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2023 JAINA

CONVENTION

JAIN DIGEST

A Publication of the

Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA)

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On the Cover: **2023 JAINA Convention**

Disclosure

The Editorial Team endeavors to publish all the material that are submitted but reserves the right to reduce, revise, reject, or edit any article, letter, or abstract for clarity, space or policy reasons. The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Team. These articles are published with the authors names. The articles written or published by the Editorial Team are published as a joint contribution of the entire Editorial Team, and not necessarily represent the views of JAINA

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Editor's Note

Om Shri Veetragay Namah

Jai Jinendra,

With blessings of Bhagwan and support & encouragement from all of you, our Editorial Team has now completed 8 years of service to the Jain community. Although the team members have changed over time, each has exhibited the same passion and commitment to bring you high-quality content. My heartfelt thanks for their hard work and unwavering support. Thanks to the JAINA Executive Committee members and JAINA Directors for their unconditional support and encouragement.

It was wonderful to meet with many JAINA officials at the 2023 JAINA Convention in Lakeland, Florida. It was a great opportunity for many to meet each other in person after 4 years. The theme of the Convention – Maximize Human Potential – was very well received by the renowned speakers as well as the attendees. Memories of many events and loving interactions with others are still fresh in our minds. Traditionally, each time we include a brief convention report in Jain Digest. You will notice that this time we have chosen to show the convention highlights in pictures – on the front and back covers as well as inside the magazine. We felt that the enthusiasm, energy, and celebrations are better expressed in pictures than in words!

However, we could not stay away from words completely. Two of our editors - Sanjay Bhandari and Dhruvi Rathi - wanted to share their feelings about the convention. Sanjay got an excellent opportunity to have one-on-one conversations with some of the dignitaries and speakers that he was going to introduce on stage as an emcee. In his article, Sanjay shares some of these conversations. For Dhruvi, the convention was about making new connections and renewing old ones. She shares her experiences in a very lively manner. We also have a brief report on the YJA activities at the convention. We hope you enjoy reading these articles and share their excitement.

In this issue of Jain Digest, we are continuing with series of articles in three areas. In the "Jain Sculptures and Art Collections" series, Dhruvi Rathi tells us about two Jain objects at the Royal Ontario Museum, in Toronto, Canada. In the "Art of Giving Back" series, Dilipbhai Shah features one of our regular writers and an advisor – Anopbhai Vora – as one of the prominent personalities among the Jains in the USA who has wholeheartedly given back to society. In the series of articles by Pathshala

students, we bring you a few more essays from older students at the Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago.

We are pleased to bring you varied articles in all the sections that will appeal to many of our readers. In the Compassion section, Payal Seth tells an engaging story about Vikas Khanna, a restaurateur, Michelin-starred chef, and cookbook author, who is not only celebrated for his culinary expertise but also for his extraordinary acts of compassion and philanthropy.

In the Devotion section, we have two articles – one by a veteran writer Dharpal Jain from Toronto, Canada, on Bhagwan Simandhar Swami and the other is a prayer to Lord Adinath by a young budding writer Mudit Jain from Ajmer, India.

In the Inspiration section, Reena Shah features Sudha Murty, a world-renowned entrepreneur, writer, and philanthropist highlighting her virtues of humility, simplicity, fearlessness, and desire to help others.

If forgiveness is a virtue that you wish to develop but find it hard, I urge you to read two articles in the Transformation section. One is an introspective article about forgiveness by Deven Shah where he deeply analyzes the topic and lists a few helpful tools that he intends to use to develop the virtue of forgiveness. The other article is by Ramesh Khandhar who shares his own experience with the harmful effects of holding grudges. I am sure you will find these articles useful in your own spiritual journey.

In the Education section, read about an innovative values education program created by Shantilal Muttha from Pune, India. The program teaches children about basic human values via structured activities such as behavioral exercises, discussions, role plays, games, stories, songs, artwork, projects, and field visits. Also included in the Education section are articles by Anop Vora on Adhar Papsthanak and a story of Kuvalayamala by Jepal Shah.

In the Information section, we bring you a summary of the 25th Anniversary Mahotsav of Jain Society of Greater Detroit, highlights of the historic visit by Jain sadhus to Pakistan and updates of two JAINA Committees – Academic Liaison and TeleHealth.

My sincere thanks to all the writers for their contribution. If you would like to write an article for our next issue to be published in February 2024, please write to us at: jaindigestpublication@gmail.com Or call or send a message at 310-721-5947.

In Seva,
Dilip Parekh

JAINA President's Message



Dear Sadharmiks,

Jai Jinendra! Pranam!

As Chaturmas begins, the global Sadhana fervor sparks a profound spiritual awakening that spans continents. In this spirit, JAINA stands poised to offer various facilitation activities for Aradhana during Chaturmas and Paryushan/Das Laxana Parva. However, before delving into these forthcoming events, it's worth reflecting on the significant occurrences of the past four months. Among these, the highlight undoubtedly resides in the biennial JAINA convention; from its meticulous preparation to the nostalgia that still lingers.

May 2023

1. On May 24, the **JAINA Women's Committee** held an online "**Digital Literacy Course**" for women, seniors, and those needing help with technology. Digital Group leader Hemal Patani led the seminar.
2. In a historic move, **Acharya Shree Dharma Dhurandhar Suri ji** entered Pakistan on foot via the Wagah border on May 21, 2023. He visited the Lahore Museum, where relics of Pujya Gurudev Vijay Vallabh Suri ji are kept and paid respects at Gurudev Shree Atmaram ji's shrine in Gujranwala. **This marks the first visit by an Indian Jain monk to Pakistan since the 1947 partition.**
3. Samkit Group launched "Hum Chale Pathshala 2.0" for NRIs aged six and above to boost participation in Pathshalas across Jain Centers. The initiative garnered a remarkable response by offering prizes for learning Jain texts.

June 2023

1. This Chaturmas, I urge our Jain Centers to connect with **Akhil Bhartiya Sanskruti Rakshak Dal**. Since 1981, they've successfully organized the "Tapovan Paryushan Aradhana" program under Shree Chandrashekhar Vijayji Maharaj Saheb's blessings. "Veer-Sainiks" facilitate Paryushan Aradhana where Pujya Sadhu Bhagwant can't be present, including reading texts like Kalpasutra and Ashtanhika Granth
2. **JAINA Telehealth Committee** launched a pilot project - the Primary Care Program will allow physicians and Dentists in JAINA to offer remote patient consultation using a secure, low-cost digital connection. Dr. Girish J. Shah - DDS, MPH, and Ph.D., is leading this initiative

and invites Physicians and Dentists from the USA and Canada to join as a volunteer.

3. The **Jain Community of New York** celebrated **Gurudev Shri Chitrabhanuji's 100th Birth Anniversary, by organizing a Hindi play, 'Maitri Bhaav,'** on July 15, 2023.
4. The **Jain Society of Toronto** performed the **grand auspicious Pratishta Mahotsav of Jain Temple for both Shwetambar and Digambar sects** from June 15-28, 2023.

July 2023

1. JAINA EC approved the establishment of two new committees: **Administrative Committee** and **Jain Entrepreneur's Committee**. The primary objective of these committees is to develop Standard Operating Procedures and guidelines for JAINA and to facilitate a community-wide initiative that aims to connect job seekers with job referrers.
2. With heavy hearts, we condemn the abhorrent violence resulting in the tragic murder of Jain Monk Kamakumara Nandi Maharaj. This senseless act has saddened the Jain community and individuals worldwide who uphold peace and compassion, urging law enforcement to bring the perpetrators to justice.
3. For the 3rd time, JAINA organizes the 99 Yatra of Shree Shantrunjay Maha Tirth, in the year 2023-24. This year's itinerary is even more exciting as it includes the 12 Gau Chhari Palit Yatra, Shree Samet Shikharji Tirth Yatra, and Girnar Mahatirth Yatra, spanning nearly two months.
4. Starting July 10, 2023, a significant amendment to the JAINA Constitution and Bylaws has taken effect, receiving a resounding 90%+ approval from the JAINA Board of Directors, with 94 Directors casting their votes. Heartfelt appreciation goes to the JAINA Constitution Committee, led by Ashok Domadia, for their dedication and hard work.

August 2023

1. Dr. Bipin Doshi, esteemed Jain Scholar and chairman of "JAINA India Foundation," visited US Jain Centers to promote Ahimsa and involve youth in adopting the Jain way of life with a scientific approach.
2. We ran an extensive awareness campaign spotlighting the historical significance and research conducted by Jain Scholars from India regarding the **Sarak Community**. Hailing from Jharkhand, Bihar, Bengal, and Orissa, the Saraks have maintained many Jain practices. Despite their historical Jain connection, they have become isolated from the broader Jain

community due to several factors over the years.

3. I am thrilled to share that **Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji** has achieved another milestone in 2023 - an **Honorary Doctor of Divinity** degree from Claremont School of Theology, USA, honoring his contributions to spirituality and humanitarianism.

Youth Activities

Embracing a dynamic series of events, YJA arranged an exciting array of picnics at amusement parks across various locations. These gatherings provide an avenue to cultivate friendships and forge cherished memories.

YJA orchestrated its inaugural Virtual LR Retreat, bringing together 43 Local Representatives spanning all six regions. An evening teeming with scavenger hunts, debates, discussions on mental health within the context of Jainism, and a host of engaging activities unfolded, lasting throughout the night.

Recently, YJP and YJA joined forces for a thrilling trivia night on June 4th, 2023. The event was remarkable, fostering connections among Young Jains, sparking new friendships, and igniting innovative ideas. The trivia night was a splendid blend of enjoyment and laughter. The partnership between YJP and YJA remains steadfast, promising more collaborative events, charitable initiatives, and exciting endeavors in the days ahead.

Jain Jagruti Central Board and Charitable Trust (JJC) partnered with JAINA for a New Jersey conclave. The event involved JJC-USA, a community of 1300+ immigrant Jain students and professionals. The collaboration resulted in an MoU for a Student Mentorship program, aimed at boosting support for Jain students in North America.



Highlights of the 2023 JAINA Convention

The 2023 JAINA Convention commenced with much excitement, energy, and enthusiasm. The opening day featured the installation of the Pratima in the temple, followed by Ras Garba and movie screenings related to Bhagwan Mahavir and

Parasnath Katha. These activities set the stage for the eventful next day.

The main event on Saturday began with a keynote address and a panel discussion on current affairs. Various engaging activities took place throughout the day, including kids' activities, Jains Got Talent shows, informative sessions, professional networking, and insights into JITO-USA. An evening cultural program brought to life the inspiring story of "Nem-Rajul".

Sunday began with a moving play, "Maitri Bhaav," honoring Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanuji and his role in establishing JAINA. Activities spanned personal, social, and spiritual aspects, catering to all age groups. Enlightening lectures covered human values, relationships, youth engagement, and Pravachans by revered Sadhu Bhagwants and Samanjis. Programs like JAB and JGT engaged the younger generation. The JITO session boosted entrepreneurship, whereas soothing devotional songs by Dr. Kumar Chatterjee touched every heart in the audience.

A significant announcement was made regarding a long-awaited senior housing project, inviting community members to consider spending their retirement years in the companionship of like-minded individuals. The day's finale featured vibrant performances, including "Jains Got Talent," Bhaktamar Dance, and a Bollywood Night, showcasing the community's cultural richness and talents.

The convention's final day featured invigorating Laughter Yoga by Mrs. Alka Sankhala and an enlightening presentation by Rahul Jain Kapoor on Jain Practices, Genes, and Health. Acharya Shree Ratna Sunder Maharaj Saheb's distant blessings inspired us.

As we concluded this remarkable convention, I remained grateful for the shared moments and connections we've formed. These days have been a journey etched in memory. Our heartfelt thanks go to the volunteers, committee members, and Bindeshbhai for their tireless efforts. The convention's legacy will enrich us, fostering unity, compassion, and service. My sincere gratitude to all who participated in and supported this big event. May its essence guide us to a harmonious future.

Yours Sincerely,

Haresh Shah

JAINA President

Vikas Khanna: A Culinary Maestro with a Compassionate Heart

By Payal Seth



Payal Seth is an economics researcher at the Tata-Cornell Institute, Cornell University. She is also a passionate author who crafts illuminating articles, dedicated to exploring and celebrating the profound significance of spiritual values in our modern lives. Her articles have been published on several national and international platforms.

April 10, 2020. The COVID-19 Pandemic had already caused havoc all over the world. After facing a myriad of heart-breaking setbacks and unfulfilled promises in his efforts to feed the hungry in India, Vikas Khanna called his mom Bindu Khanna from New York.

“Mom, we’ve had some very big and bad mishaps and I don’t want to continue to do this because it is extremely challenging. It seemed that we would be able to help, but it’s not possible. I am too far away and have too many other commitments. ... Is there a way you can help me? Just forgive me that I can’t continue doing this.”

His Mom said, *“When you were a child, you were the first kid in the family who would cut himself with a knife or burn himself and everyone discouraged you from doing things. At that time, your grandmother said that this is not the right thing to do to a child. If he doesn’t burn his hands, he will never have a history of pain towards his achievements. You didn’t stop cooking because you knew these challenges were going to be a part of your journey. So what will you do now? Just walk away? The entire country has celebrated your success. ... Your success is not yours, the privilege that you have right now, it belongs to all of us. I do not want you to do anything else. I want you to rise to this occasion because I have given birth to a warrior who is going to stand in the middle of the battlefield and feed India.”*

Feed India

And on April 11 2020, Khanna did exactly that. He launched what is now the world’s largest food campaign called **Feed India**. What began as a small failure became one of the largest food drives in the world. Within a few months, they had served 65+ million meals across 135 cities in India!

By 2019, Vikas Khanna had achieved all that he had dreamt of since childhood (becoming a Michelin chef) and even more so had become an endearing household name for proud Indians. So, he considered it his personal responsibility to feed the hungry. His compassion, sense of duty, and his mother’s powerful motivational words became

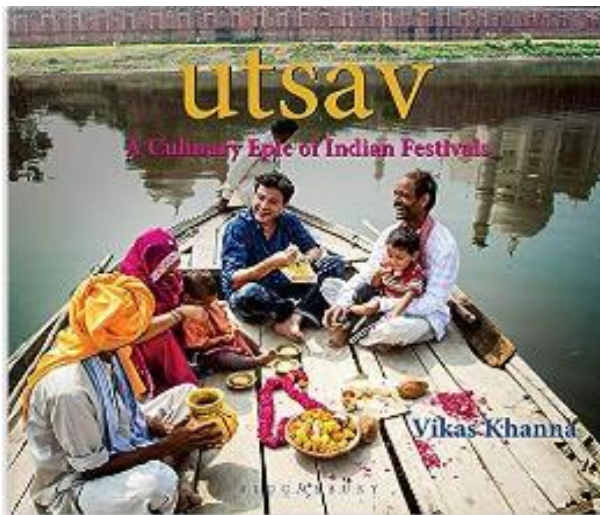
instrumental in bringing together many entities such as the National Disaster Response Force, India Gate (India’s largest rice brand), GOQii, Pepsi, Quaker Oats, and like a domino effect, many other reputed national and international brands joined Khanna’s endeavor. Feed India started supplying dry rations to old age homes, orphanages, daily wage, and migrant workers who were stranded and traveling on foot to their villages due to the nationwide lockdown. The drive also started to distribute cooked meals at train stations, in the buses, and in quarantine centers. The drive went over and beyond feeding the people, as they started distributing masks, sanitary pads, and slippers, among many other necessary items. The drive, its success, and Khanna’s passion behind it were covered by all major international media platforms.



Vikas Khanna, a restaurateur, Michelin-starred chef, and cookbook author, is not only celebrated for his culinary expertise but also for his extraordinary acts of compassion and philanthropy. Born in Amritsar, India, Khanna’s journey from a small kitchen in his grandmother’s home to the global culinary stage is remarkable. But beyond the glitz and glamour of the culinary world, Khanna’s life has been deeply enriched by uplifting others, championing causes, and making a positive impact on society. In this article, we delve into the heartwarming and compassionate acts of Vikas Khanna that have inspired millions around the world. We also focus on how Khanna’s background was instrumental in grounding him in compassion and empathy since his childhood.

UTSAV - Celebrating India's Diverse Culinary Traditions

Vikas Khanna's UTSAV project is an ode to India's rich culinary heritage and its diverse cultures. His book UTSAV is a monumental photographic work featuring delicious recipes throughout, and honoring a country that has embraced everyone, from those who came to conquer her to the ones who needed shelter. The book is said to be the world's largest compilation of festivals, traditions, ceremonies, rituals, and, most importantly, the food associated with those. This 1,200-page book has been gifted to world dignitaries, including US Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, Indian PM Narendra Modi, Dalai Lama, and Late Queen Elizabeth, among others. While the book is lauded for showcasing the culinary tradition, fostering cultural appreciation, and bringing people closer through the medium of food, the lesser-known fact is that **Khanna raised funds worth Rs 3 million through this book and donated it to Nutrition for Children by Smile Foundation.**



Even lesser known is the inspiration for this book. Khanna's friend asked him about his strangest memories when he felt helpless. He recalled meeting a beggar transgender Lakshmi on a street signal when he was young in Amritsar. When she stretched her hand to ask for money, he said that had nothing to give her, and she said, "**Bless you, my son**". She blessed him because he stood there. He didn't shun her. Lakshmi reinforced the same lesson that he was taught early on in his entire life: "**It is not actually how much you have, but how much you are willing to give**". And with the hope of all their blessings, Khanna dedicated his book UTSAV to the transgender community. UTSAV also encapsulates the wonderful details of the food and other celebrations for the biggest festivals of

transgenders in India near Chennai, held in the second week of May.

Holy Kitchens - Nourishing the Devotees

Khanna has also produced "Holy Kitchens", a series of documentaries that brings together the spiritual and culinary realms. The films explore the culinary traditions of Sikhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and more. The movies have received laurels at Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, Oxford, and many prestigious universities. They have also been screened at many film festivals including New York Indian Film Festival.



Vikas Khanna cooking for Langar at Golden Temple

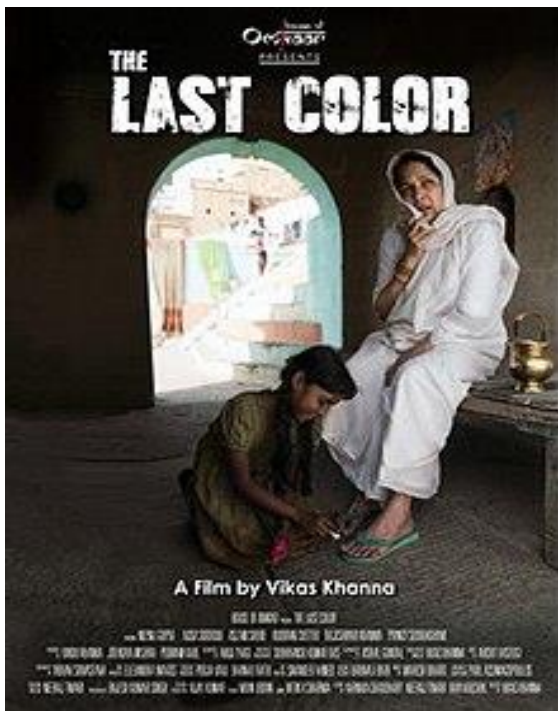
One of the documentaries that is close to Khanna's heart features stories about *langar* or the Sikh tradition of offering meals to the community, started by the Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Khanna was inspired by this in his childhood as his residence was close to the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab, one of the holiest sites of Sikhism. It is an open house of worship and runs the service of a free community kitchen, *langar*, that offers a vegetarian meal to over 150,000 people per day without any discrimination. Khanna grew up with *sevadaars* i.e., people performing *seva* or service. It made him understand the power of solidarity and togetherness. The project exemplifies the belief that food not only sustains the body but also nourishes the soul, and no one should go hungry while on their spiritual journey.

Cooking for Change

Vikas Khanna's philanthropic endeavors extend beyond India's borders. He has been actively involved in numerous charitable causes globally, aiming to eradicate hunger. He has collaborated with many top chefs in New York City to raise thousands of dollars for the victims of Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, Haiti, Amar Jyoti, Red Cross, Save the Children, Habitat for Humanity, and many other charitable foundations.

The Last Color - A Cinematic Gem Reflecting Social Realities

"The Last Color," a poignant novel written, and a film directed by Khanna, serves as a striking testament to his unwavering commitment to raising awareness about social issues and showcasing his compassion for the marginalized and overlooked members of society. Through this cinematic masterpiece, Khanna intricately weaves a narrative that portrays the struggles faced by widows in the ancient city of Varanasi, India. As the story unfolds, the protagonist, a widow (starring Neena Gupta), forms an unexpected bond with a tightrope walker, leading to a heartwarming friendship that defies societal norms.



Khanna's deft storytelling and sensitive portrayal of the characters evoke a profound sense of understanding and compassion for the hardships endured by these marginalized women. Through his lens, he not only highlights the injustices faced by widows and young girls (who are deprived of and aspiring for education) but also emphasizes the resilience and strength they possess.

Vision of Palate - Empowering the Visually Impaired

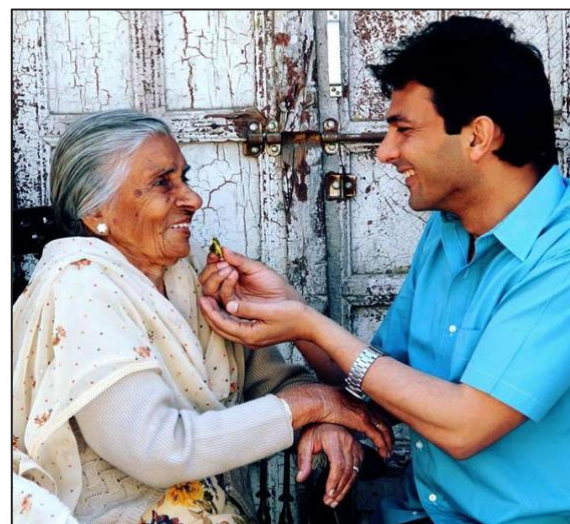
Vision of Palate is a heartwarming endeavor by Vikas Khanna to empower the visually impaired through culinary training, in collaboration with New York Public Library and Helen Keller Institute. Recognizing the potential and talent of individuals

with visual challenges, he conducts specialized cooking workshops and culinary classes for them. By providing them with the skills and knowledge to excel in the culinary world, Vikas helps bridge the gap between their aspirations and societal expectations. The project not only offers them career opportunities but also boosts their confidence and self-esteem, demonstrating that disabilities do not define one's capabilities. By providing equal opportunities, Khanna's initiative hopes to pave the way for a more inclusive and diverse workforce in the culinary industry.

Choosing Compassion

While the article could go on and on about Khanna's achievements and how each of them is grounded in compassion (like him being the Global Ambassador for Nutrition and Education for Smile Foundation), we take a pause and understand what compassion means to Khanna.

Since childhood, Khanna was fervently attached to his grandmother and hence spent most of his time with her in the kitchen. Because of her, he learned very early on that food means bringing people together. At one point, his grandmother gave him a very important life lesson, ***"Even if you are poor, it doesn't matter, as long as you are willing to share whatever you have"***.



Vikas Khanna with his late grandmother

Moving on from his childhood, when we read about Khanna's journey in the culinary world, we realize that it was both heart - and back - breaking. Despite performing low-paying jobs, being bullied for his nationality to withstanding homelessness in bone-chilling winters, Khanna never underestimated sacred values like love, kindness, and compassion. He says that there is light everywhere, you just have to search in the right places.

On October 5, 2011, Khanna got a momentous call from Michelin Guide informing him that he was awarded a Michelin star. The first person he called was his grandmother and dedicated his win to her. She reminded him that “**Just remember one thing. Never wear the crown on your head all the time. You need to take it off too. Otherwise, your back will break.**” Khanna recalls this being an incredibly humbling experience. It was these words that made him realize that if he chose not to be bitter and disgruntled when life seemed unfair, he had a commensurate responsibility not to use this achievement as a boost for his ego.

And at that moment, he dedicated this win to every street vendor who taught him flavors; to the people who did seva at the Golden Temple, because their food nourished him spiritually and emotionally; all the teachers in college who gave him full attention; for all the training and the jobs that he did; the officer who gave him the visa to come to the US; people at the homeless shelter who nourished him like family; chefs who were so jealous that a brown chef wanted to lead the food industry; people who trapped him and killed his soul but couldn't kill his imagination; and to all the people who copied everything that he was doing while he still remained original.

Choosing compassion is essential to our lives because the cycle will never be complete if we are always on the receiving end. We have to find a way to be on the other side too. Khanna says that when our actions are grounded in compassion, then one begins to complete the cycle and be on the giving end.



Vikas Khanna's journey from a small town in India to becoming an internationally acclaimed chef is inspiring in itself. However, it is his unyielding compassion and selflessness that set him apart as a true humanitarian. Through his culinary prowess and philanthropic initiatives, Khanna has touched countless lives, reminding us of the profound impact a single individual can make in the lives of others.

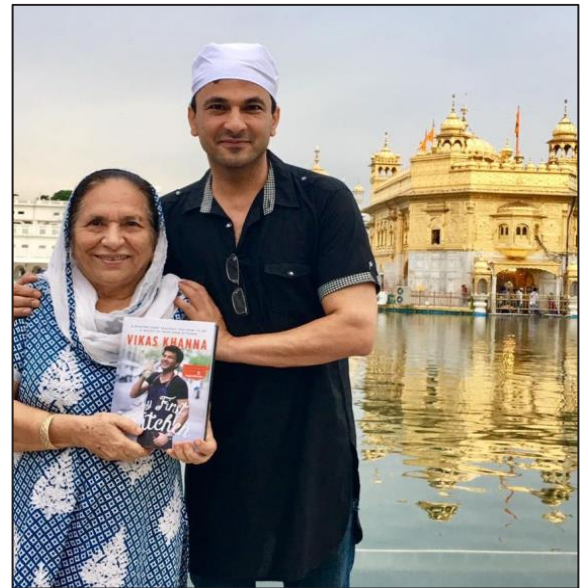
As we witness his compassionate acts, let us be inspired to look beyond ourselves and make the world a better place, one selfless act at a time.

We end this article with a quote from Khanna's and our favorite:

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.

- His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama

This article was inspired by one of our Editorial Team members – Jayana Shah.



Vikas Khanna with his mother, Bindu Khanna

Picture Credits:

Feed India:

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The Last Color:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Color

With Grandmother:

<https://m.rediff.com/getahead/report/the-one-thing-chef-vikas-khanna-cant-live-without/20180904.htm>

With Dalai Lama:

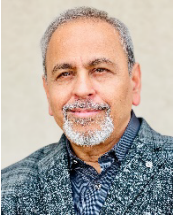
<https://yourstory.com/2015/01/persistence-spice-everything-nice-junoon-vikas-khanna>

With Mother:

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Simandhar Swami, Jaina Universe and Our Era

Dharmopal Mahendra Jain



Dharm is a Toronto-based author who has published nine books: seven collections of satirical essays and two collections of poetry. Dharm is also a columnist for five prestigious Hindi journals. He served as a JAINA director from the Jain Society of Toronto (2009 to 2011) and was the Managing Editor of Shashwat Dharm, a Hindi-Gujarati monthly magazine (1976 to 1979). His English poetry has been previously published in Poetry Pause, Fresh Voices, Harbinger Asylum, Akshara, Ispired, Piker Press, Scarlet Leaf Review, Dissident Voice, and Setu. <https://dharmtoronto.com>. e-mail: dharmtoronto@gmail.com

Bhagwan Simandhar Swami was born in Mahavideh during the lifetime of the seventeenth Tirthankar, Shri Kunthunath Swami, and the eighteenth Tirthankar, Shri Aranath Swami, on our Earth. Simandhar Swami's father, Maharaja Shreyans, was the king of Pushpa Kalawati Country, and his mother's name was Satyaki. The child was born with three kinds of special knowledge: Mati Gyan, Shrut Gyan, and Avadhi Gyan. The prince married Princess Rukmani. During the reign of King Dasharath on our Earth, Bhagwan Simandhar Swami renounced the world by accepting diksha in Mahavideh Kshetra. This was during the presence of the 20th Tirthankar Munisuvrat Swami and the 21st Tirthankar Naminath Swami on our Earth. At the time of his diksha, he acquired the fourth kind of knowledge, Manahparyav Gyan. In one thousand years of his ascetic life, he eliminated all his knowledge-obstructing karma and obtained Keval Gyan, the absolute knowledge.



Among all the living Tirthankaras, **Bhagwan Simandhar Swami** is the closest to Earth. Currently, he lives in Mahavideh. With devotion and dedication to Bhagwan Simandhar Swami, we can have our next

birth in the Mahavideh region and attain ultimate liberation by experiencing his spiritual blessings.

However, the first obvious question that arises is, **where is Mahavideh?** If there are places like Mahavideh, Mount Meru, Bharat Kshetra, Airavat Kshetra, and hundreds of other such places named in Prakrit language, then what is the complete scheme of the **Jaina Universe** provided by Bhagwan Mahavir and his predecessors? And when Tirthankaras define millions of years of the time-cycle, where does **our Era** fit in?

In the twenty-first century, **modern science considers the Universe as** the largest structure of the Nebulae. In our observable universe, there are billions of galaxies, and the Milky Way is one such galaxy that contains our solar system. In turn, a solar system is a collection of planets, moons, asteroids, comets, and other objects orbiting around a star, typically held together by gravity. Our solar system includes eight planets, including Earth, and a host of other objects orbiting around our star, the Sun. It was in 1908 that scientists added 'time' as the fourth dimension that formed the basis for Einstein's theories of relativity.

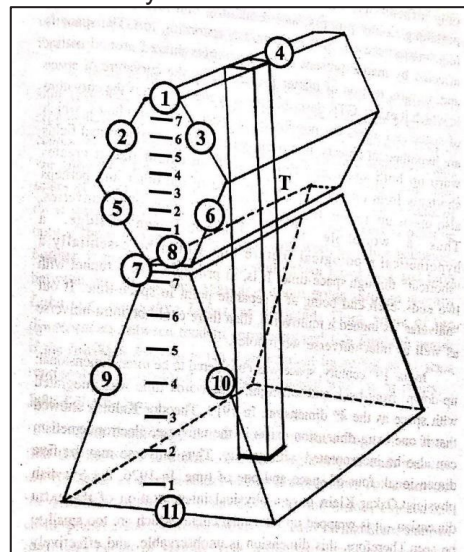


Figure A

However, almost 2600 years ago, Bhagwan Mahavir and his predecessors described a much more complex structure of the **Jaina Universe**. Here is a highly simplified and brief introduction to this complicated structure (see Figure A). The sketch of the Jain Universe (Lokakasha) might be a projection of a minimum four-dimensional creation (maximum 11) on a 2-dimensional paper.

The upper world or celestial world is the abode of heavenly beings such as Vaimanik devas and celestial vehicles. The lower world is populated by Naraki or infernal beings. The middle tier "T" (as shown in Figure A) is the region called **Jambudvipa**. It is also known as the Madhya-Lok and consists of several concentric island-continent. Here exist the 'worlds', including our world.

According to our secondary scriptures (Upang), particularly "*Jambudvipa Pragnapti*", there are five Karmabhumi-continent that are partially habitable by human and animal beings. This Jaina scripture states that there are twelve and a half island-continent suitable for the arising of a Tirthankar, and Mahavideh is one of them (see Figure B). Our earth is considered a part of Bharat Kshetra and a place suitable for human activities.



Figure B

Bharat Kshetra is shown at the bottom of figure B, where our Earth is located. The central part is Mahavideh, which is located millions of miles away from our Earth. Bhagwan Simandhar Swami resides in the capital city of Pundrikgiri in the country of Puspakalavati of Mahavideh. The star on the right side shows the location of the Puspakalavati country.

Why is Bhagwan Simandhar Swami so important?

We now know that Mahavideh is a small part of the Jain Universe. Therefore, the question arises as to why Shri Simandhar Swami Ji is so important to us and what his role is in our lives. This question leads us to know more about our times in the whole scheme of the time cycle as envisaged in our core scriptures, the Agams. The actionable (karmabhumi) areas are subject to an endless temporal cycle. This cycle is equally divided between progressive (Utsarpini) and regressive (Avasarpini) aras. Each cycle is divided into six time-stages (aras), according to Jain chronology. We currently live in **Pancham Kaal**, the fifth ara. These six time-stages or "aras" are as follows:



Utsarpini (Progressive half-cycle):

1. Extremely unhappy
2. Unhappy
3. More unhappy than happy
4. More happy than unhappy
5. Happy
6. Extremely happy

Avasarpini (Regressive half-cycle):

1. Extremely happy
2. Happy
3. More happy than unhappy
4. More unhappy than happy*
5. Unhappy**
6. Extremely unhappy

*Bhagwan Mahavir's Nirvana occurred at the end of the fourth ara, leaving three and a half years before the fifth ara. **The births of Kevlins, such as Gautam Swami, Sudharma Swami, and Jambu Swami, took place in the fourth ara, and they attained liberation in the early decades of the fifth ara.

We are in the fifth stage (**Pancham Kaal**) of the regressive half-cycle. It is believed that only during the third and fourth stages of a half-cycle, when there is neither an extremity of happiness nor unhappiness, can anyone possibly attain Moksha. It does mean that during the remaining two "aras" of the regressive cycle and following two "aras" of the progressive cycle, we do not have an Arihant Tirthankar in Bharat Kshetra. Each of these "aras" covers a time span of 21000 years. This deliberation suggests that for the next eighty-two thousand years or so, we will be devoid of a living Tirthankara on earth. Only Acharyas, Upadhyayas, Sadhus, and Sadhvis will retake birth on Bharat Kshetra and guide us towards the journey of ultimate liberation.

The situation in Mahavideh is different from that in Bharat Kshetra. Mahavideh is perpetually in the fourth ara, and Tirthankars are always present, which is why they are called "Viharman" Tirthankars. Upon attaining liberation, twenty new Kevalis or omniscient beings attain the status of Viharman Tirthankars. We and all living beings in Bharat Kshetra can connect with the living Tirthankars present in Mahavideh. We pay our respects to these living Tirthankars every day by reciting the MahaMantra Navkar and saying "Namō Arihantanam."

Bhagwan Simandhar Swami and the other nineteen Tirthankars are Arihants. The "Jag Chintamani Chaityavandan," composed by **Shri Gautam Swami** during his Ashtapad journey, pays tribute to these twenty Arihants and their Sangh through the following couplet:

संपर्तं जित्वा वर वीस भुवि निहं कोडिहिं वरनाश ।
समष्टिह कोडि सहस्र दुःख शुद्धिश्चैतं निच्य विहासि ॥

It reads, "I revere the Twenty Arihant Tirthankars and their respective Sanghas of twenty million knowledgeable people and twenty billion sadhus-sadhvis."

Acharya Vijay Rajendra Suri, in part VII of the esteemed Prakrit-Sanskrit Abhidhan Rajendra Kosh, presents the earliest references to Bhagwan Simandhar Swami found in two Agamic commentaries, namely Aavashayka Katha and Aavashyaka Vrihad Vratti. He also introduced the following hymn in praise of Bhagwan Simandhar Swami during the morning Pratikraman, which goes:

सीमंधर सेवो, कर्म विदारण देव।
भवि ज्जीवा तारक, वारक मिथ्या टेव।।
अतिशय धुनि गाजे, राजे बहु गुणवंत।
सरि राजेंद्र वंदो, विहरमान भगवंत।।

The spiritual practices of worshipping the first Arihant, Simandhar Swami Ji, and the other nineteen Viharmans are considered significant to eradicate karma. Our first salutation is offered to the Arihants through the Navakar mantra, and then we take refuge in the Siddha Paramatma. The 24 Tirthankars, starting from Adinath Bhagwan to Bhagwan Mahavir Swami, are revered as Siddha Tirthankars in the enlightened state after their attaining Moksha (the ultimate liberation).

Bhagwan Simandhar Swami leads 84 Gandharas and a million Kevalis who assist him in his universal welfare work. Dev Shri Chandrayan Yaksha and Devi Panchanguli Yakshini are his caretakers. He is one hundred and fifty thousand years old and will live for one hundred and twenty-five thousand more years. The five important events in his life, known as Panch Kalyanak, are celebrated on the following dates:

1. Chyavan Kalyanak: Shravan Vad 1 (Gujarati Ashad Vad 1)
2. Janma Kalyanak: Vaishakh Vad 10 (Gujarati Chaitra Vad 10)
3. Diksha Kalyanak: Falgun Sud 3 (Gujarati Magh Sudi 3)
4. Kevalgyan Kalyanak: Chaitra Sud 13 (Gujarati Falgun Sudi 13)
5. Nirvana Kalyanak: Shravan Sud 3 (Gujarati Aashad Sudi 3)

Bhagwan Simandhar Swami is the Tirthankar closest to Earth. Through devotion and dedication to him, we can aspire to attain our next birth in Mahavideh Kshetra and experience his spiritual presence, ultimately leading to our liberation.



Simandhar Swami Temple, Mehsana, Gujarat

A Prayer to Lord Adinath

By Mudit Jain



Mudit Jain is from Ajmer, Rajasthan. He completed his schooling from St Anselm's Sr Sec School, Ajmer and received bachelor's degree from University of Delhi. Mudit is currently pursuing master's degree in English from IGNOU. His hobbies are dramatics, writing and singing.

An impure soul, drenched in darkness of ignorance, unconsciousness, and sin
Comes and duly surrenders at your holy lotus feet

O Lord Adinath! boon me by accepting me as your disciple
Making me luckiest in all four realms

Pardon me for the mistakes I may make
As being your devotee and student
I pour my heart out in front of you
Being aware of the fact that I'm ignorant and uneducated
But still my saturate feelings for you compels me to do so

Walking up to you with utmost devotion and surrender
Joining of hands with closed eyes and chanting Namokar Mantra
Indeed, washed my heart and soul with inexplicable peace and divinity

Every time I look at you, I simply wonder
How can someone having no thing
Has everything which anyone in four realms would crave for

Just a glimpse at you is enough to calm down all my nerves
Neutralizing tornado of mixed negative emotions

Your name is enough
To perish every inch of darkness from my life
Bringing rays of hope, joy, and optimism

O Lord, I offer all my deeds and feelings at your feet
Surrendering my whole life
I bring my unending gratitude
For choosing me as your devotee
Without which I would never be able to elevate myself from the tag of a sinful soul

Finding you is like getting a torch in pitch black cold darkness
Which illuminates every corner with its warm and alluring light
Which is indeed best thing ever happened to me

The only thing I ask of you is a small place at your holy lotus feet
Where the infinite cycle of life and death comes to an end

O first Tirthankar! Please bless me
So that I can walk on the path carved by you
And make my life worth dedicating to you

કુવલયમાલા

લેખિકા જેપલ બીજલ શાહ



જેપલ બીજલ શાહ, અમદાવાદના વતની છે. ગુજરાત વિદ્યાપીઠમાંથી જૈનીઝમ વિષયમાં એમ.એ., એમ. ફીલ. (ગોલ્ડ મેડાલીસ્ટ) કરેલું છે. હાલમાં ઈન્સ્ટીટ્યૂટ ઓફ જૈનોલોજી માં કાર્ય કરી રહ્યા છે. જૈન વિશ્વકોશમાં લેખ લખે છે. આ સાથે ગુજરાત યુનિવર્સિટીમાંથી “ઉત્તરાધ્યયન સૂત્ર અને ભગવદ્ ગીતાનો તુલનાત્મક અભ્યાસ” વિષયમાં પી.એચ.ડી. કરી રહ્યા છે.

કુવલયમાલા કૃતિના કર્તા દાક્ષિણ્યકચિહ્ન ઉદ્યોતનસૂરિ છે. કૃતિના અંતે તેમણે લખેલી 27 પદ્યોની પ્રશસ્તિમાં તેમણે પોતાની કુલપરંપરા, ગુરુપરંપરા, કૃતિના રચના સમય અને રચના સ્થળનો નિર્દેશ કર્યો છે. તેમણે રાજસ્થાનના પ્રાચીન નગર જાવાલિપુર (જાલૌર)માં વીરભદ્રાચાર્યે બંધાવેલ ઋષભદેવના મંદિરમાં બેસીને શકસંવત 700માં એક દિવસ ઓછો હતો ત્યારે અર્થાત્ વિક્રમ સંવત 835, ઈ.સ.779ની 21મી માર્ચે આ કુવલયમાલાનું સર્જન કર્યું. કુવલયમાલા ગદ્ય-પદ્યમિશ્રિત કથા છે. તે મહારાષ્ટ્રી પ્રાકૃત ભાષામાં લખાયેલી ચંપૂકાવ્યની પ્રારંભિક રચના છે. તેમાં અન્ય પ્રાકૃત, અપભ્રંશ અને સંસ્કૃત ભાષાઓનો પ્રયોગ પણ તેમાં જોવા મળે છે.

આ કથા ઉત્પાદ્ય એટલે કે મૌલિક પ્રકારની એક કાલ્પનિક કથા છે. કથાનું વિષયવસ્તુ નૈતિક મૂલ્યોને પ્રતિસ્થાપિત કરે છે. આ ગ્રંથમાં ક્રોધ, માન, માયા, લોભ અને મોહ આ પાંચ કષાયોનું પ્રતિનિધિત્વ કરનાર ચંડસોમ, માનભટ, માયાદિત્ય, લોભદેવ અને મોહદત્ત એ પાંચ પાત્રોની કથા પ્રસ્તુત કરવામાં આવી છે. ચાર પુનર્જન્મો પછી બધાં પાત્રો પોતાનાં સત્કાર્યોથી સદ્રતિ પ્રાપ્ત કરે છે. સંક્ષિપ્ત કથા આ પ્રમાણે છે:

અયોધ્યામાં રાજા દ્રઢવર્મા રાજ્ય કરતા હતા. તેમની પટરાણીનું નામ પ્રિયંગુશ્યામા હતું. તેમના

પુત્રનું નામ કુવલયચન્દ્ર હતું. એક વાર કુવલયચન્દ્ર રાજા સાથે અશ્વક્રીડા માટે જાય છે ત્યારે તેમનું અશ્વ સાથે દિવ્યહરણ થાય છે. આકાશમાર્ગે જતાં કુવલયચન્દ્ર અશ્વના પેટમાં છરી ભોંકે છે અને ત્યાં નીચે ઉતરે છે. ત્યાં રહેતા મુનિરાજે કુવલયચન્દ્રને અશ્વ દ્વારા તેને ત્યાં પહોંચાડ્યાની ઘટનાનું રહસ્ય સમજાવ્યું અને પૂર્વજન્મના પ્રસંગમાં ચંડસોમ, માનભટ, માયાદિત્ય, લોભદેવ અને મોહદત્તની કથાઓ કહી. તેમના વર્તમાન જન્મ વિષે જણાવતાં મુનિરાજે કહ્યું કે આ પાંચે વ્યક્તિ પહેલાં દેવવિમાનમાં ઉત્પન્ન થઈ. ત્યાંથી ચ્યુત થઈને ચંડસોમ સિંહના રૂપમાં અને મોહદત્ત અશ્વના રૂપમાં ઉત્પન્ન થયા છે. માનભટનો જીવ તમે કુવલયચન્દ્ર છો, માયાદિત્યનો જીવ દક્ષિણ ભારતમાં વિજયાનગરીના રાજા મહાસેનની પુત્રી કુવલયમાલાના રૂપમાં ઉત્પન્ન થયો છે અને લોભદેવનો જીવ સાગરદત્ત વણિકના પુત્રના રૂપમાં ઉત્પન્ન થયો છે જે હું સ્વયં ધર્મનન્દન મુનિના રૂપમાં તમારી સામે છું. હવે તમારે કુવલયમાલાને પ્રતિબોધ પમાડવા માટે વિજયાપુરી જવાનું છે.

કુવલયચન્દ્ર ત્યાંથી જ દક્ષિણ દિશા તરફ પ્રયાણ કરે છે. માર્ગમાં યક્ષ જિનશેખર, વનસુંદરી એણિકા, રાજપુત્ર દર્પકલિહ વગેરેના વૃત્તાંતો જાણે છે. ત્યારબાદ કુવલયચન્દ્રે વિજયાપુરી પહોંચીને પાદપૂર્તિ કરી કુવલયમાલા સાથે વિવાહ કરે છે

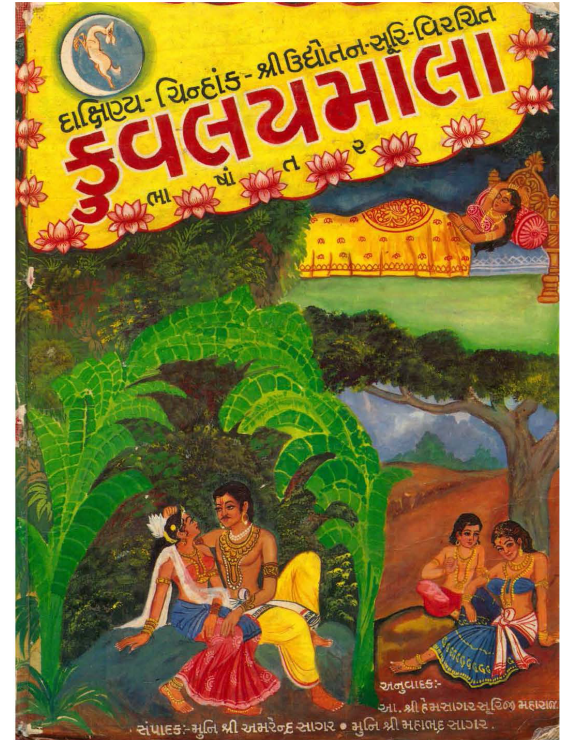
અને તેને સાથે લઈ સ્વદેશ પધારે છે. માર્ગમાં ભાનુકુમાર મુનિના દર્શન કરી સંસારચક્રને જાણે છે. ત્યાંથી પાછા આવી અયોધ્યામાં થોડા સમય માટે રાજ્ય કર્યું. ત્યારપછી પોતાના પુત્ર પૃથ્વીસારને રાજ્ય આપીને પોતાની પત્ની કુવલયમાલાની સાથે દીક્ષા ગ્રહણ કરી. પછી આ પાંચે વ્યક્તિના આગલા જન્મની કથા છે. છેવટે પાંચેના જીવ ભગવાન મહાવીરની ધર્મસભામાં પહોંચે છે. ત્યાં દીક્ષા લઈ, તપશ્ચર્યા કરીને અંતમાં કેવલજ્ઞાનને પ્રાપ્ત કરે છે.

આ રીતે કુવલયમાલાની મૂળ કથા તો આ પાંચ પાત્રોની જ છે, પરંતુ સાથે-સાથે તેમાં 26 અવાન્તર કથાઓ પણ રજૂ કરાઈ છે. કુવલયમાલાના કથાનકમાં ભારતીય કથાસાહિત્યની મુખ્ય વિશેષતાઓને સમાવી લેવાઈ છે. તેમાં કર્મફળ, પુનર્જન્મ અને માનવમનની મૂળ વૃત્તિઓ જેવા વિષયોની છણાવટ કરવામાં આવી છે.

કુવલયમાલામાં 35 જનપદો, 40 નગરો અને એશિયાના 17 નવા દેશોના વર્ણનની સાથેસાથ તત્કાલીન સામાજિક જીવનનું યથાર્થ ચિત્ર વર્ણિત છે. 18 દેશી બોલીઓનો ઉલ્લેખ દેશોના નામ સાથે કરવામાં આવ્યો છે. આઠમી સદીના સમૃદ્ધ સમાજનો ખ્યાલ આપતું તત્કાલીન વ્યાપાર અને વાણિજ્યનું વર્ણન પણ અહીં જોવા મળે છે. આઠમી સદીની ધાર્મિક પરિસ્થિતિનું વૈવિધ્યપૂર્ણ ચિત્ર આ કથામાં વર્ણિત છે. શૈવ અને પૌરાણિક ધર્મનાં વિભિન્ન અનુષ્ઠાનોનું વર્ણન પણ અહીં છે. જૈનધર્મનું પરંપરાગત સ્વરૂપ અહીં વિભિન્ન પ્રસંગોમાં વર્ણિત છે

કુવલયમાલાની કથા પ્રાકૃત ભાષાની શ્રેષ્ઠતમ કૃતિઓમાં સ્થાન પામેલ કથા છે. તેમાં મુખ્ય કથા

અને અવાન્તર કથાઓમાં પ્રાચીન ભારતની સામાજિક, ભૌગોલિક, આર્થિક તેમજ ધાર્મિક પરિસ્થિતિ, શિક્ષણ વ્યવસ્થા, સાહિત્ય, લલિત કલાઓ વગેરે પાસાઓને આવરી લેવાયા છે. કર્તા દ્વારા અહીં નવે રસનું પાન કરાવી અંતે મોક્ષમાર્ગે લઈ જતા શાંત રસને પ્રાધાન્ય આપવામાં આવ્યું છે. કર્મના સિદ્ધાંતની પ્રધાનતા દર્શાવી અહીં રાગ અને દ્વેષ, તેમાં પણ ક્રોધ, માન, માયા, લોભ એ ચાર કષાયોને જે જીતે છે, રાગ-દ્વેષથી મુક્ત થાય છે તે જ અંતે મોક્ષગતિને પામે છે તે બોધ આપવામાં આવ્યો છે.



સંદર્ભ ગ્રંથ:

- (1) કુવલયમાલા - ગુર્જરાનુવાદ, અનુવાદક-સંપાદક - શ્રી હેમસાગરસૂરિ, પ્રકાશક- શ્રી ઝવેરચંદ પ્રતાપચંદ
- (2) જૈન કાવ્ય સાહિત્ય - લેખક - ગુલાબચન્દ્ર ચૌધરી, અનુવાદક - નગીન જી. શાહ, પૃ.337
- (3) સાહિત્યદર્શન- કુવલયમાલા, લેખક- રમણલાલ ચી. શાહ

Mulyavardhan: A Values Education Program

By Shantilal Muttha



Shantilal Gulabchand Muttha, the founder of Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana and Shantilal Muttha Foundation, is a distinguished social entrepreneur and strategic philanthropist. Rising from humble origins, he established a flourishing enterprise with the noble intent of becoming self-sufficient in pursuing his dream of contributing to social welfare. He is a recipient of many awards such as the Ahimsa Award in 2018 at House of Commons, United Kingdom; the Rajiv Gandhi Manav Seva Award by the Government of India in 2017; the Jeevan Sadhna Gaurav Puraskar in 2016 and several other national and international recognitions.

Mulyavardhan is a path-breaking values education program that aims to nurture caring, responsible, and democratic citizens. It has been developed based on fundamental human values such as liberty, equality, fraternity, justice, care and compassion, trust and respect, responsibility and peace that are universal in nature. Mulyavardhan was launched in India in 2009 by **Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana**, a non-profit organization based in Pune. It has since been expanded to cover more than 4.5 million children in the country.

Mulyavardhan's learnings are relevant to audiences across the world as they offer valuable insights and lessons on how to promote values-based education in a diverse, democratic, and pluralistic society. It also addresses some of the common challenges and opportunities that educators face in the 21st Century such as fostering critical thinking, social-emotional learning, civic engagement, and global citizenship among children.

Values and Competencies Framework

Mulyavardhan is an innovative program. As values cannot be taught or imposed but can only be inculcated in children during their formative age, Mulyavardhan creates situations that present children with opportunities to practice values-based competencies, attitudes, and life skills. It engages with stakeholders involved in child's education, including parents and community, in implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of program activities and their outcomes. It also builds their capacity and empowers them to take ownership of the program.

Mulyavardhan provides structured learning activities specific to children from different age groups. These include behavioral exercises, discussions, role plays, games, stories, songs, artwork, projects, and field visits. They are designed to stimulate the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of learning and foster positive attitudes and values among children. This helps children develop a deeper understanding of human values and their relevance in everyday life. It helps them acquire skills such as critical thinking,

problem solving, communication, collaboration, leadership, empathy, self-regulation, and resilience. These skills enable them to participate actively and responsibly in democratic processes at the community and the larger societal levels.

Developing Children as Caring, Productive, Democratic Citizens

Mulyavardhan was developed and piloted in 2009, after Dr. Prem Gada from JAINA visited Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana in Pune to jointly develop a curriculum on Jainism for children of the Jain community in America. This experience encouraged Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana to develop Mulyavardhan, which can be considered as a natural extension of the Jainism course, helping our children become caring, productive, and democratic citizens.



Mulyavardhan was piloted in 2009 among 35,000 children. This first program model was evaluated twice by academic experts from the Cambridge University Technical Services in 2011 and 2013. Later, experts from Oregon State University conducted a detailed study of the program to understand its impact on children, parents, and teachers. Based on results and learnings from the pilot implementation and recommendations of the evaluation studies carried out by global experts, Mulyavardhan was redesigned to scale its impact.

During the period 2015-2020, the program reached 4.5 million children, setting a national benchmark in scale and quality for values education in the country.

This phase of Mulyavardhan was supported by Tata Trusts, which subsequently conducted an independent evaluation of the program in 2018. The third iteration of Mulyavardhan incorporates Social Emotional Ethical Learning, engaging stakeholders and democratizing the learning environment in study centers. It uses a learner-focused, constructivist, and joyful, activity-based pedagogy incorporating cooperative learning, cooperative games, and class management strategies.



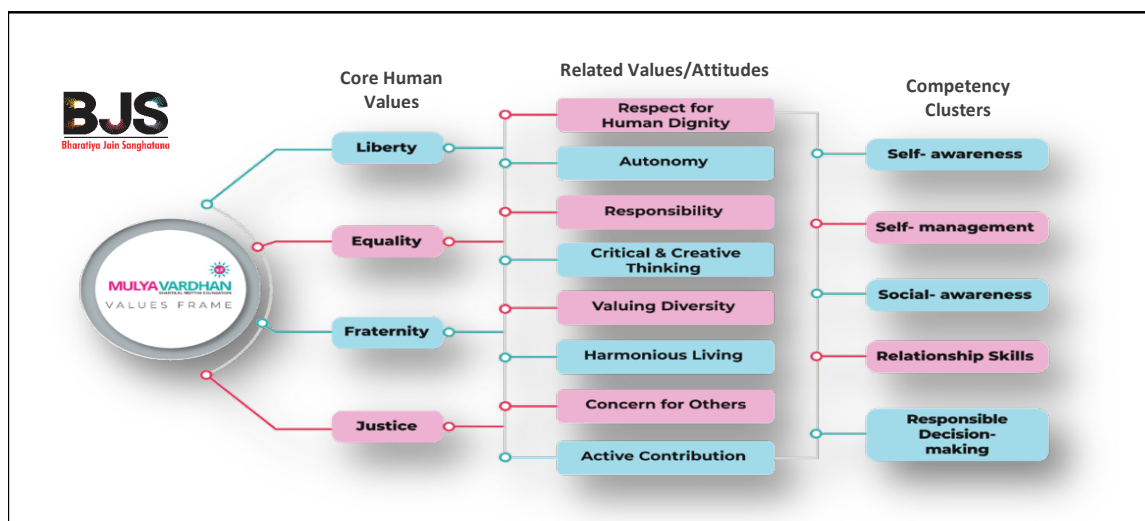
Accelerating holistic development of children

Mulyavardhan is a remarkable example of how values education can be implemented at scale. It demonstrates use of education as a tool for social transformation and sustainable development. It shows how education can foster a culture of peace and democracy among children who are the future citizens of the world. Mulyavardhan offers many implications and recommendations for educators interested in promoting values-based education in their own contexts. Some of these include:

A joyful experience for the children

Mulyavardhan has a positive impact on children's behaviors. Evaluation studies show that children attain a 25 percent higher score in performance towards nurturing values. They also report an increase in confidence, improved relations with peers, teachers, parents, and increased participation in group activities. Mulyavardhan benefits children in the following ways:

- They experience and demonstrate values.
- Practice self-awareness and self-management skills.
- Reflect on issues concerning self, others, and society at large; and develop skills for independent and critical thinking, and responsible decision making.
- Develop abilities to think of age-appropriate, innovative solutions to challenges and problems.
- Develop interpersonal skills to build and maintain positive relationships.
- Contribute to the well-being of others in the family and community.
- Adopting a holistic and participatory approach that involves all stakeholders in the planning and delivery of values education.
- Using experiential methods that engage children's minds, hearts, and hands.
- Monitoring and evaluating impact of values education on children's behaviours.
- Aligning values education with national goals and standards.
- Advocating policy support and resource allocation for values education.
- Sharing best practices and learnings from other experiences.



Adhar Papsthanak Sutra

By Anop R. Vora, Fort Myers, FL



Anop Vora is involved in Community services and Promotion of Professional Education in the Jain Community. His current interests are Listening to Spiritual Discourses, Meditation, Reading, and Writing on religious topics. e-mail: vora5000@yahoo.com

અઢાર પાપ સ્થાનક સૂત્ર

પહેલે પ્રાણાતિપાત, બીજે મૃષાવાદ, ત્રીજે અદત્તાદાન, ચોથે મૈથુન,
પાંચમે પરિગ્રહ, છઠ્ઠે ક્રોધ, સાતમે માન, આઠમે માયા, નવમે લોભ,
દશમે રાગ, અગિયારમે દ્વેષ, બારમે કલહ, તેરમે અભ્યાખ્યાન,
ચૌદમે પૈશુન્ય, પંદરમે રતિ-અરતિ, સોઢમે પરપરિવાદ, સત્તરમે માયામૃષાવાદ,
અઢારમે મિથ્યાત્વ શલ્ય એ અઢાર પાપસ્થાનકમાંહિ મારે જીવે જે
કોઈ પાપ સેવ્યું હોય, સેવરાવ્યું હોય, સેવતાં પ્રત્યે અનુમોદ્યુ હોય,
તે સવિ હું મન વચન કાયાએ કરી મિચ્છા મિ દુક્કડં.

The Adhar Papsthanak Sutra written in Gujarati is one of the most comprehensive summary of the 18 sinful activities we perform quite often - some done out of sheer habit and others due to ignorance and lack of awareness. Unfortunately, this is true of much of human life. We are supposed to recite this sutra during the morning and evening rituals of Pratikraman to remind ourselves of these karmic generating activities done through body, mind and speech and decide not to repeat them, going forward. Reciting this sutra with pure feelings and awareness every day gives us a wonderful opportunity to cleanse and elevate ourselves spiritually. Our seers recognized that worldly souls do unwholesome acts without knowing what they are doing. This sutra is designed to bring us back to the path of right conduct.

Sins 1 to 5: Major Sins: *Pranatipat, Mrushavad, Adattadan, Maithun, Parigrah*

The sutra is composed rather nicely. It starts with a listing of the five major sins, staying away from which form the laws of basic ethics: similar to the ten commandments of Christianity. Specifically, it asks us to stay away from Violence (*Pranatipat*), Falsehood

(*Mrushavad*), Stealing (*Adattadan*), Lust (*Maithun*), and Possessiveness (*Parigrah*). Jain monks must take a vow to comply with these important canons for life, 24 hours a day without any exception. For us, worldly souls, we are supposed to practice them to the best of our ability.

Sins 6 to 9: Toxic Emotions - *Krodh, Maan, Maya, Lobh*

The next four entail the control of toxic emotions of Anger (*Krodh*), Arrogance/Ego (*Maan*), Deception (*Maya*) and Greed (*Lobh*). Although not mentioned specifically in the sutra, 9 auxiliary emotions dubbed *Nokashays* of laughter, fear, sorrow, disgust, likes, dislikes, sexual urges of man, woman and bisexuals are also embedded into the primary emotions. The sutra is advising us to control all 13 emotions throughout the day because they are the prime movers for the first 5 major sins. They are the main reason for initiating the vicious karmic cycle. The control of toxic emotions is so important in Jainism that they are repeated in many sutras one way or the other.

Sins 10 and 11: Main Reasons for the Cycle of Birth and Death – Raag, Dwesh

Tenth and eleventh sins are Attachment (*Raag*) and Aversion (*Dwesh*). The former is the root cause for deception and greed, the latter anger and arrogance. Jain masters were brilliant in recognizing the fundamental causes why worldly souls go through infinite cycles of death and birth and associated pain and agony. After years of studies and experience, they concluded that Raag and Dwesh were the primary culprits. These are the ones that generate the toxic *Kashays* - anger, arrogance/ego, deception, and greed) leading to the karmic bondage.

Sins 12 to 17: Relationship Based Conflicts – Kalah, Abhyakhyan, Paishunya, Rati-Arati, Parparivad, Maya Mrushavad

The next 6 sins are relationship based conflicts: Quarreling (*Kalah*), Alleging someone wrongfully without checking out the facts (*Abhyakhyan*), Highlighting someone else's faults to others behind that person's back (*Paishunya*), Feelings of likes and dislikes depending upon favorable or unfavorable circumstances (*Rati-Arati*), Criticizing others to boost one's ego (*Parparivad*), and Speaking lies combined with deception (*Maya Mrushavad*). Here this sutra reminds us of our wrong behavior based on wrong habits and a lack of awareness. We don't think even for a second about the consequences when we commit these sins. By performing these acts, we not only hurt other people but also ourselves.

Human conflicts are derived from the powerful emotions of anger, arrogance/ego, deception and greed and feelings of hostility and revenge keep them going. Most of them start with something minor but if not controlled quickly, sometimes they get huge leading to major wars in extreme cases.

Experiencing mood swings depending upon circumstances is not advised in Jainism. Everything needs to be taken in strides thinking that whatever happens to us is due to our own past karmas. Whatever comes in our lives has an expiry date over which we have no control. We need to be in an acceptance mode, stay calm and collected.

Speaking lies mixed with deception is an explosive mixture. It is of course bad to lie but is worse when the lie is based upon deception. To trap someone knowingly, to cheat someone with a wrong representation, to say one thing and doing entirely something different are some of the examples of this sin. It goes totally against the social norms also.

Sin 18: The Root Cause of all Sins - Mithyatva

The last sin Mithyatva is a major one. It is about holding wrong belief and distorted perception about the real nature of soul and basic elements (*Tatvas*) and not having a conviction in the teachings of Lord Mahavir. This is the major culprit which is the root cause of all other 17 sins. It is one thing to *listen* to a guru's sermons, but something entirely different to *believe* in them. Without a change in the belief system, behavior does not change. Wrong belief makes us spiritually blind and creates a barrier due to which we cannot perceive the truth. Our attitude hardens, we become close minded preventing the flow of true knowledge. We lose a sense of discretion; we cannot distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. This is the reason *Samyak Darshan* – Right Belief - is emphasized so heavily in Jainism.

Epilogue

After reminding ourselves of the unwholesome acts of the day or night, we are supposed to confess our wrongdoings to a live or imagined guru (in the form of *Sthapanaji*). We are required to say from - the bottom of our heart - that we are truly sorry for our wrong deeds done knowingly or unknowingly, made someone else to perform those deeds, or encouraged others to do them. Our seers have provided this wonderful mechanism for our internal purification.

Conclusion

The composers of this beautiful sutra did not confine themselves only to commands like 'thy shall do this.' or 'thy shall not do this.' Such mandates alone usually do not change human behavior.

That is the reason the composers have listed major sins along with the toxic emotions, human frailties, and mithyatva - all in one scoop. Their aim seems to make us realize that to stay away from the major sins – the first five - in our daily lives, we need to focus within and be aware of the complex mind-spinning factors, spelled out in the last 13 sins. They are the ones that propel us towards the major sins to begin with. The seers also tell us that control of mind, speech and body are all important, not just physical acts. This illustrates the depth to which Jainism goes to broaden our horizon.

Instead of repeating the sutra mechanically, if we understand its message properly, improve our mental processes and change our behavior bit by bit every day, it could pave the way for our transformation.

The 25th Anniversary Mahotsav of Jain Society of Greater Detroit

By Sanjay Bhandari



Sanjay Bhandari is a section editor of the Young Generation section of Jain Digest. He is an international Ambassador with Jains Got Talent (JGT) team of JAINA and has served as a judge of JGT competitions during the 2023 JAINA Convention. He has also held various positions at Jain Society of Greater Detroit. He has two master's degrees MBA and MCA. He works as an Integration Manager at Marathon Petroleum. Sanjay enjoys traveling, music, movies, cricket, singing, socializing, and writing movie reviews on social platforms.



Jain Society of Greater Detroit (JSGD) temple, which was built in 1998 with enormous efforts, hard work, and vision of many senior society members completed its 25 years in 2023. JSGD celebrated this milestone of 25th Anniversary as a mega event – a *Mahotsav* - of 10 days. The collective efforts of this event led to an extraordinary achievement because it managed to collect \$500,000 in donations from the community members.

This event was led by Arvinbhai Shah (Jaya Travels) as *Mahotsav* Chairman, Naveenbhai Jain as *Mahotsav* co-chair, Pritishbhai Shah as chairman of Board of Trustees and Jayaben Shah as president of executive team of JSGD. Coordination of this mega event was not an easy task as normally the events are 1 to 3 days long; but this was a 10-day mega event. The program included a daily puja in the morning followed by swamivatsalya for all members and then variety entertainment program, Bhavna, Aarti and Mangal Divo in the evening.



The festivities commenced with the auspicious inauguration by the esteemed Deputy Mayor of Farmington Hills, Mr. Randy Bruce. The event was further graced by the presence of the honorable Consul General of India, Mr. Somnath Gosh, who bestowed his blessings upon the jubilant gathering.



We were honored to welcome two special guests from JAINA - Shri Hareshbhai Shah, the current JAINA president, and Shri Dilipbhai V. Shah the past JAINA President - during the first two days of the celebration. Shri Narendrabhai Nandu and his team from India presented Bhavna & Bhakti geet every day.

Gurudev Shri Chitrabhanuji had a special relation with JSGD. In his loving memory, JSGD members were fortunate to experience the stage play Maitri Bhav (in Gujarati) - a tribute to Guruji on his 100th birth anniversary. This drama had a world premiere (in Hindi) at the JAINA convention 2023.

There was lot of excitement among the members with 100+ volunteers helping with various activities and events. More than 200 participants performed daily in various evening programs during the Mahotsav.

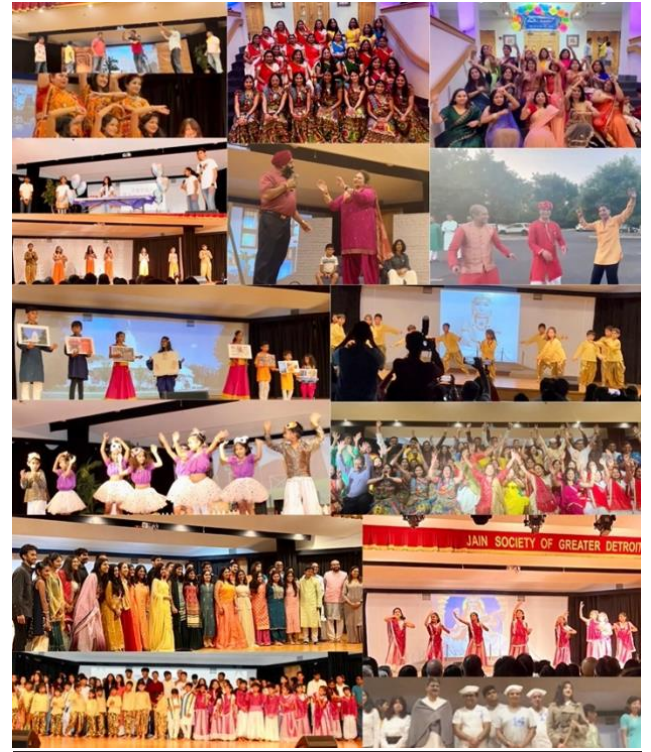
Every day in the morning there were auspicious Pujans at the temple starting from 8th July to 16th July. The Pujans involved Navgrah Pujan, Gautam Swami Pujan, Bhaktamber Pujan, Mini Sidhi Chakra Pujan, Saraswati Pujan, Digambar Pujan, Padmavati Pujan, 10 Abhisheks, Asht Prakari Pujan, and Dhwaja Pujan.

Getting all participants together and creating an entertainment program each evening was a challenging and huge task. But with the help of a talented pool of program directors, producers, choreographers, actors and dancers, all the programs turned out to be amazing. The programs included: dances, religious bingo with recital of many bhakti geets, Raas Garba (evening of traditional dances), live music, *Stavanakshari*, fashion show, stage acts, dramas, and many more. The whole atmosphere and ambience were like a festival or a mini "Kumbhmela" of Jain Society. With many hours of hard work and practices, the program coordinators and participants were so excited to showcase their talent on the stage in colorful costumes and they got equal responses from the audiences with cheers, appreciation, and applause. The society has now got a new pool of talent for any upcoming event within and outside of the society.

On the last day of the event, a huge procession took place concluding in the Dhwaja ceremony conducted by Narendrabhai Nandu & team and JSGD volunteers, followed by a grand Swamivatslaya. The society members have generously donated for various Pujan and other ceremonies.

During the Mahotsav we have seen tremendous participation, involvement and excitement from all society members who came from various states such as Michigan, Illinois, NJ, NYC, Pennsylvania, etc. We also had many guests from Canada and India. During certain events there was maximum attendance and all arrangements related to security, seating and lunch area setup, outside tents, traffic control, parking, and shuttle services were done professionally with efficiency.

These 10 days of the temple's 25th Anniversary Mahotsav have created many nostalgic moments and happiness for all the members of Jain Society of Greater Detroit that they will remember and cherish for the rest of their lives.



From Left: Chairman Mr. Arvin Shah, Consul General of India Mr. Somnath Ghosh, Co-chair Mr. Naveen Jain

Link for Mahostav videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/@JainSocietyofGreaterDetroit/streams>

Jain Sculptures and Art Collections in Museums

Two Jain Objects at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada

By Dhruvi Ghiya Rathi



Dhruvi is a New Jersey-based MBA, SAP and FJAS professional. A Pathshala and guest lecturer for Jainism at VCU University and High schools, she has spoken at Comparative Religion Conference, Religious Baccalaureates and Rotary Club in Richmond, VA. Involved with Jainism-Says-Blogspot, she researches Jain Iconography, Epigraphy, Historical and Numismatic references in Jain literature overlooked by historians, and on the applications of Jain principles. Dhruvi's research was presented at the Dating of Mahavir Nirvana Symposium by ISJS. dhrutirathi@gmail.com

In continuation of the series of articles about Jain sculptures and art collections, we bring you two objects at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada. One is identified as **Page 55 from a Jain Kalpasutra manuscript** in Fig 1 and the other is a **Figure of Jain Tirthankara** as in Fig 2 and 3. These are in the Global South Asian section of the museum.



Courtesy of ROM (Royal Ontario Museum), Toronto, Canada. ©ROM

Fig 1: Page 55 from a Jain Kalpasutra manuscript

(Image details: Medium: watercolor; paper; gold, Geography: Gujarat, India Date: 16th century Dimension: Ht. 11 x Wt. 28 cm Period: Late Medieval - Early Modern Period, Object number: 2009.10.6 Credit Line: Charles Green Collection)

Kalpasutra folios are prominent artworks from the *Shwetambara* Jain sect. The British Museum has some of the oldest known *Kalpasutra* texts used by H. Jacobi to translate. Most of them relate to the period of 15th-16th century CE. The story of Lord Mahavir in the *Kalpasutra* is recited during the *Paryushan*, for everyone to learn from. It also contains the story of *Kalakacharya* who relates to the period of King *Vikramaditya*. The script in the above folio shows the Jain Nagari script and the right image in the folio highlights the childhood of Mahavir. It shows Mahavir playing with his friends and the episode of Mahavir conquering the snake.

Page 55 of this Jain manuscript is very important to Jain followers as it states various names by which Mahavir was known. In Prakrit language, it first states that his parents named him *Vadhman* in the first and fourth lines. The second line states *Bhagav Mahavir* and *Kasav Gotta*. The fifth line states *Samana*.

Jain scriptures mention that Mahavir was named *Vardhaman* by his parents, and when enlightened, he came to be known as *Bhagwan* Mahavir who was a part of the *Sramana* tradition, belonging to *Kasav* or *Kasyap* Gotra.

The text also mentions that Mahavir, per *Indra* was steadfast and fearless, amid all dangers, He practiced austerities. He was forgiving and peaceful. He was intelligent. Also, Mahavir treated *rati* (likes) and *arati* (dislikes) with equanimity.

The playful image on the right shows the children playing the *Ambala Pipadi* game, represented by the tree, and conquering of the snake in his childhood. The story goes, one day, *Vardhman*, by his childlike playfulness, was playing in the garden with friends. He climbed a tree in his playful spirit. Meanwhile, a terrible black snake encircled the trunk of the tree and began to emit fumes out of a fit of anger that would shake even the very strong. Finding themselves in adverse circumstances, the children began to shiver with fear, but that terrible snake could not disturb a patient and strong child *Vardhman*. Seeing *Vardhman* fearlessly and without hesitation coming near it, the furious snake left the fury and went his way¹. It also shows *Indra* (on the left) carrying *Vardhaman* (young Mahavir) on his shoulders. On the right side are friends of Mahavir. Thus, page 55 from a Jain Kalpasutra Manuscript offers interesting details of Mahavir's early childhood.

Many times, we question if the information we know is real, and seeing this in a manuscript which has been copied over and over by our Jain monks and artists and maintained and catalogued by various Jain *Granth Bhandars* or *Gyan Bhandars*, reaffirms the faith in our scriptures and brings us in touch with the art and literature promoted by the Jain monks and the Jain lay community.

The second object in the museum is identified as a **Figure of Jain Tirthankara**. There are twenty-four Tirthankaras in the present *Avsarpini* time cycle. As this object relates to the 15th century CE, both the script and the language were well developed as seen from the above manuscript which is dated to the 16th century CE. Hence, we find the details of the Tirthankar inscribed on the rear. What is interesting is that the sculptures of the 14th-16th century from the *Shwetambara* tradition did not depict the well-portrayed *lanchhan* (symbols) for each Tirthankara, as we are used to in the present day. Rather, we find their names inscribed on the back, as also elaborated in the June 2023 issue of Jain Digest. An analysis of the inscription on the back reveals some interesting details.



Fig 2: Figure of Jain Tirthankara - Front



Fig 3: Figure of Jain Tirthankara - Back

Courtesy of ROM (Royal Ontario Museum), Toronto, Canada. ©ROM
 (Image Details: Gallery Location: Sir Christopher Ondaatje South Asian Gallery
 Material: metal; brass, Geography: Possibly Gujarat, South Asia, Date: 1464 CE (samvat 1520)
 Dimensions: 16.5 x 10 x 6 cm Object number: 2006.90.45, Credit Line: Gift of Charles Danzker)

¹ <https://jainworld.com/education/jain-education-material/tatvagyan-pathmala-part-ii/tirthankar-bhagwan-mahaveer>

The inscription in Fig 3 states that the image or the *bimb* is of *Shreyansnath*. It is dated *Samvat* 1520 and was consecrated on *Vaishakh Sud 3, Som* (Monday). Considering *Vikrama Samvat* (56 BCE), it belongs to 1464 CE as identified correctly by the museum. This period was before the Gregorian system, hence Julian conversion is required to identify the likely date of the inscription. Calculations are based on Robert Sewell's calendar² and Astropixel's lunar moon phases³. Gujarat, as indicated as the possible place of origin, followed the southern tradition of *Vikrama* year calculations, in which the new year started from the month of *Kartik* and the month ended in *Amavasya* or new moon day. Using these as a base, the inscription date of *Vaishakh Sud 3 Som of Samvat 1520*, relates as April 9, 1464 CE, Monday, per the Julian calendar.

The inscription on the idol also mentions an *Upkeshagna Acharya* of the *Tatahada Gotra* overseeing the consecration of the idol. He is referred to as *Kata(dabari Sant* resembling *Kharatara* of *Kharatara Gaccha*⁴. Their *Suri* were known as *Dada Sant*, resembling the *Tatahada* of the inscription. Letters *Ta* and *Da* were often interchanged in the languages in western India.

Kharatara sect originated in 1031 CE and its illustrious monk was *Jindatta Suri* (1075-1174 CE). After the death of *Jinadatta* at Ajmer, a monument was erected and the place was known as *Dadabari*, the garden of *Dada*. *Jinadatta* and three later *suris* became the *Dada* (Grand-Dad) Gurus (*Sants*) with its own cult centered on *Dadabaris* near temples in western India today. *Dadabari* resembles *Kata(dabari Sant* in the inscription. Incidentally, *Khartara* is presumed to mean sharp-witted, who were great debaters.

Jinakushal Suri (1279-1331 CE) conducted processions over western India, while Jinachandra Suri (1537-1612 CE) reformed the *Kharatara Gaccha*. He visited Lahore in 1591 CE, where he successfully persuaded Akbar to protect the Jain temples from the Muslim attack. So, the period of the *Upkeshagna Acharya* in the above *Shreyansnath* Idol, is likely between *Jinakushal* and *Jinachandra Suri* of *Kharatara Gaccha* of *Shwetambara* sect.

In conclusion, the Figure of Jain Tirthankar at the Royal Ontario Museum is *Shreyansnath* and is likely from *Kharatara Gaccha* and was very likely consecrated on April 9, 1464 CE, per the *Karttikaddi Amavasyant* calculations of southern India, which was followed in Gujarat.

The Global South Asian section of Royal Ontario Museum has some more *Kalpasutra* folios worth analyzing and understanding. For a comprehensive collection of *Kalpasutra*, the British Museum offers a great digitized collection.

The author is very grateful to Royal Ontario Museum, CA for their generosity in the usage of the licensed images. The author would also like to thank learned Dr Jitendra Shah of Shrut Ratnakar Trust for a valuable discussion on these objects.

More information about the objects can be viewed at:

Page 55 from a Jain Kalpasutra manuscript (<https://collections.rom.on.ca/objects/341063/page-55-from-a-jain-kalpasure-manuscript?ctx=3669059d-4881-4451-8ce9-5b0c5bb6a929&idx=3>)

Figure of a Jain Tirthankara <https://collections.rom.on.ca/objects/353149/figure-of-jain-tirthankara?ctx=6bb72577-2275-46b4-befe-4ee601e675d6&idx=4>

Other similar 14th- 16th century idols covered by the author can be viewed at **Seated Jain Tirthankara at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York** https://issuu.com/jaindigest/docs/jain_digest_june_2023/s/25251328

² *The Indian calendar, with tables for the conversion of Hindu and Muhammadan into A.D. dates, and vice versa*- Robert Sewell, 1896.

³ <http://astropixels.com/ephemeris/phasescat/phases1401.html>

⁴ <http://www.philtar.ac.uk/encyclopedia/jainism/khara.html>

Historic Visit by Jain Sadhus to Pakistan

By Ashwani Jain



Ashwani Jain is the General Secretary at the Jain Heritage Foundation. Ashwani has been deeply involved over three decades in laying the groundwork for preservation of Jain temples, monuments and preserving Jain heritage and culture in Pakistan.

As of today, there are no Jain families living in Pakistan. However, many Jain Heritage sites are spread across Pakistan, including several Jain Temples, Pratimajis, Upashray, Dharamshala, etc. Many Pratima and other remains of Jain Temples are found during excavation.

A delegation of 18 members of the Jain community from India, including four Sadhu Maharaj listed below, visited a few of the Jain Heritage Sites in Pakistan between 21st May to 7th June 2023.

- Shrut-Bhaskar P.P. Gachchhadhipati Shri Dharmadhurandhar Surishwarji Maharaj Saheb
- P.P. Muniraj Shri Rushabhchandra Vijayji Maharaj Saheb
- P.P. Muniraj Shri Dharmakirti Vijayji Maharaj Saheb
- P.P. Muniraj Shri Mahabhadra Vijayji Maharaj Saheb



The purpose of the visit and the delegation were divided into two parts. One to celebrate the 127th Swargarohan Tithi of P.P Shri Vijay Anand Surishwarji (or Vijayanand Surishwarji or fondly known as Aatmaramji) at Gujranwala where he took his last breath, on 28th May. The other was to visit the Lahore Museum, Lahore Jain Mandir, Shri Aatmaramji Samadhi Mandir in Gujranwala, and a couple of temples in the vicinity of Gujranwala. The team also surveyed the Jain Temples near Nagarparkar town situated in the Tharparkar district of the Sindh Province.

As the news spread in all the Sangh and Bhaktagan, many of them came over to the border on the 21st to see-off their beloved Gurudev and the delegation. Three Sadhviji also came over to the border to see-off. After completing the formalities of the Security Checks, Immigration and Customs on both sides of the border, the delegation landed on the soil of Pakistan. The Jain Heritage Foundation (JHF), organizer of the delegation, had requested the Government of Pakistan to provide adequate security to the delegation, particularly to all the Sadhus. Accordingly, they had made very good security arrangements that included teams and vehicles of the local Police as well as Elite Commandos. The security team travelled all the time along with the delegation.

Visit to Lahore Museum

On 22nd May, the delegation visited the Lahore Museum. The Museum hosts a 'Jain Temple Gallery', where they have preserved many Jain artefacts. They consist of:

The Footprints of Shri Aatmaramji

It is made of marble, having four footprints carved out in four Disha and four Oghas carved out in the four corners, with a Kamalasan as the base, and covered with a Chhatri with carvings made of marble covering the footprints. This has been shifted from the Aatmaramji Samadhi Mandir in Gujranwala in 1952.

The Wall Panel

It is a huge attractive structure with fine wooden carving. This also has been shifted from the Parshvanath Jain Temple in Gujranwala. The Marble Pratimas of Tirthankars are generally in good condition. The Stone Pratimas of Tirthankars are made of stones, some of which are in good condition, and some are damaged.

The Shetrunjay Pat

It is a huge attractive structure of approximately 9 ft. wide and 12 ft high, carved out of marble and nicely painted. This has also been shifted from a Jain Temple in Gujranwala.



Shetrunjay Pata, Lahore Museum

Kalpasutra Manuscript

The Museum has a manuscript of the Kalpasutra in 108 pages, of which they showed us a scanned copy. We helped them in correcting the page orientation and identifying some of the page numbers and verse numbers. We also read and explained a few parts of the texts along with the meaning and the relevant Jain Philosophical concepts. We performed Darshan and Bhakti in front of the Charan Paduka of Shri Aatmaramji.

The Director of the Lahore Museum invited Gurudev and the delegation to his office where Gurudev had a lengthy interaction with the Director. Gurudev appreciated the Government of Pakistan for granting visas, providing security, and preserving the Jain Heritage in their Museum. In addition, Guruji requested the Pakistan Authorities to shift the Charan Paduka of Shri Aatmaramji back to the Samadhi Mandir in Gujranwala. He explained that there are many villages in India as well, where there are Jain Temples but no Jain population. He said the community makes suitable arrangements for their upkeep and performing daily rituals as prescribed by the scriptures in all such places. Similarly, if our request is granted, we would make suitable

arrangements for upkeep and performing daily rituals in Gujranwala. The Director gave a patient hearing to Gurudev and promised to propagate the demands of the Jain Community to the relevant authorities.

The Jain Heritage Foundation is grateful to the museum authorities for welcoming our delegation and allowing us to perform the rituals which have not been performed in the last 75 years.

Media Coverage

Reporters from EMRA Digital TV Channel received the delegation at the Wagah border and remained with us during most parts of the days and our visits to the Museum and the Jain Temple in Lahore. They recorded interviews of Gurudev and many delegates on a variety of subjects. The representatives of BBC Urdu, BBC Hindi, BBC Gujarat, Urdu Point Digital Channel, Real Entertainment TV, India Pakistan Heritage Club, Bazm-e-Aalam met, interacted, and recorded interviews of our delegation and Gurudev.



Mr. Ashwani Jain felicitated all the dignitaries with Shawls and gifts.

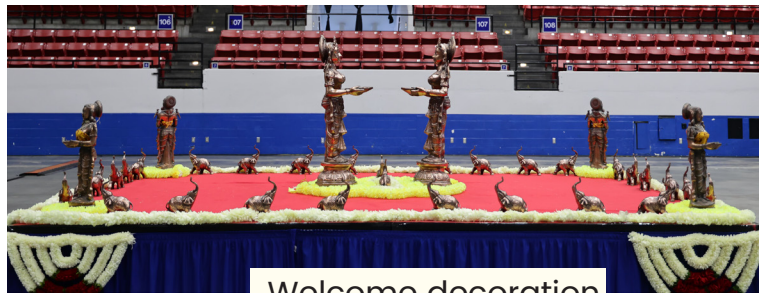
Conclusion

This visit to Pakistan by Jain Sadhus and Delegation would be recorded in history on several counts. In the last 75 years, ever since the partition of Undivided India in 1947, this was the first time Jain Delegation visited Pakistan.

- Jain Sadhus performed their Vihar by foot on the soil of Pakistan.
- Jain Shravaks walked on the streets of Lahore in traditional Jain Pooja attire.
- Jal-Abhishek, Anga-Loochana, Fulpooja and other rituals were performed in Pakistan.
- Snatra Pooja was performed in Pakistan.
- Chal-Pratishtha was performed in Pakistan.
- A Jain Delegation visited the temples in the border areas of Tharparkar.
- Jain rituals were performed in the Temple at Tharparkar.
- A Jain delegation had formal meetings with various levels of the Government of Pakistan.



2023 JAINA Convention



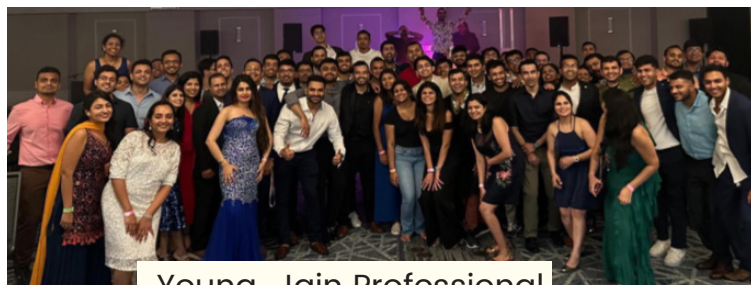
Welcome decoration



Cultural Program



Derasar on premises



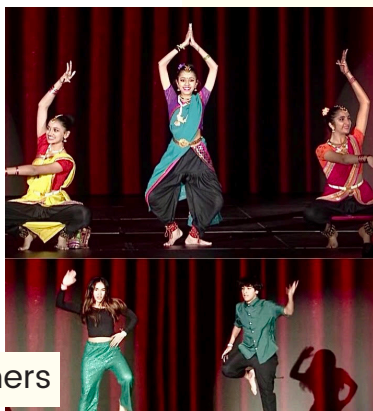
Young Jain Professional



JAINA Ratna Award



Jains Got Talent- Winners





Opening Day celebration – excitement and exhilaration of members



Mahasanghpati Dr. Kiran C Patel



Future planning?



Registration Desk



Kids Club



Kids preparing for JAB



Cultural program participants

JAINA Academic Liaison Committee (ALC) Update

ALC is working diligently to establish Jain positions for study, teaching, and research in Jain Studies at universities and colleges in the USA, Canada, and other countries. Here, we provide you with the latest developments

Achievements of the past 13 years

- 30 Universities have Endowments (11 Chairs, 10 Professorships, 8 Post-Doctoral fellowships, and 1 multiple positions).
- 8 Universities have Lectureships, Adjunct Professorships and/or Annual Lectures.
- 15 Universities are offering regular classes in Jain Studies.
- 1 Jain Study Center at BHU (Banaras Hindu University), Banaras, India

Jain Studies classes are now offered in the following 10 countries:

USA, UK, Canada, Germany, India, Belgium, Israel, Brazil, Philippines, and Pakistan

Financial Support to Students:

- Under ISJS (International School of Jain Studies) we have 9 Trained Prakrit scholars. We offer a year-long fully paid scholarship to study Prakrit in India
- 12 students are pursuing a PhD degree in the USA - 5 with scholarships

New Gyan Mandirs Established

Working with many donors, we have established the following new academic positions:

- ❖ Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel – Kalpana, Haresh, Dhvani & Jeet Jogani Family Endowed Chair in Jain Studies was established in 2022. The position is advertised.
- ❖ Rutgers University, NJ – Kalpana Dalal Endowed Post Doctoral Fellowship. Position filled.

- ❖ Bhagvan Dharmnath Endowed Program in Jain Studies at the University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK - All 3 positions filled.
- ❖ University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada – Gyan and Kanchan Jain Endowed Chair - Position to be advertised soon.
- ❖ Shri Kanji Swami Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Arizona State U, Tempe, AZ - Position filled.
- ❖ Georgia Colleges State University Milledgeville, GA – S & R Palvia Endowed Veetraag Vigyaan Professorship in Jain Studies - Position filled.
- ❖ Bhagwan Vasu Pujya Swami at the University of Pittsburgh - Position filled.

Universities under consideration for Endowed Chair or Professorship

We have started a dialogue with the following universities.

- Boston University (BU), Boston, MA
- Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

How much funds have been invested by Jain Donors and the partnering Universities?

To establish Jain Academic Gyan Mandirs at more than 29 universities (Endowments), Jain donors in USA, Canada, Belgium, UK, and India have pledged /spent more than \$20 million and the support will continue to grow.

All this has been possible by the matching funds by the partnering universities. By agreeing to fund their salary and benefits of most of the academic faculty appointees to all these positions for ever and in perpetuity, it is estimated that the total matching funds by all the universities is at least \$40 million.

Arihanta Institute
A Jain University in the Making
www.arihantainstitute.org

In 2021, a few exceptionally visionary and dedicated Jain leaders in the USA embarked upon a mission to build a world-class, online Jain University – an institution for deeper learning of the Jain tradition and engaged applications of Jain philosophy to daily life for Jains and non-Jains alike. In what felt like a karmically and divinely orchestrated plan, Arihanta Institute was born.

Dr. Parveen Jain, the Founder, and CEO of Arihanta Institute, is supported by a team of accomplished executives and educators including Christopher Miller, PhD, Pramod Patel, Kamlesh Mehta, and many more. Additionally, the institute has established an outstanding faculty comprised of the world’s leading scholars and researchers, with core courses developed and taught by:

- 1) Christopher Jain Miller, PhD, Professor and VP of Academic Affairs
- 2) Cogen Bohanec, PhD, Assistant Professor
- 3) Jonathan Dickstein, PhD, Assistant Professor

Arihanta Institute, an IRC 501(c)(3) nonprofit California Corporation, is a world-class online educational institution for deeper learning of Jain principles, history, and culture and how the Jain way of life applies to daily life for the benefit and well-being of individuals and society. It offers:

- 1) An accredited Master of Arts graduate degree in Engaged Jain Studies in partnership with Claremont School of Theology starting in August 2023
- 2) Self-paced, online certificate courses of 4-20 hours in length

Arihanta Institute’s MA in Engaged Jain Studies is the first of its kind graduate program in the world. Professors guide students as they bring Jain principles into conversation with many of the major issues of our time including, but not limited to, the climate crisis, animal advocacy, social justice, and professional ethics. Nowhere else in the world are these approaches to Jain studies

being practiced at such a high level of academic rigor.

The MA program currently has six high-performing graduate students from North America, India, and Malaysia, as well as incoming applications on an ongoing basis. Claremont School of Theology (CST), Arihanta Institute’s partner institution in this graduate school endeavor, is a well-known, world-class theological institution whose university offerings augment the Institute’s program with further courses in Jain Studies and Interreligious Dialogue. CST is excited to partner with Arihanta Institute to create what is a groundbreaking and one-of-a-kind university offering in Engaged Jain Studies. CST’s theology students are also actively enrolling in Arihanta Institute’s courses where they will gain much sought-after exposure to Jain philosophy that they would otherwise not have access to in their programs.

In addition to the MA Degree program, Arihanta Institute offers an expanding portfolio of online courses, most of which are self-paced, enabling students to learn on-demand and at their convenience. In addition to teaching fundamentals of Jain philosophy, these courses are designed to offer time-tested remedies based on ancient Jain wisdom to tackle modern-day issues such as animal advocacy, climate change, social justice, professional ethics, and personal well-being.

In addition to classroom teaching, Arihanta Institute is creating an active platform to facilitate interactions between scholars through conferences, speaker series, and other such forums. To that end, Arihanta Institute holds its third global conference of the year, titled *Ahimsa Vegan Conference: Jain Voices in Animal Advocacy*, on August 26-27, 2023 in collaboration with JAINA’s Ahimsa Eco-Vegan Committee, the Jain Vegan Initiative, and Compassionate Living.

Another highly-anticipated speaker series to take note of is the *Dialogues in European Jain Studies*. This online series is jointly organized by Arihanta Institute, Ghent University of Belgium, and the University of Birmingham of the UK and is set to start in October 2023.

JAINA Telehealth Committee

By Girish J Shah, DDS, MPH, Ph D



Girish Shah is JAINA's Regional Vice President for the Northeast USA. He has doctorate degree in Dentistry and has gone through extensive post-doctoral training. Dr. Shah is a renowned authority in his field and holds several prestigious academic titles and appointments. For his Contribution of time and financial support for the community-at-large to fulfill the JAINA mission based upon a non-sectarian approach, he was awarded JAINA Presidential award in 2021. He has been appointed as a JAINA Ambassador. He can be reached at: gjshahdds@gmail.com 631-662-4849

JAINA Announces the Telehealth Initiative to Improve Access to Quality Health Care Consultations



What is Telehealth?

Telehealth, sometimes referred to as telemedicine, is using electronic information and telecommunications technologies to extend care when the provider and the patient aren't in the same place at the same time. Telehealth includes a variety of tools and platforms allowing clinicians to connect with one another as well as to connect with patients. Technologies for telehealth include videoconferencing, store-and-forward imaging, streaming media, and terrestrial and wireless communications.

Benefits of Telehealth

Telehealth allows health care providers to:

- Increase continuity of care
- Extend access to care beyond normal hours
- Reduce patient and provider travel burden
- Help overcome clinician shortages, especially among rural and other underserved populations
- Provide support for patients managing chronic health conditions
- Screen patients with symptoms of COVID-19 and refer as appropriate
- Enable patients who are vulnerable to COVID-19 to continue receiving medical care safely
- Help stop the spread of infectious diseases
- And more....

The use of telehealth for dental services, also known as tele-dentistry, is one part of this emerging field. Tele-dentistry is the delivery of dental care using telehealth health information technology and methodology. Common tele-dentistry modalities include live video consultation, store and forward, and remote patient monitoring. These advances in technology provide the opportunity for a patient to receive services when they are in one location and their care provider is in another. Examples of tele-dentistry services include but are not limited to risk assessment, oral exams using photos and videos, motivational interviewing, and self-management goal setting, and emergency care triage.

Geographic and socioeconomic status are common barriers to health services (i.e., long travel distance to clinics, time missed from school or work). Telehealth offers a flexible alternative for patients while addressing these barriers that contribute to overall health inequities. It also has the potential to reduce disparities in oral health outcomes among rural and urban communities.

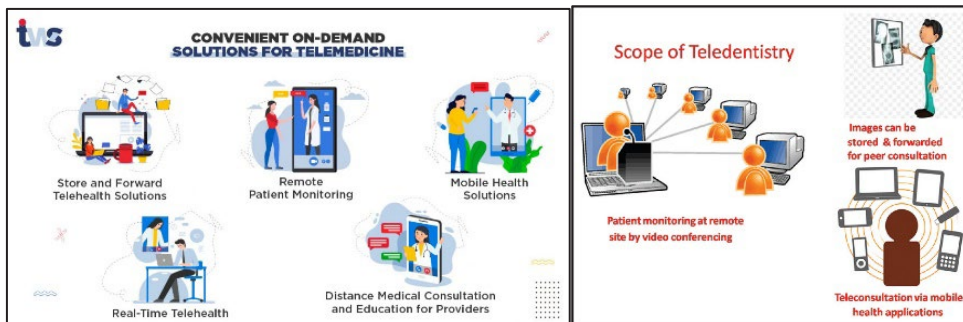
Initiative / Charter

Among the first Telehealth pilot projects to get underway, the Primary Care Program will allow physicians and Dentists in JAINA providers listing to offer remote patient consults to the Community, here in the USA and Canada using a secure, low-cost digital connection.

Beneficiaries

The Community-at-Large here in the USA and Canada - people experiencing an after-hour health issue, facing emergency without an established healthcare provider, seeking a consult, traveling and in need of assistance. Our goal is to provide the same level of services to Sadhus and Sadhvijs in India

Scope of Services



Tele-consultations: •Prevention •Risk Assessment •Exams •Specialty referral •Patient administered care •Self-management support, patient education •Care coordination

Tele-diagnosis: •Exams •Risk assessment •Treatment planning •Patient education •Prevention •Patient administered care •Self-management support •Case Management •Care coordination

Tele-triage: •Screening •Prioritize urgent dental care/close clinical examination •Emergencies •Trauma •Acute Infections •Remote assessment of school children

Tele-monitoring: •Replacement for in person visits •Remote monitoring •Frequent virtual visits to monitor progress of treatment or condition

Impact

Among the first Telehealth pilot projects to get underway, the Primary Care Program will allow physicians and Dentists in JAINA providers listing to offer remote patient consults using a secure, low-cost digital connection.

An Earnest Request to Physicians and Dentists to Join the Panel

JAINA would like you to participate as a clinical partner in this meaningful initiative under the chairmanship of Girish J Shah. Please send your name, City, State, Mobile number, and email address via email to gjshahdds@gmail.com. We will follow-up by phone in the upcoming weeks to review any participation questions you may have. We look forward to hearing from you. You can also reach us at 631-662-4849

Telehealth implementation is a team effort that requires on-the-ground knowledge, open communication, and long-term commitment for success. While you won't need to directly engage all the teams right away, it's helpful to identify who will be on which teams and consider when and how different players will be involved in Core, Leadership, Advisory, and Implementation teams.

The Art of Giving Back

By Dilip V Shah



Dilip V Shah of Philadelphia is the past president of JAINA. He is currently serving as chairman of JAINA's Overseas Relations Committee and a member of the Academic Liaison Committee. In addition to being an advisor for Jain Digest, he is also the publisher and General Editor of Jain Avenue magazine – a publication of JAINA India Foundation.

This article is second in the series "The Art of Giving Back". The Jain Digest Editorial team is glad and thankful to Dilipbhai Shah for featuring one of our regular writers and advisor – Anopbhai Vora – as one of the prominent personalities among the Jains in USA who has whole heartedly given back to the society.

Anop R. Vora - An Extraordinary Journey



Anop & Renuka Vora at their home

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.
– Nelson Mandela

These words literally spell out the life story of Shri Anop Vora who rose from humble beginnings to become a much respected and beloved pillar of the American Jain community today.

We know of Anop Vora as a past President of JAINA and as a founder President of a vibrant organization – IAAMJV (International Alumni Association of Shri Mahavir Jain Vidyalaya). But the story I wish to tell is that of "**Kanchan Foundation**" – an organization he and his brothers set up in India. The main focus of this foundation is to provide education, medical help, and economic assistance to the needy. Anop Vora's life is an inspirational story of perseverance, dedication to the cause of education, and generosity in the Art of Giving Back.

Anopbhai's meteoric rise from a small village in Gujarat - Pachhegam (3 miles from Vallabhipur) to being the President of JAINA could not have happened without the support from the 100 plus years old charitable Jain organization - Shri Mahavir Jain Vidyalaya (SMJV). While there are hundreds of such success stories that the SMJV can testify to, its prestige today is due to the heroic individuals behind those stories whose journeys are not just inspirational but constant reminders of the benevolence of SMJV to the Jain universe.

The Early Years

Born in 1940, Anop was one of 11 siblings whose father ran a grocery store that sold household goods and refreshments to the villagers. Growing up in a house made of clay, dry grass, and bricks, he grew up with bare minimum amenities under tough circumstances. The condition of many in his village was no better than him. The village had no electricity, running water, no bathrooms, and no doctors or medical aid for miles. However, despite living with scarce financial resources, the family still considered themselves to be among the blessed for living amidst 45 Jain families, a great temple, Upashraya, and a Pathshala.

A New Beginning

Later he made the decision to go to the United States to pursue higher education. After obtaining a master's degree in mechanical engineering in 1965, Anop worked for Kodak in Rochester, New York for the next 30 years.

During his long work stint at Kodak, he got an M.B.A. from the Rochester Institute of Technology. He had a successful career at Kodak as an Engineering Project Manager. During those years, he sponsored his five brothers and a sister

(most of whom also studied through SMJV) for higher education in the United States.

A Visionary for JAINA

An organization that received the best of Anop's affection and vision was JAINA. He first got involved with JAINA as a Regional Vice President, then as a treasurer, a first VP, and later as its President. Some of his notable contributions to JAINA are:

- He was the convener of a highly successful 2003 JAINA convention which was also the first convention that generated a huge profit for JAINA.
- As the JAINA President during 2003-2005, he used his management skills to streamline many administrative processes, strengthen JAINA's finances and launch a new website.
- He represented JAINA at the "Parliament of the World Religions" in Barcelona, Spain in 2004 and in Monterrey, Mexico in 2007.
- For 2023 JAINA convention he proposed the theme "Maximize Human Potential" which was very popular.
- Anop has continued to actively contribute to various aspects of JAINA like chairing the election committee and being a member of the constitution revision committee. Currently, he is serving on the JAINA Senior Housing Committee.
- He has written many articles in the JAIN DIGEST.

Anop says that his association with JAINA for over 25 years has broadened his view of Jainism as he had the opportunity to meet many individuals and scholars from all sects of Jainism and learn a great deal. He considers himself truly fortunate to receive the wonderful opportunity to serve the 150,000-strong Jain community of North America. For all the tireless work that Anop undertook for the community, he received the prestigious **Jaina Ratna** Award in 2007.

An Alumni Leads the Way

Despite having paid back the Rs 1 lakh loan to his alma mater years earlier, Anop was filled with a

desire to do a lot more for SMJV. He spoke about this burning desire to half a dozen of his close friends, who had also benefited from this institute. Everyone loved the idea; post which Anop did much of the groundwork in drawing up the Constitution. As a result, he founded the International Association of Alumni of Mahavir Jain Vidyalaya (IAAMJV) in 1991 and became the first IAAMJV president.

For the next ten years, Anop worked hard and made notable strides in his chosen mission. Once the younger and promising alumni joined IAAMJV, Anop gracefully stepped back from the leadership position but continued to mentor the successors. The new team worked extremely hard and as a result, IAAMJV flourished well. Without any solicitation, donations keep pouring in every year to support the noble work of the association. A few of its successes include:

- Over the years, the association helped the SMJV with several projects. These included helping girls' hostels in Ahmedabad and Surat and a new branch of SMJV in Udaipur.
- In addition, it has raised close to \$2,000,000 to date, to promote the cause of professional education for Jain students irrespective of their sects. These funds allowed it to support - through loans/scholarships - around 900 undergraduate students in India, 50 undergrads in USA, and 600 graduate students who came from India for further studies in the US.

The Passion for Giving Back

Anop never forgot his roots and took up several endeavors to give back to the community which raised him. With the help of his brothers, he set up **Kanchan Foundation** - named after their mother Kanchanben. The focus of this foundation is to provide educational, medical help, and economic assistance to the needy for the benefit of the whole society. According to the 2021-22 report, the foundation's regular activities includes:

Educational Activities

- 1) Educational scholarships to more than 200 students to the tune of Rs. 15 lac.
- 2) Continued support to primary and secondary schools in Rajpipala and Dediapada villages

with a laser printer and a set of batteries for computer systems at the school.



- 3) Provided 6 laptops and maintenance contracts to Shrimad Rajchandra School at Khapoli, Maharashtra.
- 4) Funded Shri Murlidhar Gram Granthalaya (Library) at Pachhegam. A modern computer system, printer, furniture, and several books were donated. The library was awarded as one of the best Granthalaya by the State of Gujarat.
- 5) The Foundation's flagship program of distributing stationary to students at schools was expanded by incorporating more villages at the cost of Rs 8 lac.

Medical Activities

- 1) 2 Children's Cancer Hospital, Kidwai, near Bangalore was granted 2 much-needed BPL Defibrillators along with a maintenance contract.



- 2) More than 75 individuals suffering from various health issues such as cancer, kidney dialysis, arthritis, knee replacement, and aging-related issues received relief for their medical treatment to the tune of Rs. 15 lac.

Cyclone Relief

Cyclone hit several villages in the Amreli District of Gujarat on May 25, 2021. Kanchan Foundation partnered with other NGOs and provided Rs 14 lac for Tad Patri and groceries to 270 villagers.



Planting Trees

Towards a permanent solution for the arid lands, Kanthariya and Jalapur villages located in Bhavnagar district were targeted this year for planting of 500 trees. 50 tree guards were also installed.

Solar LED Lantern Distribution

With the inspiration and recommendation from Yogoda Satsang Society of India, Ranchi Ashram, Kanchan Foundation distributed 100 LED lanterns in Ness of Gir area. This was a highly successful project and well-received by the community.



Poverty Alleviation Activities

A “Chhaas Kendra” (Buttermilk Center) operation at Pachhegram in Vallabhipur district continues to grow. Free of cost buttermilk was distributed among 600 families daily every summer without any caste bar. To many families, this program is an important lifeline.



As a family enterprise, Kanchan Foundation is nimble. It jumps into action whenever a situation arises. A few examples:

1) One little girl was not going to school, and no one knew why. The foundation found out that her parents did not have money for the school uniform that was mandatory. The foundation took care of this promptly and changed her life.

2) One person was diagnosed with a severe artery blockage but could not go for an immediate stent procedure because the doctor required a couple of lac rupees upfront. He thought he would go for this operation once he saved enough money. When the foundation learned this, it extended the medical help quickly and saved his life.

3) The foundation arranged an eye camp in the village and discovered many high school kids have never had an eye checkup. The foundation found out that some of them required specs. It went ahead and bought a pair for them all.

Anop's siblings residing in the US took an important step to make the foundation even stronger structurally and financially by communicating and encouraging their second-generation youngsters to contribute to the foundation's goals. The response from them has been overwhelming. Presently, this family contributes more than \$100,000 to this foundation every year.

Kanchan Foundation in India is largely run by his elder brother Khantibhai, his daughter Smita, her husband Rajesh, and many dedicated volunteers. The foundation spends the money to support and help the poor not only in Anop's village but also in Ahmedabad, Mumbai, and in Adivasi areas. It has also created a large corpus fund that should ensure the longevity of the foundation for years to come.

Currently, Anop and his wife Renuka live in New Jersey and Florida 6 months a year at each location.

Anop can be reached at vora7300@gmail.com

Sudha Murty: The Woman Who Inspires Many

By Reena Shah



Reena is the section editor of the Inspiration section of Jain Digest. She has a Ph. D. in English literature and a USC grad. She currently teaches English to high school students. Teaching has always been a passion and she loves to read and write. She is dedicated to lifelong learning and continuing education. Her industry experience includes Market Research, Non-Profit, and educational institutions. She practices deeper aspects of spirituality and is a follower of the Late Param Pujya Pappaji at Shrimad Rajchandra Aatma Tatva Research Centre, Parli, Near Mumbai.

A writer, philanthropist and an entrepreneur, Sudha Murty is greatly admired and respected for being a prolific writer and being one of the brains behind Infosys - one of India's leading IT companies. Soberly dressed in traditional Indian attire, she is also globally recognized for her philanthropic work - facilitating the education of poor children, passion & compassion to fight for women's rights, ability to speak her mind, simplicity, and her humility. On April 5, 2023, she received Padma Bhushan award for her immense contribution to the field of social work from India's President Draupadi Murmu. Her multifaceted personality has been a tremendous source of inspiration for me.



Early Life and Education

Born in the small town of Shiggaon in Karnataka, India, Sudha Murty had the passion to excel right from her childhood. She was born into a family that valued education and hard work. Sudha's parents encouraged her to pursue her dreams even when the

odds were against her. Sudha Murty earned her B.E. in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from the B.V.B. College of Engineering & Technology in Hubli (presently known as KLE Technological University), which she followed with an M.E. in Computer Science from the globally renowned Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, in 1974. An excellent student, she was a top student in both her bachelor's and master's degrees.

Brilliant Penmanship

Sudha Murty is also a prolific author who has published over ninety-five titles in sixteen Indian languages. She has received many awards at the state, national, and international levels, including the Rajyaprashasti, and six doctorates from universities across India. Her books focus on a variety of societal and civic issues while also entertaining and educating the masses and the children. Her books are known for their simplicity, humor, and ability to connect with readers of all ages. She is India's highest-selling female author. She has been a role model to many writers and women around the world.

Fearless and Confident

Sudha's passion for learning and her curious nature led her to study engineering at B.V.B. College of Engineering and Technology in Hubli. It is simply incredible to note that she was the only female student at her engineering college in Hubli. Her male classmates weren't derisive, but they certainly didn't conceal their amusement at having a girl in their carpentry workshop. "I never missed a single class because I knew if I did no one would help me. It made me self-sufficient. It also made me talk to boys on equal terms," she shares. Sudha was accepted to the college by the principal with the three utterly illogical requirements of always wearing a saree there, never eating in the canteen, and never engaging in conversation with male students. A woman's journey towards pursuing her dreams and ambitions consists of several bumps of societal bias. There have been several sectors that had their gates open for 'Men only'. She is known for her feisty letter to JRD Tata in reaction to a TELCO (now Tata Motors) job notice

inviting applications for trainee engineers, where women were asked not to apply. She was subsequently hired as their first female engineer. It was there that she met her future husband, Narayana Murty, who would later become her partner in life and philanthropy. Sudha's hard work and dedication soon paid off, and she was promoted to the position of Senior Systems Analyst. Despite her success in the corporate world, she felt that something was missing in her life.

Sudha Murty has worked tirelessly to be a strong voice in educating people on the need to overcome gender inequality in all aspects of life. Her work is an inspiration for all who strive to achieve gender parity and combat sexism. She is portrayed as a lady who is opposed to any kind of discrimination against women. She has no qualms in showing this to anyone regardless of age or designation. In her book, *Women@Work*, she discusses the challenges that women face in the workplace and how they can rise to the occasion by taking charge of their careers and manage their time effectively. A woman who refused to stay on the sidelines because of the large gender bias of the country, Sudha is an icon to the youth of today.

Genuine and Humble

Sudha Murty is easily one of the richest women in the country but is far from flaunting her wealth to the masses. One of her key aspects is the simple values that she adheres to in a world that emphasizes materialism. She sure knows the art of simplicity, and being a genuine human being is something she does flawlessly! "No jewelry or new saris for me... I have everything I need," says Murty.

Three days in a year she goes to the Raghavendra Swamy temple in Jayanagar. She cleans the kitchen and the adjoining rooms; washes the dirty utensils, dusts the shelves, chops vegetables, takes inventory of stock, sweeps the yard, and empties the trash cans. Influenced by the Sikh philosophy of *Kar Seva*, Sudha believes that it is easy to give money but devoting yourself to physical seva is not. She further added that we are all equal in the eye of God but not in the eyes of society.

Her legacy will continue to inspire generations to come, reminding us all that one person can make a difference in the world. "If you really understand life, power and money should not affect you. But you require a strong mind for that. Don't be carried away with power, with money. Enjoy the small things and work hard and with honesty. It may not pay you immediately, but in the longer run you can create

something good," she said. Simple living and high thinking are her philosophies that continue to inspire people all around the globe.

Gives Back to Society

One of the best things that we as human beings can do is care for the underprivileged. Sudha Murty stands by the belief that money always changes hands and that giving back to society fosters significant goodwill. Her noble beliefs are reflected in her active participation in social work for art and culture, public hygiene, healthcare, poverty alleviation, and women empowerment and education. In 1996, she founded Infosys Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Infosys Technologies. Through the foundation, Sudha focused on healthcare, education, and rural development. She worked tirelessly to build schools, hospitals, and community centers across India, helping to improve the lives of countless people in underprivileged communities.

One of Sudha Murty's defining moments in her life was when 3,000 rehabilitated sex workers arranged a thanksgiving ceremony for her after 18 years of tirelessly working with them to empower them to lead a normal life. She said, "I went there on the stage and the 3,000 of them, who were now leading normal lives, wanted to hear from me and I was absolutely speechless. The tears started to flow, and I quoted a shloka from Ramayana: 'God... don't make me rich, don't make me beautiful, don't make me a queen. If at all you want to give me anything, give me a soft heart and a strong hand, so I can wipe the tears of others.' At that moment, I realized why I was born, and it gave me a tremendous amount of peace." A tremendously inspirational moment! Sudha's work with the Infosys Foundation earned her many accolades and awards, including the Padma Shri, one of India's highest civilian honors.

Sudha Murty is an undeniable source of motivation for many in the Indian literary scene. Her life story is a testament to the power of hard work, dedication, and a willingness to help others. From her incredible achievements to her charitable works, she has demonstrated that true success comes from adding value and making a difference to the lives of others. Sudha is a terrific example of how anyone can make it big if they put their mind to it, no matter where they come from or what challenges life throws at them. We should learn from her exemplary life and strive to be like her in order to create positive change around us.

[To learn more about Sudha Murty, many articles, and news stories are available online. There are many YouTube videos of her interviews and speeches.]

My Intent to Forgive

By Deven Pravin Shah



Deven is an engineer and a marketer. Deven lives with his family in Orange, California. Deven is grateful for the mindfulness meditations and his ability to reflect. It has opened his awareness to navigate the terrain of thinking patterns and emotions. He loves writing, coaching youth in communication and leadership, cooking, hiking, skiing, and creativity in developing & presenting ideas. (<https://blog.devenshah.net>)

Medical research and studies show how forgiveness can transform neural circuits in the brain for positive change. When I read books from Dr. Andrew Weil, Dr. Jon Kabat-zin, and Dr. Joan Borysenko, the insights on mind-body healing and psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) drew me in. They explain how mindful awareness, compassion, and forgiveness can help me tap into my natural built-in healing powers. The mindfulness meditations show the potential of forgiveness to connect with my inner joy. Religious teachings guide us to forgive. Science and spirituality appear to converge on the ideas of forgiveness. In this article, I am sharing my learnings and thoughts about forgiveness.

Why Forgive?

I used to think I hurt no one, so why the concern about forgiving? I'd rather live a carefree life instead of carrying the heaviness of the idea. I learned that the weather of thoughts and emotions passing through me could possess me. My actions and behavior can impact others without me realizing it. Hurt from others could be churning in the subconscious, and I may not even be aware. The weather has been accumulated from my current and past lives. I could be hurting other living beings (plants, animals, microbes, or any other organism) simply from my way of life, i.e. living without awareness.



While entering the temple at Shrimad Rajchandra Ashram in Agas, I read the following words: **“Forgiveness is a Grand Entryway to Liberation”**. It resonates with me even more now.

Forgiveness is an act of filling yourself with love and radiating that love outside to impart in others.

– Dr. Wayne Dyer

Forgiveness and Health

What happens because of potential negativity or anger in my subconscious?

A constant stream of thoughts emerges and flows through our minds like a waterfall. On average, there are 60,000 thoughts per day, and 95% of them are the same as yesterday. The thinking patterns can feed on themselves, causing us to harbor and even build negativity and anger. Rumination can activate the stress response in the brain - cortisol level increases, and fight-or-flight response can increase blood pressure. It can impact sleep quality.

It is easy to overcome at a young age. I may not even realize it's there. It still drains the energy I could use to grow, develop, and connect with others. As we age, it can catch up to us with health issues. What might appear as a severe or acute symptom might be a culmination or build-up of psychosomatic effects over the years. In extreme cases, repetitive thoughts getting too invasive can cause anger disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and depression.

How does forgiveness help me heal, grow, and be happier?

Forgiveness softens or dilutes the toxic effects of rumination. It affects the parasympathetic nervous system, which slows breathing & heart rate and improves digestion. It's also known as "the rest-and-digest response", which can neutralize the effect of the fight-or-flight response. With toxic anger out of the system, muscles relax, anxiety decreases, energy levels increase, and the immune system strengthens. The act of forgiveness lowers blood pressure and improves sleep.

Acknowledging and seeing all living beings with compassion helps me tune in with nature and be in harmony with the universe. It allows or unblocks my inner healing energies.

Paradigm of Forgiveness

When I choose to forgive, it empowers me to control and create my life narrative instead of feeling victimized by actions from others. It frees me from the jail of past experiences. It releases my heart from pain, hurt, and anger. When I forgive, I value my priceless inner core. I am not wasting it away with negative emotions. It can give me the strength to grow from challenges and use them to assist others.

Forgiveness isn't just about letting go and moving on. It also offers empathy, compassion, and understanding toward someone who might have hurt me. It can be a powerful construct for positive change. Authentic forgiveness stems from a deep faith that we are enough, and that love is abundant. I have so much richness from inside that if someone takes a little out of it, I don't have to chase them to return the debt. Forgiveness is about living in a place of abundance and not scarcity.

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.

- Lewis B. Smedes

Do I have the ability to Forgive?

The answer is yes: the neural circuits and other structures in the prefrontal cortex in our brain – the compassion circuitry – allows us to perceive emotions, empathize and respond to others with compassion. I have a built-in support system available to use.

I learned from mind-body healing work that there is only one emotion: **fear** – behind my anxieties, anger, worries, stress, frustration, or hurt. My ego is on a mission to protect me from the perceived or imagined fear that took root from past experiences. If I want to forgive genuinely, I need to bring my fears out in the light of my awareness, be vulnerable to allow them, and let them go; that requires courage. It's much easier to bury the fear in my inner dungeons and not think about it. Bringing it out is painful.

My actions, thoughts, and emotions from the past create a strong energy field that can control or impact my thinking. The energy field is – karma. I might be accumulating it not only from my current life form but also from past births. My inner weather and body chakras are under the influence of karma: when I think about it, my free will could be limited by it. What has accumulated over years, decades, or even centuries can't go away in a snap. So, as much as I consciously think of forgiving, turning the massive tide inside takes effort.

It's not an easy journey to get to a place where you forgive people. But it is such a powerful place because it frees you.

- Tyler Perry

I can't develop the virtue of forgiveness in an instant. However, I can be willing to forgive. **It is about my intent to forgive.** Staying with it can gradually open the door and start the process that can bring positive change.

Helpful Tools: 1) Forgive Myself

My journey with forgiveness starts with me. Can I forgive myself first?

- I have experiences and memories where I wish I had done something different. Am I being hard on myself? Can I let go of self-judgment?
- A child is inside me: can I hold my inner child with unconditional love and kindness?
- I could be repeating mistakes, running into certain scenarios, or having thinking patterns based on my karma - the energy field I built over life cycles. The weather is passing through me. If I resist it, fight with it, or feel guilty about it, my reaction will make it even stronger: allow it - accept it - let it go. It can help me heal.

When I love, nurture, nourish, care for, and accept myself, the circles of compassion start in the inner healing space and ripple outwards to touch others. It can help me cultivate space to hold and nurture the vibes of forgiveness.

Helpful Tools: 2) Create My Narrative

When I recognize what my inner weather brings, can I use my built-in inner compass – my conscience – to create a positive narrative? It can help me connect with my inner abundance.

I am the Atma – universal consciousness full of peace, bliss, happiness, love, boundless creativity, and abundance. Can I use it to hold my thoughts, feelings, memories, and body sensations with compassion and love? It can open space for me to explore and lead to meaningful change.

Can I take a few moments every day to be grateful for the blessings and positives in life? A positive dialog with myself can be a catalyst to germinate the seeds of forgiveness,

Helpful Tools: 3) Start by Giving

Forgiveness is an extreme type of kindness that lasts forever. Forgiving can start by giving unconditionally, even if a tiny bit. Examples:

- Smile and see the good in others in a trying moment. That is – even more so if there was a build-up in the relationship from past encounters.

- Listen to others with patience. Take time to understand.
- Take care of small details with friends and family.
- Acknowledge positive steps and actions from others.
- Give a gentle, encouraging note to someone putting their heart into an initiative.
- Join a voluntary activity. Help someone in need.

When I give, my fulcrum shifts by that much from scarcity towards abundance. It can help me shore up my support system from the inside to strengthen my intent to forgive.

Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself.

– Suzanne Somers

Helpful Tools: 4) Mindfulness and Self-awareness

Can I put myself in a position of a witness to my thoughts, feelings, and body sensations? I am the one who observes it all (સાક્ષી ભાવ). It naturally allows me to detach from the drama of my mind and softens the grip of emotions. The detachment also connects me with my inner joy, peace, and bliss.

Mindfulness and self-awareness help me with the direction along the journey of forgiveness.

Helpful Tools: 5) Beginner's Mindset

Can I be a beginner for a change? Have childlike curiosity and openness to see new possibilities with each moment rather than presuming it is a continuation of the same. It can bring new energy and freshness to my outlook. It may help me see magic in the mundane and routine.

I want to see others with their unique, miracle nature, and not through my lenses of ideas and opinions about them. I avoid insisting they should be, how they were half an hour ago, yesterday, a couple of years ago, or any other time. I hope it gives them space to open up.

Seeing everything and everyone with a child's freshness, lightness, and openness can open up the space to dissolve grudges and nurture the seeds of forgiveness.

Helpful Tools: 6) Self Control

I have been doing 8-day fasting – aththai – for several years. It started as a test of willpower – I wanted to prove I could do it. It sustained subsequent years for the reward of the magical energy release I experienced after the fasting.

After a few years, it started connecting me with inner peace. My mindset shifted to tune into the internal flow and grace. I no longer have the body cramps or back pain I used to get during fasting. The body scan meditation I have been doing for years is more effective during the days of fasting. I can think more clearly and my focus is much sharper. My inner joy and intuition seem to emerge naturally. In that space, my direction shifts to what carries a deeper meaning for me. I am more equipped to face my fears and let them go. I can open up and connect with others more easily.

I wish it carried with me through the year, but it isn't the same as I get wrapped in the fast pace and the daily grind. I am happy I can "go there" once a year.

The story's moral is that self-control has tremendous potential to shape my life. It opens up the space to heal, grow, develop, and lighten up when I can detach from my bodily desires. It connects me with my inner compass, guiding me to align with universal values and principles: forgiveness is one of them.

*The weak can never forgive.
Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong. – Mahatma Gandhi*

Helpful Tools: 7) Ho'oponopono

I learned Ho'oponopono is a Hawaiian ritual to cultivate compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude. Our subconscious has countless memories and programs recorded in it. Our mind thinks of zillions of thoughts daily: but we know only a tiny portion of those. Without realizing it, each thought activates a memory stored in our subconscious mind, manifesting as a problem or a repetitive pattern. The Ho'oponopono is about taking 100% responsibility for all that manifests in our lives and surrendering to the universal consciousness to heal it. It is about repeating four sentences: I am sorry - please forgive me - thank you - love you.

I am sorry, as I am 100% responsible for what is expressed in my life. It might be happening from memory in the subconscious from this or previous birth cycles. I take responsibility for it all.

Please forgive me – I am asking the divineness inside me and the entire universe for forgiveness. I surrender my ego and release myself.

Thank you for all that is happening in my life – including the problems – it is allowing me to clean it. I am grateful for that.

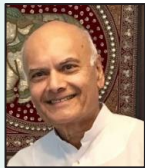
I love you – There is the same universal consciousness inside me - the space filled with peace, bliss, happiness, and compassion. I am one with and love all in that space.

The Ho'oponopono repetitions help me clean up my memories and loosen the grip of the energy field I have been carrying and building over birth cycles. It helps me release and forgive.

I say the following with my intent to forgive. I pray it blesses me with grace to let go and merge with all – be one with all. Michchhami Dukkadam: I beg for forgiveness for all hurt caused by me knowingly or unknowingly. 🙏 🙏

Pitfall on the Spiritual Path – Holding Grudges

By Ramesh Khandhar



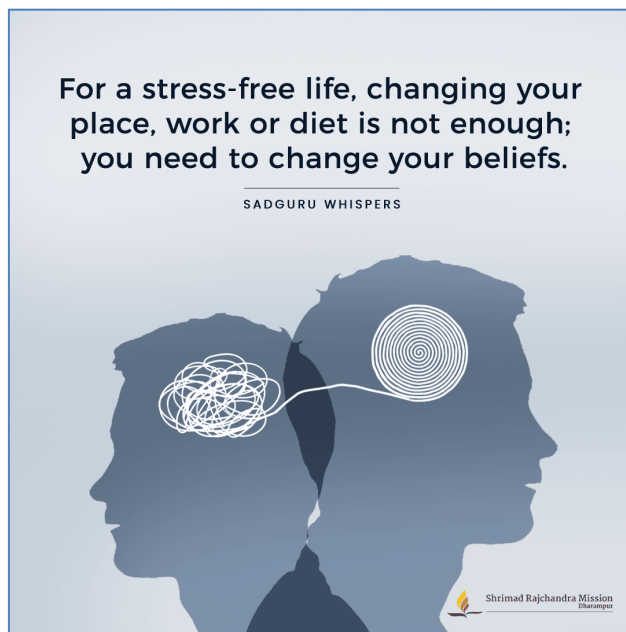
Ramesh Khandhar is a former secretary of the executive board and past head teacher of Pathshala at Jain Center of Southern California. He travels around to deliver spiritual discourses and continues to do intense introspection and contemplation. Currently, he is serving as Section Editor and Advisor of Jain Digest. (ramesh.khandhar@gmail.com)

After graduating from UCLA with an MS degree, I started working as an Engineer. After two years of good performance in the company, to my surprise, a junior engineer with no university degree who was working with me got promoted to a senior engineer position, bypassing me. I was very upset and angry. I went to see my immediate boss, presented my case, used some harsh language, and blamed him for racial bias. I also went to see his boss, the department manager. I was upset and could not stay calm. The decision was not reversed, and I left the company with a feeling of bitterness and prejudice.

Even though the change helped me move from engineering to project management, I harbored this frustration, grudge, and ill feeling in my subconscious for several years. I kept blaming the manager for forcing me to leave the company with very good retirement plan benefits. I could not erase that emotional hurt I was harboring inside me. The unpleasant memory kept popping up now and then and changed my mood to sour and hurtful. I remained trapped in bitterness and anger over the way I was treated. It certainly was acting as a roadblock in my spiritual practice of mindfulness and meditation.

Several years later, I was visiting India and came across the spiritual teachings of Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji. His preaching helped me move forward on the spiritual path. He emphasized the Jain cardinal principle of 'forgive and forget'. Reflecting on that unpleasant event, I realized that my destiny created that scenario to push me toward project management. The immediate boss, the department manager, the junior engineer, and the surroundings were only incidental to my destiny. I realized that when I react to someone's wrong behavior, I am the one creating obstacles to my inner peace. Being unaware and ignorant of that understanding, the unpleasant memory had taken a grip on my mind leaving little room for further spiritual growth.

The moment I accepted the change in career as my destiny, the emotional hurt dissolved. It made me resilient, free, peaceful, and even joyful. *To complain was not a mistake but the way I reacted with harsh feelings was wrong.* The impulsive reaction implied my determination to change the scenario to my expectations. This was a result of my egoic attitude. The ego nurtures the unforgiving attitude leading to prejudice, harboring emotional hurt with an attitude of getting back at those who were just instrumental and not the cause of my suffering.



Quote by Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji

Forgiving becomes fruitful only if it is accompanied by reasoning and understanding the karmic principles working behind each scenario we face. This understanding made me more of a forgiving nature. It helped me get rid of the negative baggage and move forward. *We must take full responsibility for the path to change our lives for the better.* Only then do the emotional hurt, prejudice, and grudges start to dissolve and open the gate to the spiritual path.

Essays by Pathshala Students in North America

Beginning with the February 2023 issue, the Jain Digest Editorial Team has started a new series of articles – essays written by the Pathshala students in North America. Many Jain Centers in USA and Canada have been conducting Pathshala classes for several years. Many volunteers provide selfless service to the Jain communities by teaching the students about Jain principles, values, rituals, culture, Indian languages, etc. Essay competitions are held to motivate the students to stimulate their thinking and analytical skills about what they have learned in Pathshala. We continue this effort to showcase the winning entries from one Jain Center in each issue of Jain Digest. In the June 2023 issue we showcased essays by 8- to 14-year-old students from **Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago (JSMC)**. In this issue bring you essays by 14- to 18-year-old students from JSMC as well as an essay by an adult. We hope that you will enjoy reading these essays and be pleased with the talent these students exhibit. We would love to hear from you. Write us note at jaindigestpublication@gmail.com



JSMC Essay Competition 2021

Level 6 Students - Age 14 to 18 years

Topic: Relevance of Bhagawän Mahävîr Swami's Preaching at Present

Om Gandhi - 1st Place



Om has actively been involved in Pathshala since a young age, participated in several Jain Academic Bowl competitions, and volunteered in the Jain community via cultural programs and the JSMC health fair. He is currently a

sophomore at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is the president of the Hindu-Jain Association.

Modern society can be described as fleeting joys hidden within a haystack of challenges and burdens. In search of these small joys, passions, and hatred overwhelmingly consume us, making it abundantly clear that we have deviated from the path of spirituality. We care more about materialistic possessions than the values of *Kshama*, *Vinay*, *Ārjava*, and *Santosh*. We rather discuss politics than recite the *Stutis* and *Sutras* that enable us to reflect on our deeds and contemplate the qualities of the *Tirthankaras*. We have forgotten our vows and instead indulge in our every pleasure with no self-restraint. And while our intentions may be pure, we still get pulled into the vortex of *Kashāyas*, forcing us

to engage in the very actions that we vowed against. How then do we follow the guidelines of our scriptures while also simultaneously living in this *Dukham Kal* full of hate and untruths? In fact, only Mahavir Swami's teachings will enable us to find a feasible blend between the juxtaposing aspects of spirituality and the nature of modern reality.

Throughout modern history, inequality, prejudice, and discrimination are depressingly common. From genocides like the Holocaust to the systemic racism and oppression entrenched deep within American society, humans have always unjustly treated those who look different, often resorting to violence. By contrast, understanding the Karma theory and Mahavir Swami's emphasis on the *Ratna Trayi* exemplifies how all souls, regardless of their physical characteristics, are equal in their potential towards achieving *Samyag Darshan*, *Jnān*, and *Chāritra*. Mahavir Swami himself was strongly against the Indian Caste System stratified individuals because of uncontrollable characteristics. Why shouldn't we follow in his footsteps and facilitate equality for others? Why should we succumb to the *Kashāyas* of *Krodha*, *Man*, *Maya*, and *Lobha*?

However, the impact of his teachings doesn't end with structural inequality. In fact, it affects each and every aspect of our *Man*, *Vachan*, and *Kaya*. For example, vegetarianism, preached by Mahavir Swami is a dietary framework to extend Ahimsa beyond the human sphere and consider all living beings both ethically and ecologically. Embedded within this framework is the need to implement both *Anukampā*, empathy towards all living beings, and the four *Bhāvanās* - *Maitri*, *Pramod*, *Karuna* and *Madhyasthata* - into our daily lives to ensure that we spread values of compassion, appreciation, and kindness towards all living beings. Nonetheless, perhaps the one *Kashaya* that has plagued all modern humans is anger. Minimizing indulgence in the five major types of vices, including *Vikathā* and *Vishay*, is the first step towards eliminating this

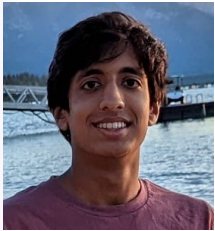
Kashaya. Also, as highlighted in Mahavir Swami's sermons, accepting the multifaceted points-of-view of others through the logic of *Anekāntavāda*, *Pramāna*, *Naya*, and *Syādvāda* can allow us to exercise equanimity towards all, especially during times of disagreement.

In conclusion, only the application of Mahavir Swami's teachings, more relevant now than ever, will lead us out of the ever-prevalent darkness of *Mithyātva* and into the light of *Jñān*. His guidance has truly important impacts, from inspiring us to spiritually focus on the 14 *Purvas* in the *Navakār Mantra* to allowing us to make moral decisions to climb up the 14 *Gunasthānas*, the stages of spiritual development. And through his teachings, we can only hope to find the answers to our questions, guiding us to find the balance between a modern life and a religious one.

Level 6 Students - Age 14 to 18 years

Topic: Relevance of Bhagawān Mahāvīr Swami's Preaching at Present

Jainik Shroff - 2nd Place



Jainik Shroff is a Junior at Barrington High School. He is currently a level 6 Pathshala student at JSMC and has been attending Pathshala since he was 3 years old. He is also an active participant and volunteer in various activities at the Derasar like MJK, Declamation Contest, Stuti Competition, and Lock-in. In addition, he has participated in the Jain Academic Bowl competitions at the past 3 JAINA Conventions. He is also an active member of YJA Publications and Education sub-committees. In his free time, he likes to play tennis and watch all kinds of sports.

"*Ahimsa Parmo Dharma*" or "Nonviolence is the supreme religion" - At first glance, this message seems like it's simple to understand. However, if you look at these words closer, you will see that it is much more than just that. This principle of nonviolence preached by Bhagwan Mahavir conveys the message that we should live and let live.

Throughout his life, Bhagwan Mahavir never resorted to using violence when he was in trouble. This is shown in many stories such as "*Chandkaushik*", "*The Cowherder and Nails in the Ears*", etc. These stories showed how Bhagwan Mahavir stayed calm while facing adversity. Nonviolence continues to influence many in modern times. Famous individuals like

Mahatma Gandhi were inspired by how Bhagwan Mahavir used nonviolence to solve tough problems. Martin Luther King Jr. read about how Gandhiji used nonviolence and adopted the same method in his peaceful protests. In South Africa, Nelson Mandela used nonviolence to protest the apartheid instead of resorting to rioting. These individuals showed that nonviolence is a powerful way to resolve conflicts.

Another one of Bhagwan Mahavir's powerful teachings is *Anekāntavāda*, which can be used to understand another person's point of view. In today's world, this is especially important; instead of jumping to conclusions right away, we should hear everyone's viewpoint. We can get rid of meaningless arguments and avoid participating in violence not just physically, but also mentally by following the principle of *Anekāntavāda*. Every single one of Bhagwan Mahavir's teachings always can be traced back to *Ahimsa*.

Although it may not seem related to the principle of *Ahimsa*, Bhagwan Mahavir's preaching on *Aparigraha* also played a big role in minimizing violence. He never said that we shouldn't have money, clothes, or food; only to restrict it to a minimum. By doing this, we are controlling our greed, which is the root cause of all of our unhappiness. Being surrounded by more materialistic and luxurious things makes us want to have more and more. Non-possessiveness is not just for material things; we also have to be free from our rigid thoughts. Holding on to one's thoughts is also a form of possessiveness. Our desire for wanting more can lead us to acts of violence.

In more recent times, the principles of *Ahimsa*, *Anekāntavāda*, and *Aparigraha* have been shown by many youngsters, but two have stood out the most. Malala Yousufzai and Greta Thunberg has demonstrated these principles while showing courage and compassion. Malala stood up against an entire terrorist organization peacefully. Even after being injured, she continued to protest what she believed in, equal education opportunities for girls. Greta Thunberg talked about climate change in front of the UN, and how we should be minimalistic. In fact, she arrived at the UN conference via a sailboat that ran on solar power! Like Bhagwan Mahavir, she practiced what she preached.

I believe that Bhagwan Mahavir's teaching of non-violence applies equally to everyone, across nations, across societies, and across faiths. As he said "*Killing a living being is killing one's own self; showing compassion to a living being is showing compassion to oneself. He who desires his own good should avoid causing any harm to a living being.*"

Level 6 Students - Age 14 to 18 years**Topic: Relevance of Bhagawān Mahāvīr Swami's Preaching at Present****Vaarin Shroff - 3rd Place**

Vaarin Shroff is currently a Sophomore at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign majoring in Finance with minors in Computer Science and Statistics. He is the Secretary for the Jain Students Association at the University. He attended Pathshala

at JSMC since he was 3 years old and was involved in various activities at the Derasar as a participant as well as volunteer. In addition, he participated in the Jain Academic Bowl competitions at the past 5 JAINA Conventions. He is involved in various clubs and activities at college, but he still finds time to play basketball and tennis and hang out with friends.

The three pillars of Jainism are *Ahimsa*, *Anekāntavāda*, and *Aparigraha*. Bhagwan Mahavir preached about these three values in his sermons, showing the importance of following them every single day. The philosophy and teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir hold great significance to overcome the various challenges of life.

One pillar in particular that could have a major impact on us today is *Anekāntavāda*. The word *Anekāntavāda* can be split into two words, *Anekānta*, and *Vāda*. *Anekānta* means not one-sided and *Vāda* means doctrine. In simpler terms, *Anekāntavāda* means "multiplicity of viewpoints" - there is more than one way to look at something.

Bhagwan Mahavir's philosophy and teachings make the principle of *Anekāntavāda* applicable to the modern world. Answers to many contemporary problems can be found in Bhagwan Mahavir's preachings. One recent problem that has come to light is the racial divide in America. Protests have quickly turned violent in light of the murder of George Floyd. However, if people look at both sides of the story in this situation, the problem can be mitigated. Rioting and looting local stores is not beneficial to the owners and causes more chaos, so it should be condemned. However, looking at it from the Black Lives Matter point of view, they have been protesting peacefully for over 50 years, yet nothing has been done to get rid of the racial divide in America. Due to this, the protests are turning violent, because they

feel it is the only way to get the attention of lawmakers and the general population.

I learned the true benefits of looking at all points of view about two weeks ago when I was watching a video of Emmanuel Acho, an analyst for Fox Sports. He was talking about white privilege, a concept I had heard of but did not know much about. He mentioned that even though black people were treated as equals, they were oppressed for such a long time that they were at a disadvantage. He compared it to a white person starting a 1000-meter race with a 200-meter head start against a black person. This really opened my eyes and made me understand how much black people are disadvantaged. After listening to Emmanuel Acho's perspective, I realized why the protests were truly happening.

We should also look at this situation from the white people's point of view in order to understand why they don't believe white privilege exists and that there is no racial divide in America. Most white people believe that policy like affirmative action - the concept of favoring individuals that are part of a group that had been previously discriminated against - are unnecessary because there are already so many laws that bring equality to black people.

Can the issues raised by Black Lives Matter be resolved by *Anekāntavāda*?

Individual freedom and social justice are both essential for human welfare. However, individuals may exaggerate one or undermine the other. If someone follows the concept of *Anekāntavāda*, they will treat both concepts equally. Additionally, they will be able to distinguish between right and wrong in their views and the views that oppose them. Tolerating and appreciating points of view that differ from yours is one of the lessons to be learned from the sermons of Bhagwan Mahavir.

Level 6 Students - Age 14 to 18 years**Topic: Relevance of Bhagawān Mahāvīr Swami's Preaching at Present****Vidhi Piparia - 3rd Place**

Vidhi Piparia is in 12th grade student from Chicago. She plans on continuing her studies in Economics and International Studies at Dartmouth College. Vidhi is an ambitious and creative student always seeking to learn more with

an interest in entrepreneurship and cultural learning. She is thankful for this opportunity to share her relationship with Jainism.

Segregation Back Then and Now

Twenty- six hundred years ago, the social order was set and was impossible to escape. The *Shudras* were breaking their backs doing manual labor in society, while the *Brahmins* lived as the elite and soared their eyes over society. The *Vaishyas* lived in society as mere merchants while the *Kshatriyas* lived as lavish rulers and were the warriors in society. Your societal class was determined simply by your birth and there was nothing you could do about it. Bhagwan Mahavir was born into a world of segregation, but he found a path to integration.

At first glance, we think, how could our past be so disgusting and filled with immoral practices that have gone on for so many centuries when, in reality, it is not our past, nor can we push it off and make it our future, but it is our present. Back then, segregation was based on the house you were born into, and now segregation is based on the color of your skin, what gender you are, and so much more. The original fundamentals of the caste system may not be practiced, but its essence has definitely persevered through the centuries. *What do I have to do, as an individual, to help break down the barriers that separate the same race, us, humans?*

Unraveling Internal Beauty over External Appearances

In the thirty years, Bhagwan Mahavir preached to the people, his sermons and teachings attracted people from all walks of life: the rich and poor, kings and commoners, men and women, touchable and untouchable, your class in society did not matter. Bhagwan Mahavir also created the fourfold sangha of Jainism including *Sādhus*, *Sādhvis*, *Shrāvaks*, and *Shrāvikās*, including both men and women. Your class in society did not matter to be in the presence of Bhagwan Mahavir, and your gender did not matter to be a part of Jainism in the eyes of Mahavir; so then what did? What qualifications do I need to be a Jain? Do I need to do lots of pujas or maybe if I memorize all the sutras in our JSMC Prayer book then I can be a good Jain? If the truth be told, Bhagwan Mahavir made religion simple and natural. It was not the ritual complexities that a person performed that would make them capable of attaining true salvation, Bhagwan Mahavir's preaching reflected the internal beauty and harmony of a soul. When looking at someone, that is what we should see, not the color of their skin, or the gender they identify.

Equanimity for Equality

Just as I, a Jain, sometimes tend to focus on the external rituals of Jainism, we, as a human race, tend to focus on what we see from the cover of a person, this is the root cause of too much violence in our society. Why did George Floyd die because of the color of his skin? The answer to this, we may never know, but the solution to this problem is right in the teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir. As the cow herder put nails into Bhagwan Mahavir's ears, he stayed in serenity, as Chandkaushik bit Bhagwan Mahavir's toe, he stayed in serenity, as Sulpani tried to harass Bhagwan Mahavir, he stayed in serenity. Through the equanimity Bhagwan Mahavir showed in all these events, he was able to achieve Moksha. Although we may not be able to get to that level in this life, the compassion and vigilance equanimity creates for one's own self and the environment is what is needed to create a level of equality between human beings. When we start gaining a sense for our environment, we start to see each other as more than just the color of our skin, or our gender, everyone turns into human beings. In times like these, it is our self-equanimity as the preaching of Bhagwan Mahavir show, that helps us change the injustices of our world.

Conclusion

The segregation caused by the caste system from Bhagwan Mahavir's time may have primarily been in India, but in our modern world segregation seems to be the root cause of a lot of the violence in our society. Although almost all of society was divided, Bhagwan Mahavir found a way to accommodate people of all classes by looking at the inner beauty of everyone. To be able to see through the filters of people, it requires equanimity, as Bhagwan Mahavir did. Our society is facing many problems right now, and although the tangible answers may not seem very clear, a source of inspiration will be weaved in the teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir.

If anything in this essay has offended you or gone against the teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir, I sincerely ask for forgiveness.
Michchhāmi Dukkadam.



JSMC Declamation Contest 2022

Adults - Age 19 and above

Dhiren Solanki - 1st Place

ધીરેન સોલંકી આઈ.ટી. પ્રોફેશનલ છે. તેઓ જૈન ફિલોસોફી અને શાસ્ત્રો ના ઉત્સુક વિદ્યાર્થી છે. ઘણા વર્ષોથી તેઓ નિયમિત સ્વાધ્યાય કરી રહ્યા છે. શિક્ષકો જૈન સોસાયટી પાઠશાળામાં તેઓ નિયમિતપણે હાજરી આપે છે અને વર્ગમાં જૈન ધર્મ પર અવારનવાર જુદા જુદા વિષય રજૂ કરે છે. હાલમાં JSMC માં જોઈન્ટ સેક્ટરી તરીકે ફરજ પણ બજાવે છે.

તાજેતરમાં જ તેમણે પંચાસ શ્રી લલિતવિજયજી મહારાજ સાહેબના ટપ પ્રવચનના આધારે “વ્રષ્ટિ પરિવર્તનનો પુરુષાર્થ” ગ્રંથનું સંકલન કર્યું છે. જાન્યુઆરી ૨૦૨૩માં મણિલક્ષ્મી તીર્થમાં શિબિર દરમિયાન આ ગ્રંથનું વિમોચન કરવામાં આવ્યું હતું. આ ગ્રંથને મુનિ ભગવંતો અને તમામ ઉપસ્થિત શિબિરાર્થી દ્વારા ખૂબ જ સારી રીતે આવકારવામાં આવ્યો હતો.

વિચાર, વાણી અને વર્તન

આંતરિક સંવેદન અને બાહ્ય વહેવાર ના સમન્વય નું નામ એ જ વિચાર, વાણી અને વર્તન.

વાણી અને વર્તન વ્યક્તિત્વ ની ઓળખ આપે જ્યારે વિચાર એ મનુષ્ય નું સૂચક છે કારણ વિચાર એ મન નો વ્યાપાર છે અને મન ફક્ત મનુષ્ય પાસે છે, મન જ માનવ ને દિવ્યતા તરફ લઈ જઈ શકે છે અને આ જ મન માનવ ને દાનવ પણ બનાવી શકે છે. આ સ્વતંત્રતા ફક્ત મનુષ્ય પાસે જ છે. એટલેજ દાવિત્વ પણ ખુબ વધી જાય છે. આપણા માં રહેલી પરમાત્મા બનવાની શક્યતા સાકાર કરવાનું આ પહેલું પણ અત્યંત મહત્વ નું પગલું એ છે વિચાર, વાણી અને વર્તન માં એક્યતા (Oneness) અને શુદ્ધતા (Purity).

ધર્મ ની વ્યાખ્યા કરતા જ્ઞાની ભગવાનતો કહે છે, સ્વ નું અને પર નું કલ્યાણ થાય તેવી

આચાર સંહિતા નું નામ જ ધર્મ, જેનાથી પોતાનું અને બીજાનું કલ્યાણ થાય, મંગળ થાય, સુખ શાંતિ નો હેતુ બને, એવી ચિત્ત વૃત્તિ નો જે માલિક છે એ વીતરાગ નો અનુયાયી.

તો ધર્મ શું થયો? વિચાર માં વિકાર રહિતતા, શુદ્ધતા; વાણી માં સૌમ્યતા, સત્યતા; અને વર્તન માં સરળતા, સંવેદિતા એ ધર્મ છે. જેનો વિચાર દોષ યુક્ત છે, મલિન છે, એની ભીતર ની સંવેદના પોતાને પણ પીડા આપે અને વાણી વર્તન રૂપી બાહ્ય વહેવાર પ્રકૃતિ નો લય પણ ખોરવે છે.

તો પ્રશ્ન એ થાય કે વિચાર, વાણી અને વર્તન થી જીવ સ્વ નું અને પર નું કલ્યાણ કેવી રીતે સાધે? જેમ વાણી અને વહેવાર નું પ્રેરક બળ વિચાર છે તેમ વિચારો નું ઉદ્ભવસ્થાન અભિપ્રાય, માન્યતા (belief) છે. જ્યાં સુધી અભિપ્રાય જ મિથ્યા હોય ત્યાં વિચારો માં સમ્યક્તા કેવી રીતે પ્રગટે? અને પછી વાણી અને વર્તન પણ મિથ્યા રૂપે જ પરિણમે ને!

તો વિચાર, વાણી અને વર્તન ને સમ્યક બનાવવા માટે પ્રથમ માન્યતા, અભિપ્રાય માં પરિવર્તન થવું જોવેય. અધ્યાત્મ ના ક્ષેત્ર માં આંતરિક પરિવર્તન જ પ્રગતિ નું માપદંડ ગણાય છે. માન્યતા ના સમીકરણો નહિ બદલાય ત્યાં સુધી ઐક્યતા અને શુદ્ધિ આચરણ માં નહિ આવે. કોઈ મને દુઃખી કરી શકે જ નહિ એવા સમ્યક અભિપ્રાય વાળા મહાવીર ને ખીલા ઠોકાયા તો પણ વહેવાર નો લય નહિ ખોરવાયો.

અભિપ્રાય ને સમ્યક કરવાની સાધના નું નામ સમ્યગ દર્શન. જૈન દર્શન પ્રમાણે સમ્યગ દર્શન થી જ મોક્ષ માર્ગ ની શરૂઆત થાય. સમકિત પામેલા જીવ ના સુખ અને દુઃખ ના સમીકરણો બદલાય, સ્વ અને પર પદાર્થ વચ્ચે નો ભેદ સ્પષ્ટ થાય, ભીતર માં રહેલા સાચા 'હું' ની ઓળખ થાય. એનાથી વિશેષ, સમકિત પામેલા જીવ માં પાંચ ગુણો પ્રગટે. જે એ વાત સિદ્ધ કરશે કે અભિપ્રાય માં થયેલું transformation જ વિચાર માં ક્રાંતિ અને આચાર માં સમ્યગ વહેવાર નું કારણ છે. કેવી રીતે?

શમ નામના પહેલા ગુણ થી અંતર માં પરિણામ શાંત અને વિચાર માં કષાય ની ઉપશાંતતા થાય અને એટલે કરીને વાણી માં સૌમ્યતા પ્રગટે, સર્વ જીવ પ્રત્યે મૈત્રી ભાવ થાય, આમ વાણી અને વર્તન થી સર્વે જીવો ને આનંદ વહેયતો જ ફરે. બીજો ગુણ સંવેગ એટલે માત્ર મોક્ષ અભિલાષ, જીવ ને હવે પોતાને પામવાની અને એમાં જ સ્થિર થવી તાલાવેલી જાગે, શુભ અને શુદ્ધ ભાવ માં પ્રવૃત્ત

એ સાધક નું વિચાર, વાણી અને વર્તન રૂપ આચરણ પણ શુદ્ધ જ હોય ને? ત્રીજો ગુણ નિર્વેદ, જીવ ભવ ભ્રમણ થી થાક્યો, સંસાર માં કોઈ સુખ નથી ભાસતું. જે ને કર્મ ની સંવર અને નિર્જરા માં જ રસ હોય તેવો સાધક, અસ્તિત્વ સાથે લય જાળવી ને જ જીવે અને એના જીવન માં વિચાર, વાણી અને વર્તન ની ઐક્યતા સહજ રીતે ઘટે. ચોથા માં અનુકંપા એટલે કરુણા નો ગુણ આવવાથી, બીજા ના દુઃખ જોયે ને દુઃખી થાય, એના દુઃખ દૂર કરવાના પ્રયત્નો આચરે એટલે જ્યાં વિચાર માં જ અનુકંપા હોય ત્યાં વાણી અને વર્તન થી તો એ સાધક પરોપકાર અને સેવા માંજ પ્રવૃત્ત હોય ને? અસ્તિકથ એટલેકે શ્રદ્ધા નામના ગુણ ને લઈને, સમ્યગ દૃષ્ટિ ને બધાજ જીવ માં શિવ નું દર્શન થાય. ત્યારે વિચાર, વાણી અને વર્તન રૂપ આચરણ એના અંતિમ શિખરે એટલે કે નિષ્કામ પ્રેમ ની અભિવ્યક્તિ રૂપે જ પરિણમે ને!

ધર્મ એ સ્વયં ની ખોજ અને આનંદ ની પ્રક્રિયા છે. મિત્રો, દીવાની જ્યોત ભલે નાની હોય પણ એ સુરજ નું સંતાન ગણાય, માણસ ગમે એટલો મોહ ગ્રસ્ત, વિષય ગ્રસ્ત હોય તો પણ પરમ તત્વ સાથે અનુસંધાન શક્ય જ છે.

સમ્યગ દર્શન ની આરાધના ને આપણા જીવન ના ચરિતાર્થ કરી વિચાર, વાણી અને વર્તન થી આ વિષાદગ્રસ્ત વિશ્વ માં કોઈક ના મુખ પર સ્મિત નું પુષ્પ ખીલવવવામાં નિમીત્ત બનીયે એવી પ્રભુ ને અભ્યર્થના.

JAINA Convention 2023: An Amazing Experience

By Sanjay Bhandari



Sanjay Bhandari is a section editor of the Young Generation section of Jain Digest. He is an international Ambassador with Jains Got Talent (JGT) team of JAINA and has served as a judge of JGT competitions during the 2023 JAINA Convention. He has also held various positions at Jain Society of Greater Detroit. He has two master's degrees MBA and MCA. He works as an Integration Manager at Marathon Petroleum. Sanjay enjoys traveling, music, movies, cricket, singing, socializing, and writing movie reviews on social platforms.

The JAINA Convention, held every two years in the USA, brings together the Jain community for four days of celebration, joy, and cultural exchange. On a very fortunate day during my regular evening walk, I was offered to be one of the emcees at this year's JAINA Convention in Lakeland, Florida. Adding to my joy, I was also asked to be one of the judges for the prestigious "Jains Got Talent" event. These opportunities to serve at the convention resulted in an amazing experience for me and my wife, Manisha. Here are some of the highlights:

At the convention, we cherished reconnecting with friends, discussing about their families and the cultural activities in US Jain centers, and meeting dignitaries and scholars. The diverse lineup of events, including lectures by dignitaries, the grand procession, JAB event, Jains Got Talent, cultural performances, Bollywood night, and delicious food, added to our enjoyment. I was able to meet my mentors and leads from JAINA, Dilipbhai Parekh (Jain Digest), Jayeshbhai Sanghvi (Jains Got Talent) and many other colleagues for the first time in person, though I have been working with them for many years.



One of the major highlights of the convention was an opportunity for the attendees to engage with esteemed scholars and Gurus invited from India, USA, and other countries. As one of the emcees for this event, my challenge was to decide how to introduce them on the main stage in front of 3000+ audience, which was quite overwhelming. I did not want to just read from their bio. I wanted to get to know them. Fortunately, I was able to meet many of them at the Dignitaries dinner. During the

conversation, I learned more about them; beyond their official bio. Here are some examples:

Sadhavi Sangh Mitra, who is disciples of Acharya Chandana ji, shared with me that Chandana ji is a self-made multiple dimensional personality, poet, writer, singer, and visionary whose selfless work has made her a world icon in last 50 years. She further added that Chandana Ji is the first Jain Sadhavi ji to receive the Acharya status as well as the Padma Shri award.



I met Dr. Kummar Chatterjee, a musical maestro of Bengali origin, who shared how Jainism transformed his perspective and how his father's illness led him to his musical therapy aiding thousands. I sang a fitting soulful song for him on the stage, and he was delighted to listen to it.



World famous inspirational storyteller, Shri Shantilal Ji Golecha told me that the mantra (secret) to success is to believe in yourself and not doing a copy of anyone. Golecha Ji had

mesmerized us with an inspirational story in the dinner event.

Shri Rahul Kapoor Jain (a young and dynamic motivational speaker from Bangalore) who uses modern tools and technique in his speech, told me humbly that he still considers himself a student with a desire to learn new things. He told me that his biggest inspiration was his mother, so I recited one song for mother on the stage, which he admired.



Karmveer award winner Ruma Devi told me that advocating the rights of women helped her create jobs for many women and she even shared her experience of meeting Shri Amitabh Bachchan at KBC TV program where she was honored for her achievements.



Shri Guru Ratna Prabhu ji explained how the knowledge of various religions helped her to focus more on social work and developing meditation techniques.



Esteemed scholar Chandrakant Ji Mehta, honored with the JAINA Ratna award in JAINA 2023 shared

that his teachings enabled over 200 students to certify an exam in a 2-year Tattvarth Sutra course.



Meeting these personalities was a good learning experience for me and my wife. Their unwavering passion, humility, openness, and friendliness impressed us. This helped me in my role as an emcee, making my speaker introductions more interesting for the audience.

Another event my wife and I enjoyed was judging the performances of the participants of the Jains Got Talent competitions. It was very challenging to pick the deserving candidates to finals in this highly competitive program. Participants of all age groups showcased their remarkable talents in singing, dancing, speech, and instrument playing, leaving the audience spellbound. The blend of innocence, excitement and nervous anticipation among the participants transported me back to my own childhood days of stage performances and competitions.

In addition to our customary judging sessions at JGT, we seized the opportunity to engage in moments of leisure by indulging in rounds of Antakshari and Bollywood Karaoke with the other judges and our fellow colleagues, infusing a fresh and enjoyable dimension into the event. At the Bollywood concert, me and my wife were overjoyed to dance on the stage in front of 3500+ attendees. Also walking and dancing during Bhagwan Neminath Ji's baraat, procession and Garba event added further fun and flavor to the event.

The JAINA Convention 2023 left an unforgettable mark on me and my wife and proved to be a remarkable experience. Learning more about Jain principles, connecting with new people, and strengthening the bonds with those we knew was very enjoyable, fulfilling.

JAINA Connections

By Dhruvi Ghiya Rathi



Dhruvi is a New Jersey-based MBA, SAP and FJAS professional. A Pathshala and guest lecturer for Jainism at VCU University and High schools, she has spoken at Comparative Religion Conference, Religious Baccalaureates and Rotary Club in Richmond, VA. Involved with Jainism-Says-Blogspot, she researches Jain Iconography, Epigraphy, Historical and Numismatic references in Jain literature overlooked by historians, and on the applications of Jain principles. Dhruvi's research was presented at the Dating of Mahavir Nirvana Symposium by ISJS. dhrutirathi@gmail.com

The theme of the 2023 JAINA convention was Maximizing Human Potential, and I related to this concept via strangers with whom I connected and messages that came my way through them. Attending the JAINA convention as a solo for the first time, I used every opportunity I had to strike up a conversation with a stranger. Come with me on the journey of forty-eight hours of human connections that I made at the convention.

At the airport terminal in Newark, New Jersey, on my way to Tampa, two strangers took seats next to me in the seating lounge and behind me, was a Gujarati family of four. Probability-wise, there was a fifty percent chance they were all going to the JAINA convention along with me. After a few conversations, I got an affirmation of the same. Also, I found that the two strangers beside me had ties to my hometown Rajkot, especially the mother, who was in a wheelchair. My bond with Jainism comes from this town. Our flight to Tampa got delayed which allowed us to talk some more and collectively address the challenge of reaching the convention, as we missed our airport shuttle. The family of four had planned to Uber and the rest of us decided to use Uber too. Another stranger on the same flight needed transport, so we all shared the ride. The shared experience of the flight and Uber created a bond among us, me feeling as if the Universe is trying to connect us.

When registering at the Convention, I did feel a bit nervous, as my co-passengers dispersed with their family and relatives, but then out of the blue someone shouted my name, and I was happy to recognize two familiar faces from India! And as I went to get tea, a tap on my shoulder by someone made me immediately feel welcomed! Already, I had a very good feeling, that the next two days are going to be just great, and I must be open to receive the energy and people coming my way!

On my shuttle bus ride to the hotel was another stranger who had ties to Rajkot, and was related to

Pravinbhai Shah, chairman of the JAINA Education Committee, who I had worked with but not met in person. Next to her, was another person who knew Pravinbhai as well. A stranger from New York, out of kindness, provided a ride from the hotel to the convention as shuttles were doing their rounds. Another day, a fellow attendee from Atlanta showed kindness by calling to inform me about the arrival of the shuttle to the convention, and to check if I wanted to join. While attending to the sale of JAINA Education books, I interacted with a stranger, who happened to live on the same street of my hometown Rajkot and our families were familiar with each other! Another message to me from the universe, that we are moving together towards an unknown goal.

Pravinbhai and I had many subjects to discuss and offered me to conduct a presentation on his behalf. He was someone I interacted with over Zoom, but never met in person. Raj Salecha, who worked extensively with Jain Education, introduced me to the world of tireless efforts in engaging the young generation to learn about Jainism: His dedication to the cause was truly an example of maximizing human potential. It was lovely to meet his family who took the opportunity to visit Lakeland via a long road journey which involved a five-day trip from West to East with his family. His wife was willing to drive for a long period and the daughter enjoyed the various interesting places on the way.

Dining with the strangers involved a conversation with two young Jain adults attending the convention for the first time, who happened to hail from Jodhpur, the town of my in-laws. It was almost as if too many connections to Rajkot, my birth town, were making my in-laws feel left out! My conversation with them was engaging, as the primary reason the young couple came to the convention was to get involved in Jainism projects. I found a tech and social-media-savvy person in him that we needed to popularize the Jaina magazines and Jainism-says-blog, I am associated

with. Thus, the stranger provided answers to my problems.

While giving a presentation on Jainism-says-blog, I came across another stranger from Chicago, who was related to the mother-daughter team from New Jersey. This Chicago relative attended my presentation, only because I became close over the previous twenty-four hours with his cousin who traveled with me. The message I had to give to this gentleman from Chicago, was an insight into his daughter's contribution to spreading Jainism, which she presented on the YJA blog, that he earlier was not aware of. It was an emotional moment for him, to get a peek into his daughter's young mind and to recognize the efforts and values inculcated at home and the Jain Pathshalas that his daughter attended. It felt good to be instrumental in enabling the sweet surprise to the stranger from Chicago through the presentation on Jainism-says-blog! Another place where I happened to just answer some question of a stranger was, when I just sat next to him, at a prestigious talk. We exchanged a few words, and he realized he came looking to understand more about Jain Education efforts rather than the topic of the current talk, and I just happened to have the answers he was looking for as I was a part of the Education team.

Lively conversations with other members of the Jain Digest, Jain Avenue and Jainism-says-blog teams, made the visit more meaningful. As I had not met them in person but worked across geographical locations spanning the USA and India. Some recognized each other, by just the sound of the voice, and that felt even more sweeter!

The cherry on the top for these JAINA Connections was that the winner of the JAIN Ratna Award, Shri Chandrakant Mehta, who happened to be a part of the family of four that I set out on my trip with from New Jersey. It was only when the award was declared that I realized we were traveling with the "celebrity". Even on my way out, he was the last person I met with, which allowed me to have a photo op celebrity moment with him! Every stranger I met, reminded me of the values that support Maximizing Human Potential. These were kindness, humanity, dedication, warmth, and a zest to learn along with the insatiable curiosity of the human mind.



And one such stranger, who offered to take a selfie, was none other than Rahul Kapoor Jain - the one whose sessions on maximizing the potential of the human mind were widely attended.

So, my experience at the JAINA Convention was full of anecdotes and surprises, and going with an inquisitive and open mind, I met interesting people, besides the ones that I already knew on Zoom. For this, I need to thank a special person, who kept pushing me to attend the JAINA Convention, and maybe he was indeed pushing me so I can experience first-hand how we all are connected at a deeper level. I would encourage solo attendees to not hesitate to attend the convention as sometimes the solo visits give you an occasion to connect with strangers, and one such stranger passed on a happy message accidentally, that I felt was meant just for my ears! Attending the JAINA convention was a journey of knowing strangers who then became a part of my close circle and with whom the connections made will surely endure the test of time!

Strong friendships will emerge, and I realized that every conversation I had with a stranger had a purpose in my life. In fact, during one such conversation, the book "Many Lives and Many Masters" was mentioned, which reaffirms the feeling I gathered at the convention, that we are all connected, and every person is a messenger to make my life more meaningful. The memories of those forty hours made these strangers no longer remain as one, so indeed the JAINA Convention should be rephrased as JAINA CONNECTION !!

Young Jains of America at the 2023 JAINA Convention

By Suryaraj Jain



Suryaraj is a Director of Publications, 2022-2023, at Young Jains of America. He is a recent graduate from George Mason University where he received his BS in Information Systems and Operations Management. He is currently working at SAP Concur as a Support Engineer and resides in Virginia.

From June 30 to July 3, 2023, over 150 youth (ages 13-21) gathered at the biennial JAINA Convention in Lakeland, Florida, and participated in Youth Activities. During the six months prior to the convention, the Co-Leads, Niva Ranavat, Yashvi Shah, and Aditya Singhvi, planned various activities and sessions alongside the Youth Activities Committee. Throughout the weekend, the youth deepened their understanding of Jainism while simultaneously growing their friendships to expand across the United States and, in some cases, across the world.

By following closely with the theme of this Convention, “Maximize Human Potential,” the youth explored themselves and their interests through various sessions including an engaging impromptu public speaking workshop by Yash Vardhan and Rishabh Shah, a mental health workshop with Ananya Jain, an educational career exploration panel with multiple experienced panelists, multiple Jain education sessions with Jinay Shah and Professor Cogen Bohanec, an energy-packed dance workshop led by Deesha Ajmera, and an inspiring keynote from cancer survivor and past governor candidate for the state of Maryland, Ashwani Jain.

Throughout all of these sessions, the youth were exposed to professionals with vastly different experiences, but each presentation accumulated a universal lesson. After many interpersonal interactions and great times together, the youth learned that to “Maximize Human Potential,” we must work together. Great things can happen with the effort of one person, but even greater things can happen with the efforts of many.

A small note from the organizers:

Thanks to all of the speakers who took time out of their busy schedules to give presentations to the youth and thank you to everyone who participated and helped in between sessions; we deeply appreciate your time and efforts!



