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Smarananjali to Our Spiritual Luminaries

JAIN DIGEST

A Publication of the

Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA)

email: jaindigestpublication@gmail.com

JAINA Headquarters email: jainahq@gmail.com, Website: www.jaina.org

JAINA Executive Committee

President: Haresh Shah
harryshah2000@hotmail.com

First VP: Bindesh Shah
shah.bindesh@gmail.com

Secretary: Atul Shah
abshah24@gmail.com

Treasurer: Ketu Sheth
ketuatjsocf@gmail.com

VP Northeast: Dr. Girish J Shah
gjshahdds@gmail.com

VP Mideast: Sharad Doshi
sunrisebusiness@gmail.com

VP Southeast: Anil H. Shah
anilshah1945@gmail.com

VP Midwest: Ram Gada
ramgada@gmail.com

VP Southwest: Jatin Shah
jatin7@gmail.com

VP West: Shobha Vora
shvora2010@gmail.com

VP Canada Dr. Mahendra Jain
drjainkmc@gmail.com

Past President: Mahesh Wadher
mahesh.wadher@gmail.com

YJA Chair: Rupal Sanghavi
chairs@yja.org

YJA Chair: Pratik Shah
chairs@yja.org

YJP Co-Chair: Ananya Jain
info@yjp.jaina.org

YJP Co-Chair: Ketul Kothari
info@yjp.jaina.org

JAIN DIGEST Editorial Team

310-721-5947

email: jaindigestpublication@gmail.com

Jain Digest Committee Chairman and Editor-in-Chief

Dilip Parekh

Section Editors

Compassion: Jayana Shah

Devotion: Dilip Parekh

Education: Payal Seth

Information: Raj Kumar Jain

Inspiration: Reena Shah

Transformation: Ramesh Khandhar

Young Generation: Sanjay Bhandari

Staff Editor: Dhruvi Rathi

Art and Design

Jayana Shah

Advisors

Dilip V Shah

Anop Vora

Ramesh Khandhar

Dr. Hema Pokharna

On the Cover:

Smarananjali to Our Spiritual Luminaries

Within a short span of 37 days in the first quarter of 2023 the Jain community has lost three prominent Jain personalities – two from Jaipur, Dr. Hukum Chand ji Bharill and Dr. Sanjeev ji Godha - and one from Mumbai, Shri Premacharya ji (Pravinchandra Mehta). We dedicate this June 2023 issue to these spiritual luminaries that have illuminated lives of millions of people around the world by spreading the teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir.

Disclosure

The Editorial Team endeavors to publish all the materials 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,

Within a short span of 37 days in the first quarter of 2023, the Jain community has lost three prominent Jain personalities: two from Jaipur, Dr. Hukum Chand ji Bharill and Dr. Sanjeev ji Godha, and one from Mumbai, Shri Premacharya ji (Pravinchandra Mehta). Dr. Godha and Shri Premacharya ji left their bodies on the same day – February 17th – at the age of 47 and 97, respectively. Dr. Bharill ji left us on March 26th at the age of 87. We dedicate this June 2023 issue to these spiritual luminaries that have illuminated the lives of millions of people around the world by spreading the teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir.

We have two articles giving “Smarananjali” to these compassionate guides. Our editor of the *Information* section, Rajendra Jain, covers the accomplishments and teachings of Dr. Bharill ji and Dr. Godha ji. And Reena Shah, our editor of the *Inspiration* section, gives us a glimpse of the inspirational life of her Guru Shri Premacharya ji – fondly known as Pujya Pappaji.

Although we intellectually understand that death is unavoidable and can occur anytime, when people die due to senseless violence, it is natural to feel sad, angry, and frustrated. But does it have to be that way? Is it still possible to choose love and forgiveness? In her article “Choose Love, Not Hate,” ninth-grader Khushi Patel tells us about the *Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement* founded by Scarlett Lewis, the mother of Jesse Lewis, a six-year-old victim of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012. Khushi shows us that we all can choose love. In her words: “*Through compassion and kindness, we can imbibe the qualities of a loving nature within ourselves and make the world a better place.*”

There are many examples of compassionate and kind people who have chosen love by conducting selfless humanitarian service. Among the Jains in North America, there are many who have been using their resources to give back to their native places in India. In his article “The Art of Giving Back,” Dilipbhai Shah tells us about three such couples who deserve to be recognized for their philanthropic endeavors. And this is just the first article in this series – there is more to come in future issues of Jain Digest.

In addition to this series of articles, I am glad to inform you that our newest member of the editorial team, Dhruvi Rathi, plans to write a series of articles about

Jain sculptures and art in the various museums in the US and abroad. In this issue, she tells us about the “Seated Jain Tirthankara” sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

We are very happy to have Dhruvi on board. She is from New Jersey, has an MBA degree and is an SAP professional. A Pathshala and guest lecturer for Jainism at VCU University and high schools, she has also been a speaker at various conferences. Please join us in welcoming Dhruvi to the Jain Digest family!

We are fortunate to have a few more new authors write for us in this issue. Rajkumar Jain, an accomplished author and independent thinker from Indore, has written an article in Hindi about Bhagwan Mahavir's teachings of *Ahimsa*, *Anekantvad* and *Aparigrah*. Among the other new authors are a 17 year-old Shaan Udani from Morris Plains, New Jersey and four 8 to 13 year-old Pathshala students from Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago (JSMC). Shaan describes his four-day pilgrimage to Palitana and Shankheshwar. The essays by JSMC students are a good testament of the knowledge they are acquiring at the Chicago Pathshala. Our sincere thanks to the Pathshala staff and to Pradipbhai Shah for sending us the essays. More to come from JSMC students in October. Finally, we have one more new author, Piyush Gandhi, President of JSMC, who has written about JAINA's committee “Jain Connect,” which he calls “*the future of Jain matchmaking*”.

We are very grateful to have received an article by Gurudevshri Rakeshji titled “Yearning for the Divine” in which he explains that without undergoing the pangs of separation, the process of cleansing, one cannot experience oneness with the Divine.

In addition, we have an educational article by Dr. Palakh Jain and Payal Seth summarizing the six fundamental truths about the soul. It is based on a best-selling book by Gurudevshri Rakeshji titled “Atmasiddhi Shastra.” We also have a very insightful article by Rameshbhai Khandhar about how real forgiveness can transform our spiritual life. There are a few more interesting articles which are not listed here due to lack of space.

My sincere thanks to all the writers and editors for their contribution and hard work. If you would like to join our editorial team or write an article for our next issue to be published in October 2023, 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



Jai Jinendra!

I hope everyone celebrated joyfully the Ayambil Oli and Mahavir Janma Kalyanak at your center. JAINA is grateful for your continued support in promoting Jain practices, helping others, educating Jains and non-Jains to create a solid North American Jain community, creating awareness of Jainism by spreading the message of Bhagwan Mahavir and energizing our community by evoking social changes. I am privileged to share several significant accomplishments JAINA made over the last four months as listed below.

January 2023

1. JAINA Delegates attended 8 Winter Programs in India during January 2023 and networked with other organizations.
2. On January 15, 2023, JIF organized an event in Mumbai attended by JAINA Dignitaries and 65 different Jain NGOs, where we discussed how we could serve the community on a larger scale.



3. On January 21-22, JAINA and Shrut Ratnakar jointly organized the **2nd International Jain Conference** in Ahmedabad, where 40 scholars from all over India and overseas presented their views on forgiveness from different perspectives.
4. JAINA petitioned the Government of India and Jharkhand regarding the unrest in Jharkhand over the preservation of our most sacred Shri Sammed Shikharji Tirth, and apparent inaction in

Gujarat against reported encroachments, harassment of pilgrims, illegal activities, and vandalization of religious monuments at Shri Shatrunjay (Palitana) and Shri Girnar Tirths

5. VRG Committee announced **Research and Cultural Immersion Grant Scholarships** to promote awareness of the historical contribution made by Shri Virchand Raghavji Gandhi and other prominent Jains to bring the Jain religion to the West and promote a deeper understanding of Jain religion to the youth born in the USA and Canada.
6. On January 28, the Ahimsak Eco-Vegan Committee, in partnership with Young Jain Professionals, held its first Jain Vegan Meetup of 2023 in Dallas, Texas.

February 2023

1. In observance of Gurudev Shree Chitrabhanu Ji's 100th birth anniversary, JAINA has sponsored the construction of a new **Panjarapole** just outside Shankheshwar and the JAINA Vaiyavach Committee has decided to support **planting 2000 trees** on the Panchasar-Shankheshwar Highway, on which 30,000 sadhu sadhvis undertake vihar annually. **JAINA members planted the first eleven of the planned trees on February 5.**



March 2023

1. To celebrate Women's Day, JAINA Women's Committee conducted a conference on **Alternative Solutions for Positive Mental Health** on Sunday, March 4, 2023. They also started the monthly Digital Literacy Course on March 24, 2023, which teaches you the Basics of Digital Devices.
2. Jain Connect had their **Singles Weekend** meet-up in Atlanta from March 3-5, 2023. This event, open to singles aged 24 to 42 based in the U.S. and Canada, was fun and interactive. Attendees were able to mingle with new people in a relaxed and comfortable setting.
3. The JAINA LRP and JCNC BOD Leadership Committee jointly conducted the **Jain Way of Leadership Conference** on March 18, 2023.
4. On March 25, 2023, Ahimsak Eco-Vegan Committee, in partnership with Young Jain Professionals, held a Jain vegan meetup in Dallas, Texas. In this event, Jains of all ages gathered at the vegan Asian restaurant Goji Café.



April 2023

1. To celebrate Earth Day, Arihanta Academy and JAINA's Academic Liaison Committee held a virtual **conference on Defining Applied Jain Studies** April 22 & 23. Eminent Jain Scholars talked about Climate Change, Professional Ethics, Yoga, and other topics over 45 breakout sessions.

JAINA Convention 2023

JAINA Convention 2023 Team, led by Convener Bindesh Shah, is working around the clock to prepare for the in-person Convention from June 30 - July 3, 2023, and give the community a fantastic experience. If you haven't registered, we highly recommend you register. So far, 2700+ individuals have registered!



Other JAINA Committee News

1. JAINA 99 Yatra Committee has tentatively organized the 3rd 99 Yatra at Shri Shatrunjay Mahatirth from November 27, 2023, to January 26, 2024. The last date for registration is July 31, 2023.
2. Student Guidance Committee, which aims to initially help students settle in and eventually become active members of JAINA, has recruited 150+ host families so far.
3. JAINA believes telemedicine is changing how we contact doctors, especially after COVID. JAINA **TeleHealth Committee** is working to improve access to quality healthcare and has recruited 50+ Physicians and Dentists and planning to do more.
4. JAINA Senior Housing Committee is working on finding plots in various parts of Florida.

Major Youth Update

JAINA congratulates the new YJP Board for the 2023-2024 fiscal year and is excited to work with the new **YJP Co-chairs Ananya Jain and Ketul Kothari** on future endeavors.

YJA is excited to launch the new **Shop and Seva Project Teams**. Also, they published the first issue of Young Minds for 2023 in May.

Choose Love, Not Hate

By Khushi Patel



Khushi Patel is a 9th grade student from Houston, Texas. She volunteers for VOSAP's Ignite Program. She enjoys writing and learning more about the world around her. She is passionate about igniting change and spreading awareness about global issues. Khushi is thankful to have the opportunity to use her writing skills to help others.

It is often said that tragedy and grief often translate into frustration and hate. But is it truly universally applicable to all situations? In this article, we gain inspiration from a mother who chose Love instead of Hate and gave birth to a beautiful movement, even in the wake of a heartbreaking tragedy.

Choose Love Movement: A Brief History

The Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement was founded by Scarlett Lewis, the mother of Jesse Lewis, a six-year-old victim of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012. The movement was inspired by a message that Jesse had written on a chalkboard at home shortly before he died: "Nurturing Healing Love."



In the wake of her son's tragic death, Scarlett Lewis made the conscious choice to respond to the violence with love and forgiveness. She founded the Choose Love Movement in 2016 to honor her son's memory and to spread the message of love, compassion, and forgiveness. Hence, rather than allowing herself to be consumed by emotions of hatred, Scarlett transformed her grief into a positive movement to spread love instead.



The Choose Love Movement is a nonprofit organization (<https://chooselovemovement.org/>) that offers a free, evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) program for schools and families. The mission of the organization is to promote social and emotional learning and to cultivate a culture of compassion and connection. Their goal is to create a safer, more peaceful world by empowering individuals with the skills of emotional intelligence, mindfulness, resilience, and kindness.

The Choose Love Movement offers several programs to support its mission. Their signature program is the Choose Love Enrichment Program, which is a free, evidence-based social and emotional learning curriculum for Pre-K through 12th-grade classrooms. The program teaches children and adults the skills such as responsible decision-making, and positive relationships. It is designed to be easy to implement and is available in both digital and print formats.

Nearly three million people across more than 120 countries have already decided to Choose Love. In addition to the SEL program, the Choose Love Movement also offers resources for parents and educators, organizes community events, and advocates for a more compassionate and connected world. Their "Choose Love for Home" program gives families a healthy way to grow together through a series of self-guided videos and activities.

Over the past few years, the Choose Love Movement has received numerous awards and recognitions for its work in promoting social and emotional learning from organizations such as Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, National Parenting Product Awards, American Association of School Librarians, etc.

Yes, We Can Choose Love As Well

It is important that we too make the decision to reject hatred and instead, choose love because of its overpowering ability to make the world a better place. As Mahatma Gandhi aptly put it, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind". We have to see the

world through the lens of love to avoid being blinded by hate.

To truly imbibe the qualities of a loving nature into our lives, it is important to understand why exactly it is so important to send love and kindness back into the world. In stressful and frustrating situations, it is often easy to turn to hate and anger. Though it may not seem like it, it is hard to make the conscious decision to choose love over the conveniently available feeling of hatred. Imagine a scenario in which you have been waiting more than an hour for your order to arrive at a restaurant. Many of us would become frustrated and angry at the fact that the food has not arrived yet. Though we do not realize it, the root cause of our frustration is that we are not in control of when our food will arrive. This is the case in many situations that incite feelings of hate within us. Hatred is often released in a vain attempt to gain control of our surroundings. This is what makes it so incredibly important to fight our inclination to turn to hate and instead prioritize choosing love. By choosing love, we can develop a more positive outlook on our surroundings and slowly make the world a better place. Just one act of kindness and love can have a domino effect and inspire hundreds of others to also spread positivity into the world. Above all, choosing love is an act of courage because it shows a conscious effort to not only emanate positivity but also to take control of your emotions and not let anger become a driving force.

How Do I Choose Love?

It is equally as important to understand how to imbibe love and positivity into our lives. There are several ways to do this, but perhaps the most powerful one is to have compassion. Compassion is the ability to understand the experience of another and show an emotional response in an empathetic manner. By being compassionate, we can nurture a loving nature both within ourselves and also our community. It is through practicing compassion that we are able to place ourselves in another's shoes and gain more insight into their experiences. Hate often stems from a lack of understanding, but through compassion, we can bridge that barrier.

Does Choosing Love Have Any Benefits For Me?

Actively prioritizing compassion will help us become more loving and understanding. Another easy way to instill love within ourselves is to practice acts of kindness. Not only does kindness boost self-esteem and confidence, but it also has numerous scientific

benefits. The Mayo Clinic reports that regularly exercising kindness can help regulate blood pressure and decrease stress levels. Through both kindness and compassion, we can foster a more positive and loving mindset within ourselves.

Choosing Love: Is It Practical?

Throughout history, countless inspiring figures have demonstrated the power of choosing love over hate. Some of the most prominent figures include Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, and Nelson Mandela. After India was colonized by the British, Mahatma Gandhi became an activist for independence. At a time of conflict and tension, he could have easily turned to violent and hateful methods of activism, however, he advocated for love and peace. His non-violent methods proved extremely effective in gaining independence for India and serve as a powerful example of what can be achieved by rejecting hate and instead choosing love. Martin Luther King Jr., a civil rights advocate, drew inspiration from Gandhi and also chose to advocate for equality in a non-violent manner. Even though he faced opposition and hateful threats to his life, he never resorted to hatred as a means of spreading his message. His choice of peace and love propelled the civil rights movement forward and aided him in spreading his message. He defeated hate by using love. Another powerful example of the power of love is that of Nelson Mandela, an anti-apartheid activist. After being falsely imprisoned for his activism, Nelson Mandela still harbored no hate toward those who put him in jail. Instead, he chose to forgive them and famously made the statement, "As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison." A person who holds onto anger and hatred gets burned by them just as a person who holds a piece of burning coal in his hand.

Especially in today's world, one filled with hate and prejudice, it is urgent that we make the conscious decision to turn toward love. By rejecting feelings of hatred, we not only benefit our communities but also ourselves. Through compassion and kindness, we can imbibe the qualities of a loving nature within ourselves and make the world a better place. It is said that between a stimulus and a response, there is a choice. We too have the choice. Let us make the world a better place by choosing love over hate, every time.

"Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible." – Dalai Lama

Yearning for the Divine

By Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji



Propounding the path of Bhagwan Mahavira, an ardent devotee of Shrimad Rajchandraji, Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji is a spiritual visionary and modern-day mystic. The founder of Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur, Pujya Gurudevshri has illuminated numerous lives across the globe through enlightening discourses and an array of meditation retreats.

Is it necessary to go through the stage of pain of separation from the Divine before the attainment of the Divine? Pujya Gurudevshri explains - without undergoing the pangs of separation, the process of cleansing, one cannot experience oneness with the Divine.

One may wonder if it is necessary to pass through the phase of separation from the Divine. The saints say that the question whether it is essential to pass through that state is futile for the ignorant one is already in that state. You were, you are and will continue to be in that state if you do not work towards union.

The realization of being separate from the Divine marks the beginning of pain. If you begin to experience this pain, you are a devotee. The pain in turn, leads you to commence efforts to break the separation and experience oneness.

The Pursuits of the Devotee and the Worldly

A devotee is in love with the Divine. In love, separation from the beloved becomes very painful, and the thirst intensifies. With this arises the hope of union – when will the darkness vanish? When will the day of awakening dawn? When will the distance end? When will communion take place? The greater the love, the more the pain of separation is felt; the more the pining for the Divine, the more is the hope of union. When the pangs reach the pinnacle, the one who is thirsting disappears. What remains then is only the thirst, the cry. When the doer, the ego disappears, union takes place.

Conversely, in the worldly one, separation from the Divine finds expression as thirst for worldly objects. He falsely believes that his welfare lies in wealth, status, and in having a beautiful wife. He desires a good job, a healthy body, and an easy-going life. Such thinking makes him run around and toil in the world. He tries to heal the pain of separation from the Lord with his love for worldly things. Unable to diagnose the

cause of his disease correctly, he takes remedies randomly and worsens his disease of delusion.

The Cause of Suffering

Have you ever pondered over why you have not experienced divine communion despite the Divine being present at all times? If saints have realized divinity, why have you not? They all lived in the same world, under the same sun and on the same earth as you; yet, they could have the experience – why have you not met with the Divine yet? Is the direction of your search faulty? Is your method wrong?

The error lies in detecting the cause of the disease. You will keep missing the right conclusion as long as you are searching outside for the root cause of suffering. Once you are able to determine the right cause, you will realize that the hollowness you experience is not in the world but within you. Your idea of separation is because you are asleep to your divine nature. You do not need more wealth; you lack awareness of your real nature. Only upon awakening do you experience oneness with the eternal in you. Therefore, understand the pangs of separation to transcend their pain. Do not fear pining for the Divine. Yearning is like taking a bath, or burning in fire that removes the dirt of ignorance, cleanses the heart, and makes you eligible for the communion.

Be Ready to Pay the Price

Your question whether it is necessary to pass through the furnace of separation, only shows that you want to experience union but want to

save yourself from the pain of separation. You want to find a shortcut to self-realization. Your intentions do not seem noble. You want the Divine without bearing the cost. Remember, you will have to pay the price of pining, for the blissful experience of union.

For the attainment of the Divine, you will have to let go of your individual ego identity. The Divine does not manifest by offering just wealth etc. but you must completely offer yourself. He alone who can offer this can attain union with the Divine. The day you experience the Divine, you will realize that you had to give up nothing as compared to what you have received. By giving away the valueless ego, what you get is the invaluable infinity. Like obtaining the Kohinoor for peanuts.

Give up the idea of saving yourself from the pain of separation. Pass through this stage, dancing, singing, and celebrating. This stage brings you nearer to the Divine for you remain constantly in His remembrance. Here you get the direction of His whereabouts. The tears of pining serve as an offering at His Lotus Feet. If you try to skip this stage, you will remain without the attainment of the Divine. You may have plenty of wealth, name, fame, and political influence and yet without a yearning for the Divine, you are far away from the divine destination.

Put at Stake

One who desires money puts his life, his reputation, and even God at stake for more money. He does not question whether or not he needs to put his life at stake or work harder to earn more wealth. Then why do you, the desirer of the Divine, ask whether passing through the phase of crying for God is avoidable? Without shedding tears for the Divine, you will not realize Him.

Only those who have not loved God consider crying for the Divine as grief. The lovers on the contrary see it as their good fortune. Tears that flow for God become nectar. Even if you get thorns on this path, consider them as flowers. Even if you get showers of stones on your way, consider them to be pearls and jewels. The

divine union is such a momentous event for which any amount of pain is worthwhile.

Devotion: The Art of Dissolving

A devotee longs for dissolving in the Divine. He seeks his own death. Therefore, to be a devotee is not within everyone's easy reach. Often devotion is misunderstood to be the path of the cowards, helpless and those tired of life. This is not true. Only those who can venture into the unknown, who are brave enough to end their limited identity and seek union alone, because they are passionately in love with the Divine, can walk this path.

Devotion is an art of dissolving. When the ego dissolves, the Divine manifests. If even a bit of you remains, the event of realization cannot occur. Your individual existence is the greatest hindrance. When your cry increases in pain because of the separation from the Divine, you will begin to listen to the Divine. When you are about to break down while yearning, you will begin to hear His sweet voice, which will encourage you to continue.

Drop the known ten directions and take to the eleventh one of going within, you will undoubtedly, meet Him there. The more you go deeper within, greater is the stream of joy you experience. With increase in happiness, the toils and choices fall away, the surrender unto the Divine heightens, He appears nearer and in one fine blessed moment, you will experience oneness.

Yearning for the Divine involves your heart. Only through high-sounding intellectual discussions or just by reading the scriptures, you cannot attain the Divine. When the heart pines continuously there arises a possibility of the divine experience. A devotee is never satisfied with anything worldly. Seek God alone. Be ready to cry out and wait, but do not compromise. Let not the worldly love satisfy you. The end of these pangs, tears, cries, pinning is that the ego dissolves in the Divine. The Divine then manifests with grandeur, thus marking the grand finale of the journey of devotion.

In Memory of Two Prominent Jain Scholars

Dr. Hukum Chand Ji Bharill and Dr. Sanjeev Ji Godha

By Rajendra Jain

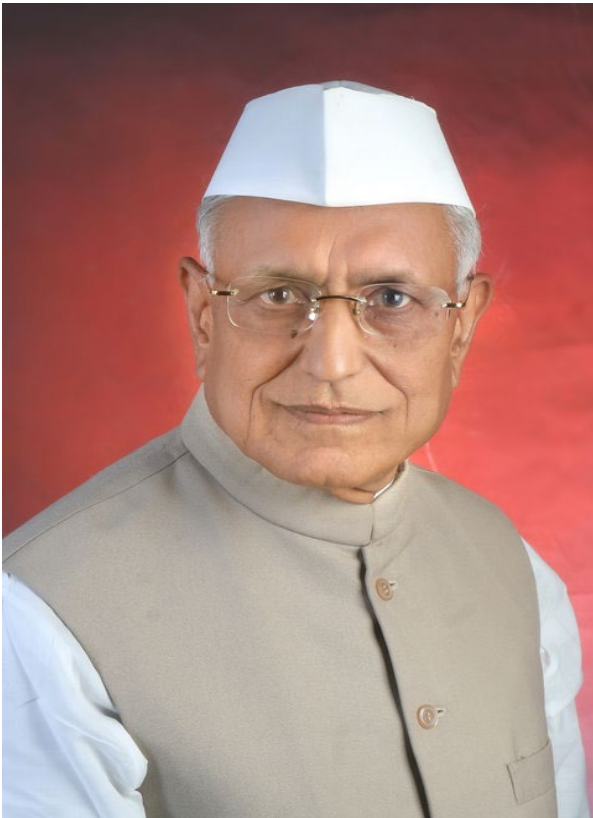


Rajendra Jain is a JAINA Director and a trustee of the International Jain Sangh, NJ. He is Co-Founder and CEO of Qmart International Inc. Prior to that he worked for 20 years with Bell Labs/AT&T. Raj has an eMBA from Wharton School of Business, PA and AT&T School of Business in Finance and Business Management. He is Information Section Editor of Jain Digest

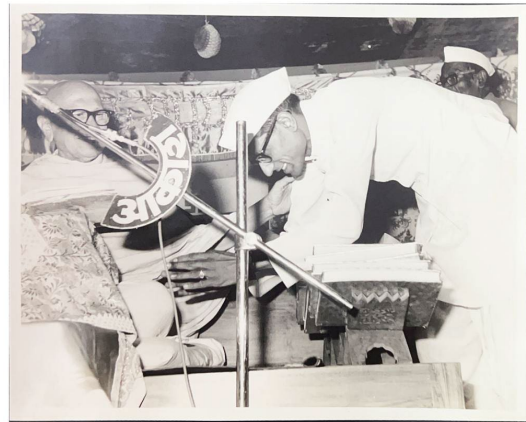
(Editor's Note: Within a short span of 37 days in the first quarter of 2023 the Jain community has lost two prominent Jain scholars from Jaipur, India – a torch bearer of Pujya Kanji Swami Dr. Hukum Chand Ji Bharill and his young disciple Dr. Sanjeev Ji Godha. They both were accomplished orators whose mission in life was to spread Bhagwan Mahavir's message to the masses. In this article our Section Editor Rajendra Jain who personally knew both these luminaries very well, offers his heartfelt Shraddhanjali to them and educates us on their illustrious lives.)

Dr. Hukum Chand Ji Bharill

Dr. Hukum Chand Ji Bharill was a world-renowned scholar of Jainism from Jaipur, India. He was an accomplished philosopher, thinker, teacher, orator, author, poet, journalist, administrator, visionary leader, a practitioner of Jain teachings, and a spiritual guide to thousands around the world. His unwavering dedication and zeal for promoting Jainism worldwide were commendable.



Dr. Bharill was born on May 25th, 1935, in the village of Barodaswami (District: Lalitpur, State: Uttar Pradesh, India). He had two brothers and one sister. He was married to Gunmalaben who wholeheartedly supported his mission of advancement of Jainism throughout his life. From a very early age he was an avid student of Jain philosophy and also started teaching others at the tender age of 14 years. In his early twenties, he met Pujya Kanji Swami and became his disciple. He was known as the "9th Ratna" of Kanji Swami. Quite often Kanji Swami spoke very highly of Dr. Bharill and appreciated his knowledge, dedication, and his various literary works.



PhotoScan by Google Photos

Academic Accomplishments and Titles

In his formal education Dr. Bharill got MA and Ph.D. degrees. His Ph.D. thesis was on the life of Pandit Todarmal ji; titled *Pt. Todarmal Vyaktitva Aur Kartutva*. Mangalayatan University honored him with a D. Lit degree. The degrees for his formal religious

education were *Shastri, Nyayteerth, and Sahityaratna.*

He has been bestowed with numerous titles, such as *Vidya Varidhi, Jain Ratn, Maha Mahopadhyay, Vidya Vachaspati, Parmagam Visharad, Tatvavetta, Adhyatm Shiromani, and Vani Vibhushan.*

Literary Works

Dr. Bharill passed on his knowledge to the masses via writing 100+ books on various philosophical topics. These books later have been translated into several Indian languages including Gujarati, Marathi, Kannada and English. 4.5 million copies of these books have reached wide range of readers around the world. Some of his most admired books are *Tirthankar Mahavir Aur Unka Sarvoday Tirth, Dharm Ke Das Lakshan, Barah Bhavana: Ek Anushilan, Sapt Shatak, etc.* He has written simplified versions of many of Pujya Kundkund Acharya's works; such as *Samaysar Anushilan, Pravachansar Anushilan, etc.* He has written many books to teach students about Jainism such as *Vitraag Vigyan Pathmala, Balbodh Pathmala.*

He was the editor of "Vitraag Vigyan" – a very popular monthly magazine which is published in Hindi, Marathi, and Kannada languages. All his literary works and editorial contributions have undoubtedly made a significant impact on the Jain community.

Spreading Vitraag Vigyan all over the World

Pujya Kanji Swami was deeply influenced by the *Samayasāra* of Pujya Kundakunda Acharya in 1932. He lectured on these teachings for 45 years to comprehensively elaborate on the philosophy described by Kundakunda. After Kanji Swami's death in 1980 Dr. Bharill took upon continuing the work of spreading Vitraag Vigyan around the world.



Dr. Bharill was a very skilled orator. His speaking style was very appealing. He was able to explain difficult concepts of Jain philosophy in a simple, easy-to-understand, practical, and logical manner. His down-to-earth personality, loving nature, and sense of humor made him one of the most popular and sought-after speakers among the common people. He was also well respected among the Jain scholars.

Over the years Dr. Bharill made trips to several countries 36 times giving pravachans at various venues. He visited USA, Canada, UK, Germany, Belgium, Singapore, Hongkong, Thailand, Malaysia, Kenya, etc. He was a regular speaker at many international conventions and conferences such as JAINA, JAANA, International Jain Sangh.

Teaching Students and Mentoring Scholars

At the young age of 33, Dr. Bharillji joined Pt. Todarmal Smarak Trust in Jaipur. His mission was to establish a school for Jain education. He had only a small hall and few resources in those challenging times. He began his work by writing books on Namokar Mantra and training the trainers who would educate teachers and the public.

The Shri Todarmal Digamber Jain Siddhant Mahavidyalay was established in 1977. Today, this school is one of the most prestigious institutions of Jainism where hundreds of scholars and teachers pursue and complete their studies. During his long career as a teacher and mentor, Dr. Bharill has taught 6,729 students and trained 600 Jain scholars. Many of these scholars now travel to different parts of India and abroad to propagate Jain's philosophy. Two of his students chose to study Dr. Bharill's life and work and later published their doctoral thesis as monograph in the Hindi language.

Leadership Positions

Dr. Bharill has held many significant positions, such as the President of Akhil Bharatvarshiy Digamber Vidvat Parishad, Acting President of Dhai Dweep Trust in Indore, General Secretary of Pandit Todarmal Smarak Trust and Pandit Todarmak Sarvoday Trust in Jaipur, and associated with other organizations such as Akhil Bhartiya Digambar Jain Mahasamiti, Akhil Bhartiya Digambar Jain Parishad, and Akhil Bhartiya Jain Patra Sampadak Sangh. He also served as the Director of Pandit Todarmal Digambar Jain Siddhant Mahavidhyalay in Jaipur, Akhil Bharatbarshiy Vitragvigyan Pathshala Samiti and Vitrag Vigyan Vidhyapith Pariksha board in Jaipur. He

was also a member of the Senate at the University of Rajasthan in Jaipur and a Court Member at Manglaytan University in Aligad. Dr. Bharill was the Honorary Dean of the Department of Jainology at Manglaytan University.

Important Learnings from Dr. Bharill's Life

Dr. Bharill was not just a preacher of Vitraag Vigyan, he was a voracious practitioner of the fundamental beliefs of Jainism. He firmly believed that the body and soul are different entities. He practiced being a witness to whatever is happening with ease – *Sahajata*. He has written a wonderful, soul-searching composition on *Sahajata*. He always told his audience to focus on who they really are – an eternal soul full of peace, bliss, and everlasting happiness.

Many followers of Jainism want to learn about "Samadhi Maran" – dying in a peaceful manner without any regrets, or worries. Dr. Bharill used to say that death happens in an instant; why worry about that? If you live a peaceful, undisturbed life with no regrets – "Samadhi Jivan" – you will die in Samadhi as well.

Dr. Bharill's Legacy Continues

Dr. Bharill achieved what he firmly believed in. On the night of March 25, 2023, he was discussing *Tattvarthsutra* with his son until midnight. On the early morning of March 26 at 4 am he passed away peacefully in his sleep.

His lifelong commitment to spreading Jain philosophy has inspired his entire family to follow in his footsteps. His elder brother, Pundit Ratan Bharillji, his son, daughters, and even grandchildren as well as countless others have taken up the mantle of promoting and preserving Jainism.

Dr. Bharill's teachings are available to us in the form of books and YouTube videos on the Todarmal Smarak channel.

On a Personal Note...

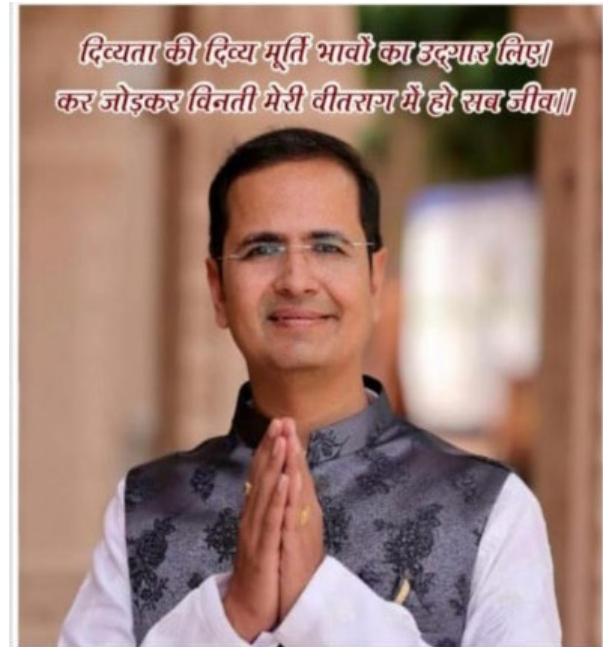
As I pen this Shradhanjali to Dr. Hukum Chand Ji Bharill, affectionately known as "Dada", my thoughts and condolences go out to his loved ones and the entire Jain community. It was a great privilege for my wife, Neerja and I to have been so closely connected with Dada and Ammaji. We were very lucky to have met Dada and the family through our common friend Shree Niranjanbhai Shah from Chicago where we would learn Jainism from the "Best", Dada himself. Since then, we never missed any of his teaching

events at JAINA, JAANA, and the International Jain Sangh. Dada, you will always be in our hearts and your legacy will live on forever inspiring generations to come.



Dr. Sanjeev ji Godha

The Jain community mourns the loss of Dr. Sanjeev ji Godha, a distinguished scholar from Jaipur, India, whose contributions will be felt for generations to come. He passed away at the young age of 47 on February 17, 2023.



Dr. Sanjeevji Godha was born on November 26, 1976, to Shree Mahendra and Manjuji Godha. He began learning about Jain principles from a young

age, studying Balbodh Pathamala and Vitrag Vigyaan, eventually delving into the deep concepts of Tattva Gyan, which led him to complete his Ph.D. in "Teen Lok" (Jain Cosmology) as described by Arihants; M. Phil in Jain Philosophy (for which he was awarded the Gold Medal), and M.A. in History & Comparative Study of World Religions.

Even while in college, he remained steadfast in his focus on tattva gyan. Dr. Godha's vast knowledge and expertise in Jain philosophy made him a beacon of light for all those who sought to learn about the religion. He was deeply committed to sharing the teachings of Jainism with as many people as possible. His work as Director of the Jain Adhyatma Academy of North America (JAANA) and Arham Pathshala, as well as his involvement with other organizations, allowed him to reach a wide audience and have a significant impact on the Jain community. His dedication to mentoring Jain scholars and sharing his expertise through writing and editing was also impressive. In addition to his scholarly pursuits, Dr. Godha's ability to simplify complex concepts and make them accessible to a broader audience was truly remarkable. His large following on YouTube is a testament to his ability to connect with people from all over the world and share his knowledge in an engaging and meaningful way.

He was a disciple of Dr. Hukum Chand ji Bharill. His profound knowledge of Jain philosophy and cosmology was matched only by his unwavering dedication to sharing his insights with others. He was a gifted orator who dedicated his life to spreading Jain scriptures and tattva gyan, earning him a reputation as a renowned scholar. He wrote a book titled *Kalchakra* in Hindi, published many articles, mentored young scholars, and traveled the world to speak about Jain principles.

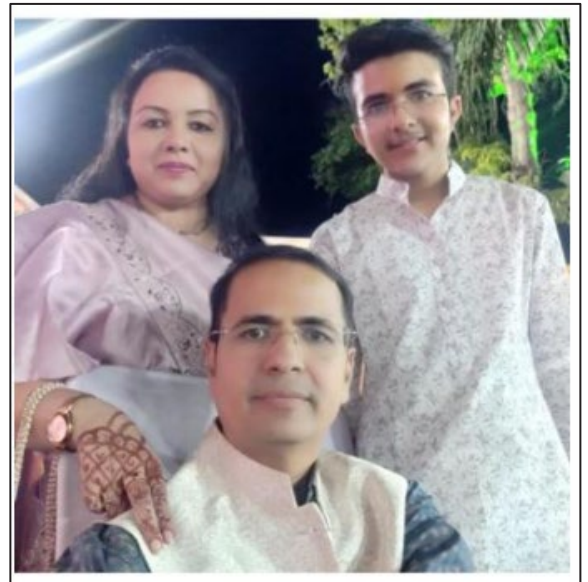


Dr. Sanjeev ji Godha has left a profound impact on those who knew him. Through his in-person lectures

and YouTube videos, he tirelessly spread the teachings of Jainism and touched countless lives. His dedication to this work was truly inspiring, and his legacy will continue to live on through the lives he has impacted.



It is truly remarkable that despite his illness, Dr. Godha continued to inspire and guide others, using his own life as an example of the principles he preached. His unwavering smile and dedication to his work are a testament to his commitment to spreading knowledge and helping others. He was a shining example of what it means to live a life of service, compassion, and dedication to one's beliefs.



While we offer our condolences to Dr. Godha's family, friends, and colleagues during this difficult time, we take comfort in knowing that his contributions to Jainism and beyond will never be forgotten. He will be remembered with the utmost respect and admiration by the entire Jain community. May his "True Self" find its ultimate destiny...

Dr. Godha's wife, Sanskriti ji, speaks highly of him :

वे मेरे साथ हैं, ऐसा एहसास मुझे प्रतिपल होता है. प्रवचन आदि सुनते हुए उनके शब्द कानों में ऐसे गूँजते हैं, जैसे वे साक्षात् मुझे ही सुना रहे हों और कह रहे हों की "संस्कृति ! संयोग का वियोग तो निश्चित ही होता है, वियोग पर ध्यान नहीं दो; संयोग तो क्षणिक हैं, उनकी ओर दृष्टि मत करो. तुम्हारा अपना आत्मा तुम्हारे साथ है, उसका अवलम्बन लो. तुम्हारे में क्या कमी हो गई. तुम अभी-भी गन संपन्न हो." मेरे कानों में गूँजते हुए उनके ये शब्द मुझे संबल प्रदान करते हैं. वास्तव में इस जीव को धर्म ही एकमात्र सहारा होता है और वो हमें इसी की शरण में रहने की ही प्रेरणा देकर गए हैं, जिसके सर पर जिनवाणी माँ हो वो सदा के लिए सुखी हो जाता है.

Dr. Godha's son Arjav says:

उन्होंने मुझे हर परिस्थिति में सहज रहने, धैर्य धारण करने की ही शिक्षा दी है. जो उन्होंने मुझे सिखाई है, उसी के माध्यम से मैं अब अपना जीवन जीना चाहता हूँ. दादा की जो सहजता है, उसी को उन्होंने अपनाया और पूरी दुनिया को समझाया. मुझे बचपन से उन्होंने इसी धर्म के मार्ग पर लगने की शिक्षा दी है. वे हमेशा कहते थे कि तू पुरे जीवन में कुछ कर या मत कर, बस! इस धर्म को अपना ले, यह जो मनुष्य भाव तुझे मिला है, इसे सार्थक कर ले.

In their tribute to Dr. Godha, Munishri PramanSagar ji Maharaj and Acharya Shri VishuddhaSagar ji Maharaj have said:



शोक नहीं, वैराग्य का प्रसंग

— मुनिश्री प्रमाणसागर जी महाराज
(यूट्यूब पर उपलब्ध उद्बोधन का सार)

श्री संजीवजी गोधा के देहावसान का समाचार मिला। चातुर्मास के दौरान वे हमारे प्रवास में आए भी थे। पर इस घटना से एक बात हमको अच्छे से समझकर चलना चाहिए कि किसी की आयु पर किसी का नियंत्रण नहीं है। आना-जाना तो लगा हुआ है। बस जब कोई ऐसा व्यक्तित्व हमारे बीच से जाता है तो उसके चले जाने का दुःख हर व्यक्ति के मन में छाता है। डॉ. संजीव एक अच्छे विद्वान, एक अच्छे प्रवचनकार, तत्त्व के ज्ञानी थे। काल ने असमय छीन लिया।

हम-आप यह कहते हैं कि असमय है; परन्तु काल के आगे तो कोई समय-असमय नहीं होता और कालबली के आगे बड़े-बड़े बाहुबली भी हार जाते हैं। मैं ऐसी घड़ी में यही कहूँगा, जिसने जिनवाणी की सेवा की है, उसे उसका फल तो मिलता ही है; आगे-पीछे भले ही मिले। उस व्यक्ति ने अपने जीवन में जो अच्छा करना था, कर लिया, करके गया।

कोई हमारे बीच से अचानक चला गया। इसका मतलब यह नहीं कि वह अपनी राह पूरी कर गया, इसका सही मतलब तो यही है कि वह हमें हमारी राह दिखा गया। हमें हमारी राह देखनी है, अपने जीवन को संभालना है और ऐसे निमित्तों को हमेशा शोक का निमित्त बनाने की जगह वैराग्य का निमित्त बनाना चाहिए।



वस्तु स्वभाव को देखो

— आचार्यश्री विशुद्धसागर जी महाराज
(यूट्यूब पर उपलब्ध उद्बोधन का सार)

वीतराग जिनशासन की अनुमोदना, प्रभावना करो। निज आत्मा की प्रभावना के साथ ज्ञानी गोधा चले गए कि नहीं चले गए?

आपके संयोग का वियोग हुआ है; इसलिए लोगों को लगता है कि हमारे लिए बहुत बड़ा अध्यात्म तत्त्व को परोसने वाला जीव चला गया; पर मित्र, ऐसा क्यों नहीं सोचते हो कि शरीर का परित्याग करके क्षति तो उनकी हुई है जो उनसे कुछ चाहते थे। क्षति उनकी नहीं हुई है जो जीवन व मरण को निजस्वभाव से भिन्न मानते थे। सद्भावना की दृष्टि से भावना रखो जो आत्मा जहाँ गई, स्वस्थ रहे, वीतराग सत्यार्थ मार्ग की पोषक बने, मिथ्यात्व से दूर रहे। वियोग पर मत बिलखो, संयोग पर मत मुस्कुआओ, वस्तु स्वभाव को देखो! जो है, सो है।

ऐसा चिन्तन करो कि गोधाजी की आत्मा जहाँ भी हो, वह सच्चे देव-शास्त्र-गुरु, वीतराग मार्ग का पोषण करें, एकान्त नहीं, स्याद्वाद का पोषण करें, ऐसा चिन्तन करो...

A Summary of Six Essential Learnings from Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra

By Dr. Palakh Jain and Payal Seth



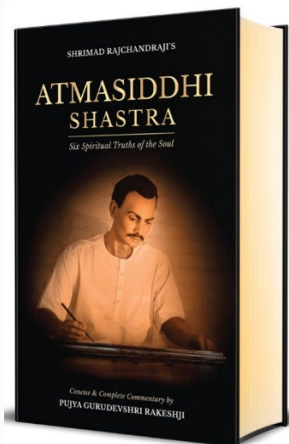
Dr. Palakh Jain is an Associate Professor in the School of Management at Bennett University in Uttar Pradesh, India. A Fellow of IIM- Ahmedabad in Economics area and alumni of Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, Palakh was awarded Junior Research Fellowship by the UGC in 2005. She has been chosen as the "Exclusive 20 Emerging Female Leaders" from India by "Women in The World Foundation", New York.



Payal Seth is a PhD Scholar at Bennett University and an economics researcher with the Tata-Cornell Institute, Cornell University. Her research interests lay at the intersection of development, health, and behavioral economics. She has published extensively in leading national and international newspapers.

Reference: "Shrimad Rajchandraji's Atmasiddhi Shastra" - A Concise and Complete Commentary by Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji

Shrimad Rajchandraji is a venerated personality who was exceptional with his exposition of Lord Mahavir's teachings. Honored as the spiritual guru of Mahatma Gandhi, Rajchandraji strived to create an era of spiritual growth for everyone. One of his most significant contributions is Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra, which is a 142-verse poem, composed in a single sitting of about one and half hours. Even copying these lines requires longer! The poem is the clearest and most cogent composition in the odyssey of the soul.



There is an endless cycle of life and death and we are all caught in it. But is it necessary to be trapped in this cycle? Absolutely not. One can easily break this cycle through liberation, but for this one has to acquire knowledge of the truth. The truth is simply that we are the Soul and to understand this truth, we need to

understand the attributes of Soul outlined in its six fundamentals.

The six fundamental truths related with Soul are:

- 1) Soul Exists
- 2) Soul is Eternal
- 3) Soul is the Doer of Karma
- 4) Soul is the Receiver of the Fruits of Karma
- 5) There is Liberation

6) There is a Path of Liberation

In line with the theme of the book, we summarize these six fundamental truths of the soul in the form of a conversation between a Guru and His Disciple.

First Fundamental: Soul Exists

It is only once we accept that the soul exists, does one take the first step to the path of liberation. But the disciple is doubtful.

Disciple: All the objects that exist in this world possess the properties of color, smell, taste, etc., and are hence perceived by the senses. Since the soul cannot be seen by eyes or any other senses, there is no empirical proof that it exists. Or, maybe the body, its senses, or breathing itself is identified as the soul because there is no other sign distinguishing one from another. Since its existence is doubtful, the means of liberation are futile.

Soul's independent existence is presented as a logical doubt to the Guru.

Guru: Since infinite births, we have been identifying with the body because of our false belief that we can prove the existence of any substance only by our senses. We need to realize that the existence of the soul can be determined by contemplating its characteristics. When the sword is inside the sheath, it appears as one object. Or just like salt and sugar once mixed cannot be identified as separate from each other to the naked eye. But they can be distinguished by tasting their granules separately. Similarly, the difference between soul and body can be identified through their characteristics. The soul is consciousness or the "knower" of the body; the body is inanimate. The

soul is formless, eternal, and immortal; the body has a form, is transient and mortal. Adopting this right thinking is the first step towards the realization of the Self.

The soul cannot be perceived by the eye because soul is the “knower” or the “seer” itself. Hence, seeing and knowing is the attribute of the soul and the eyes are just a medium.

The body is a collection of atoms and is hence, inanimate. Sense, which is a part of this body is also inanimate. Similarly, in every breath, atoms of oxygen are absorbed. They do not know themselves or each other, i.e. the senses and the breath do not know in which part of the body they are functioning. Knowing is an attribute of the soul, and the one who perceives all living and non-living entities is the soul. The soul alone is the propellor of body, senses, and breath because, in the absence of the soul, all three will stop functioning. In the absence of the soul, this body will be cremated and no pain will be felt and eyes will be present inside the body but nothing can be seen. Since the departure of the soul and the cessation of respiration happens simultaneously, one does not realize that respiration has stopped as a result of soul leaving the body. If respiration could continue even after the soul leaves the body then the longevity could be extended indefinitely by oxygen cylinders. However, the fact is that the entire body will not function without soul even if respiration is artificially restored through oxygen cylinders.

The independent existence of the soul can only be experienced and not shared. It's state of consciousness or the feeling of “I am” remains unbroken in all states. Even if the senses cease to function, this feeling of “I am” will persist. Its existence, although formless, is devoid of dependence on anything.

Hence, the Guru proves that the soul exists and upon contemplation, the disciple humbly accepts this reasoning.

Second Fundamental: Soul is Eternal

Disciple: The soul, although it exists, is not eternal as it is created and destroyed with the existence of the body. Further, there is also impermanence in its momentariness as it changes every moment with the change in the body. Since no substance in the world remains forever and is constantly changing, the soul must be too.

Guru: Whose experience is it that the soul is created and destroyed? It can only be either the

soul or the body, as only two kinds of substances exist in the universe: animate or inanimate. Since the body is inanimate i.e. it does not possess the property of knowingness (જ્ઞાનક્રમ), it cannot know anything.

The soul is only the substance that has consciousness i.e., the soul which can know about birth and death. But birth and death of what? The soul itself? But this statement is also incorrect because for the soul to be the knower of its own creation and destruction, it should be present prior to the birth and survive the destruction. If this is true, then this proves the eternal nature of the soul. Hence, it is the soul which knows about the birth and death of the body.

Unlike the body, the soul is not made from a combination of atoms and molecules. Science has built computers and robots, but it cannot give them life. The soul is a natural substance, which is self-existing, self-sustaining, and self-contained. It is a universal law that something that is created will disintegrate at some point. Conversely, something that is not created, cannot be destroyed. Since the soul or the nature of knowingness cannot be created or destroyed, it is eternal.

The soul is eternal, but could it also be changing constantly every moment? No. Even though a new state is created and the old one destroyed, there is no change in the inherent intrinsic attributes of the soul. For instance, waves rise and fall in the ocean, but there is no change in water. Or a golden pot can be destroyed to make a gold crown, but the substance of gold remains the same. Likewise, the soul passes through different stages of existence (past lives) or even different stages of life (childhood, adulthood, and old age), and its inherent property of knowingness does not change. It is the same throughout.

The disciple is now clear that the soul exists, it is eternal, but its state changes. It leads him to think about why people experience different intensities of sorrow and joy in life. Eastern philosophies point this to *karma*, but who is the doer of this *karma*?

Third Fundamental: Soul is the Doer of Karma

Disciple: Soul is not the doer of *karma*. Or, karma binds itself automatically to the soul, the soul is the mere spectator. If not, then the soul becomes the doer of karma, and then doing karma becomes the nature of the soul. If that is the nature of the soul, then the soul would keep on doing karma and will never be liberated.

Guru: Karmic bondage only happens if there is inspiration from a substance. The act of acquiring karma is impossible without inspiration. It is only the soul which has the ability to inspire and hence it acquires karma. Inspiration is the form of impure feelings (attachment and aversion) that is generated by the soul which attracts karmic bondage. It is not the nature of the inanimate objects to inspire. Humans can accomplish important tasks using computers, but computers cannot inspire humans to work on them. It is merely an instrument to realize the intention of working. Since karma is inanimate, and devoid of consciousness, it cannot inspire and hence is incapable of acquiring karma..

This karma is bound to the soul when it is engaged in likes and dislikes. If the soul does not engage in these impure feelings, then no karma is acquired. Since the soul has the freedom to stop acquiring karma, it is not the innate nature of the soul. At the fruition of meritorious karma, one receives its fruits, say delicious food. If one consumes it with detachment, then no new karma is attracted. If instead, it is devoured with gluttony then one acquires new karmic bondage. Similarly, if from fruit of unmeritorious karma one gets an abusive neighbor but tolerates him/her with equanimity, then no new karma is acquired. Therefore, a soul is responsible for karmic bondage.

Now that the disciple is convinced that the soul is the doer of karma, he expresses his confusion about if the soul is indeed the recipient of the fruits of karma.

Fourth Fundamental: Soul is the Receiver of the Fruits of Karma

Disciple: Soul cannot be the receiver of the fruits of the karma as inanimate karma, which does not have knowledge, cannot possess the understanding to give fruits to the doer. For the soul to receive fruits of the karma, there must be a giver who must possess knowledge. Since karma does not do so, it is incorrect to think that the soul receives the fruits from karma.

Guru: If the soul is residing in its true nature, then karmic particles do not form bondage with the soul. However, when impure feelings of attachment and aversion rise in the soul, then it activates the soul's energy. Due to the vibration of the soul, karmic particles are acquired, resulting in bondage with the soul. Karma stays bonded to the soul until it matures and bears its consequences. At that time, if the soul reacts, it binds new karma. If it remains

equanimous, then it acquires no new karma. Hence, despite being inanimate, karma derives its power of giving fruit solely because of the soul's impure feelings. For example, even though alcohol is devoid of consciousness, it affects even an intelligent person to behave wildly because of its intoxicating nature. So, even though karma is inanimate, it can give fruits to the soul.

Having gained a logical understanding of the soul and karma, the disciple now thinks just as the world is beginningless and endless the relationship between the soul and karma must be the same. Hence, it is impossible to be free from karma and attain liberation.

Fifth Fundamental: There is Liberation

Disciple: Although the soul is the doer of karma and the receiver of the fruits of karma, it cannot achieve liberation from karma as infinite time has passed by and the flaws of attachment and aversion, that cause bondage still remain. The soul is not seen without auspicious or inauspicious karma. So the soul cannot achieve liberation. After all, if the soul can achieve liberation why has it not been liberated by now?

Guru: The soul must receive the fruits of both auspicious and inauspicious karma that is bound to it. Having understood that the soul is the doer of karma and the recipient of its fruits, let's understand the point about retreating from karma and its fruit. As the soul begins to withdraw from both types of feeling (attachment and aversion) it begins to eliminate the causes of karmic bondage. It does not incur new bondage and gradually destroys existing bondage. This way, when all karma is destroyed, the soul is liberated. Just as both auspicious and inauspicious karmas yield fruit resulting in transmigration, refraining from both gives the fruit of liberation. The only reason liberation has not been attained is because the soul has not been able to overcome auspicious and inauspicious karmas. It is not even aware that it is possible to refrain from both kinds of feelings. But it is possible to eliminate the feelings as those are not the soul's nature. Rather, they are contrary to its pure nature. Therefore, these feelings can be destroyed.

When both these feelings are destroyed, modifications in the form of pure, natural feelings emerge within. As the soul remain engrossed in these pure feelings, its natural disposition is stabilized. The impure state will go on waning and the pure state will emerge stronger. Once the soul stays steady in these pure feelings, it attains

liberation. Detachment from the fruits of karma or freedom from ego and selfishness has the ability to make the soul pure and attain liberation. Liberation as seen from the internal perspective is just the soul reveling in its own infinite bliss, eternally.

The disciple, now clarified from all doubts, yearns to break free from the misery of the endless chain of transmigration and attain this blissful state of liberation. But yet again, he is doubtful of its path.

Sixth Fundamental: There is a path to Liberation

Disciple: Assuming that the state of liberation exists, there does not exist any undisputed path towards attaining it. How can karma that has been accumulated over an infinite period of time be annihilated in this present human birth? If the path of liberation is unattainable, then what can be gained by the knowledge about the soul?

Guru: The inherent nature of the soul is pure, but it modifies into pure or impure states. For indefinite lifetimes, the soul has been in an impure state. Attachment, aversion, and ignorance are the fundamental knots of bondage. The only true path to liberation is the annihilation of ignorance, attachment, and aversion. This leads to the attainment of the soul.

To harbor the delusion of “I-ness” and “my-ness” (or ego) towards the fruition of karma is ignorance. Just as light dispels darkness and allows us to view objects just as they are, ignorance regarding one’s identification with the body can be dispelled through the light of knowledge. The impure state can be transformed into the pure state by developing an awareness that “I am separate from the body and impurities of likes and dislikes”. This true knowledge leads to liberation. Any person who can shift the focus from the karmic identity toward his/her pure eternal nature is able to attain the state of liberation.

Shrimadji explains that for one to be worthy of attaining liberation, there are four prerequisites.

1) Subsidence of Passions

The soul binds karma when it engages in four passions: anger, pride, deceit, and greed. Anger, an impure feeling leads to bondage, whereas forgiveness does the exact opposite. Similarly, pride can be countered by humility, deceit can be arrested by nurturing straightforwardness and greed can be restrained by developing content. One who reduces the strength of his/her passions is eligible for the path of liberation.

2) Liberation is the only desire

The person needs to have a burning desire to attain inner purity which then leads to liberation.

3) Grief for the cycles of birth and death

One who feels dreadful towards transmigration which has been caused by worldly attachments and wishes to detach from them is qualified to liberate.

4) Inner Compassion

Having the inner feeling of compassion is necessary to be eligible for the path of liberation.

Generating pure feeling through self-awareness is dharma. This can be experienced by *every single human, here and now*. Therefore, there is no uncertainty about the means of liberation. If one puts in the best effort and develops the four attributes mentioned above, one can attain liberation.

The Disciple Experiences the Soul

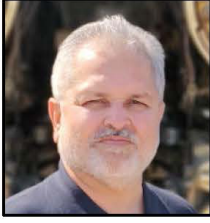
Having acquired firm conviction in the veracity of the supreme truths, the disciple takes his journey towards self-realization which includes, introspection, contemplation, and meditation. Having focused single-mindedly on the nature of the pure soul, the disciple experiences it. He is filled with ecstatic effervescent joy.

Once the false identity with the body is stripped off, then the soul is no longer the doer of karma, nor the receiver of its fruits. This is because it no longer possesses a craving or aversion for any situation or outcome that arises. The focus is constantly on itself (soul). This is the essence of religion.

It is said that Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra flowed from Shrimadji as the sacred Ganges flows from the Himalayas. It purifies, washes away sin and impurities, and spreads a sense of coolness and calmness among its seekers. The authors present their infinite salutations to both Shrimad Rajchandraji and Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji for their ceaseless compassion for presenting this work and bestowing us with the path of liberation.

Our attempt at summarizing the six fundamental truths is only to make the readers aware and encourage them to read the beautiful masterpiece. Our summary, in no way, does justice to the wonderment that Atmasiddhi Shastra is. Our sincere request to the readers of this article is to pick up your copy of the book and feel the overwhelming purity of Shrimad Rajchandraji’s logic to achieving liberation even in these present times.

वर्तमान वैश्विक परिदृश्य में महावीर के अनेकांत, अहिंसा और अपरिग्रह के सिद्धान्त राजकुमार जैन, इंदौर



राजकुमार जैन स्वतंत्र लेखक और विचारक हैं। इंजीनियरिंग स्नातक और कंप्यूटर एप्लीकेशन में स्नातकोत्तर शिक्षा हासिल करने के बाद पिछले 33 वर्षों से इंदौर से आई टी सिस्टम इंटीग्रेशन का व्यवसाय संचालित कर रहे हैं। लोगों से मिलना और उनके जीवन से सीखना इनका प्रमुख शौक है।

जैनत्व धार्मिक कट्टरता की बजाय धार्मिक सहिष्णुता और सभी धर्मों के प्रति समादर का भाव रखने पर जोर देता है। यही समानता का भाव सही मायनों में मानवीय जीवन के उत्कर्ष का धर्म है।



वैश्विक इतिहास में कई महान व्यक्तित्व हुए हैं जिन्होंने दुनिया को सत्य, अहिंसा और शांति का पाठ पढ़ाया है। ऐसी ही महान विभूतियों में से एक जैन धर्म के 24वें तीर्थंकर भगवान महावीर स्वामी हैं। महावीर एक आध्यात्मिक गुरु ही नहीं बल्कि वैज्ञानिक और मनोवैज्ञानिक भी थे। वैज्ञानिक, सच तक पहुंचने के लिए प्रयोगशाला में प्रयोग करते हैं, महावीर ने अपने शरीर को ही एक प्रयोगशाला बना लिया था और वर्षों की कठोर तपस्या (शोध) के पश्चात उनकी आत्मा की ज्ञानशक्ति का पूर्णतम विकास हुआ जिसे जैन दर्शन में केवलज्ञान कहा जाता है।

दुनिया जाति, धर्म और राष्ट्रियता के बीच विभाजित है लेकिन महावीर की उद्घोषणा 'मिती में सच्च भूएसु' अर्थात् सभी प्राणी मेरे मित्रवत हैं। भगवान महावीर ने जाति, वर्ग, वर्ण, लिंग, भाषा, क्षेत्र आदि सभी भेद की दीवारों को एक बार में ही ध्वस्त कर दिया था। भगवान महावीर का आत्म धर्म संसार की प्रत्येक आत्मा के लिए समान था। "आत्मनः प्रतिकूलानि परेषां न समाचरेत् " दुनिया की सभी आत्माओं का स्वरूप एक है, अतः हम दूसरों के प्रति वही विचार एवं व्यवहार रखें, जो हमें स्वयं के लिए पसन्द हो।

अनेकांत

भगवान महावीर ने जाति, समुदाय, धर्म, रंग या क्षेत्र के आधार पर असमानता को दूर करने के लिए अनेकांत (अनेकता में एकता) का सिद्धांत प्रतिपादित किया। उन्होंने कहा था हमें अपनी आस्थाओं के साथ-साथ दूसरों के दृष्टिकोण का भी सम्मान करना चाहिए। युद्ध पहले मन में उत्पन्न होता है, फिर युद्ध के मैदान में लड़ा जाता है अतः उनका मानना था कि चर्चा और सामाजिक अहिंसा को अपनाने से असमानताओं को दूर किया जा सकता है।

वर्तमान परिदृश्य में इससे अधिक प्रासंगिक कुछ भी नहीं हो सकता है। मानवता के लिए उनका संदेश था कि स्वयं के मन और आत्मा की शांति प्राप्त करने के बाद ही विश्व शांति का मार्ग प्रशस्त हो सकेगा।

मानव की दृष्टि एकपक्षीय होने के कारण वह हर बात को अपने नजरिये से देखता है और सोचता है कि जो मैं समझ रहा हूँ वही सही है। सारी समस्याएं, द्वेष, विद्रोह आदि इसी कारण से होते हैं कि हम किसी भी बात का मात्र वही पहलू देखना चाहते हैं जो हमारे स्वार्थों के सबसे करीब होता है। महावीर का मानना था कि समानता व सह-अस्तित्व में अधिकार के साथ आदर की भी भावना निहित है। सह-अस्तित्व है तो ही स्व-अस्तित्व सुरक्षित है। यही वह अनेकांतपरक चिंतन है, जो विद्रोहों, झगड़ों और समस्याओं से हमें मुक्त रख सकता है।

अनेकांत का सिद्धान्त बताता है कि वैचारिक भिन्नता एक वास्तविकता है, सहमति और असहमति वैचारिक भिन्नता से उपजे दो कारक हैं, लेकिन इनमें से कोई भी कारक हमें यह निर्णय लेने का अधिकार नहीं देता कि जिस विचार, जिस सोच से हम सहमत नहीं हैं उसे हम नकार दें। सत्य तो सत्य ही है और सर्वथा सत्य ही रहेगा।

हाँ, व्यक्ति विशेष के लिए वह कुछ उपयोगी हो सकता है तो कुछ अनुपयोगी भी हो सकता है, कुछ ग्रहण करने योग्य हो सकता है तो कुछ छोड़ने योग्य भी हो सकता है, किन्तु सभी के लिए सभी कुछ ना तो पूर्णतः अच्छा है, ना ही पूर्णतः बुरा।

अनेकांत दृष्टि के मूल में दो तत्व हैं, पूर्णता और यथार्थता। जो पूर्ण है और पूर्ण होकर यथार्थ रूप में प्रतीत होता है, वही सत्य है। साधारण मनुष्य आमतौर पर यथार्थवादी होते हुए भी अपूर्णदर्शी होते हैं। वस्तुतः अनेकांत एक जीवन दर्शन है। जो भी कोई सही अर्थ में जीवन को जीता है, वह 'अनेकांत' को जीता है। इसके बिना व्यक्ति, समाज, राष्ट्र या विश्व समुदाय का विकास पूरी तरह नहीं हो सकता। महावीर अनेकांत के द्वारा ही व्यक्ति और समाज के लिए एक निराकुल, समतावादी, शांत और निष्कपट जीवन तराशना चाहते हैं।

अहिंसा

भगवान महावीर स्वामी का दूसरा बड़ा सिद्धांत अहिंसा का है। जैन धर्म में कहा जाता है कि अहिंसा ही सबसे बड़ा धर्म है (अहिंसा परमो धर्म), अहिंसा ही परम ब्रह्म है। अहिंसा ही सुख शांति देने वाली है। अहिंसा ही संसार का उद्धार करने वाली है। यही मानव का सच्चा धर्म है, और यही मानव का सच्चा कर्म भी है।

भगवान महावीर ने मानवीय स्वभाव के विभिन्न पहलुओं को मनोवैज्ञानिक रूप से चित्रित कर अहिंसा के सिद्धान्त को रखा है। आवेश में, क्रोध में, भावावेश में, ईर्ष्या वश अथवा अन्य मानसिक असंतुलन की स्थिति में मनुष्य उचित-अनुचित का निर्णय नहीं कर पाता है और उस अवस्था में वह किसी प्राणी को शारीरिक या मानसिक क्षति पहुँचाकर हिंसा कर बैठता है। भगवान महावीर कहते हैं कि "शस्त्र हथियार नहीं है, वरन मनुष्य स्वयं शस्त्र है और वह हर प्राणी शस्त्र है, जो दूसरे के अस्तित्व पर प्रहार करता है।"

दूसरों को दुख देना या दूसरों के अधिकार छीनना ही हिंसा है। इस संबंध में भगवान महावीर का यह कथन उल्लेखनीय है, "व सयं तिवयए पाणे, अद्वन्नेहि घायए, हणंतं वाणुजणाइ, वेरं वड्ठर अप्पनो" अर्थात् जो मनुष्य स्वयं हिंसा करता है या दूसरों से हिंसा करवाता है और हिंसा करने वालों का अनुमोदन करता है, वह संसार में बैर को बढ़ावा देता है। अहिंसा प्राणी मात्र के प्रति आत्मभाव रखने एवं विवेकपूर्ण व्यवहार द्वारा व्यक्तिगत एवं समष्टिगत दुर्भावनाओं को दूरकर एक स्वस्थ जीवन प्रणाली अपनाने की प्रेरणा देती है।

महावीर की साधना विश्व शान्ति की प्रयोगभूमि है। महावीर ने कहा था - 'अप्पणा सच्च मेसेज्जां मेत्ति भूएसु कप्पए', स्वयं सत्य को खोजें एवं सबके साथ मैत्री करें। भगवान महावीर ने अहिंसा के बाह्य एवं आंतरिक रूप की चर्चा कर, उसके सूक्ष्मातिसूक्ष्म रूप

का विश्लेषण कर यह प्रतिपादित किया कि अहिंसा की स्थापना अहिंसा द्वारा ही संभव है। यही उनके जीओ और जीने दो के सिद्धान्त का मूल कारक है। बुद्ध ने जिसे तथाता कहा है, महावीर उसे ही अहिंसा कहते हैं। लाओत्से ने जिसे टोटल एक्सेप्टेबिलिटी कहा है कि मैं सबको स्वीकार करता हूँ, उसे ही महावीर ने अहिंसा कहा है। जिसे सब स्वीकार है, वह हिंसक कैसे हो सकेगा।

महावीर एक बड़ा गहन सवाल उठाते हैं कि "जीना क्यों है?" और इसी प्रश्न से महावीर का सारा चिंतन और सारी साधना निकलती है। महावीर कहते हैं, यह जीने की बात, जीने की आकांक्षा ही पागलपन है। यह शाश्वत सत्य है कि कितने भी जतन करलो मौत तो आ ही जाती है फिर भी अगर आप यह कहते हैं कि चाहे कुछ भी हो जाए, मैं जीऊंगा ही तो वस्तुतः आप यह कहते हैं कि चाहे कुछ भी हो जाए, मैं मरूंगा नहीं। जीने का इतना पागलपन भी किस काम का कि इसकी चाह में मैं सब कुछ नष्ट करने को आतुर हो जाता हूँ और विनाश करने का भरसक प्रयास कर लेने के बाद भी मैं अपने को बचा नहीं पाता। महावीर कहते हैं, ऐसे जीवन के पागलपन को मैं तजता हूँ। जो व्यक्ति जीवेषणा छोड़ देता है वही अहिंसक हो सकता है। क्योंकि जब मेरे मन में जीने के प्रति कोई आग्रह ही नहीं रह जाता है, तब मैं किसी का विनाश करने के लिए भी उद्वेग नहीं होता।

महावीर कहते हैं कि मृत्यु को स्वीकार करना अहिंसा है और मृत्यु को अस्वीकार करना हिंसा है। क्योंकि जब जब मैं अपनी मृत्यु को स्वीकार करता हूँ तो मैं सबके जीवन को स्वीकार करता हूँ। अपनी मृत्यु को परिपूर्ण भाव से स्वीकार कर लेने के पश्चात मैं किसी अन्य के जीवन को आघात पहुंचाने के लिए जरा भी उत्सुक नहीं रह जाता। महावीर कहते हैं कि अगर तुम्हारी कोई हत्या भी कर जाए तो वह सिर्फ निमित्त है, वह

कारण नहीं है। कारण तो मृत्यु है, जो जीवन के भीतर ही छिपी है। एक बार हमें यह समझ आ जाये कि जो हुआ है वह तो वैसे भी होने ही वाला था, तो हम फिर किसीसे घृणा करने की बजाय सबसे प्रेम करने लग जाते हैं। हिंसा का भाव समाप्त हो अहिंसा का भाव जागृत हो जाता है।

जब जीवन का मूल्य शून्य हो जाता है तब अन्य सारे विस्तार भी शून्य हो जाता है। सारी माया गिर जाती है। जितना लगता था कि जीवन को बचाऊँ, उतना ही मृत्यु से बचने का सवाल उठता था। जब जीवन को बचाने की कोई बात न रही तो मृत्यु हो या न हो, सब बराबर हो गया। जिसके लिए जीवन ही निर्मूल्य हो गया है, उसके लिए धन, जमीन, जायदाद, महल पद, प्रतिष्ठा आदि का क्या कोई मूल्य होगा? जिस दिन मेरे जीवन का कोई मूल्य नहीं रह जाता उस दिन मेरी मृत्यु शून्य हो जाती है। और महावीर कहते हैं कि उसी दिन अमृत के द्वार खुलते हैं, उस महाजीवन के, उस परम जीवन के द्वार खुलते हैं जिसका कोई अंत नहीं जिसका कोई प्रारंभ नहीं, जिस पर कभी कोई बीमारी नहीं आती और जिस पर कभी दुख और पीड़ा नहीं उतरती।

इस परम जीवन को बचाने की कोई जरूरत ही नहीं है। इसे कोई मिटा नहीं सकता, क्योंकि इसके मिटने का कोई उपाय ही नहीं है। इस परम जीवन को जानकर व्यक्ति अभय हो जाता है। और जो अभय हो जाता है, वह दूसरे को भयभीत नहीं करता। हिंसा दूसरे को भयभीत करती है। आप अपने को बचाते हैं, दूसरे में भय पैदा करके व्यक्ति भी ऐसे ही जीते हैं, समाज भी ऐसे ही जीते हैं। राष्ट्र भी ऐसे ही जीते हैं। इसलिए सारा जगत भय और भय जनित हिंसा में जीता है। महावीर कहते हैं, सिर्फ अहिंसक ही अभय अवस्था को प्राप्त कर सकता है। जिसने अभय को नहीं जाना है वह अमृत को भी कैसे जानेगा?

अपरिग्रह

महावीर परिग्रह को हिंसा कहते हैं और अपरिग्रह को अहिंसा। आपके पास कोई वस्तु है, आपका उससे कितना मोह है, कितना आप उसको पकड़े हुए हैं, कितना आपने उस वस्तु को अपनी आत्मा में बसा लिया है। सारी जिंदगी उठते-बैठते, क्या मेरा है, कहीं कोई और तो मेरे उस पर कब्जा नहीं कर रहा है इसकी फिक्र रहती है। जमीन का वह टुकड़ा, जिसको आप अपना कह रहे हैं, आपसे पहले कितने लोग उसे अपना कह चुके हैं। कितने लोग उसके दावेदार हो चुके हैं। दावेदार आते हैं और चले जाते हैं और जमीन का टुकड़ा अपनी जगह ही रहता है। दावे सब काल्पनिक हैं आप ही दावा करते हैं, आप ही दूसरे दावेदारों से लड़ लेते हैं, मुकदमे हो जाते हैं, सिर खुल जाते हैं और हत्याएं भी हो जाती हैं। हमारे जीवन में हिंसा इसीलिए है कि बिना मारे मालिक होना मुश्किल है। क्योंकि दूसरा भी मालिक होना चाहता है। अगर वह जिंदा रहेगा तो वह मालिक होने का प्रयत्न करता रहेगा।

महावीर की उत्सुकता समानता में नहीं अहिंसा में है। वे कहते हैं अहिंसा के फैलाव से ही समानता संभव है। महावीर जिस दिन खुले आकाश के नीचे आकर नग्न खड़े हो गये, उस दिन उन्होंने कहा कि मैं हिंसा को छोड़ता हूँ, इसलिए सब सुरक्षा छोड़ता हूँ। इसलिए सब आक्रमण के उपाय छोड़ता हूँ। अब मैं निहत्था, निशस्त्र, शून्यवत भटकूंगा इस खुले आकाश के नीचे। अब मेरी कोई सुरक्षा नहीं, अब मेरा कोई आक्रमण नहीं तो अब मेरी कोई संपत्ती कैसे हो सकती है। अहिंसक की कोई संपत्ती नहीं होती। अगर कोई अपनी लंगोटी पर भी अपनी मालकियत बताता है और दावा करता है कि यह लंगोटी मेरी है तो वह अहिंसक नहीं। इससे कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता कि महल मेरा है या कि लंगोटी मेरी है। वह मालकियत का भाव ही हिंसा है। इस लंगोटी पर भी गर्दन कट सकती है। और यह

मालकियत बहुत सूक्ष्म होती चली जाती है। धन छोड़ देता है आदमी, लेकिन कहता है, “धर्म” मेरा है।

महावीर ने कहा है कि आग्रह भी हिंसा है। यह अति सूक्ष्म बात है। आग्रह हिंसा है, अनाग्रह अहिंसा है। और इसी कारण महावीर ने जिस विचार-सरणी को जन्म दिया है, उसका नाम है “अनेकांत”। यह अहिंसा के विचार का जगत में फैलाव है। अनेकांत की दृष्टि जगत में कोई दूसरा व्यक्ति नहीं दे सका। क्योंकि अहिंसा की दृष्टि को कोई दूसरा व्यक्ति इतनी गहनता में समझ ही नहीं सका और समझा भी नहीं सका। महावीर कहते हैं कि विचार की संपदा को मेरा मानना भी हिंसा है। क्योंकि जब भी हम यह कहते हैं कि यह मेरा विचार है, इसलिए सत्य है, तब हम यह नहीं कहते कि जो मैं कह रहा हूँ वह सत्य है, तब हम यह कहते हैं कि मैं ही सत्य हूँ और जब मैं स्वयं सत्य हूँ तो मेरा विचार तो सत्य होगा ही। इस जगत में जितने भी विवाद हैं वे सत्य के विवाद नहीं हैं। वे सब इसी “मैं” के विवाद हैं। इसलिए महावीर ने अनेकांत को जन्म दिया।

जन साधारण को जीव हिंसा से बचाने के लिए महावीर ने अहिंसा का उपदेश दिया और वैचारिक मतभेदों, उलझानों, झगड़ों आदि से बचने के लिए, शांति की स्थापना के लिए अनेकान्तवाद का सिद्धान्त दिया। अनेकांत मानव सभ्यता की अहिंसा का चरम उत्कर्ष है। इसे संसार जितना अधिक अपनाएगा, विश्व शान्ति उतनी ही व्यापक होगी। अहिंसा, अनेकांत और अपरिग्रह दरअसल एक ही मूल सिद्धान्त के तीन पहलू हैं, अहिंसा का आचार, अनेकांत का विचार और अपरिग्रह का व्यवहार मनुष्य के जीवन को चेतना के ऊर्ध्वमुखी सोपानों पर स्थापित करता है। महावीर के सर्वव्यापी, सर्वहितकारी, सर्वमंगलकारी संदेश आज भी उतने ही सामयिक और उपयोगी हैं जितने उस समय थे।

Jain Sculptures and Art Collections in Museums
“Seated Jain Tirthankara” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

By Dhruti Ghiya Rathi



Dhruti 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. Dhruti’s research was presented at the Dating of Mahavir Nirvana Symposium by ISJS.

The Jain Digest Editorial Team is pleased to bring you a series of short essays on Jain sculptures and art collections in various museums in the USA and abroad. Such essays will familiarize you with the styles of Jain iconography, the changes in the artwork, the introduction of specific symbols and have a relook at some of the currently identified sculptures, besides creating engaging conversations and interest in Jain Art and its collections worldwide. This will familiarize you with such great artwork and images, and we hope that this will spark an interest in you to visit the museums and view their rich collections.

This article highlights “Seated Jain Tirthankara” from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, “The twenty-four Jain teachers” & “The Jain Teacher Shreyansanatha” from the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

The South Asian Art section of New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art has a great collection of Jain idols and Kalpasutra text folios. Amongst its collection, is a Seated Jain Tirthankar as in Fig 1 and 2.

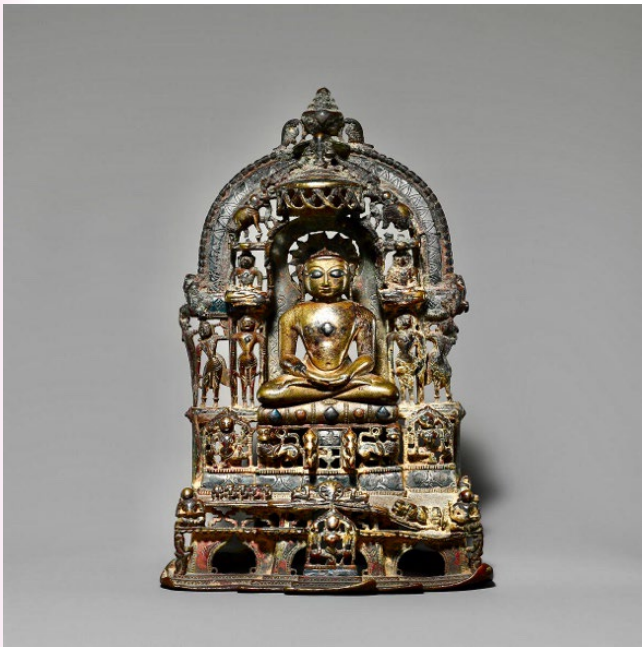


Fig 1: Seated Jain Tirthankara (Front)



Fig 2: Seated Jain Tirthankara (Back)

Image details Fig 1 and Fig 2

Title: **Seated Jain Tirthankara**
 Date: 15th century, Culture: India, Medium: Bronze
 Dimensions: H. 7 9/16 in. (19.2 cm); W. 5 1/16 in. (12.9 cm); D. 3 1/4 in. (8.3 cm)
 Classification: Sculpture Credit Line: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Klejman, 1965
 Accession Number: 65.73.1
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (<https://www.metmuseum.org/>)

As the above sculpture is unidentified, some comparative analysis is undertaken to narrow down the identification of the seated Jain Tirthankara. Bronze and brass Jain idols of the 14th-16th century CE are noticed in the collections of the Met as well as in the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

Fig. 2 of the Seated Jain Tirthankara contains a Sanskrit inscription on the back of the idol, which gives probable information about the date of the idol, the name of the Tirthankara and the information about the *Acharya* that oversaw the process of its consecration and establishment of the holy idol. The script used to write Sanskrit is the Jain Nagari, a variant of Nagari script, with some unique features of Jain Nagari numerals, especially the numeral nine. On close observation, the date of Samvat 1496 is likely inscribed on the idol, calculated from the era of Vikram Samvat (57 BCE). This suggests the idol's date as 1439 CE, which can be confirmed by the Met's identification of the idol to the 15th century. The style of numerals on this idol is comparable with the inscription on a *Chaturvinshati* of a similar time period as shown in the section image of the idol of The twenty-four Jain teachers (Fig 4).

“The twenty-four Jain teachers” and “The Jain teacher Shreyansanatha” at Asian Art Museum San Francisco

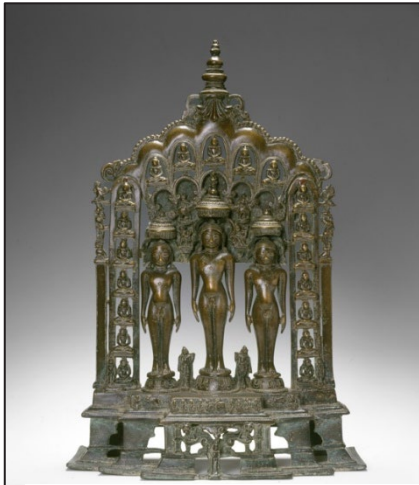


Fig 3: The twenty-four Jain teachers

Image Details: Fig 3 and Fig 4

Title: The twenty-four Jain teachers

Place of Origin: India, Gujarat state or Rajasthan state

Date: 1492 CE. 1549 (Vikram Samvat) – indicated on the idol

Materials: Bronze

Dimensions: H. 21 1/2 in x W. 14 1/2 in x D. 6 3/4 in, H. 54.6 cm x W. 36.8 cm x D. 17.1 cm

Credit Line: Museum purchase

Department: South Asian Art Collection: Sculpture

Object Number: B69B11 On View Location: Gallery 3

Asian Art Museum San Francisco

Besides the date, the Seated Jain Tirthankara idol also likely specifies the name of the seventh Tirthankar Padma Prabhu through the inscribed text *Shri Padma Prabha bimbam*.



Fig 4: The twenty-four Jain teachers (Side)

Like the Met idol, we find some more Jain Tirthankaras of a similar period in the collection of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. Idol of the Jain teacher Shreyansnath from Asian Art Museum is shown below for a better understanding of the bronze idols of the 14th to 16th century CE in western India.

The Shreyansnath idol clearly states the date of the idol as well as the name of the idol as *Shri Shreyans bimbam*, like the possibly *Shri Padma Prabha bimbam* in the Seated Jain Tirthankar idol. The position of inscribing the date, name of the Tirthankar and the name of the *Acharya* (priest) overseeing the consecration and establishment of the image are similar between the idols of Seated Jain Tirthankara and Shreyansnath. Thus, a commonality of the period, script and style of narration is observed between the two idols. Additionally, the Padma Prabha idol (Seated Jain Tirthankara idol) mentions *Acharya* Shri Suriji who oversaw its consecration and for Shreyansnath, it is done by *Acharya* Shri Bhuvan Kirti Suriji. The practice of mentioning the name of the Tirthankara, date



Fig. 5: The Jain teacher Shreyansanatha (Front)

of consecration and details of the *Acharya* on the back of the Jain idols continues even today for *Prathisthit* idols or idols consecrated with five *Panch Kalyanaks*.



Fig. 6: The Jain teacher Shreyansanatha (Back)

Image Details: Fig 5 and Fig 6

Title: The Jain teacher Shreyansanatha

Place of Origin: India, Gujarat state

Date: 1512 CE (Vikram Samvat 1569)

Materials: Brass with silver inlay

Dimensions: H. 4 1/2 in x W. 3 in x D. 1 3/4 in, H. 11.4 cm x

W. 7.6 cm x D. 4.4 cm

Credit Line: Bequest of Marjorie Walter Bissinger

Department: South Asian Art

Collection: Sculpture

Object Number: 2011.46

Not On View

Culture: Jain

With the mention of the month and day in the Indian calendar, the exact date is read as Maha Sud 5, as indicated for the Shreyansanath idol. *Maha*, as the name of the month, stands for the Gujarati usage of *Magha* month of the North Indian calendar and falls between February -March. *Sud 5*, indicates the 5th day of the rising moon, the auspicious date of the Jain

calendar. The usage of the word *Maha* (for *Magha*) reaffirms the origin of the Shri Shreyansnath idol as Gujarat.

Seated Jain Tirthankar : <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/39263>

The twenty-four Jain teachers : [http://asianart.emuseum.com/view/objects/asitem/items\\$0040:11073](http://asianart.emuseum.com/view/objects/asitem/items$0040:11073)

The Jain teacher Shreyansnath: [http://asianart.emuseum.com/view/objects/asitem/items\\$0040:15449](http://asianart.emuseum.com/view/objects/asitem/items$0040:15449)

Conclusion:

Jain Art and Sculpture are truly mesmerizing as Robert J. Del Bontà¹ states: “On first acquaintance, Jain sculpture can appear to be a deceptively simple concentration of the repetitious images of the Jinas, figures that do not present much scope for dramatic interpretation. But armed with more understanding of the rich textual traditions of the various sects of Jainism, we can appreciate more fully the complexities of its intricate iconography.”

Hence, it is no wonder that Jain followers have patronized art and sculpture over several centuries. In conclusion, it is possible that the Seated Jain Tirthankara idol at Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York is the idol of the seventh Tirthankara Shri Padma Prabh and likely dates to be 1439 CE or 1496 Vikram Samvat era, and its origin is likely to be western India.

The author is immensely grateful to Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and Asian Art Museum of San Francisco for their generosity in granting the usage of the licensed images.



A concerted effort to preserve our heritage is a vital link to our cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational and economic legacies - all of the things that quite literally make us who we are.

- Steve Berry

¹ Robert J. Del Bontà, Jaina Sculpture at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, CoJS Newsletter • March 2010 • Issue 5, Pg. 43 www.academia.edu

Introducing Jain Connect: The Future of Jain Matchmaking by JAINA

By Piyush Gandhi

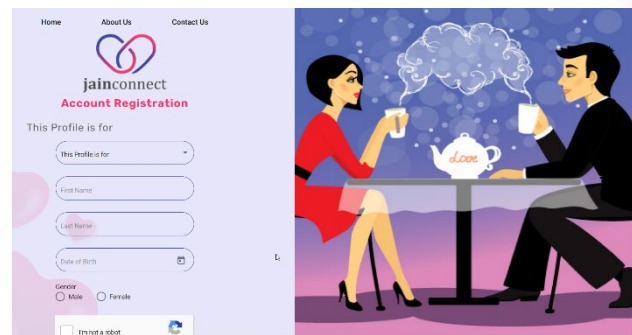
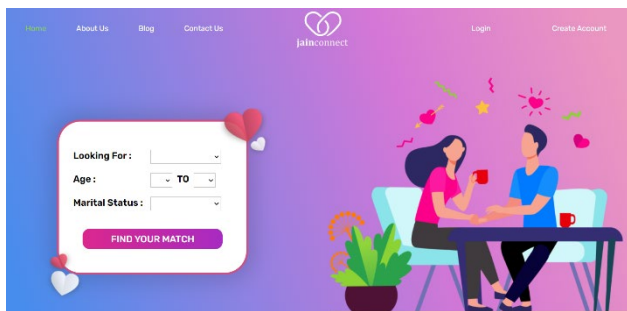


Piyush Gandhi, (BE Computer Engineering, MBA Finance), is the President of the Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago (JSMC). Over the past 13 years he has held many positions at JSMC and also chaired many committees during its 25th anniversary celebration. He has held many positions at JAINA also, including chairperson of the Jain Connect and Community Voluntary Committee. He has been an active participant in many JAINA Convention committees since 2013.

As it is said that finding Love is a wonderful thing but finding the right person can be a mystical and daunting task. At Jain Connect, we make the task easier, and a wonderful experience for you.

Jain Connect is a platform designed to help Jain singles in North America connect with each other and find their life partners. Launched during the 2019 JAINA Convention, Jain Connect quickly became the largest platform for Jain singles in North America. With 800+ profiles on its site, the searches are more relevant for North American singles.

Registering on the website allows you to perform a free basic search. In order to use features that connect you to other individuals, you will need to be a paid member. Once you become a paid member, you will be able to send your interest to another person as well as receive such interest from others. Once you accept a request, the portal enables you to communicate with the person who has shown interest in you. You can then exchange your contact info to continue your communication elsewhere or just use the portals Chat feature to communicate.



It is not just a platform for dating, but a community that allows Jain singles to connect and build relationships. By providing virtual and in-person events, Jain Connect can provide a variety of ways for people to meet and get to know each other. The success stories and growth of Jain Connect demonstrate its ability to serve Jain singles in North America, and its commitment to fostering meaningful relationships within the community. With its innovative approach Jain Connect is poised to become an even more important resource in the years to come.

We also have presence on Instagram, and Facebook and are soon going to launch our own dedicated App on Google and Apple. This will help every user with an easy way to communicate with each other. Instagram is also a great and quick way to get in touch with the Jain Connect board or to ask for any help you may need with Jain Connect.

If you are a Jain single between the age of 24 to 42 then we highly encourage you to register yourself at www.jainconnect.net. Registration is free and the paid features start at just \$5/month.

The Success Story of Jain Connect

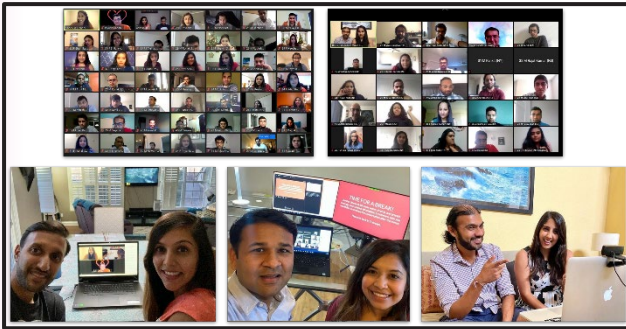
One of the things that sets Jain Connect apart from other dating platforms is the variety of ways it allows people to connect. Jain Connect provides virtual events, in-person events, and online presence both through a regular website and the upcoming app. This makes it easy for Jain singles to find events that suit their preferences and schedules.

How to Register?

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, Jain Connect adapted to the new reality and pivoted to the virtual world. We conducted nine National Virtual events in a span of 2 years, providing a safe and convenient way for singles to interact and get to know

The registration steps are very simple. Visit our website, click on "Create Account" button on the top right corner, and fill out all your information - including a picture - before you click on "Submit" button.

each other from the comfort of their homes. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we were able to celebrate three success stories between 2020 and 2021.



Jain Connect continued to innovate and grow. Our virtual events became so popular that JITO, one of the largest Jain organizations in the world, approached us to conduct a similar event for Jain Singles internationally. In 2022, we conducted an international event in collaboration with JITO. This event provided an opportunity for Jain singles from all over the world to connect and interact with each other.

As the pandemic situation improved, we started planning our first in-person event after Diwali of 2022. The challenge was to host an in-person event within 3 months. The team came together and shortlisted 4 cities. After careful evaluation of things like weather, travel connectivity, availability of public transportation, things to do nearby, and many more criteria Atlanta and LA were shortlisted. Atlanta won the coveted title of hosting the first-ever Jain Connect in-person event due to all the above factors and cost per participant.

The First In-person Singles event in Atlanta

Jain Connect's first in-person singles event in Atlanta was huge success. The event was held over the weekend of March 3 to 5, 2023 and saw a fantastic turnout of 62 participants, with 30 women and 32 men, all between the ages of 26 and 42, joining from 17 states.



The attendees came from diverse backgrounds and professions, including finance, fitness industry, medicine, entertainment, and technology. Despite their differences, everyone was united in their desire to connect with others and potentially find a romantic partner. More so, we felt that attendees were thrilled to also have a chance to dress up, let loose, and meet new people who share their values and beliefs.



To help everyone break the ice, the event featured a range of fun activities, including flash dating, Wandavision expectations, icebreaker games, Bollywood jeopardy, Family feud, escape room, and even a Bollywood dance night.



The attendees also had the privilege of hearing from Dr. Manoj Jain and Dr. Sunita Jain, who shared their invaluable life experiences with the group.



Jain Connect team is truly grateful to the Jain Society of Greater Atlanta (JSGA) without whose support the event could not have been possible. Whether it was finding local talent who can facilitate a session or arranging food or Yoga, choreography, late night snacks; JSGA was with us all steps of the way. Jain Connect is proud of the local community for supporting us in such a big way and we look forward to partnering in a similar fashion with other Jain Sanghs across the nation.

What Role should Parents Play?

JAINA gets many queries from parents who are eager to get their son/daughter get married. We understand their concern. If you are a parent that wants to help your young adults, here are some useful tips:

- You can create profile on their behalf but let them take the ownership to talk to someone they like. Please do not call a prospective girl or a boy directly without your son/daughter having first talked with them.
- Encourage your son/daughter to be active on the Jain Connect portal. Help them if needed to

narrow down their search or sensitively advise them on how to go about it.

- Encourage them to attend our Virtual and In-Person events. They are marketed to users whose profile we have on our website and via the general JAINA emails.
- Encourage them but don't pressure them to get married. Be there for them as they navigate this maze for finding their life partner.
- Give them the confidence to open-up and tell them it's ok if the opposite person does not 100% match their expectations.

Future Plans

Looking to the future, Jain Connect has a vision to conduct two in-person events every year, and one during the JAINA convention year. Once the platform is stabilized, we plan to launch a separate service for 45+ singles, recognizing that the needs and preferences of older singles may differ from those of younger singles.

In addition, we plan to launch a national WhatsApp group for parents to interact, providing a space for parents to share their experiences and insights with each other while supporting their children in their search for a life partner.

If you need more information or if you are interested in sponsoring a future Jain Connect event, please write to us at jcchair@jaina.org or call our Chair Piyush Gandhi at (630) 765-0872.

Jain Connect board also constitutes of Sheenika & Dr. Varun Gandhi as Advisors; Ketan & Neha Kuruwa, Swapnil & Sheetal Koti, and Pratik & Aksha Desai as Board Members.

Please enjoy some pictures from our past events, and if you are a single Jain, then we hope to see you at one of our events in the future.





JAINA Convention 2023 – New Exciting Updates!

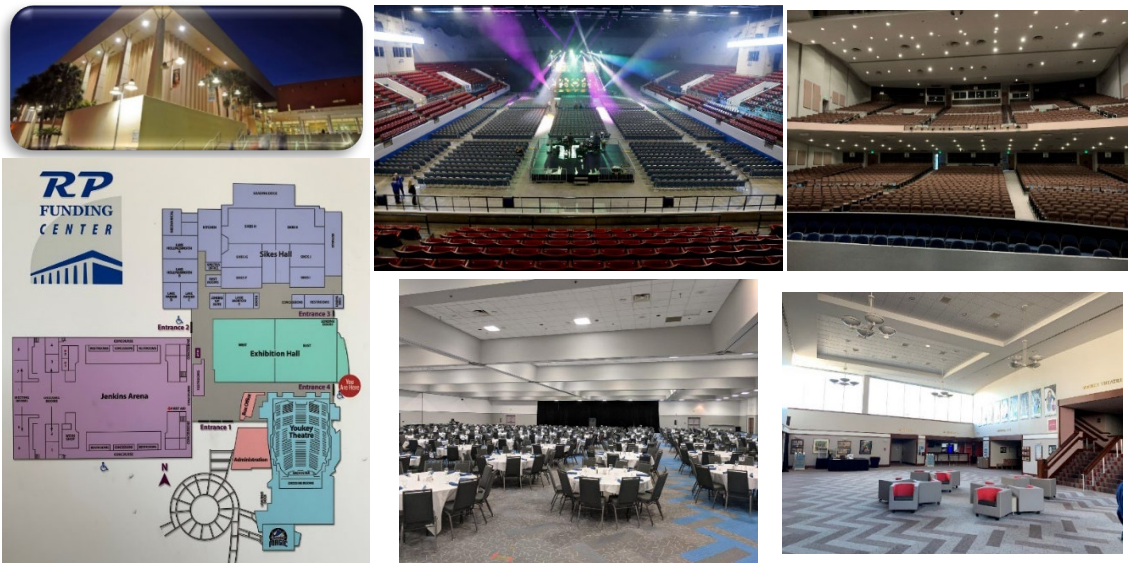
“Maximize Human Potential – The Jain Way”

The Federation of Jain Associations in North America (JAINA) will be celebrating its 22nd Convention on the Fourth of July weekend — from June 30th to July 3rd, 2023. Every two years, JAINA, in partnership with local Jain Centers, hosts a convention that brings together over 4000 guests worldwide. This year, the convention will be hosted in beautiful and serene Lakeland, Florida, between Orlando & Tampa.

Spiritual dignitaries and scholars at the convention will elaborate upon how Jainism can help humanity progress to our highest potential by conditioning our body, mind, and spirit to perpetually strive to achieve lasting inner peace and to impact our world in positive ways.

With 250+ volunteers working to make this convention a success, Convention Convener and JAINA First Vice President **Mr. Bindesh Shah** from Ft. Lauderdale is thrilled to announce the ongoing addition of new events, programs, and speakers – significantly elevating the anticipation and excitement for the Convention!

The Convention will be hosted at the RP Funding Convention Center, Lakeland, Florida, Central Florida’s premier entertainment, sports, and convention complex with over 100,000 square feet of flexible space. It is the only multipurpose facility in the state of Florida with four distinct venues under one roof. These venues include the 10,000 seat George Jenkins Arena, the 2,300 seat Youkey Theatre, the 28,000 square feet Exhibit Hall, and the 34,000 square feet Conference Center. Airport Transfers for both arrival and departure have been arranged at a subsidized rate for the convenience of all the attendees. Parking and Local Transfers between hotels and the convention center are kept complimentary.



Pictures of the Facility – RP Funding Center

Public Relations and Media Committee Chair **Mr. Vipul Shah** of Chicago is thrilled to share some exciting news about the evening entertainment and cultural programs.

Key Highlights of the Social, Educational and Entertainment Programs

- **Nem-Rajul Nrutya Natika** – a Musical Drama Cultural Program
- **मंत्र थी मोक्ष** (Mantra to Moksha) - Presentation and Recitation by Dr. Kummer Chatterjee
- **क्षमा विरस्य भुषणम** (Kshama Virasya Bhushanam) – an online presentation of Ballet on 10 lives (१०) of Tirthankar Shri Parshwanath
- **Raas Garba & Bollywood Concert** by winner of **The Voice**, **Grishma Khiste** and group
- **Jains Got Talent** - Solo and Group talent competition
- **Women Empowerment** Sessions by **Yogita Shah**, a member of **NASA** team that successfully sent the Perseverance rover to the Red Planet and by **Ruma Devi**, winner of the **Nari Shakti** award
- **NextGen Programming** includes:
 - **Jain Connect** - Age-based Guided Networking group event
 - Professional development and personality assessment events by Young Jains Professionals (YJP)
 - Jain Education and Entrepreneurship workshops by Youth Activities led by Young Jains of America (YJA)
 - Kid's Club for kids age between 6 and 8
- Professional Networking event with Panelist Speaker session followed by Professional Speed Dating
- **Sessions and discourses** by 50+ spiritual and motivational speakers and thought leaders.
- High-caliber drama depicting the life of **Gurudev Shri Chitrabhanuji**, spiritual leader who blessed the foundation of JAINA
- **Virtual Tirthdham Darshan** of 4 major Jain Tirths in India using cutting-edge drone A/V technology
- **Float Procession** during opening ceremony

Nem-Rajul Nrutya Natika – A Musical Drama Cultural Program



This is the story of the 22nd Tirthankar Bhagawān Nemināth which depicts His life events from His youth as a prince, His engagement to princess Rajul, his marriage procession (१८५५ ५२५०११), his compassion towards animals and His instant change of heart, resulting in His denouncing the world and taking Diksha. This is the story of Raag and Virag, Eternal Love and Renunciation. This dance drama is entertaining, yet thought provoking, which incorporates nine dances and many drama characters.

Nem-Rajul Nrutya Natika, presented by JAINA, is produced by Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago in collaboration with various Sanghs of North America.

Mantra to Moksha

When two rivers merge it is called Sangam; but the confluence of three rivers is called Prayaag. Music is the confluence of three rivers Sur, Laya and Taal. (melody, tempo, rhythm). Dr. Kummer Chatterjee blends mastery in music and unflinching devotion to the almighty, projecting a picture of an immensely likable attitude and a calmness that overwhelms his personality. Shree Kummer ji will take us to the journey of Moksha through the Power of Mantra!



Kshama Virasya Bhushanam

After a grand success from last convention in 2021 through presentation of Mahavir Ek Alokik Katha, we bring this ballet for this convention depicting the story of 10 Lives of Shree Parshwanath Bhagwan – Kshama Virasya Bhushanam! A Video Presentation of captivating stories, explicit lyrics, melodious music & dance.



Keynote Speakers



Sri Guru Ratna Prabhu



Sri Sri Ravi Shankar



Dr. Sudhir Jain

Enlightening discourses, discussion tracks and activities planned at this Convention will offer attendees a deeper understanding of Jain principles and values while also helping our communities maximize their potential.

Spiritual Scholars



Acharya Lokesh Muni



Acharya Praman Sagarji



Acharya Vijayratna Suriji



Gurudev Namramuniji



Acharya Chandanaji



Sadhvi Shilapiji



Dr. Samani Chaitanya Pragya



Samani Him Pragya



Atmarpit Rajuji



Shaileshi Didi Ajmera



Samani Jin Pragya



Samani Kshanti Pragya



Sadhvi Sanghmitraji



Pt Champakbhai Mehta

Session Speakers



Dr. Jitendra B. Shah



Pt Mahesh Jain



Ankit Shah



SP Bharill



Narendra Nandu



Dr. Kумmar Chatterjee



Rahul Kapoor Jain



Dr. Bipin Doshi



Jinay Shah



Dr. Pradip Jamnadas



Shantilal Gulecha



Dr. Ruma Devi



Priti Shah



Yogita Shah



Dr. Darshan Mehta



Dr. Mukesh Lathia



Sharmila Oswal



Anop Vora



Dr. Sejal Shah



Dr. Shobha Vardhaman



Dr. Girish Mehta



Pankaj Shah



Lalit Kapoor



Dr. Pritesh Mutha



Preeti Jain



Laxmi Jain



Cogen Bohanec



Ellen Gough



JAINA President **Mr. Haresh Shah** of Delaware is proud to announce the Maha Sanghpati for this convention as **Drs. Kiran C. & Pallavi Patel - an Indian-American philanthropist, serial entrepreneur, hotelier, and cardiologist.** The Drs. Kiran C. and Pallavi Patel Family Foundation focuses on bettering the world through health, education, and culture. The impact of their extraordinary generosity is evident across the globe, particularly in Florida, India, and Africa. While actively initiating projects, Drs. Patel also respond in times of need.

Along with Maha Sanghpati, there are many sponsors and supporters for this convention including Sanghpati, Maha-Rathi, Corporate sponsors, Souvenir sponsors, Swamivatsalya sponsors, Temple sponsors, Sponsors for various events for entertainment, nextGen, and speakers' sessions. **Mr. Haresh Shah, Mr. Bindesh Shah,** and immediate past president of JAINA **Mr. Mahesh Wadher** extended heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to all the donors, sponsors, supporters, and well-wishers.

JAINA convention 2023 is an invitation to all who aspire to maximize potential to improve, influence, and inspire others, to address the problem of modern times using the modern-day tools available to us, the Jain way. Since opening the registration on August 18th, over 2,000 attendees have already registered for the convention. Come join us! With our collective wisdom, we will dream and create a nonviolent future of Love, Peace, and Collaboration. Your presence and participation will strengthen our interconnection as we walk on this resilient path to peace that we build together.

For additional information about this convention and to register, please visit us online at: www.jainaconvention.org

For more information contact:
Mr. Vipul Shah

Shri Premacharyaji: The Inspiring Sadguru

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 Param Pujya Pappaji at Shrimad Rajchandra Aatma Tatva Research Centre, Parli, Near Mumbai.

Spirituality teaches us that we are born with a supreme purpose: to know ourselves as souls and to realize the union of our soul with Bhagwan. The first step toward this goal is to understand who we are. Unless and until we do so, we cannot move toward our destination. To experience our soul and to make progress toward our goal, it is critical that we find a spiritual Master who has unraveled the mystery of life and who can guide us on the inner spiritual journey that leads us to our goal. With the guidance of a spiritual Master, we can learn to reach the inner realms to experience our soul.



This is a humble attempt to briefly record the magnanimous journey of a Param Purush, who has been an inspirational SADGURU for many and helped me understand the depth of his *purusharth*, compassion, love, peace, and gyaan. Born on December 11, 1926, Shri Pravinchandra Mehta, was well known as Premacharyaji among *mumukshus*. He was an enlightened Master, a spiritual visionary, and an ardent devotee of Shrimad Rajchandra. Fondly known as Param Pujya Pappaji and Pujyashree, his glance radiated love. His presence was enveloped with peace, love, and purity, and his discourse was a call to realize one's true nature. Following the spiritual path according to the principles of Jainism, his insights were not limited to a tradition or set of beliefs. His divine love and compassion reached the depths

of our hearts, and all pain, and suffering. Tapping into the qualities of our soul, his limitless ocean of love, he filled me with joy, bliss, and happiness. As I experienced a little soulful joy every day in the midst of worldly life, my faith in HIM and the existence of the soul strengthened, and HE helped me awaken to a new understanding of dharma and soul. Amazed at his generosity, love, and compassion, gradually my vision changed, and I began to see the oneness of HIS and my soul.

Early Life

In 1950-55, he started a successful business in the sugar and chemical industries in Kanpur. At the age of 25, he established India's first zinc chloride factory under the name of Asiatic Group of Companies. Due to his business acumen, Asiatic Group of Companies expanded and opened 11 different factories producing zinc chloride in different parts of India. He started receiving fame as a dynamic, smart, man of principles in the manufacturing world of business due to his three guiding principles: maintaining superior quality of the product, practicing the right code of conduct, and using intelligence in the correct and creative manner.

Spiritual Pursuit

His astonishing thought process and contemplative nature inspired his curiosity to research the science or mystery behind his success. This research presented him with three questions: Is this success due to intelligence or hard work? Or is this success because of his destiny? Or is this success because of God's grace? These questions drew his attention to spirituality and opened the doors for him. His search for a spiritual master ended when he saw Bhogilal G. Sheth's face while doing aradhana sitting in front of Krupaludev's *chitrapat* in Deolali mandir. Bhogilal Sheth, fondly known as "Baapuji", was an ardent devotee of Krupaludev. After that incident, under

Baapuji's guidance, Param Pujya Pappaji started reading Vachanamrut and contemplating on the deep meaning of each word in it. The true meaning of a soul's journey to *moksh marg* started revealing itself to him in the way it would reveal itself to a Spiritual Master.

Revolutionary Thinker

His new spiritual soul was born as a result of his in-depth study and ponderings on the topic of the "science of karma". He did not blindly follow a religion but conducted his own experiments and became a follower based on the results of his own experiences and research. He strongly believed that *Bhagwan's* spiritual pursuits and his experiments on *jad* and *chetan* applied to the whole world and that it is the reason behind the ultimate peace and purity of every human being. He was a revolutionary thinker who recognized that all humans are essentially composed of matter.

***"Knowing oneself is pure gyaan,
purifying that gyaan more is true dharma"***
- Param Pujya Pappaji

His revolutionary and sweeping statement, "people know Mr. Mahavir, and not Bhagwan Mahavir!" left the world surprised and shocked. What people did not see beyond his idol was Bhagwan's inner journey to attain moksha. But it inspired *mumukshus* to look at Jain religion in a different light. He was hailed as a champion of humanism. However, a little-known aspect of his philosophy is its distinct "socio-spiritual" tradition. This tradition has profound lessons in chartering a path of sustainable development, especially in the face of the current socio-economic crisis facing the underprivileged (especially women and children). Pappaji's understanding of the socioeconomic and spiritual constructs of society gave way to a three-pronged approach to help the underprivileged — social equity, employment for all, and economic well-being. His limitless compassion (*karuna*) for all living beings filled me with inspiration to engage in selfless SEWA.

Param Krupalu Dev's Devotee

It was love at first sight for him when he saw Krupalu Dev's *chitrapat* (picture). He spent his life doing

Krupaludev's bhakti and absorbed the essence of each of his sermons, letters, and teachings. He would spend hours in meditation and reading Vachanamrut (written by Krupaludev) to get an in-depth knowledge of *tatva* (element named soul). He would sit in front of Krupaludev's *chitrapat* and spend hours looking and talking to the *chitrapat* to get answers to his unresolved questions.

***"The more you read and know Krupaludev,
the more your ability to love all living
beings."***
- Param Pujya Pappaji

Pujyashree's modesty and humility were visible when he would always tell his followers to not call him sadguru but only consider Krupaludev Shrimad Rajchandra as the only Guru. He considered himself merely a *nimitt* (means to reach) or a guide to help discover one's true self.

Inspirational Teachings & Loving Guidance

An enlightened discoverer of the self, Pujyashri's contribution to the world through his revolutionary words and teachings touched people's lives as they experienced peace and happiness deep within. He has explained unique and amazing mysteries of the principles related to the concept of God (*Ishwar tatva*) in simple and easy-to-understand language. His spiritual discourses are available on satshrut.vitraagvigyaan.org and books and CD are disbursed through Spiritual Impressions Pvt. Ltd. The light of his extensive spiritual knowledge (gyaan) can be seen in some of the books like: *Mahaveer na bodh ne paatra kon*, *Apoorv Vichaar*, *Paribhraman ni Sampoon aahooti*, etc.

For the people to experience the presence of soul in their body through the science of *Vitraag Vigyaan* (science of detachment through attachment) and to spread the elements of Jin, he planted the seed of Shrimad Rajchandra Aatma Tatva Research Center, Rajnagar, Parli (Maharashtra).

His love and care for each *mumukshu* were evident in several of his meetings with them. *Mumukshus* would travel from all over India to meet him and get his darshan. He would always find time to meet them and would even make late-night phone calls and video calls with *mumukshus* residing abroad (even at

midnight) at the age of 90. His strength (*virya gun*) was tremendous at this age. Another instance of *virya* is that despite Pappaji's severe back pain, we could never see a single sign of stress or pain in his voice. He would conduct *satsangs* and continue with his meetings wearing his smile.

His teachings were a source of inspiration for all the *mumukshus* as they increased their self-awareness and motivated them to contemplate and discover the new mysteries of SELF. His devotion towards Shrimad Rajchandra was unsurpassed and opened the doors to practicing *maitri, pramod, karuna, and madhyasthata* with all living beings regardless of their faith and origin. He never encouraged *mumukshus* to blindly follow *jin tatva* but would always tell them to, "think, experience, and then develop faith in *tatva gyaan*." With his subtle and extensive *gyaan* (knowledge), Premacharyaji became a source of inspiration for the current modern youth.

***"Stress does not change destiny,
but contemplation does change destiny"***
- Param Pujya Pappaji

I would always get a sense of peace, love, and calm in his presence at the ashram. Sometimes a loving glance, blessings with his hand, or "it will be done" or "have patience and it will happen soon," or "just do the *bhaav* and it will happen" would change a person's life. This was enough support and direction for a *mumukshu* to walk in worldly life with confidence. This selfless quality of love can be seen in Pappaji. Once when I told him that I missed him a lot, he responded saying "when one soul misses another soul, it is because there is a connection between the two hearts/souls and it is natural for us to cry when we miss them."

Compassionate Humanitarian Services

His compassion was limitless. Regardless of people's caste or religion, out of his kindness he started the ashram amidst the tribal (*adivasi*) population with the intent of uplifting women, educating children, and providing free medical services to them. Parli was one of the most backward & undeveloped tribal belts of Maharashtra, with a lack of even basic Medical Infrastructure and Facilities in the area. He started Shree Raj Educational Centre's school at Parli with

the intent to endow the children there with the best formal education to make them independent and confident individuals. He also started Shramik Naari Sangh (Sa-Ni-Sa) for the economic empowerment of underprivileged and needy women to enable them to earn a livelihood, run their families and become independent. He provided training and employment opportunities to them. He strove to protect the interests of the most marginalized and vulnerable sections of society.

His love for humanity shows through all the projects he has initiated to help the rural villagers in need. He also initiated Raj Roti Centers throughout various cities where poor people are given a meal at a small token price. All these initiatives were not required or necessary, but it is with the vision of Pappaji to spread love and peace to all as every *jeev* is an *aatma* and his unique love for all can be seen.

***"If the state of soul does not progress by
practicing religion,
then one should understand that they do not
have complete faith, but they are practicing
religion out of habit."***
- Param Pujya Pappaji

Param Pujya Pappaji's deh vilay - End of an era

Param Pujya Pappaji left his body at Parli Research Center on February 17, 2023 at the age of 97 years for Devlok. Knowing that the body had to be used only for the upliftment of the soul, this pure soul only focused on knowing his soul. He spent his life guiding worldly souls (worn out due to worldly miseries) *atma dharma, runanubandh* (bondage due to debt from the past life), and the true understanding of karma theory through love, affection, and compassion. An ocean of compassion inspiring humanity to seek self-realization, Pappaji was a 21st century spiritual visionary, while practicing *vitraagta*. Spiritual expeditions with him always uplifted our enthusiasm and re-kindled our spirits. He was like an expert gardener who taught us how to tend to the seeds of our soul, so we can blossom into the spectacular flowers that we are meant to be.

***"Doing purusharth with the goal of
upliftment of soul in mind is a true Jain."***
- Param Pujya Pappaji

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.

The first-generation Jain immigrants to the US – those who arrived in the US between 1965 and 1975 as students and remained in the US have all by now retired. Most of them have done well financially. They have provided their children with a first-class education, created temples, Jain Sanghs, and many social organizations. They have earned the respect of their colleagues and their neighbors. As a group, they are enjoying their golden years and basking in the success of their children and grandchildren.

People in this blessed group of Jains are of two worlds. They have achieved the “American Dream” of hard work leading to the good life without forgetting their roots. Their Indian upbringing colors their American citizenship. They have not forgotten their childhood, their parents, and the modest circumstances they came from. There is a soft corner in their heart for the land of their birth and a nostalgia for the SANSKARS they inherited.

One of the Sanskars Jains are born with is their generosity. Back home, Jains though a small minority in India, are known as the honest, highest taxpayers and most charitable people. This proclivity to pay back to society has earned them the honor of being called MAHAJAN or BADJATIYA. This article is a tribute to a few individual humanitarians of North America who deserve to be recognized for their philanthropic endeavors in India.

1) Arvinbhai and Jayaben Shah

Arvinbhai and Jayaben from Detroit, Michigan, are the owners of a well-known, very successful travel agency - JAYA Travel. Jayaben is also known in India in the rehab medicine field. It all started in 2001.

The earthquake that hit Kutch on January 26, 2001, devastated Bhuj. 13,500 lives were lost, and 21,000 injuries were reported. Hundreds of nearby villages were flattened. Over one million structures were damaged or destroyed, including many historic buildings and tourist attractions. The quake destroyed around 40% of homes, eight schools, two hospitals and 4 km of road in Bhuj, and partly destroyed the city's Swaminarayan temple and historic forts. The Bidada hospital was one of the only structures that

was not damaged. Overnight it became the relief center of the region. The hospital saved countless lives and continues to serve the victims of the quake to this day without any fee. For those who lost their lives, their stories ended, but for those who lost their limbs, the tragedy had just begun. In Kutch, as in most of rural India, there are no Rehab centers. The earthquake highlighted an urgent need for one and the trustees of the Bidada Hospital started looking for donors to fund a rehab center. Their appeal reached the ears of Jayaben and Arvinbhai.



Jayaben was born in Mumbai, but her family hails from Bidada. Her parents routinely helped the only private hospital in the district: Bidada Sarvodaya Trust Hospital. In 2004 Jayaben and Arvinbhai stepped forward and became the main donor for the building housing JAYA Rehabilitation Institute and Research Center. The Rehab Center currently treats 70,000 patients per year. Most are charged a token fee but many of these patients are treated free if they are not able to pay. The center also receives some donations, but the annual deficits are borne by Jayaben and Arvinbhai.

In 2017, the couple opened a small rehab center at the RMD Hospital at Girivihar Trust of Palitana. The center was expanded last year to 5,000 sq ft facility. Today it has many departments like Physiotherapy, Speech and audiology, Occupational Therapy, and Prosthetics. It provides free help to about 70 patients daily, including children and many of our sadhus and

Sadhvis. Total operational cost of the center is funded by Jayaben and Arvinbhai as all the services are provided free. Patients come from as far as 160 km as this is the only rehab facility in Saurashtra. Patients arriving at the Palitana train or bus station are provided with subsidized transportation to the rehab facility. Plans are to introduce robotics for therapies as more space is made available to the rehab center. Jayaben and Arvinbhai are presently considering opening a third rehab center at Shankheshwar.



JAYA Rehab Center Main Building Kutch

Dr. Mukesh Doshi, director of JAYA Rehab is the backbone of both locations of JAYA Rehab. At March 2023 Indian Council of Medical Research & Global Assistive Devices Expo conference held in New Delhi, recognized Dr. Doshi as one of the best personalities in Rehabilitation Management.

Interestingly, Jaya Rehab is the pioneer in India for animal rehab also. They developed prosthetics for birds and animals, and their new technology was licensed free of charge to the Bhagwam Mahavir Viklang Sahayata Samiti of Jaipur founded by Dr. D R Mehta. They have crafted prosthetics for turkeys and exported the know-how to the US.

The couple is the silent receiver of thousands of blessings of patients who have nowhere to turn to.

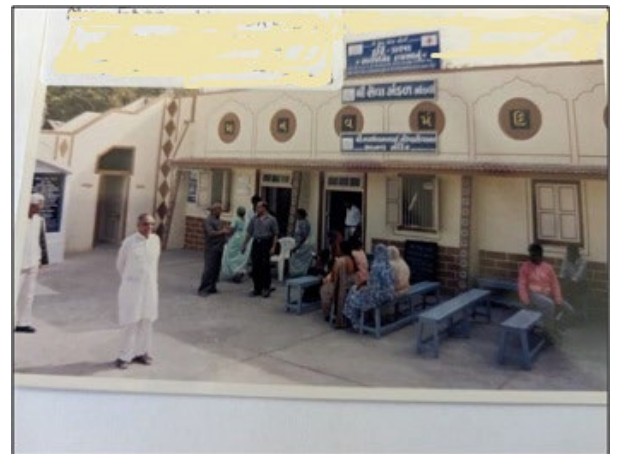
2) Dr. Dhirajbhai Shah

When Dr. Dhirajbhai Shah arrived in the US in 1970, he had two things on his mind. The topmost desire was to protect his precious Indian culture and the second was a concern – how will he pay back the taxpayers of India who had invested hundreds of thousands of Rupees for his Medical Education.

The opportunity to address his first concern arrived just five months after his arrival in the US. The US Military tried to draft him for service in the war in Vietnam. Due to his birth in a Jain faith and his firm belief in Non-Violence he refused to go to Vietnam

and sought exemption. The military had not heard of Jain faith and denied his appeal. Dhirajbhai was forced to go to court. It took two years and help from Shri Chitrabhanuji's books to convince the judge to grant him the Conscientious Objector status. The Judge ordered the military that it can not press into service any Jain, indeed anyone, who is a firm believer in non-violence.

As to his second concern, the opportunity arrived in 2003. He lost his parents Harilal and Prabhaben in 2002. Dhirajbhai decided to start a free clinic in their memory in the town of their birth birthplace, Mandvi. The clinic was named "**Hari-Prabha Clinic**". It has two doctors, and they see about 100 patients a day (30,000 a year). There is also a pathology lab serving about 50 patients per day for various investigations. All of this is free to all the patients. The clinic is supervised by the trustees of a local Seva Mandal. Even medicine is provided free to the patients who need it.



In 2023, the 20th Anniversary of the clinic, Dhirajbhai organized a 15-day medical camp for full body checkups for people at no cost to them. About 700 people took advantage of the camp. Surprisingly, 33% of patients had medical conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or kidney disease that they were not even aware of. They were called back, and the doctors advised them of the dangers they were facing and provided proper guidance and medications. Dhirajbhai intends to organize such medical camps every year. Dhirajbhai does not think he has paid back his debt to the taxpayers who footed bills for his education; but just the interest on the investment his countrymen made in him.

3) Dilip and Ranjan Punatar

Dilip Punatar, an industrial Engineer in Dayton, Ohio with 30 years of program and project management experience with the United States Air Force, retired in 2016 and moved with his wife Ranjan to Dallas, Texas. Together they founded Global Life Texas to promote and support women empowerment, Thalassemia testing among young, and support tree planting in Gujarat. As an active member of Jain Society of North Texas, they led planning for various programs in the Senior Forum. They also became active members of the local Gujarati Senior Samaj. In other words, Punatar were thoroughly enjoying their retirement years. But fate had some special plans.



Early in 2022, someone they did not know called from India. He introduced himself as Ashok Sukhadia, the newly appointed Principal of Devgam High school. This intrigued Dilipbhai. Devgam is a small village in the Amreli District of Gujarat and Dilipbhai's hometown; but he was never a student at that high school. How and why did the caller find him?

Ashokbhai explained that after a long search, he was able to locate him. He was the only student from Devgam who had settled in the US, and they need help. It turned out to be a long conversation. After carefully listening to the principal, Dilipbhai and Ranjanben decided to help. What Dilipbhai learned was that his old high school, built in 1983 was the only one in the six surrounding villages and it needed major repairs. The rainwater was leaking through cracks in the ceiling and the building was declared unsafe. As a precaution and a temporary plan, all 130 students, eight teachers, and couple of staff were moved to Devgam primary school. The school board made the list of repairs needed and obtained

estimates. The education committee started looking for potential donors from several big cities but could not even collect half the amount needed for patchwork and repairs. A structural engineer was called for a second opinion. He gave them unwelcome news. The entire structure was so weak that it needed to be demolished. Even the foundation was so weak that it could not support the new roof. The school board was in shock. The financial challenge seemed unbeatable. Besides, the whole world was just recovering from Covid -19 pandemic.

That is when the newly hired principal started looking overseas for help and discovered a native son in Texas. Dilipbhai and Ranjanben decided to give as much assistance as possible for the construction of a new school building from their retirement savings. The couple insisted on the best quality construction, making the entire facility accessible to physically challenged students with wheelchairs and construct several ramps for them. They selected the best quality shower, toilets, and other plumbing fixtures. They revised the traffic flow, added doors for entry and exit, windows for adequate lighting and flow of fresh air throughout. One classroom was designated as a smart class with access to WIFI and added digital screens in other classrooms. Ceiling fans were everywhere, including the hallways. Finally, the new building was up. Dilipbhai and Ranjanben attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony held on November 20, 2022. Their two adult sons Haren and Ankit flew in from Texas and attended the school opening.



The surrounding village students had to walk over 10 km distances in rain, cold and summer heat to attend the only high school in the region. As girls grew older, parents worried about their safety, and girls' dropout rate was on the rise. To provide better safety and reduce girls' dropout rate, both Punatar sons committed to providing a brand-new bus.

The author has a few more examples to cite and invites readers to forward other examples of donors' activities in India. (To be continued..)

To Admire – A True Jain Value

By Dr. Palakh Jain and Aditi Jain



Dr. Palakh Jain is an Associate Professor in the School of Management at Bennett University in Uttar Pradesh, India. A Fellow of IIM- Ahmedabad in Economics area and alumni of Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, Palakh was awarded Junior Research Fellowship by the UGC in 2005. She has been chosen as the "Exclusive 20 Emerging Female Leaders" from India by "Women in The World Foundation", New York.



Aditi Jain is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP)® with 20 years of experience across fortune 500 companies, the development sector, international universities, and global start-ups in India and abroad. Presently, as Head of the International Relations and Corporate Outreach Office, she provides strategic direction for setting up and expansion of Bennett University's (BU's) social responsibility vertical and international office.

Today a Jain scholar told me that he used to admire a Padma Awardee Jain individual (names not mentioned for confidentiality). "Admire" – the word stuck a chord! I reflected on the word and my reflection yielded that "to admire" is a true Jain value.

From childhood, in Jain families, we are taught to look at the *gunas* (good qualities) of others. I remember one of my Jain students mentioning to me that he doesn't like college as everyone is criticizing the other and, in his family, he has been taught that one should not criticize. I realized that day that he is a true Jain. Every individual is blessed with both good and bad qualities. However, it is in the hands of the other person to view the good or the bad quality.

I recall a story from Mahabharata: both Yudhishtar and Duryodhan were asked to roam in village. The former was told to find a bad person and the latter was asked to go and search for a good person. They both went to the same village and at the same time. Upon their return, Yudhishtar said he could not find a single bad person as all were good people. On the other hand, Duryodhan said, he could not find a single good person. The difference in opinions is because a human mind mirror what they have inside them.

Just as an experiment – try two things: criticize and admire. You will realize that you feel terrible when you criticize as it is a sort of 'himsa'. On the other hand, when you admire someone, you feel joy within, and your heart

expands. Scientifically also it has been proven that good hormones are secreted when you admire someone, and the not-so-good ones are secreted when you criticize someone.

The title of the article is "To Admire; A True Jain Value: according to Jains, their Gods (Jinas) are the ones having infinite qualities. In bhakti, a devotee admires the qualities of God as it is said that what you see in others come to you. To become God (the ultimate aim of Jains) one needs to imbibe the qualities that God has. It is only possible if one starts seeing the divinity in other human beings.



Admiration triggers positive emotions like appreciation and empathy which in Jain Bhavana is known as "Pramod Bhavana" (Feeling of Appreciation)

In Pramod bhavana, we admire the success of our friends, spiritual leaders and Arihants. It guides us to recognize, regard, and respect others' virtues. This Bhavana harnesses love

and empowers us to channelize everything good in life. The practice of Pramod is feeling as well as action-oriented and instrumental in developing the virtues such as compassion, friendship, appreciation, and equanimity which are necessary for one's spiritual growth. Appreciation implies deep respect for the intrinsic worth of every human being. It replaces a mindset of scarcity with abundance which in turn leads to that beautiful feeling of gratitude for everything you have.



Rejoicing (admiring) the virtue starts sprouting the same in our heart. However, admiration should be with a purpose to cultivate that virtue being admired. The inner feeling should be 'I wish I had that virtue'. If it's an object such as a painting or a location with natural beauty, we should have high regard for it with heartfelt appreciation. It must not be just a formality or a show-off. We grow towards what we admire. It strengthens our ability to grow that virtue.

The essence of Jainism lies in the element of admiration. As a matter of fact, the Jain prayers are the admiration of the virtues or the guṇa (the good qualities) of the gods, teachers, and the saints. Namokar mantra, the most

significant and profound mantra is the symbol of deep respect towards spiritual beings.

Kabir Das ji, the greatest Indian mystic poet and saint said –

बुरा जो देखन मैं चला, बुरा न मिलिया कोय
जो दिल खोजा आपना, मुझसे बुरा न कोय

Looking for vices all around, such vices nowhere I found.

Introspecting deep revealed, those vices does me surround.

Kabir says that instead of finding fault in others, retrospection of one's own self will reveal that the fault lies with our own perceptions and mindsets. But if one chooses to love, appreciate and be compassionate it would enhance his spiritual intelligence and drive him to connect with the Infinite.

In the materialistic, we idealize the person who is the expert in the field we want to excel in e.g. an aspiring cricketer will admire Sachin Tendulkar and epitomize him. In order to become a better human being, it is important to avoid the superficial and admire the goodness of others to avoid becoming acquisitive.

While we keep aspiring to achieve the life goals we forget the basic values of appreciation, love, admiration, respect, and gratitude that make us a better person and paves the path to achieving that higher goal in life we were all born for. It's time for us to reach out to our roots and be receptive to all the goodness around us and discover the world of boundless joy.

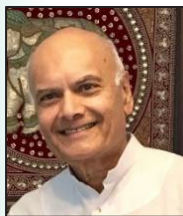
To quote Voltaire, the French Enlightenment writer, historian, and philosopher "*Appreciation is a wonderful thing: It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.*"

PRAMOD BHAVANA – FEELING OF APPRECIATION

In this bhavana, we admire the success of our friends, spiritual leaders, and the Arihants. One of the most destructive forces in our lives is jealousy. However, friendship combined with the admiration, destroys jealousy. As jealousy subsides, negative impulses are turned into positive ones, and in due time, we will be at peace.

Transformation through Forgiveness

By Ramesh K Khandhar



Ramesh Khandhar is a former secretary of 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. In addition, his special interest is reading and contemplating Jain scriptures, listening to spiritual discourses, enjoying solitude, and writing spiritual articles in 'Divya Dhvani' and in Jain Digest magazines. Currently, he is serving as Section Editor and Advisor of Jain Digest. (ramesh.khandhar@gmail.com)

What is Forgiveness?

Enlightened teachers of every faith have exemplified a willingness to let go of anger, resentment, and vengeance toward those who have harmed them. Forgiveness is often defined as an individual, voluntary internal process of letting go of feelings and thoughts of resentment, bitterness, anger, and the need for retribution toward someone who we believe has wronged us, including ourselves.

In forgiveness, we replace negative emotions such as hurt, anger, resentment, and vengefulness with positive emotions like empathy, compassion, sympathy, and altruistic love. We move away from those negative feelings and no longer dwell on the wrong-doing. This shift in emotions is much harder and takes longer, as it is common for those feelings to return on a regular basis. Forgiveness can be viewed as a two-step process; acknowledge the hurt & commit to get rid of the hurt, and the second step will be to implement the decision. The second step is for our own benefit. The changes in thoughts, motivations, or behavior will often follow the changes in emotions.

Why to Forgive?

Forgiving others heals our heart by not reacting to their wrong behavior or hurtful action. It helps remove obstacles to our inner peace. Our quality of life improves. It facilitates our spiritual progress. Our decision to forgive reflects trust in ourselves. When life hits us hard, it is a very

effective medicine for healing deep wounds. It helps us to free up the energy that was used to hold on to negative emotions of hate and anger. That free energy can now be used for a better purpose.

Following are a few important points about the benefits of forgiveness and how to practice it.

1) Letting go empowers us

When we forgive and let go of our past conditioning, we stop giving energy to feelings of vengeance and instead refocus our attention and time on what we truly desire. Most of us have a habit of creating an attitude based on what happened to us in the past. The mind inherently operates from the past. This is a highly dysfunctional way of living life because it does not allow us to move forward with a clean slate and make spiritual progress.



If we cling to our past, then our future will carry the same "essence", and our life will move in

circles with nothing new or creative coming in. We must stop focusing on these feelings and refocus on things that matter. Time is a precious resource; therefore, we should be aware of its use in the right direction.

Most people want to let go of their past but want to retain their identity which comes from the past – this is not possible. We must let go of our identities by growing our awareness, and be willing to come completely fresh to life, in a very innocent way.

2) Forgiveness helps raise our vibration energy level

Our energy is sacred and precious, which is why it is important that we spend it wisely on things that serve us the most. When we do not forgive, we are essentially holding on to negative emotions of hate and anger that drain our energy and lower our vibration. When we forgive, we free up all that energy that can now be used for a better purpose. Also, the more energy we have available the higher our vibration will be.



3) Life is always in this moment

Most people don't realize that life is always just the "now". There is no past or future in life, just this one moment called the now. All vices such as prejudice, animosity, jealousy, revenge attitude, etc. are due to hurt in the past. We hold all hurtful attributes(vices) to get back at some

people who were instrumental in hurting us. This prevents us from living in 'now', the present moment. Additionally, it holds us back from the spiritual path.

If we don't color the present moment by past conditioning and surrender to the 'now', we will move effortlessly forward on the right path. Forgiveness helps dissolve the past conditioning harbored in the subconscious mind. It gradually reprograms the subconscious mind by changing the negative emotions and thoughts into positive ones as well as our reactive behavior into responsive ones. It empowers the conscious mind to move forward and paves the way to a spiritual path leading to enlightenment. Nisargadatta Maharaj used to say, "When you board a train, would you still carry your luggage on your head, or would you rather put it down and enjoy the journey?" Forgiving helps us to get rid of the negative baggage and move forward. Only when we 'forgive and forget', our subconscious mind will not carry that hurtful baggage, realize inner peace & calm which will help us progress on a spiritual path.

In the forgiveness process we must focus on what we can control in the here and now. The intent is not to change the person who hurt us in the past. It is all about changing our life by bringing us peace, happiness, compassion, and equanimity which results in emotional and spiritual healing. True forgiveness will take away the power the other person continues to have in our life.

4) Forgiveness helps us develop inner strength

Forgiveness is not for the meek. It takes a lot of guts and inner strength to let go of our anger than to hold on to it. It is difficult in the beginning, but the more we forgive, the stronger we become from within and gradually it becomes natural and effortless. There is an old Buddhist saying, 'one who angers you, controls you.' And this is so

true. When we are hurt and angry, we spend countless hours, even days, thinking of the event/person responsible. We lose our peace of mind to the person or the incident, so much so that we cannot even sleep properly. When we forgive the negative emotions associated with that incident will gradually dissolve. This leaves us feeling more peaceful and calmer.

As we become more forgiving, the fountain of inner energy starts flowing in our actions and makes us more cheerful, blissful and leads us to a spiritual path. We move in the direction of lasting change. Studies have shown that forgiving others produces strong psychological benefits. In addition to decreasing depression, anxiety, and unhealthy anger, it leads to psychological healing. It is something we extend toward another person, because we recognize that it is the best response to the situation. We develop the habit to forgo the victim thought, "Why has this happened to me?" in favor of the growth mindset which says, "I choose to use this for my good."

5) Forgiveness frees us from the karmic loop

Many times, we get stuck mentally resisting what has already occurred. Thoughts such as, "This should not have happened. My friend should have known that would hurt my feelings. If she loved me, she would not behave in such a way. I am the victim of this situation. I did not deserve this," poison the mind with resistance to the past event. Failure to assume responsibility for our attitude and action nurtures the habit of blaming others for our current situation.

The understanding of karma theory helps us stop such thinking and come out of a vicious karmic loop. The karmic principles state that whatever happens to us is because of our own karma and others are just incidental in that event. This understanding makes us more forgiving. We learn to accept what has happened. The attitude

of "forgive and forget" frees us from the karmic loop. We make a conscious effort not to talk disparagingly about those who've hurt us. This helps us to release ourselves from all attachment and aversion and move toward attracting the right type of people supporting our spiritual goal

6) Forgiveness and empathy go hand-in-hand

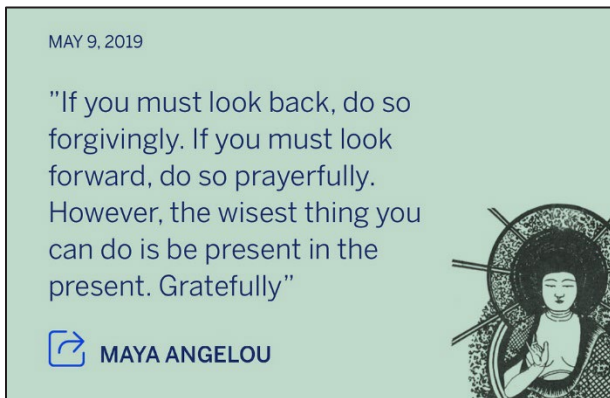
Scientists have shown that when we forgive someone, it increases the activity in the neural circuits responsible for empathy. And it is also true that an empathetic person tends to forgive others easily. Sometimes pride and power can weaken our efforts to forgive by making us feel entitled and inflated, so that we hang onto our resentment as a noble cause. When we realize such imperfections in ourselves, we can understand others better and empathize with them, which makes it easier to forgive. Also, when we refrain from talking negatively about those who have hurt us, our heart and mind becomes more forgiving.

Often the root cause of not being able to forgive is because we are in some form of emotional pain. It may be anxiety, depression, anger, lack of trust, self-loathing or low self-esteem, an overall negative worldview, and a lack of confidence in one's ability to change. All of these harms can be alleviated by developing the virtue of forgiveness. Hence, it's important to identify the kind of pain we are suffering from, so that we can acknowledge and act on it. The more hurt we have incurred, the more important it is to forgive, at least for the purpose of experiencing emotional healing.

7) Being grateful helps in forgiving others

There's a beautiful quote from Khalil Gibran, who wrote 'The Prophet': 'I have learned silence from the talkative; tolerance from the intolerant; and kindness from the unkind. Yet strangely I am ungrateful to these teachers.' We therefore need

to realize that the people we have conflict with are our teachers. They become instrumental in awakening us from wrong beliefs/perceptions. We can experience more peace when we remember to be grateful in these often-trying moments. We will not waste our energy through negative emotions of hate and anger about past events. This will open the door to reflect on past events, learn valuable lessons from our past and make that the steppingstone to our spiritual path.



8) Forgiveness is all about being aware

The word 'awareness' is multifaceted. It means being aware of who we really are; it means being aware of our own beliefs and shortcomings, it means being aware of other people's feelings, point-of-view, etc. In order to be able to forgive, we need to develop all these facets of awareness. The person who does not have such awareness will hold on to feelings of hate, resentment, and anger because they are essentially one with their beliefs, their conditioning.

Awareness helps us to consciously look at our thoughts and beliefs which then leads to developing virtues such as humility and forgiveness. Just like meditation, forgiveness expands our conscious mind. It helps us become aware of our subjective beliefs and perceptions and teaches us to look at things objectively and from different perspectives. The more we do that, the more conscious/aware we become of our physical, mental, and spiritual actions.

Conclusion

The research shows that forgiveness improves health, elevates mood, enhances optimism, and reduces anger, stress, anxiety, and depression. Choosing to forgive, even though we have been deeply hurt, is a spiritual act which purifies our soul, removes negative feelings, and opens the door to enlightenment.

Forgiveness allows us to let go of bitterness and replace it with gratitude. This kind of transformation is possible only by switching our focus from what went wrong to the good that can come from it. To move forward and manifest what we truly desire, we need to break free of the shackles of the past by letting go and forgiving. Forgiveness breaks the power that another person still exercises over our emotions. The more we contemplate the good that can come from a disconcerting situation, the more we will grow spiritually. Eventually we develop the virtue of capturing the silver lining out of a not so good situation. It is up to us to realize our full potential from every happening.

When we learn how to forgive, we open ourselves up to a world of spiritual and physical benefits. The spiritual benefits of forgiveness are only as accessible and potent as the intention and effort we apply in every act of forgiveness. The spiritual benefits of forgiveness will only come when we practice unlocking ourselves from anger, resentment, bitterness, etc. As an aspect of resilience and a measure of psychological flexibility, forgiveness is best cultivated as an ongoing practice. We do not know what kind of pain we have had in our past lives or what kind of pain we have inflicted on others. So, it also helps to practice forgiveness as a preventive measure, as a form of investing in ourselves and a more peaceful future. Let us start practicing forgiveness today and see how it can transform our life.

Seven Ways to Have a Healthier Relationship With Stress

By Jill Suttie, Psy.D



Jill Suttie is Greater Good's former book review editor and now serves as a staff writer and contributing editor for the magazine. She received her doctorate of psychology from the University of San Francisco in 1998 and was a psychologist in private practice before coming to Greater Good.

(This article was originally published in Greater Good Magazine by Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley on February 15, 2023. One picture has been added to the article.)

A new book by renowned stress researcher Elissa Epel explains how stress affects our bodies at the cellular level and how to manage it better.

Are you suffering from chronic stress? Many of us are — whether we're stressed out by our jobs, complicated relationships, caregiving responsibilities, or the general state of the world.



That's where Elissa Epel's new book, ***The Stress Prescription***, comes in. A health psychologist and director of the Aging, Metabolism, and Emotions Center at the University of California, San Francisco, Epel explains how stress affects our bodies and minds — including our health, happiness, and longevity — and how to manage it in the best way possible.

Too many of us are in a constant state of alertness, she argues, which makes us ill-prepared to navigate the everyday stressors and bigger upsets that occur when living a full life. We may *think* we're relaxed, but we're actually maintaining a low-level vigilance that's hard on our bodies. Constant physiological strain can shorten our telomeres (the caps at the ends of our DNA that protect it from aging) — a process

she wrote about in her bestselling book, *The Telomere Effect*.

Epel emphasizes that not all stress is inherently bad — and that we shouldn't aim for a stress-free life. We need our physiological stress response to survive, as it can come in handy when we're gearing up to perform or facing an actual life-or-death threat.

"Anything worth doing will have aspects of stress woven through challenge, discomfort, risk. We can't change that. But what we *can* change is our response," she says.

If we can learn how to handle stress better and build up stress resilience, we're more likely to thrive, she argues. To do that, she recommends seven guidelines and offers specific practices to get us there.

1. Embrace uncertainty

Life is uncertain, and things will not always go according to plan. But, if we get better at tolerating uncertainty, it can lead to less stress, as well as other good things — like being able to trust others, collaborate, and cooperate more.

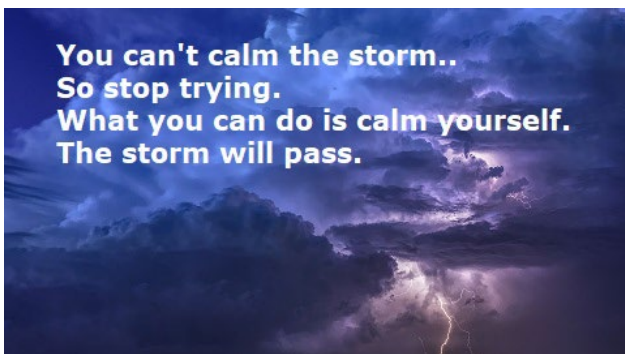
Tolerating uncertainty means not always having rigid expectations of the future. "Strong expectations can hurt us whether they're positive (something we're looking forward to) or negative (something we're dreading). Better to loosen our expectations as much as we can," says Epel.

One way to do that, she says, is to practice mindfulness meditation, which keeps you focused on the present and prevents ruminating too much on what unknowable thing might happen. While you'd be forgiven for thinking it's better to anticipate disasters so that you're prepared for them, she argues against that approach. Anticipating the worst leads to spikes of cortisol that are harmful to your health—and result in no better response to stress than not anticipating it.

2. Don't fret about what you can't control

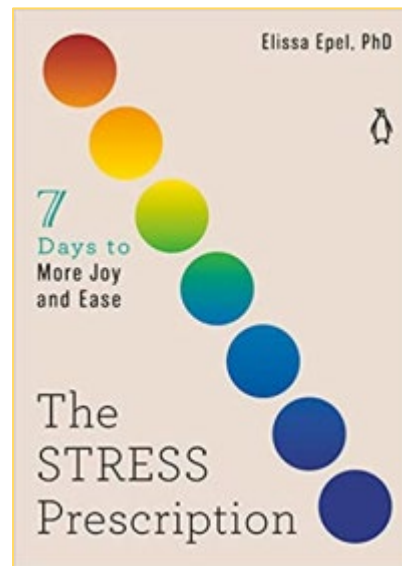
Like the old adage goes, when things go wrong, it's good to recognize what's in your control and what isn't — and then focus your attention on changing what's under your control. For example, if your spouse suddenly becomes incapacitated, and you're called upon to become a caregiver — a huge stressor for most people — it's better to accept reality, manage what you can, and let go of the rest.

This may not sound easy. But with reflection, says Epel, you might find that many things you ruminate about — what others think of you, a potential illness or diagnosis, the outcome of an election — are not under your control, making worry needless and even problematic. Once you realize this, you can focus on accepting what's not controllable and making better choices about how to handle stressors actually under your control. That might mean letting go of superfluous activities, taking breaks in your busy life for some restful breathing, or practicing self-compassion.



3. Harness the body's stress response to meet challenges

Our bodies are well designed to enter into fight-or-flight mode when we are under threat or facing difficulties. But the physical effects of stress depend on our attitude—whether we see it as a bad thing or recognize the positive, energizing elements of that mode. When we see the benefits of stress, we actually show a healthier stress response in our bodies — which can help us overcome challenges.



“When we focus on the benefits of stress, we feel less stress about stress, pay attention to positive cues rather than threatening cues, and approach situations more confidently rather than avoid them,” writes Epel.

This kind of reframe can be helpful for accepting our mistakes along the way when we try new things. Knowing that failure, challenge, and stress can be an important part of reaching our goals can help us to take them less to heart—and prevent us from giving up too soon.

How to do it? Reframed statements around stress — like saying, “This is exciting! I can appreciate this feeling” as opposed to “This is so stressful. I hate this feeling.”— have been found over many studies to reduce our negative feelings about stress.

4. Train your cells to metabolize stress better

Chronic stress is never good for us. But getting an occasional shot of high stress that our bodies can tolerate and easily recover from—something Epel calls “hormetic stress”—is actually good for us. It builds resilience at the cellular level and makes us better prepared to handle future, unexpected stressors.

While all exercise is good for managing stress and improving health, Epel recommends high intensity interval training (HIIT), which gives you the most bang for your buck. HIIT involves short bursts of high-intensity exercise followed by a recovery period, and it has become very popular for people who have less time to exercise. For those who can't do HIIT, there are other ways to expose our cells to short bursts of stress, such as taking a cold shower or using a sauna. Though the research is relatively new, Epel provides some evidence that both of these can increase stress resilience and lead to better health, too (though you might want to check with a doctor before trying them out).

5. Use nature to recalibrate

There is ample evidence that spending time in nature reduces stress and improves well-being. Epel argues that “exposure to nature, in all forms and contexts, is one of the most powerful and immediate ways to reduce stress.”

Being in green spaces allows us to experience “attention restoration” — a kind of recovery from the stress of cognitive overload and constant stimulation that many people experience in their everyday lives. Experiencing nature can also produce feelings of awe, which, in turn, reduce stress — along with a host of other benefits. If you don't have easy access to the woods or an urban park, take heart. Even looking out at the night sky or watching nature videos can be calming.

6. Practice deep rest

We all need to relax in order to reduce stress in our lives. But, says Epel, we also need to find moments of deep relaxation where we experience “protected, tech-free, rest-focused

downtime for ourselves.” This kind of deep rest is different from what we typically think of as “relaxing”— like lounging on a couch and watching TV or walking our dog at night. It's more about the kind of experience you might have on a meditation retreat, where you practice letting go of all responsibility and just being.

Of course, sleeping or napping are ways we can get that kind of rest — if we're good at them, which many of us aren't. But there are other things we can do, too. Epel suggests specific deep breathing exercises, which is something under our control that can quickly put us into a relaxed state — and has all kinds of benefits for our physiology.

7. Find moments of joy in your life

When we feel happy, we tend not to feel so stressed out. So, says Epel, it's important to cultivate more moments of joy in our lives — especially moments of purpose and meaning. “The science of happiness and joy is pretty clear: It's good for the mind, good for the body, good for stress resilience,” she says.

While chasing happiness can actually hurt your well-being if you get too obsessive, you can simply turn your mind toward noticing the positive. One practice she suggests (which I took to heart, personally) is changing the way you wake up and go to bed at night. Rather than startling awake and immediately thinking about all you need to get done, she suggests taking a moment to imagine what you're looking forward to that day. Similarly, before going to sleep at night, you can recount the happiest parts of your day and what you're grateful for. “Happiness and gratitude give us that reserve capacity, the charge to our battery,” she writes. “They give us the resources to zoom out, take a healthy perspective, see the challenge, stay flexible, and be resilient.”

It's definitely helpful to have tips for managing stress all in one place. The book *“The Stress Prescription”* has a chock full of ideas on how to make the findings work for you, personally. By following Epel's prescription, you are bound to increase your resilience to stress — and be happier and healthier for it.

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. As a continuation of our effort to showcase the winning entries from one Jain Center in each issue of Jain Digest; in this issue we bring you essays from **Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago**. 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 3 Students - Age 8 to 9 years

Topic: If you were granted three wishes...

Deeva Kamdar - 1st Place



Deeva is level 4 Pāthashālā Student at JSMC. She is very enthusiastic and attentive. At the age of 8 yrs., she was the youngest JSMC Pāthashālā student participating in JAINA

ACADEMIC BOWL at a national level. She also participates in Stuti and speech competitions securing first place. She has learned two Pratikraman Sutras, Bhaktāmar, Ajit-Shanti stotra, Brahat Shanti, and many stutis. During Paryushan and Āyambīl Parva she also observes Ekāsānu and Āyambīl.

Some would ask for worldly gains, some would ask for superpowers, some would ask for a longer life and some would ask for buckets and buckets of candy.

I have been studying Jainism for 5 years now, but some concepts about Jainism make me so curious, as they are extraordinary and spark a little doubt in my mind.

So, my first wish would be to meet Mahavir Bhagwan and see if it is possible for me to have Keval-Jnān. I would ask Mahavir swami a really hard question and see if he answers it. If he does answer, then I can clear all my doubts from him. I would ask him if Nāraki is real. Also, if it is true that Neil Armstrong actually did not set foot on the Moon. As Jainism says he just set foot on a rock (that is one big rock) and that the real moon is a Dev-vimāna. I would ask him a few more geographical questions: Is the Earth really flat? Is it true that there are 2 Suns?

My next wish would be to bring back the 14 Purvas from Drashtivāda Āgam. I remember my brother telling me the story about how Bhadrabāhu swami refused to teach his chief disciple Sthulibhadra Swami the last 4 Purvas because he misused the knowledge and scared his sisters when they came to meet him by turning into a Lion. I do not think that it is fair that because of Sthulibhadra swami, no one else can learn the 14 Purvas.

My last and final wish is to get the power of being able to understand, talk, write, and read Sanskrit, Prakrit, Hindi, and Gujrati. I have realized that it will be hard for me to go further in my journey of learning sutras or anything in Jainism without knowing all these languages. So, these are my three wishes and the reasoning why I would want them. I would only use all these powers for my spiritual gain because worldly desires are not true happiness. Fame in life does not get you anywhere because, in your next life, you will be a nobody again.

So, the only way to achieve infinite bliss is to attain moksha, which is what I will work toward with these three boons. Thank you.

Level 3 Students - Age 8 to 9 years

Topic: If you were granted three wishes...

Arian Gupta – 2nd Place

I think this essay is important because the world is struggling with real problems that need to be solved. First climate change, second the coronavirus then the black rights. We could only have 3 wishes but if we could have more, I have so many ideas to save our world!

My first wish is that I want to help the climate. The Ozone layer is the most important thing for the climate. It has a hole that is getting bigger due to greenhouse gasses, the smoke from factories, gas from cars, and deforestation. Deforestation is people cutting down trees, which give us oxygen, to make homes. Greta, a 17-year-old girl, is known for a climate strike. She said "I want to feel safe. How can I feel safe when we are in the greatest crisis in human history?" Jainism teaches us how to save the world but in a different way! Jainism teaches us about the three R's Reduce Reuse, and Recycle.

My second wish is that I want people to start donating more because 648 million (that's 9% of the world) of the population are poor! We need a lot of people to donate to fix this problem. So many places help the poor by accepting donations from people, like Feed My Starving Children or The Goodwill store. Did you know that more than 1.2 billion people live under less than \$1.25 a day? We should donate especially now because the coronavirus is shutting down companies and many people don't have jobs due to that! This relates to Jainism because it is Aparigraha, non-possessiveness.

My 3rd wish is for people to stop bullying. More than 160,000 teens have skipped school because of bullying. The protestors also feel like black people are getting bullied. That's why there are so many protests everywhere. More than half of the population under 25 have experienced bullying! Everyone deserves respect, no one should ever get bullied. This relates to Jainism because Jainism teaches us Ahimsa.

My Pāthashālā teachers have helped me understand what is right and what is wrong. I am thankful and proud to be a part of the Jain temple. It may take a lot of work to improve our world, but I am always up for a challenge just like Greta Thunberg! Together we will make a difference.

Level 4 Students - Age 10 to 13 years

Topic: If I were Alive During the Time of Bhagawān Mahavir-Swami...

Tanvi Shah – 1st Place



Tanvi Shah was a 6th grader at Albert Einstein Elementary School in Schaumburg, Illinois when she wrote this essay. She has been an active pathsala member at JSMC for 12 years and loves volunteering at the derasar. Her faith in Jainism is well-grounded thanks to JSMC and swadhyay. She is

currently a freshmen at Schaumburg High School in Schaumburg, Illinois.

Imagine sitting in front of a Vitarāga Tirthankara who's under the sacred Ashoka tree, giving vast knowledge on Jainism's tattvas to many life forms. Envision being settled in the serene atmosphere of Mahavir Swami's Samavasaran, the Chaumukhji lord visible from all sides. Instead of relying on written Āgam sutras, I wish I could listen and absorb Bhagwan Mahavir's purest, most divine speech.

If I was living during the time of the most known Tirthankara and propagator of Jainism, there are countless questions I would have asked him, the knowledge that I would gain, and sermons of his that I would attend, but the very first thing I would have done is join the Chaturvidha-sangha that he has established. Beforehand, women were no more than possessions. But in this Sangha, everyone's treated equally due to Mahavir Swami's preaching on the gospel.¹

On universal love. It would be best for me if I started as a Shrāvīkā living a strict Jain lifestyle. To make sure that I put forth my best effort, I would take the vows for a Jain laity: the five Anu vratas, three Guna vratas, and four Shiksha vratas. But, I know living such a life can be challenging, so I would ask Mahavir Swami to be my guru. He'd be a wave of hope that I have full faith in; which would help me find my way to the other side of the ocean of samsara, where the peace and liberation lie. But who helped him? I'd have asked him, "When you were in deep meditation for over 12 years, you faced so many hardships. What

made you so focused on your goal that you didn't think about turning back even once? And, what made you start thinking about renunciation and practicing long sadhana?" As I continue seeking his guidance and becoming closer to my inner self, he'd be my only guru to which I bow down. No Mithyätva beliefs would be able to change my Samyaktva in my Prabhu! Years would pass by and soon, it would be time to let go of my emotional dependence on him and free myself from that bondage! He would have welcomed me into the Sangha with warmth and I would have spent years with him, stepping in his shadow and basking in his wisdom and kindness. I'd be thankful forever that even though he'd already attained enlightenment, he stayed back to guide people in the right direction and so, in his honor, I'd write books on his teachings so that future generations could know what a remarkable revolutionary our Guru-Ji was!

Today, terrorism, discrimination, war, and environmental degradation are still conflicting and as the Sangha gets more intricate, ritualistic complexities get introduced which destroys the simplicity of our religion. Living in the time when Jainism was flourishing and getting to practice it with its reformer would be a completely different experience than reading books about it today, more than 2,500 years later. What if this essay could've been a diary entry about what life was like living with Mahavir Swami?! Now, that would've been a life worth living!

Level 4 Students - Age 10 to 13 years

Topic: If I were Alive During the Time of Bhagawän Mahavir-Swami...

Shreeya Gandhi – 2nd Place



From a very young age, Shreeya is involved in Pāthashälä and has taken part in a range of social and volunteer activities at the temple. She has participated in several Jain Academic Bowl competitions and

serves as a local representative of YJA Midwest region. Currently, she is a sophomore in high school.

It's fascinating to contemplate the mysteries of life, death, and rebirth. After all, the principle of reincarnation is a core tenet of Jain philosophy, where the soul bounded by Karmic particles, is ever eternal. This principle sheds light on a specific truth: each of

our souls have been present throughout many timelines in different bodies. Based on this, it's interesting to wonder about what I did when I was alive to witness the events so important to my religion, whether it be the construction of Palitana or the Abhishek of the Tirthankars on Mount Meru. Yet, out of all the other time periods, I constantly find myself reflecting on the revolutionary time of Bhagawän Mahavir-Swami. One day, while I was performing Sämäyika, I fell into a deep trance, deeper than ever and I found myself at the time when Bhagwan Mahavir was alive!

As I was exploring the villages, I saw that everyone was caring, compassionate, and generous to all the living beings and tried to avoid any actions that harm any living form. I wondered why this place is so different. Why did everyone seem so happy? Pondering these questions, I decided to attend one of Mahavir Swami's preaching. He taught the idea of the supremacy of human life and the complete detachment from people, places, and materialistic objects. Mahävira's message of Non-Violence (Ahimsa), Truth (Satya), Non-Stealing (Achaurya), Celibacy (Brahmacharya), and Non-Possessiveness (Aparigraha) is full of universal compassion. Mahävira Swami emphasized that all living beings, irrespective of their size, shape, and form are equal. This way he preached the gospel of universal love and peace.

Mahavir Swami taught a scientific explanation of the meaning of life. He explained that we must start with three things to draw this meaning into our own life. First, we must have the right faith, as we must believe in truth. Second, we must have the right knowledge, as we must study to understand the deeper meaning of life. Third, we must follow the right conduct, as the conduct in our faith and knowledge. There's no knowledge without right faith, no conduct is possible without knowledge, and without conduct, there's no liberation. He explained that we should hold these vows at the center of our lives. These vows cannot be fully implemented without the acceptance of a philosophy of non-absolutism (Anekäntaväda) and the theory of relativity (Syädväda).

In conclusion, right after Mahavir Swami's sermon ended, which took 48 hours, I came out of the trance and returned to the mediation. Lord Mahavir helped me escalate on the path to moksha. For most of us, moksha is long away, but he taught us how we can approach it ourselves by rules which lead to inner peace and harmony. Above all, he taught us that we produce our own fate through our actions and emotions. In fact, never shall a day come when mankind will not need to follow his teachings. Thank you and Jai Jinendra.

Four Day Pilgrimage to Palitana and Shankheshwar

By Shaan Udani



Shaan Udani is a 17 year old junior at Seton Hall Preparatory School. He lives in Morris Plains, New Jersey. Shaan is actively involved in the Jain community. He often goes to the temple with his Nani and is a local representative of the Mid-Atlantic Region for YJA (Young Jains of America).

Situated in the rolling mountains southwest of Bhavnagar is Palitana, the sprawling Jain Tirth (pilgrimage site) home to more than 900 temples. Interestingly, it was one of the first vegetarian cities in the world. Further north, in the Patan district of Gujarat, is Shankheshwar. The grandeur of Shankheshwar is highlighted by a six feet high Parshwanath statue. The temple is also home to other deities, including Goddess Padmavati. I and several members of our family were fortunate to have an opportunity to visit these pious pilgrimage sites in December 2022. In this article I hope to take you on this pilgrimage with us. Hope you enjoy the journey.

Day 1, December 22: Mumbai to Rajkot and Khimat Yatrik Bhavan - Jain Shwetamber Dharamshala

At 6 AM, we wake up to catch our flight from Mumbai to Rajkot. We walk outside the JW Marriot to find the airport shuttle service already loaded with our bags and prepared for a highway run to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Domestic Airport. We gather with extended family and close friends at the airport who will be joining us on this four day pilgrimage. Within an hour, we land on the Rajkot tarmac; the balmy Indian air meets my face as I walk off the plane. Before our journey to Palitana begins, we eat a complete Jain meal at the Imperial Palace, filled with an assortment of subzis and fresh rotis. At 1 PM, all 23 of us pilgrims board the bus, our second home for the next 4 days. Stocked with water, food, and entertainment, we are well suited for our five hour ride to Palitana.

Along our journey, I cannot help but catch a glimpse of the stray cows and flat lands of Gujarat. In the background, the various voices of family members flooded the air in anticipation of our four day pilgrimage in honor of my late Nana. Would I feel Nana's presence, God's presence, or both? I wondered.

We arrive at the dharamshala around 9 PM, stopping only once for a bathroom and chai break. The Khimat Yatrik Bhavan dharamshala is much better than I imagined it would be, with air conditioning and ample hot water. Our entire party occupies one floor, making it convenient for an impromptu dinner that night, consisting of thepla and gathia, as well as last minute to-dos before the main Pilgrimage day. Even though everyone is exhausted after our journey, no one falls asleep before 11:00 PM.

Day 2, December 23: Battling illness, Climbing Shatrunjay Hill and River Aarti

I fell ill overnight, intense pains in my stomach and acid build up in an already sore throat. I wonder if it was the guava or the oily dinner last night. Yet, I push through and eat a protein bar, enough to make my stomach recover quickly. We are slated to climb Shatrunjay hill by 8 AM, early enough to beat the heat. In order to get to the base, we take a rickshaw ride from the dharamshala to the steps of the hill. We weave through crowds of people clamoring for us to pick their doli. My parents, brother, and I decide to trek the 3,500 steps on foot. Luckily, we reach the peak in about seventy minutes, just in time to grab a pass for morning Pakshal, or the cleansing of God.



Our five hour visit consists of Pakshal pooja, visits to various century-old temples, and a group prayer led by my Nani. When we stand beside the immortal Rayan Tree, we cannot help but marvel at its power. I touch the walls of a temple, thinking to myself that I just touched a surface thousands of years old. Palitana is one of the few places where I feel that I am with God in harmony. God's warmth surrounds us as we engulf in HIS vibrations and feel blessed, knowing God will always be there for us. As we pray, I think to myself what is really behind those magnificent eyes? The pooja we do is simple on the outside. However, what is God like on the inside? I realize that behind those eyes is his love for us.

At 2 PM, we start our descent, running down the steps to spare our knees. On the streets of Palitana at Om Pav Bhaji, we eat delicious Jain pav bhaji and dosa. Exhausted but excited, we board the bus at 6 PM and travel to the Rohishala Temple at the Shatrunjaya River. Stuffed from pav bhaji, I decide to skip dinner and enjoy the river view. While we stare at the sun, my Nani is busy bidding to host the aarti. Nani outbids everyone, of course. Eventually, all twenty-three of us gather and lead the aarti for two hundred people. Standing by the Shatrunjaya river, listening to the hymns behind us, I feel as though I am in a different place, free from conflict and surrounded by peace.



We are nearing the end of another tiring day, but we have one more stop. We visit the Sahitay Mandir, home to the "Blinking Padmavati Devi." It is said that she blinks once every year on Diwali;

it is one of the most beautiful images of any deity I've ever seen. I watch her piercing eyes carefully, making sure not to miss a possible blink. We also listen to a Maharaj Saheb describe how Palitana emerged from the mountains countless generations ago. We head back to Khimat Bhavan, legs weary but souls enlightened.

Day 3, December 24: Gochari, Giri Vihar, Jain Balashram, and Off to Shankheshwar

I wake up hungry for breakfast, yet before I can eat, I have a higher calling. At 7:15 AM, our entire group participates in gochari, or serving food to the Maharaj Sahebs. I look in awe at the heaps of food, ranging from thepla to nuts to fresh fruit, all perfectly arranged for the Maharaj Sahebs. I position myself in front of the cut apples, my serving spoon held firmly in hand. Slowly, the Maharaj Sahebs walk in with their tiffins, ready to collect food and offer their blessings. It is a fulfilling experience.



Our next stop is Giri Vihar, a home for sick Maharaj Sahebs. We even pray with a Maharaj Saheb who suffers from Alzheimer's. A mixture of emotions flood my heart, feeling sad and

helpless for these Maharaj Sahebs in their last days.

Next, we travel to Shree Siddhakhshetra Jain Balashram in the heart of Palitana. It is a boarding school for Jain boys whose parents can no longer take care of them. We tour the school, meet with some students, and lastly, donate to this special place.

Onward, it was now time to make our way to Shankheshwar. It was a typical seven hour journey - I sleep periodically, play games on my phone, teach my cousin how to play ultimate tic-tac-toe, and enjoy the countryside view. Along the way, we stop at a Gallops rest stop, which to my surprise, has better food than most rest stops in the U.S. I enjoy a delicious paneer pizza from Dominos (who would've thought). At 8 PM, we arrive at the Shankheshwar Sukhdham dharamshala. Yet again, the dharamshala surprises me with hot water and comfortable beds. I do not fall asleep until closer to midnight - not only am I excited for tomorrow's 4 AM wake up call, but the sounds of people yelling from the floors below pervade the rooms.

Day 4, December 25: Shankheshwar Pilgrimage, Boat Derasar, Journey Home via Ahmedabad

By 6 AM, we are already in line for Vaksakshep pooja. The scene in the morning at the temple is surreal. Candles are lit in the corners, allowing the idols to shine against the sunrise. The men's line for the Vaksakshep pooja goes surprisingly fast. We meander past all the idols in their brass covering, looking pure as can be. With each barefoot step, additional blessings can be felt. Shankheshwar, with its tarp coverings and quartz walls, feels like the perfect place to indulge with abandon in God's love.

The highlight for me, however, is praying to Padmavatidevi and dressing her with a special veil. Almost exactly five years ago, Padmavatidevi had saved my parents. We had come to Shankheshwar in December of 2017 and stood before Padmavatidevi, asking for protection. The next day, my parents were in a tragic restaurant fire that killed 14 people. We as

a family truly believe that our prayers that day to Padmavatidevi saved my parents.

After covering Padmavatidevi with her veil, my Nani takes us to the Boat Derasar, a temple built on a boat, but the boat is on land! We partake in another group chaityavandan. It is here where I fully realize how special this pilgrimage is to our family. No matter where you pray, be it on a boat or in a traditional temple, or how you pray, God's aura is palpable. On the "boat," I feel a sense of rejuvenation and purity that is much needed.

Before we pack our bags, we make a final visit to the Shankheshwar temple for darshan. However, I'm now in shorts after shedding my pooja clothes. I am stopped by the guards, and before I know it, Nani's shawl is wrapped around my legs as a makeshift dhoti. Embarrassed but happy to be back in the derasar, I do my last darshan of this pilgrimage. It is time for our three hour journey from Shankheshwar to Ahmedabad's International Airport. We stop for a rushed meal of Jain pav bhaji and dosa (again) at Honest. Back on the road, we face an enormous Ahmedabad stand-still traffic jam. We eventually reach the airport and rush through security with our wheelchair bound seniors, only to learn that our flight is delayed 40 minutes (sigh). The calmness of the flight back is reassuring after the voyage.

Within fifty minutes, we land in Mumbai, signaling the end of our successful and unforgettable pilgrimage. After such an adventurous four days, I realize it's December 25th - Merry Christmas everyone!



Modern Approach to Paryushan and Das Laxana

By Dr. Surendra Singhvi



Dr. Surendra Singh Singhvi is one of the prominent personalities. He was closely associated with Acharya Sushil muniji and Gurudev Chitrabhanu and established the first Jain Center of America in New York in 1976. He also started Jain Centers in Cincinnati and St. Louis. He also has been heavily involved in providing Jain education at the University level. He has served on various JAINA committees.

(Editor's Note: Two things come to mind when we think about Paryushan and Das Laxana – Asking for Forgiveness and doing tap such as Athhai. Many of us would like to be able to do such tap but for various reasons we are not able to. Realizing this situation, Surendra ji provides us with a few alternatives where the goal is to achieve control over our senses by following some restraints during these pious days and doing some noble activities. We hope this helps you to celebrate these important festivals more meaningfully.)

Let us redefine *Athhai* as practicing one or more vows for 8 or 10 days since fasting for all 8 or 10 days is difficult for youth, seniors, and college students. At least one of the alternatives listed below can be followed by most people.

- 1) Observe Ekasana - eat once a day before sunset and eat only Jain food - no root vegetables or greens. And if possible, avoid dairy.
- 2) Observe Samayik and Swadhyay for one hour every day during the festival. Read spiritual books and journals such as Jinvani, Jain Avenue and Jain Digest.
- 3) Minimize or eliminate addictions such as tobacco, gutka, liquor or illegal drugs.
- 4) On the last day, try to do Upvaas and perform English Pratikraman with focus on the meaning of what is being said. Ask forgiveness from any one whose feelings you may have hurt; knowingly or unknowingly. Don't limit this to only Jains; think of all the people that you know.
- 5) Donate money to good causes and do volunteer work at temples, hospitals, schools, etc.
- 6) Listen to religious discourses in person or on Zoom. JAINA provides a lot of lectures in English, Hindi and Gujarati.
- 7) Practice "Digital Fasting" - minimize use of Smartphone, TV, and Social Media
- 8) Practice Ahimsa by minimizing use of water and electricity.
- 9) Minimize use of flowers - donate books when visiting a patient in hospital or attending parties/weddings/engagements/graduation, etc.
- 10) Minimize parigrah - minimize shopping for items. If you buy one shirt, donate one shirt as well.
- 11) Follow Anekantvad and avoid arguments. Appreciate other person's viewpoint.
- 12) Be aware of your thoughts and control passions such as anger, ego, deceit, and greed.



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HIGHLIGHTS

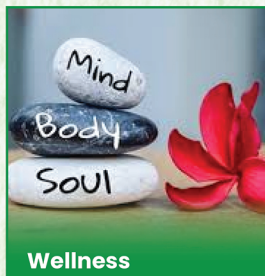
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Women and Youth Sessions
- Workshops on JWOL, Healthy Living
- Meditation and Yoga
- Ecology and Sustainability Sessions



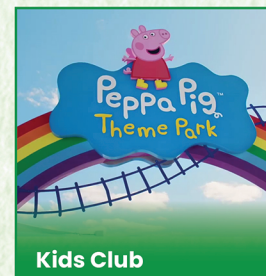
Theme Parks



Wellness



Entertainment Programs



Kids Club



Vacation Opportunities