Soon, the child lost consciousness, leading the relatives to believe that the child had died. They dug a hole in the earth on the outskirts of the city and buried the child. This was such a blow to the father Shrikant that he died out of shock.

At that time, the law of the state was such that if neither the father nor his heir was alive, the entire wealth

had to be given away to the state treasury. The officers from the King's court arrived to take charge of Nagketu's wealth. However, Nagketu was born as a creditor to whom nature owed grand rewards. It was nature who had to worry about this situation. She shook the throne of Dharanendra Nagraj, residing in 'patal', who learnt about the situation with his avadhi-jnana. He took the form of a Brahmin and stopped the Officers from taking charge of Nagketu's wealth. He told them about the boy being alive. Then the King and the others went to where the child was buried. They dug deep into the soil and brought the child out. The Brahmin revived the child after which he regained consciousness.

Dharanendra (in the guise of Brahmin) told the King, "Bring up this child with a lot of care. He will protect you and your city in the future. He is also 'charam-shariri'. He will annihilate all his karmas in this very birth and attain emancipation."

Some time later, the King had impaled an innocent man on the stake taking him to be a thief. The man maintained his equanimity at the time of his death so he was reborn as a demi-god. The demi-god saw his previous birth with his 'avadhi-jnana' and a terrible hatred arose in his mind for the King. He prepared to cause trouble for the King and destroy the city. He created a huge rock and got ready to launch it onto the city. Nagketu witnessed the scene. How could he allow all the magnificent temples of the city to be destroyed? He raised his finger, and due to the

power of his excessive merit and unequalled brilliance, the rock stopped midway and the city was saved.

Once a small snake entered the basket of flowers which Nagketu used for worship, and bit him while he reached for the flowers. He felt unbearable pain, yet Nagketu advanced in pure meditation and unprecedented equanimity. He started ascending the 'Kshapak-Shreni' and ultimately attained 'keval-jnana'. Due to the efficacy of his meritorious psychical state, the snakebite had no effect on him. During his long state as a 'kevali', he roamed the earth and eventually, by destroying his remaining four 'aghati' karmas, he achieved moksh.

Many from amongst us have performed austerities like, 'attham' and even 'atthai' or 'masakshamana', not once but several times. Leave aside Dharanendra, not even an ordinary demi-god has come to us. However, Dharanendra himself came to the child, Nagketu.

He was reared by the King with a lot of affection and care. Even the power of the malicious demi-god was not potent enough to defeat the power of Nagketu and the city was saved from the huge rock.

Kshapak-Shreni = ladder of elimination (of karmas)

Dharanendra = the Chief demi-god serving Lord Parshvanath

Kevali = one who has attained keval-jnana (omniscience)

Moksh = salvation; liberation; emancipation

Aghati karma = non-destructive karmas; karmas which do not destroy the intrinsic qualities of a soul – Aghati karmas are four
(1) Nama karma-physique making karma (2) Gotra karma-status determining karma (3) Vedaniya karma-Feeling producing karma
(4) Ayushya karma-longevity determining karma

Atthai = an eight day fast

The most important accomplishment was that he attained what is the most difficult to achieve, even if after an extremely long period of time, lasting over many births – He attained ‘keval-jnana’ and eventually ‘moksh’.

Nature awards such grandiose prizes for correct answers! Don’t we also want such majestic rewards? Nature does not consider us as either offensive or aliens. It is ready to award us prizes which are beyond our imagination. It is only that she is waiting for us to give out the correct answer when being tested by her.

If I have to bear anything, it is only my karmas which have to be blamed. The other person is only

A Jailer!

A Jailer!

A Jailer!

I perceive today that the Lord has come into my heart. Such sentiments have arisen within my heart whereby I feel like befriending all living beings. I feel as if someone has applied cool collyrium to my red hot eyes (red from anger). Love has manifested in my heart for whoever I was angry with earlier. I now know that those who were the cause of my losses or injury were only the 'nimitta' (incidental causes). Today, the truth has dawned upon me that it was my own karmas which were responsible for all my woes. I desire progress and prosperity of all those who I was envious of earlier. Let them enjoy the fruits of their good deeds. Why should my heart foster the feeling of jealousy? On the raging flame of animosity, a shower of equanimity is now pouring down, resulting in tender and young sprouts of forgiveness to bloom in my heart.

O mind! Be warned when your karmas are being bound to the soul. It is meaningless to fret when your karmas start bearing fruits.

The erudite have advised souls to desist from committing undesirable deeds. What is the point of crying at the time of being punished?

As an example, let us see what transpired with Paris Hilton. She is the inheritor of one of the most famous chains of Hotels, – The Hilton Hotels. She was caught driving after her licence had expired. She was given a jail term of 23 days. It was a narrow cell with just a wooden plank for sleeping. It was bitterly cold. She cried her heart out for two days.

(Mumbai Samachar dated 8-6-'07)

Halt!

If everyone around us appears to us as unjust, there is an immediate need to examine our own disposition. If you think you have any undesirable traits, such as anger, uttering harsh words, doubting nature, an interest in slandering others, a tendency to shirk work, a bad habit of negative thinking, you need to correct them at once. Even after introspecting objectively, if you find that the traits still persist, stay calm and composed and think about your previous past deeds and crimes.

Enlightening Literature

- Hansa, Tun jheel maitri sarovarman
(Gujarati + Hindi approx. 61000 copies)
- Haiyun marun nritya kare
- Hun karun, hun karun, e ja ajnanata
(approx. 20,000 copies)
- Kar paddikamanun bhavashun
- Avikkha ananande
- Hun chhun sevak taro re
- Ha! Pastavo vipul jharanun
- Micchami dukkadam
- Taliye dosh santap re

Dear reader,

If you have experienced any peace of mind after reading this book, I urge you to read it again and again.

If you inspire Jain or even non-Jain dear ones, family, friends or businessmen to read it, even they will experience harmony in relationships. You, yourself can buy 5-25 copies and give them to their friends. After giving the book, kindly follow up with a phone to check if the book is being read. This is because, reading nowadays is a forgotten hobby.

It will certainly prove to be more gainful than any other expensive gift.

