

# JainDigest

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The Gratitude Tree: An Expression of Appreciation

## JAIN DIGEST

A Publication of the  
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### On the Cover:

### The Gratitude Tree: An Expression of Appreciation

To stay hopeful and positive in the current world situation, it is important to remember and feel grateful for the many good things in our life. The front cover picture is an attempt to depict some of those important things. All of us in the Jain Digest editorial team also express our gratitude for an opportunity to serve you for the past 7 years. Thank You!

### 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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Om Shri Veetragay Namah

Jai Jinendra,

While reading about Dr. Mahendra Pandya who recently passed away, I was amazed to learn about his passion for Jain dharma as well as his philanthropic contributions to so many organizations. I think the best way to summarize the feelings we get for people like Dr. Pandya is the feeling of Gratitude. During this year JAINA has celebrated and paid tribute to towering personalities such as Gurudev Chitrabhanuji and Pujya Acharya Chandanaji. And the best way to honor them is not by words, but by the *feeling of Gratitude*, the *emotion of gratefulness* for their contribution to the betterment of humanity.

Ralph Waldo Emerson says: "Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude." With that sentiment, we have chosen "The Gratitude Tree" for the front page of the October issue.

And with that same feeling of Gratitude, we bring to you the October 2022 issue of Jain Digest. In October our current editorial team completes 7 years of service to the Jain Community. During this time, we have published 21 issues of Jain Digest and one 140-page special edition devoted to Jain Education in North America. All of these are available to view and download at <https://jaina.org/jaindigest>. We have also published a compilation of articles related to 16 Bhavanas which is available for purchase at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

Here is a short recap of our 7 year journey:

After the JAINA Convention in 2015, our past JAINA president Maheshbhai Wadher was given responsibility to chair the Jain Digest committee. He recruited me to serve as an editor and Jayanaben Shah as a graphics designer. Under the guidance from Ashokbhai Domadia, who was JAINA president at that time, we published our first issue in December 2015. During 2015 to February 2019, we used to print 15,000 copies of the magazine and mail them to JAINA members in North America, India, and a few other countries. Each magazine had a few articles related to a specific theme such as Compassion, Forgiveness, Bhavanas and other topics mainly focused on Jain education. Many JAINA members and advertisers provided partial financial support during those years. However, the cost of printing and

mailing was very high. By that time many online publishing tools were available which could minimize the cost of publishing. Hence, beginning with the July 2019 issue, we decided to publish the magazine online. The new online tools also provided us with an opportunity to provide enriched content by adding clickable links to other websites and YouTube videos. This added more life to the articles, providing an enhanced reading/viewing experience. Now that is available online, people from 20+ countries are able to get free access to the current and past issues of Jain Digest. In recent months, several authors from India have contributed to the magazine.

During 2019, we also received valuable feedback from our advisors and well-wishers such as Prakash Mody from Toronto and Professor Atul K. Shah from UK – the former editor of the Jain Spirit magazine. Based on this feedback, we decided to change how the articles were organized and formatted in the magazine. We decided to focus our content on universal human values that Jainism promotes and cater the magazine to a wide variety of interests. To facilitate that, we created sections such as Compassion, Devotion, Education, Information, Inspiration, Transformation, etc. We also created guidelines to decide what type of articles to publish in each section. Since then, our writers and editors have done a wonderful job in making sure that the articles adhere to these guidelines. As a result, many of our readers have told us that the variety and quality of articles has improved a lot over the last few years.

That brings me back to Gratitude! We are immensely grateful for the unconditional support from the members of the JAINA Executive Committee and JAINA Directors; the valuable guidance from our advisors and well-wishers; the selfless hard work and passion of the design and editing team; the love, trust & encouraging feedback from readers like you; and the more than 125 authors who have written 400+ articles in the past 7 years for Jain Digest! We look forward to continuing to do our best to bring meaningful, interesting, inspiring content to you with one goal in mind – to help you all advance in your spiritual journey.

If you would like to join our editorial team or write an article for our next issue, please write to us at: [jaindigestpublication@gmail.com](mailto:jaindigestpublication@gmail.com) or call us at 310-721-5947.

We hope you enjoy the varied articles in this October issue. The next issue will be published in February 2023. Stay safe. Stay healthy.

In Seva,  
Dilip Parekh

# JAINA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Jai Jinendra!

Hope you and your family are in sukh-sata and had wonderful Paryushan and Das Lakshana celebrations at your Jain Centers. During the last year, if we have hurt your feelings through our thoughts, words, or actions knowingly or unknowingly, then on behalf of JAINA EC and JAINA BOD, I ask for your forgiveness with an open mind and a loving heart.

With your love and support, JAINA continues to reach new heights and progress in achieving its vision. I'm glad to share a number of achievements JAINA has made in the past four months.

## May 2022

1. JAINA 99 Yatra Committee announced planning the third Shatrunjay Mahatirth 99 Yatra in 2023-2024. The Yatra will be from November 27, 2023, to January 26, 2024. Please find more details about the Yatra on page 51 in this magazine.
2. JAINA EC approved the '**Host Family Committee**' during the May 9, 2022, EC meeting. This ad-hoc committee will be led by Chairperson, **Pallavi Dedhia**. The committee aims to host Jain students coming to North America, help them settle down and get to know the local Jain community. The committee will coordinate with **JAINA India Foundation** for the process. For more information, please contact Pallavi Dedhia at 781-273-5495 or email to [dedhiapal@comcast.net](mailto:dedhiapal@comcast.net)
3. **JAINA Women's Committee** conducted a series of weekly lectures on **Financial Literacy Education** throughout May and June months which were attended by many people. The seminars were open to all and free.
4. Inaugurated **Gujarati edition of the current JAB (JAINA Academic Bowl) manual** – a great leap forward for JAB at the Jain Society of Tampa Bay.

## June 2022

1. JAINA along with the Jain Center of Southern California and Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti Foundation

co-organized a dialogue program on "**Peace and Conflict - Indian Cultural Values and Mahavir Philosophy**" on June 4, 2022.

2. On June 11, JAINA celebrated a **musical Mother's Day with Pujya Acharya Shri Chandana Ji Maharaj (Pujya Tai Maa) recipient of the 'Padma Shri' Award 2022**. The event was addressed by several renowned Jain Sadhuji/Sadhviji, Scholars, Dignitaries, Sadharmik, and JAINA Leadership.
3. JITO Matrimony, in association with JAINA, launched the NRI Meet on June 26, 2022.

## July 2022

1. **JAINA Women's Committee** started a **Digital Literacy Group** where they are working on a new project '**The Tech Clinics**', which will provide hands-on Technology help to women, senior citizens, or any tech-challenged members of our community to empower them.
2. JAINA EC approved the '**Volunteer Committee**' during the July 7, 2022, EC meeting. This ad-hoc committee will be led by Chairperson, Piyush Gandhi. The committee aims to give back to the community in the form of 'Vidhya Daan' by creating a National Volunteer agenda of offering tuition help in the subjects of Math and Science to disadvantaged students without asking for anything in return. For more information please contact, Piyush Gandhi at 630-765-0872 or mail at [gandhipiyush@gmail.com](mailto:gandhipiyush@gmail.com).
3. JAINA-ALC, along with the Jain Center of Greater Boston and the International Center of Jainism and Science, organized a 2-day International Symposium to address the Dating of Mahavira Nirvana, on July 9-10, 2022 in Pune, Maharashtra, India.
4. JAINA organized lecture series on '**Study the essence of Shree Bhaktamar Maha Stotra**' by Dr. Bipin Doshi of JAINA India Foundation on 18th, 22nd, 25th, and 29th July.
5. JAINA paid homage and celebrated the 100th birth anniversary of Gurudev Shri Chitrabhanuji with an inaugural lecture in the new annual "**Chitrabhanuji Memorial Lectures**" series virtually on his birthday on July 26. The lecture was delivered by Padma Shri Kumarpal Desai.

And on July 30, JAINA presented an online tribute that featured goodwill messages from Dignitaries, Scholars, and his students, a live concert, a few poetic tributes, and a musical performance.



6. As JAINA President, I attended the **Chovisi Pratishtha** and 10th Anniversary celebration at the Jain Center of Central Ohio during July 21 - 25, 2022, as well as the grand **24 BhavTirth Pratishtha** at the Jain Center of New Jersey during June 30-July 6, 2022. Both events were successful and appreciated by the community.

### August 2022

#### 1. JAINA Convention 2023

Logo was launched after conducting the logo competition starting from May 15 - July 9. The committee received about 30 Logo designs to select from. We are grateful to all the participants for working hard to bring their best creations. Besides this, the JAINA convention 2023 team is working hard to bring the best convention experience to the community.



2. The Jain Vegan Initiative launched the **"Give up dairy for Paryushan/ Dashlakshan"** campaign this Paryushan/Das Lakshana Parva to practice Ahimsa in the true sense.
3. JAINA introduce a new Ad-hoc Committee, **Telehealth**. This committee, led by Dr. Girish Shah of NY, will open doors for digital assistance and health care services for our community. For more information, please contact Dr. Girish Shah
4. Celebrating the 100th birth anniversary of Gurudev Chitrabhanuji, JAINA Jivdaya Committee is building a new Panjarapole at Shankheshwar-Ahmedabad Highway, near Panchasar. Our Goal is to Raise - \$ 125,000. This fund will be used for Fodder Storage, Bal Vatika (for young calves), Shelter/Shed. Please review the proposed development plan which will be able to manage 700-750 animals, in 6 sheds and one storage facility for fodder storage, with more land for future development.

[https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.jaina.org/resource/esmgr/09092022\\_enewsletter/Chitrabhanu\\_Memorial\\_Panjara.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.jaina.org/resource/esmgr/09092022_enewsletter/Chitrabhanu_Memorial_Panjara.pdf)



Please support us by donating to this noble project.

5. This year, JAINA continued with virtual lectures during this Paryushan/Das Lakshana Parva. **Dr. Dharam Chand Jain, Dr. Sejal Shah, Padmashri Kumarpalbhai Desai, Dr. Kirit Gosalia, Dr. Priyadarshana Jain**, and other dignitaries delivered Paryushan and Das Lakshana Lectures in Hindi, Gujarati, and English.
6. As a Tapasvi Anumodna, JAINA recognized Paryushan/Das Lakshana Tapasvis, who had done 3 Upvas and more (age 13 or below) and 8 Upvas and more (age 14 or above) during this Paryushan while 3 Upvas and more (age 13 or below) and 10 Upvas and more (age 14 or above) during this Das Lakshana, in the JAINA newsletters and [www.jaina.org](http://www.jaina.org)

### YJA Update:

In the history of YJA, for the first time ever, YJA Convention 2022 had Vegan food to promote Ahimsa in the loving memory of the Shri Gurudev Shri Chitrabhanuji's 100th Birth Anniversary. As JAINA President, I attended and witnessed the YJA Convention 2022 in Dallas, where 785+ members attended an in-person Convention after four long years, making it a weekend to remember. JAINA congratulates the Young Jains of America for the successful Convention and encourages their efforts to spread the message of Mahavir among youths with their thoughtful initiatives.

Regards,

Haresh Shah



# Watsi – Making Healthcare a Reality for All

By Mackinnon Engen



*Mackinnon Engen is Executive Director of Watsi. As a global health and humanitarian professional, her experience spans the UN, international and local NGOs, and academic sectors. Mackinnon has lived and worked across South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. She is passionate about bringing people together to ensure patients can access essential, life-changing healthcare.*

*(Mackinnon is grateful to Watsi's Impact Intern Skylah Fregoso for her help with this article.)*

“Helping others is an act of service that not only leads to a more equitable world, but also to a more connected one.” This is what “Watsi”, a nonprofit organization that funds healthcare for people in the Global South, is all about.

## Watsi Story

Story begins in rural Costa Rica when Chase, the co-founder of Watsi, was serving as a Peace Corps volunteer. While riding on a bus, Chase saw a woman asking passengers for donations to help pay for her son’s medical care. Without the support of others, her son would not receive the healthcare he needed. This stuck with Chase and inspired him to build an organization that would leverage technology to bring people together from all around the world to directly help others in need. He decided to name the organization after the town he was passing through on his world-changing bus ride: *Watsi*.

What started as a small group of kind-hearted, hard-working volunteers has grown to help more than 25,000 people across 29 countries. Watsi raises money through crowdfunding to cover healthcare costs for patients who otherwise would not be able to afford their needed treatments, just like the strong and resilient mother Chase saw on his bus ride.

Watsi partners with credentialed medical organizations who are leaders in their local communities. These medical partners span across the world, from Kenya to Cambodia to the Philippines. Thanks to the dedicated teams at

Watsi’s medical partners, the stories of individual patients are shared on the organization’s innovative platform. People all around the world are able to read these unique, personal stories and choose a patient to support by directly funding their life-changing treatment.

( <https://watsi.org/monthly> )

Watsi’s mission is not only to make the world more equitable by raising funds to ensure safe, high-quality medical treatments are more accessible, but also to do this in the most impactful and transparent way. Watsi ensures that 100% of every donation goes directly to paying for a patient’s care. Watsi also shares the details of all medical payments in real-time on their website. This allows donors to know exactly what their money is funding, as well as to ensure every penny possible is used to help fund patients in need of treatment and expand access to healthcare.

## How it Works?

### 1) Patient seeks care

Consider a patient named Nairorie. Her mother brings Nairorie at one of our medical partner’s facilities, such as Arusha Lutheran Medical Centre (ALMC) in Tanzania, since the family cannot afford to pay for the care she needs.

### 2) Patient learns about Watsi

Nairorie and her mother learn about Watsi from a member of our medical partner’s staff, who asks if they would like to share their story with the world.

COMPLASSION



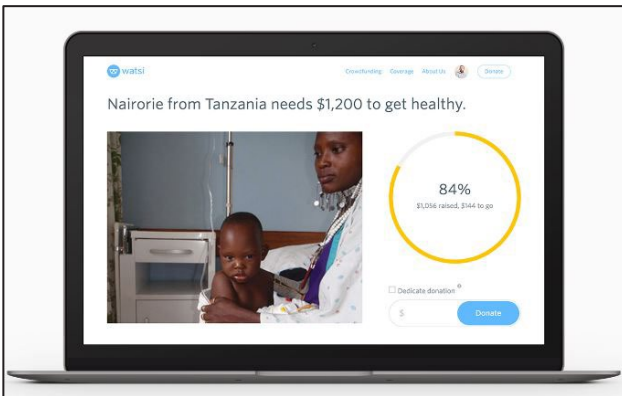
Arusha Lutheran Medical Centre (ALMC), Tanzania

### 3) Medical partner submits patient to Watsi

Nairorie's profile is submitted to us. After we review and approve the case, the medical partner may begin providing care before Nairorie's profile is posted or funded.

### 4) Donors fund patient care

We post the profile for donors to begin funding Nairorie's care. 100% of donations fund care.



### 5) Donors receive patient updates

Our medical partner submits a post-treatment update on Nairorie, and we send it to her donors. We transfer the funds raised to our medical partner to support the cost of her care.

One of such patients whose medical care was funded with the support of 20 amazing donors is a young boy named Felix. Felix is a bright fourth grade student from Kenya who lives with his grandmother. She raises him and his younger sibling due to their mother being unable to care for them. To support their family, she works as a small-scale farmer.

Last year, Felix was playing and unfortunately fell, causing him to severely fracture a bone in his right hand. This injury left him in pain and



unable to move his hand. Fortunately, his grandmother took him to our medical partner's care center, where he was able to undergo fracture repair surgery.

After surgery, each Watsi donor who supported Felix's care received an update that his treatment was a success and Felix was already back home and recovering well! Thanks to the kind generosity of the donors and their desire to do good, Felix can now grow up without the risk of permanent disability or developing further challenges due to his injury. Most importantly, he can continue with school and enjoy playing with friends as he grows.

Radiating relief and renewed hope, Felix's grandmother shared, *"To see my grandson go through the operation successfully has made me very happy. I am confident once healing takes place, he will be free to play with friends and get back to his normal life."*

Another patient who was supported by the Watsi community is Tumushabe, a 34-year-old mother from Uganda. She and her husband are both farmers. Together, they proudly own a small two-room home. They live there with their two

children, who are 11 and 9 years old and both enrolled in primary school. Tumushabe shared that she loves spending time with her children!



Last summer, Tumushabe and her husband were expecting their third child. After experiencing pains, she sought care at one of Watsi's medical partners. There, her doctor recommended that she undergo a caesarean section delivery to prevent uterine rupture. By delivering via C-section, doctors could better ensure the safety of both Tumushabe and her new baby.

With the help of Watsi donors, she was able to undergo a safe delivery and welcome a healthy, beautiful baby boy to the world. Tumushabe shared that after her recovery, she wants to resume farming, and she is confident that she will be self-supportive and able to take great care of her children.

She said, "I thank very much the Watsi program for the financial support. May you continue to support the needy, as this would save many lives."

Both Felix and Tumushabe were able to receive the healthcare they needed to live full lives thanks to the generous support of Watsi donors.

One of these supporters, who donated to both Felix and Tumushabe, is Dilip Parekh. Many of you may know him as a leader within the Jain community, but he is also an active member of the Watsi community. He is part of a special group of Watsi supporters called "The Universal Fund", which enables people to give automatic donations to support a new patient each month. Through Watsi, Dilip has strengthened access to critical healthcare through the COVID-19 crisis and has aided more than 28 people across seven countries in receiving life-changing medical treatment.

### What is the Universal Fund?

Donors join our Universal Fund to make healthcare a reality for everyone — one donation, one patient, and one month at a time. The tax-deductible donation is automatically charged every month, and it's simple to edit or cancel at any time. It's doing good on autopilot. 100% of the donation funds life-changing healthcare for a new Watsi patient every month. Donors get to know exactly where their money goes. Every month, donors receive an email introducing them to the patient they supported and an update after the patient receives care. You always see your impact.

Dilip shared, "I am very much impressed by the work Watsi is doing – giving an opportunity to people across the world to change the world of a person by giving them a chance for a better life. I love to read the updates they send me via email with heart touching stories of people I was able to help. One such patient was a little boy Baraka from Tanzania who successfully underwent clubfoot repair surgery. It feels good to know that he will be able to walk as a normal child."

We would like to thank Dilip for his generous support of Watsi's patients! We hope you will also join in today to support a patient in need.



## Joy of Helping

By Ramesh Shah



Early in life Ramesh Shah was inspired by his religious mother who cared for his intellectually disabled sister for 63 years and also his other seven siblings. She gave them lots of love and encouraged them to get the best education. Ramesh came to USA in 1967 and after a long career in working for corporations and running his own business, he retired in 2017. Since then, he has 100% dedicated himself to humanitarian work and started “Joy of Helping” - a charitable nonprofit in 2021. (<https://joyofhelping4u.com/>)

My wife Prafulla and I have been involved in humanitarian services since 1983. It all started when I received a letter from the Jain Society to sponsor a squint eye camp in Mandvi Gujarat. I followed up by supporting a polio camp and have attended yearly camps at Bidada Hospital since 1984, working with doctors, volunteers & trustees in various capacities.

I am focused on transforming the lives of the underserved. I support institutions that work at the grassroots level and serve neglected members of society. Our focus has been to help the institutions that are engaged in various initiatives such as child welfare, assisting physically and mentally challenged individuals, empowerment of women, education for young girls, healthcare for children and women, elimination of needless blindness, and vocational training and income generation for the impoverished.

I also act as a bridge between outstanding nonprofit organizations and people who share their mission. Many people in the United States are willing to support exceptional humanitarian efforts but do not have the time to visit, access, and monitor such institutions. I try to fill this gap. I identify, see, and evaluate these organizations. Our main criteria for support are the excellence of work and no discrimination based on caste, creed, religion, region, language, or gender. Some of the notable projects we have supported financially as well as with hands-on work are:

- Rehabilitation of people affected by the earthquake in Kutch in 2001
- Cardiac care medical camps in Bidada during 2004 to 2015
- Women’s health programs with Bhojaya Sarvodaya Trust from 2003 to present

- Veerayatan Institute of Engineering – 32 acre land donation to build the college in 2007
- Nari Gunjan – providing education to children and vocational training for women since 2019
- Child Welfare school for the handicapped since 2006
- Women’s empowerment with Project Life
- Eradication of curable blindness in Bihar since 2019
- Cataract surgeries in India and Kenya – working with several NGOs
- Distribution of white canes to visually impaired in Kenya
- Emergency funding to NGOs during the pandemic
- Disaster relief in India and Kenya in 2020
- Divyajyoti Trust - Retinopathy for premature babies



Since the formation of **Joy of Helping** non-profit in 2021, we have continued to work with these partner organizations. Our main focus is always helping the poorest in any project. We support NGOs who are willing to work in most poor and difficult areas and only collaborate with those who maintain 100 %



transparency. We support NGOs that work against abuse of women and children.

At **Joy of Helping**, we support institutions at grassroots level in the following areas:

- Provide education to the children in the slums and the tribal regions
- Improve health standards amongst the children in regions where the mortality rate is very high due to malnutrition
- Rehabilitation of the mentally/physically challenged, hearing impaired, CP kids
- Women empowerment through vocational training helps them live their life with dignity.
- Encourage women to participate to join self-groups and income generating project
- Fight curable blindness and work with dedicated eye hospitals in India and Kenya.
- Raise Schedule class voice against caste-based violence and discrimination
- Prevention of the diseases

Some of our recent projects are:

1. Provide meals to school children to the poorest Kenyan families who do not have food at home. We have challenged ourselves to make a substantial impact by solving the hunger and malnutrition problem.
2. Provide funding to educate primarily selected students from poor socioeconomic classes who have failed to pursue higher education. The students are from the poor segment of society and are willing to work hard to develop their skills. The students enroll into a one year certificate programs titled "Vision Assistant" and "Ophthalmic Nursing".
3. Support "Nari Gunjan" to provide security from abuse and neglect for the children of Musahar communities and help them access primary education and healthcare services.
4. Provide education support to children from three redlight areas and those whose mothers have moved out to Mumbai suburbs, Thane, and Raigad district.
5. Support tree plantation program lead by VSSM. Plan is to plant 5000 trees in the countryside of Gujarat in 2022.



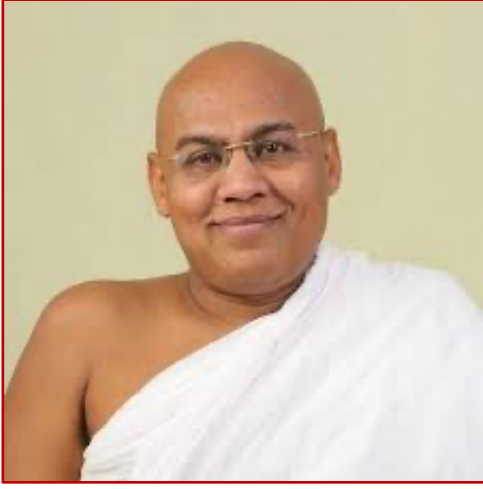
Our efforts are not simply monetary. The most fulfilling aspect of giving is the personal interaction and seeing the smiles and hope we can bring to people. I am personally involved in each project that we sponsor. This entails numerous international trips annually, interaction with nonprofit organizations, and personal interaction with people whose lives we touch. Personal interaction allows me to stay connected with those in need, adapt to the times, and find the best opportunities to support the community without discrimination. I feel truly blessed to have the chance to share this experience with my family, friends, and the community around me, and I am grateful for the support and donations they have provided along the way.



## પ્રવચનશિખર પૂજ્ય આચાર્ય શ્રીમદ્વિજય મહાબોધિ સુરીશ્વરજી મહારાજ

લેખક: શૈશવ શાહ, અમદાબાદ

પૂજ્યશ્રીનો જન્મ 16 એપ્રિલ 1962 માં રાસંગપર (જી. જામનગર, ગુજરાત) માં થયો. એમના પિતાનું નામ પદમશીભાઈ શાહ અને માતાનું નામ કસ્તુરબેન હતું. પિતાજીએ વર્ષો સુધી મુંબઈમાં કરિયાણાં ની દુકાન ચલાવી. ત્યાર બાદ મોટાભાઈએ કેમિકલ ની ફેક્ટરી નાખતા પિતાજી રીટાયર થયા.



પૂજ્યશ્રીનું શિક્ષણ મુંબઈ - દાદર માં થયું. બાલમંદિર થી લગાવી S. S. C. સુધી પૂજ્યશ્રી હંમેશા પ્રથમ નંબરે ઉત્તીર્ણ થયા.

પૂજ્યશ્રી ના પરિવારમાં પહેલેથીજ ધાર્મિક વાતાવરણ હતું. દેવદર્શન, પ્રભુની પૂજા, રાત્રી ભોજન નો ત્યાગ, અભક્ષ ત્યાગ વગેરે સંસ્કારો બાળપણથીજ હતા. ઉપાશ્રય માં જેટલા પણ ગુરુ ભગવંતો પધારે પૂજ્યશ્રી ધાર્મિક અભ્યાસ કરવા અવશ્ય જતા. નાની ઉંમરે બે પ્રતિક્રમણ સાંભળીને કંઠસ્થ કરી લીધા હતા. ત્યારબાદ પાંચ પ્રતિક્રમણ, ચાર પ્રકરણ, ત્રણ ભાષ્ય, છ કર્મગ્રન્થ, તત્વાર્થસૂત્ર, વીતરાગ સ્તોત્ર અને સંસ્કૃત વ્યાકરણનો અભ્યાસ સંસારી અવસ્થામાં કરી લીધો.

પંદર વર્ષની ઉંમરે વૈરાગ્ય પ્રબળ થતા પૂ. આ. શ્રી અક્ષયબોધિ સુ. મહારાજ ની સાથે મુંબઈ - વાલકેશ્વર માં ચારિત્ર જીવનનો સ્વીકાર કર્યો. વૈરાગ્યદેશનાદક્ષ પૂ. આ. શ્રી હેમચંદ્રસુરી મહારાજના ચરણોમાં જીવન સમર્પિત કર્યું. સંયમ જીવન અંગીકાર કર્યાબાદ લગાતાર સોળ વર્ષ સુધી ગુરુકુળવાસમાં રહી ન્યાય, વ્યાકરણ, પ્રકરણ, કર્મસાહિત્યનો સુંદર અભ્યાસ કર્યો અને પછી પ્રવચન ક્ષેત્રમાં પ્રવેશ કર્યો. છેલ્લા ત્રીસ વરસથી પૂજ્યશ્રી જૈન સંઘોમાં, સ્કૂલ, કોલેજ અને જેલમાં પ્રવચનો કરી રહ્યા છે.

"માં-બાપને ભૂલશો નહિ" એ વિષય પર પૂજ્યશ્રીએ આજ સુધીમાં 163 વાર પ્રવચન કર્યા છે. જેના શ્રવણથી હજારો યુવાનોમાં પરિવર્તન આવ્યું છે. માતા-પિતાના અનન્ય ભક્ત બન્યા છે.

એ સિવાય દરેક ચાતુર્માસમાં પૂજ્યશ્રી રવિવારીય યુથ શિબિરનું આયોજન કરે છે જેમાં પંદરથી વિશ વર્ષના હજારથી બારસો જેટલા યુવાનો/યુવતીઓ પૂજ્યશ્રીના જોશીલા પ્રવચનો સાંભળી જીવનમાં પરિવર્તન લાવે છે. વ્યસનો અને પાપોથી મુક્ત બને છે.

ગચ્છાધિપતિ શ્રી જયઘોષસૂરી મહારાજની નિશ્રામાં પચીસ વર્ષ રહી પૂજ્યશ્રીએ ચાતુર્માસિક પ્રવચનો, જાહેર પ્રવચનો, માસખમણ-સિધ્ધિતપમાં વિશિષ્ટ પ્રેરણા કરવા દ્વારા ગચ્છાધિપતિશ્રી ને સહાયક બનેલ. પૂજ્યશ્રીના પર્યુષણ મહાપર્વ તેમજ દીપાવલી પર્વના પ્રવચનો જૈન સંઘમાં ખુબજ વખણાય છે. એ અંગે પૂજ્યશ્રીએ લખેલું સાહિત્ય પણ ઉપલબ્ધ છે. એ સિવાય પૂજ્યશ્રીએ આજ સુધીમાં 60 જેટલા પુસ્તકોનું સંપાદન કર્યું છે.

વડીલો તરફથી અનુજ્ઞા પ્રાપ્ત થતા પૂજ્યશ્રીને અનુક્રમે ગણીપદવી, પન્ચાસપદવી અને ઇ. સ. 2015 માં આચાર્યપદવીની કલિકુંડ તીર્થમાં પ્રાપ્તિ થઇ.

ત્યારથી જૈન સંઘમાં પૂજ્યશ્રી “પૂ. આચાર્યદેવ શ્રી મહાબોધિસૂરીશ્વરજી મહારાજ” ના નામે સુપ્રસિદ્ધ છે.



પૂજ્યશ્રીની પ્રેરણાથી અમદાબાદ-પાલડી વિસ્તારમાં “સુકૃત સેન્ટર” નામનું ભવન બન્યું છે. જેમાં નાના બાળકોથી લગાવી વડીલો-વૃદ્ધો માટે અનેક પ્રવૃત્તિઓના આયોજન થાય છે - જેમ કે બાળકો માટે સંસ્કાર કેમ્પ, સમર કેમ્પ, ડાન્સ ક્લાસ, અષ્ટપ્રકારી પૂજા, “વન ડે” આયંબિલ વગેરે કરાવાય છે. યુવાનો માટે

શિબિર, તત્ત્વજ્ઞાન, સંમેલન અને વિવિધ સેમિનારના આયોજન થાય છે. વડીલો માટે પાઠશાળા, સામાયિક, સ્નાત્ર, નવપદની ઓળી, ભક્તિના આયોજન થાય છે. દર મહિને વિવિધ વ્યક્તિઓનું વક્તવ્ય ગોઠવાય છે.

સુકૃત સેન્ટરની વર્તમાન કાળમાં અતિઉપયોગી પ્રવૃત્તિઓ જોઈને ગુજરાત અને મુંબઈના વિવિધ સંઘોમાં આવા સેન્ટર ખુલે એ માટે પૂજ્યશ્રીને વિનંતી થાય છે.

આ તમામ પ્રવૃત્તિઓમાં પૂજ્યશ્રી દ્વારા શુરુ થયેલી શ્રેષ્ઠ પ્રવૃત્તિ એટલે વિહારસેવા. છેલ્લા બાર વર્ષથી ભારતભરના વિવિધ સંઘોમાં સાધુ/સાધ્વીજી ભગવંતોને પૂજ્યશ્રીની પ્રેરણાથી હજારો યુવાનો વહેલા સવારે ઉઠીને વિહારમાં સહાયક બને છે.

ઇ. સ. 2010 માં ભિવંડી (મહારાષ્ટ્ર રાજ્ય) માં પડેલું વિહારસેવાનું બીજ આજે સમસ્ત ભારતમાં ફેલાઈ ચુક્યું છે. ગુજરાત, મહારાષ્ટ્ર, રાજસ્થાન, મધ્યપ્રદેશ, તામિલનાડુ, કર્નાટક, તેલંગાણા, આંધ્રપ્રદેશ તેમજ કેરલા રાજ્યમાં આજ સુધીમાં 350 ગુપ સ્થપાયા છે. જેમાં 15,000 યુવાનો જોડાયા છે.

આ યુવાનોને મોટીવેટ કરવામાટે દર વર્ષે યાતુર્માસ દરમ્યાન વિશાલ સંમેલનનું આયોજન થાય છે જેમાં 2000 જેટલા યુવાનો વિવિધ રાજ્યમાંથી આવતા હોય છે.

પૂજ્યશ્રી ગુજરાતી, હિન્દી, મરાઠી, અંગ્રેજી, રાજસ્થાની, સંકૃત અને પ્રાકૃત ભાષાઓના અચ્છા જાણકાર છે. જરૂર પડે તો વિવિધ ભાષામાં પ્રવચનો કરીને જનતાને આવર્જિત કરે છે.

પ્રવચનશિખર પૂજ્ય આચાર્ય શ્રીમદ્વિજય મહાબોધિ સૂરીશ્વરજી મહારાજ સાહેબના ચરણોમાં કોટી કોટી વંદના.





## Insights from Jain Philosophy

By Shree Nahata



Shree Nahata grew up in a Jain family in Bangalore, India. He is currently pursuing a DPhil in Oriental Studies researching Jain and Buddhist Philosophy at the University of Oxford. In his spare time, he enjoys composing Sanskrit verses and Hindi/Urdu ghazals.

As a kid growing up in a devout Jain household in India, I was exposed to a rich and sophisticated culture: listening to *pravachans* by Acharyas, giving alms-food (*gochari*) to monks and nuns, performing 48 minute meditations (*samayik*), and fasting on certain days. There was a strong emphasis on moral values (*sanskaar*) in our family. I vividly remember the wonderful stories our grandfather told us every night in order to teach us Jain values.

When I went abroad for my university education, however, I began to develop doubts about Jainism. Reading about other religious traditions and meeting people from different cultural backgrounds challenged my Jain belief-system. I did not have the philosophical skills necessary to know whether my Jain beliefs were true and, if so, how. I wondered whether my Jain values were right or merely conventional. I knew the do's and don'ts of being a Jain, but I did not know the why's behind my practices. In other words, I did not understand the fundamental philosophy of Jainism without which none of the ritual, meditative, and ethical practices make sense. A flood of questions arose in my mind: Are the fundamental teachings of Jainism true or do I believe them merely because of the accidents of my birth? Is there something special about Jain philosophy or does Jainism teach essentially the same thing as other traditions? There was no dearth of questions in my mind, only a lack of answers.

I decided to embark on my own quest for truth. I felt that the best way to discover the underlying philosophy of Jainism was to read ancient Jain texts in their original language. This led me to study Sanskrit as part of my MPhil in Classical Indian Religion at University of Oxford. Reading various classical texts such as *Tattvārthasūtra*, Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra* and Samantabhadra's *Āptamīmāṃsā* was like discovering a time-travel machine to learn Jain philosophy directly from the great Acharyas of

the past! This life-changing experience continues to inspire my current research into Jain philosophy at the same institution.

During the course of my research, I have discovered certain philosophical ideas which have convinced me of validity of the fundamentals of Jain philosophy. In what follows, I will explain the four most profound and magnificent Jain philosophical ideas which have re-ignited my conviction in the Jain path:

### 1) There is no Creator God – You've got to help yourself!

Most Indian and Western religions teach that the universe was created by an omniscient, omnipotent, and benevolent divine reality. While the name given to this transcendent entity (such as Yahweh, Allah, Brahma, etc.) might vary, there is an underlying affinity between these traditions: the universe was created by God and the summum bonum of the religious life depends on His will. Hence, the religious path consists of devotion to this Supreme Master in whose hands our fates lie.

I personally never found the idea of God appealing. Besides the evident fact that there was no evidence for the existence of such an entity, my teenage self despised the notion that my life depends on some invisible master above me. I kept searching for a path which balances rationality with individual freedom until I finally (re)discovered Jain philosophy! When I read Acharya Jinasena's refutation of *Īśvara* (creator God), I felt like I'd found a fellow free-thinker from 1200 years ago! I realized that the object of Jain worship, Bhagwan Mahavir and the other Tirthankars, were human beings just like you and me rather than unverifiable invisible beings in the sky! When I read the benedictory verse of the *Tattvārthasūtra*, I finally understood the deeper philosophical basis of Jain worship: we worship the Tirthankars in order to cultivate their virtues (*tad-guṇa-labdhye*) and not in order to get our

selfish projects cleared by some sky-dwelling bureaucrat! The historicity of Bhagwan Mahavir's life appealed to my scientific temper.

And, when I learnt Sanskrit grammar, I discovered that the most fundamental meaning of the word 'karma' is simply 'action'. I found the Jain doctrine of karma liberating because it meant that my life ultimately depends on my own intentions, choices, and actions rather than some external force. An appreciation of the law of karma made me realize the radical freedom and the deep responsibility underlying the human condition. Our fate, secular and religious, depends on our own effort rather than the *firmans* of invisible beings in the sky - this is a profoundly humanistic doctrine!

## 2) Anekāntavāda – The World is Real, Diverse, and Full of Possibility!

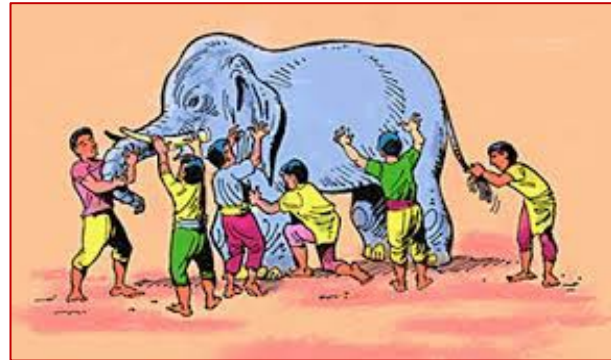
Over the course of my study of Indian philosophy, I noticed a marked tendency within schools of Buddhism and Vedanta to deny the reality of the world as we experience it. These schools teach that the world of ordinary experience is a kind of illusion (*māyā/moha*) which must be transcended by discovering a deeper reality. Once again, my scientific temper prevented me from denying the reality of my ordinary experience. This worry lingered in my mind until I encountered Acharya Samantabhadra's verse in which he praises the Jina for teaching a doctrine consistent with our ordinary experience of the world. In this remarkable fact, I noticed the potential for a convergence between Jainism and modern science. Reading the philosophical debates between Buddhists and Vedantins puzzled me greatly. While Buddhists insist on the impermanence of reality, Vedantins are equally adamant in their assertion that the permanent alone is real. I felt the power of both sides of the argument because both of them captured an aspect of my experience. Yet, I did not know how I could simultaneously be both a Buddhist and a Vedantin until I discovered Jain *anekāntavāda*!

In my understanding, *anekāntavāda* accepts the diversity of our experiences of this colorful world instead of trying to dogmatically superimpose any one-dimensional theory upon reality. *Anekāntavāda* teaches that reality is both permanent as well as impermanent and

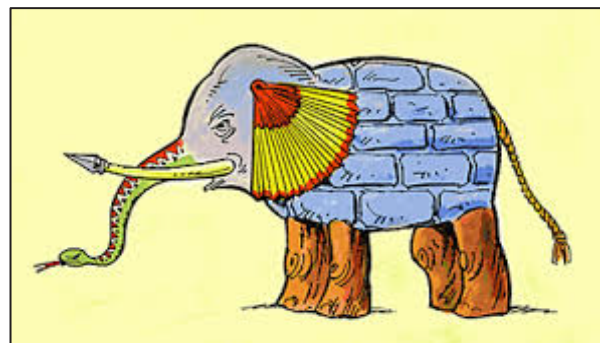
this is not a contradiction because we experience both continuity and change in our ordinary lives. The beauty of *anekāntavāda* lies in its power of reconciling seeming contradictions in order to create a more multi-dimensional portrait of reality. When Vedantins one-dimensionally assert the unity of existence, Jains remind them that every entity is unique in its own way! When Buddhists one-dimensionally assert the absolute uniqueness of every entity, Jains remind them that things actually have a lot in common!

## 3) Nayavāda – Truth is Context-Dependent!

A deep insight into the context-sensitivity of truth is found in the Jain doctrine of viewpoints (*nayavāda*). Against the absolutist teachings of other religions, *nayavāda* reminds us that every object or situation can be analyzed from different points of view. No statement is true or false until we determine the relevant context for the statement. Traditionally, *nayavāda* has been illustrated by the story of six blind men and the elephant.



Each blind man, touching a part of the elephant, declares the elephant to be a rope, wall, spear, or fan. Based on their limited epistemic perspectives, they begin to quarrel with each other.



While this lovely parable introduces us to the insight of nayavāda, a more precise way of understanding nayavāda is to consider a simple sentence such as 'Mango tree produces mangoes'. At first blush, the sentence seems obviously true. How can this statement have no truth-value independent of context? However, the sentence seems obviously true precisely because we implicitly supply a context: the context of mango trees in general. Mango trees, in general, do produce mangoes! However, suppose that I make this statement in front of a barren mango tree in my courtyard. The statement would now be false because of the context of this particular fruitless mango tree. Imagine a third context: both my neighbor and I planted mango trees in the past but only my neighbor's mango tree currently bears mangoes. In this situation, the statement would be true when applied to my neighbor's mango tree and false when applied to my mango tree. Now, suppose instead that I make this statement at a botany conference. A respondent might rightly object that my statement is ambiguous: the species *Mangifera Indica* produces ordinary mangoes whereas the species *Mangifera Foetida* produces 'horse-mangoes'. And, if my statement was about a restaurant called 'Mango Tree', it would have an entirely different truth-value!

Though it emphasizes the context-sensitivity of truth, nayavāda is not a form of skepticism. There is a definite truth-value to the statement 'mango tree produces mangoes' when I supply a particular context such as *Mangifera Indica* trees in my courtyard. Nonetheless, nayavāda shows how one and the same statement can be both true as well as false depending on the context. This brilliant insight is, once again, inspired by the complexity and diversity of our ordinary lives rather than by abstract speculation. When correctly applied, nayavāda leads to a more context-sensitive and liberal approach to truth in contrast to the narrow dogmatism of other philosophical schools.

#### 4) Syādvāda – Truth Depends on Perspective!

The last and most complex piece of the puzzle of Jain philosophy is the doctrine of 'conditional assertion' (*syādvāda*). While nayavāda analyses an object from a particular point of view, syādvāda attempts to synthesize these

different points of view to paint a more complete picture of reality. At the most fundamental level, syādvāda teaches that any property F as well as its opposite property -F can be predicated to a given entity X provided that the assertions are qualified by suitable perspectives. Understanding classical 'perspectives' in terms of the modern notion of 'parameters', syādvāda basically states that both of the following statements are true:  
X is F given parameters (a, c, e, g ...)  
X is not-F given parameters (b, d, f, h...)

A simple example of syādvāda is the following statement about a fifteen year old boy: 'This boy is old'. The statement is true from a perspective of a 5 year old; but from a 40 year old's perspective, it is not true. And the boy is certainly old enough to do the dishes; but not old enough to drive a car!

Syādvāda might seem like a collection of dry and improbable propositions unless we understand the Jain ontology underlying it. According to Jain ontology, there are six kinds of substances in the universe with innumerable instantiations of each kind. Each substance has innumerable properties as well as infinite modes. This is a remarkably open-ended conception of the nature of reality. When we understand the infiniteness of the cosmos, we realize that the truth of any limited linguistic statement inevitably depends on the parameters we choose to assess its truth-value. This, in layman's terms, is the perspective-dependent nature of truth. However, syādvāda goes beyond this perspectival nature of truth. It states that, given the overflowingly complete nature of reality, any predicate F can be truthfully attributed to any subject X provided that we choose the right set of parameters. The more I think about it, the more syādvāda amazes, astonishes, and baffles my ordinary mind! Syādvāda is an insight into the perspectival nature of truth based on the infinitely open-ended nature of reality.

The study of these profound and complex ideas has convinced me that Jain philosophy offers unique insights into the nature of reality. While I might not be able to follow every dietary restriction enjoined by the Jain tradition, I am proud to call myself a Jain precisely because I have caught a brief glimpse of a few gems in the treasury of Jain philosophy.



## How to Create a Blissful Life Practical Lessons from Karma Theory (Part 1) 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.*

*Both authors while economists by profession, share a common passion of understanding the teachings of Jainism and other philosophies.*

Every person in this world wants to be happy and this longing for happiness creates desires. Desire to earn more money, fame, and have a family, among others. It is also true that in every person's life, a time will come when they realize that there is a cyclical pattern to the experiences of this desire. A desire which they hoped would give them happiness, is bound to make them unhappy at some point. Similarly, an unfulfilled desire will seem like a blessing after years. Hence, when a person has experienced all possible happiness and suffering from their desires, they will often be stuck with one question. *Is this it? Is this all there is to life? What is real happiness? Where is bliss?*

This question is often the starting point of the spiritual journey when we start to move from external to internal sources of happiness. Discovering the ultimate truth that all happiness lies within us might seem like a canonical statement, but when we come in contact with those who have experienced it, such as many spiritual luminaries around the world, we understand its significance.

Now a pertinent question arises - how to achieve that state? The answer can be found in ancient scriptures that will often outlay the path for self-realization. However, according to Jain teachings, this path has a pre-requisite - We need to have a good understanding of the theory of *karma*. The law of *karma* or the law of cause and effect says that every volitional thought, word, or action will bring out a similar result. *Karma* dictates that whatever is happening to you is entirely because of your own thoughts, words, and actions. Sometimes, you don't

even need to understand the concept of past lives. If you are aware and carefully assess your life, you will be able to trace back any suffering in your life to your past actions. The beauty and burden of *karmas* is that you are entirely responsible for your own life. No one else can bear or partake in the fruits of your action.

In the very wise and heartfelt words of Dr. Stephanie Schauder

*Enough  
Having everything is worse  
It's a paradox you see  
When all your needs are met  
You have to wonder "Is it me?"*

*Why can't I enjoy this comfort  
I've wanted so long to obtain  
Why do I feel so empty  
When there's nothing left to gain*

*And the icing on the cake  
Is this realization to the core  
That the dessert doesn't satisfy  
It only leaves us wanting more*

*And the trouble with that façade  
Is the learning you see  
When you can't believe false promises  
You think "there's something wrong with me"*

In a series of two articles, we discuss one of the building foundations of a spiritual journey, how to do *karmas* (actions) in life? In other words, how to take charge of your life and determine your fate? We will cover the following five broad topics:



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1. Understanding the concept of *karmas*
2. Learning how to react in unfavorable situations
3. Controlling your mind
4. The power of present efforts
5. The secret to happiness and the ultimate quality of a good person

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The content of this article is based on the discourses of a revered Jain monk, **Munishri Kshamasagar Ji**. We feel that people would gain immense peace from His teachings and hence have translated his teachings on Karma Theory to reach a wider audience. We are very grateful to Him for changing our lives for the better.

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### What is Karma?

The theory of *karma* is the same as “as you sow, so shall you reap”, but let’s delve a little deeper. *Karmas* are tiny invisible particles floating in the universe and get attached to the soul whenever we undertake actions that involve the following four passions: anger, ego, deceit, and greed. (see a footnote at the end of the article.) They get detached from the soul only after they fructify. If there is equanimity in our actions and the four passions do not exist, then *karma* particles are not attracted to the soul. The intensity and duration of the fruit of *karmas* can be modified through repentance and purity of conduct.

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*Karma*, according to Jainism, is the root cause of the cycle of birth and death. It is only because the *karmic* particles are attached to the soul, that the soul will transmigrate and attain a new body after death. When one sheds off all *karmas*, then one becomes free of the cycle of birth and death and can attain liberation or *moksha*.

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You may find that Karma theory is overwhelming, and it is not clear what you should focus on. A golden rule that you need to follow is just to focus on your action in the present, You don’t need to be concerned with the accumulated past *karmas* (*sanchit karma*), or how your future life will transpire from actions that you don’t even remember. Just remain in the present and focus on your thoughts, words, and action now.

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Remember that *karmas* are influenced by our present efforts, attachments, and ignorance (or lack of right knowledge). Attachments and ignorance have the potency to destroy the qualities of the soul including compassion. However, present efforts and embarking on a spiritual path open new avenues for

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undercutting attachments and ignorance. Again, the key is to focus on present efforts.

### Why is it so important to stay in the present?

If you are aware, you will realize that your thoughts are either in the past or in the future. It is important to live in the present. It might be worth thinking about what is it that our thoughts are resulting in? If we think about our past, we cannot change it. If we think of our future, there are a number of scenarios that may unfold.

Whenever an unfavorable situation arrives, then do not be overwhelmingly in despair. It is in vain to think ‘my entire life has gone by and I haven’t seen a single happy moment.’ The sadness caused by a past event may be very small, but then it is you who is extenuating it by dwelling on it. The sad moment happened once, but it is you and your uncontrolled mind that is running it over and over and exacerbating the sadness. No one else can ever be held at fault for what you decide to make yourself undergo. Learning to be free from the past is an empowering process. It will open up the gates for designing your own life. If we observe carefully with awareness, we will find that not an iota from the external world causes that despair. It is my thought or perception towards that person, circumstance, or thing that is the source of unhappiness.

Similarly, when you are experiencing happiness (i.e. fulfilment of our desires which is due to the fruition of good *karmas*) in life, don’t dwell on whether it will last in the future. Everything is temporary except the soul and even this shall pass. Be in the present, there is no other way to be happy.

### How to react when we face unfavorable situations?

Even though it is understood that blaming others, or staying depressed will prove to be destructive, it is quite difficult to orchestrate our reaction to unpleasant scenarios especially if one is unaware of the right conduct. Hence it is important to understand how to handle unfavorable situations.

One thing we need to realize is that we will get the fruits of our *karmas*. This is a law. What is happening to you is an effect, so it must have a cause. *Karma* is the law of causation. But how we react when we receive the fruits is entirely dependent on our present



efforts. It is of critical importance to be careful in monitoring the reaction through present efforts because that will determine the future course of our life.

When we face difficult times in life, then it is very important to react in a particular manner.

**1) Be Responsible:** Take all the responsibility on yourself. Understand that what is happening to you, is happening to you because of yourself only. Never try to impart the blame of the situation on anyone else. When we blame others, we give away our power to change. The acceptance that you are the creator of your life (even if there are unpleasant moments in it) is the steppingstone to having a peaceful life.

**2) Remain Equanimous:** A majestic king once approached a Jain monk. He was worried about his kingdom being captured by the neighboring king. He asked the Jain monk, the secret to remaining calm and collected during these troubling times. The monk gave him a scroll but asked him to open it when the situation was truly dire. The king held on to the scroll even when his kingdom was invaded, and the battle stretched on for weeks. When the opposing army was close to approaching the king, he decided to open the scroll. The following golden letters graced the folds of the paper: "This too shall pass". The king realized the wisdom behind these words, picked up his sword, and fought valiantly. Hence, no matter how difficult the situation, compose and convince yourself that "This too shall pass".

This is also true when you face favorable situations. The happiness that you receive from the fruits of your previous karmas, will eventually pass. So do not get too excited at the prospect of having a new job, acquiring more wealth, etc. The initial excitement will fade away eventually. Gaining this state of equanimity in life will give us control over our emotions, and eventually will make you detached from no matter what the situation in life.

### **How to change one's perspective and look at hurtful things in a positive manner?**

We now understand how one needs to take responsibility and remain equanimous when undergoing tribulations in life. But even after following these steps, we may still have some unresolved feelings towards events and people.

To this question, Muni Shri Kshama Sagar Ji says that it is okay to still have unresolved feelings towards the other party, but we can always make an effort to change our perspective. He illustrates this point through an anecdote. A person had saved money through sheer labor and hard work for building a house for his family for the past ten years. A day before moving in, the house burned down. Everyone around him offered sympathy for his undue suffering. They were perturbed to see the man with the same contented smile that he had when he was saving for the house. When prodded, he said, "I am grateful that the house burned now, and not when my family moved in. I can build a new house, but where would I have gotten a new family?". See, this is all in perspective.



The power to change perspective lies entirely in you. What is suffering for you, can also become a cause of joy for you. So, if you want revenge, use it creatively. Use it positively. Use it to change yourself.

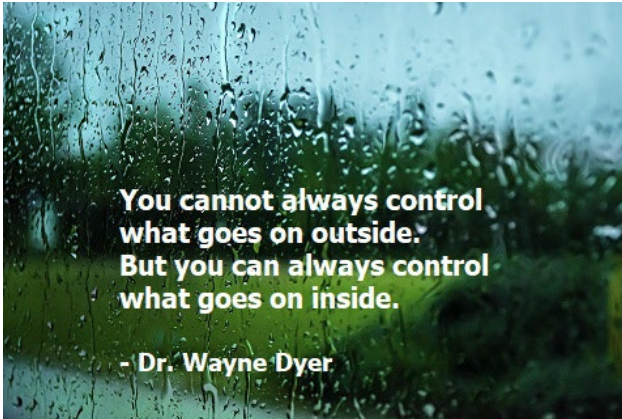
If you are caught making a mistake, then thank God that you were caught now. Accept your responsibility and understand that you were saved from making a larger, irredeemable mistake in the future. If a person abuses you, then again thank the person. Imagine the horrid circumstance if he would have slapped you or murdered you. Thank him for saving you from severe future pain.

If the trick is to control our minds, then how do we achieve that?



## How to achieve control of the mind?

Our mind is quite fickle. It will gravitate towards immoral thoughts. If someone is angry at you, then the only resolve to get out of this situation seems to get angrier. But if I use logic, then there is no reasoning to mirror someone else's emotions. For instance, If the other person doesn't have an eye, then you don't make yourself blind too. So, there is no valid logic in getting angry when someone else is expressing anger towards you. Controlling your mind will make you so strong, that other people's emotions will not have any impact on you.



Hence, it is important to train our minds towards only thinking moral thoughts. In the beginning, it can be attained by chanting mantras, like the word Om repeatedly 24\*7. Chanting mantras changes the chemical association between the soul and body. Or simply, it is very difficult to think negative thoughts when one is continuously chanting mantras. This saves us from acquiring negative *karmas* for the future.

This article summarized the dilemma that every human will go through in their life, introduced the concept of *karmas*, and allayed the concern that even if the information is overwhelming, the answer is straightforward: focus on the present. We leave you with this last thought hoping that the next time any negative thought comes to your mind, you will be quick to observe it and dispense it from your mind. Controlling the mind is a challenge. Chanting mantras is just a starting point. Other practices like meditation, mindfulness, etc. can further help this process.

In the next article, we will go a step further from reacting to unpleasant situations to discuss the right manner to conduct present efforts and a proven shortcut to be infused with everlasting joy in life.

## Introducing Munishri Kshamasagar Ji

Munishri Kshamasagar Ji, the disciple of Acharya Shri Vidhyasagar Ji Maharaj is among one of the most respected Jain Munis. Muni Kshamasagar ji, an M.Tech. from the Sagar University, renounced all the worldly pleasures and material belongings to become an ascetic at the tender age of 23 to tread on the path of peace and salvation as propagated by his Guru Acharya Shri Vidhyasagar ji Maharaj.



Munishri's Amrit Vaani simplifies the complex Jain philosophy and provides answers and solutions to all the worldly problems in a very practical way. It is so easy to relate to his pravachans. At every point it feels, "Yes this is exactly what I do in my life and how I feel and what I go through" and then it becomes so easy to realize the right path and the right conduct that alleviates all wrongdoings hence all worries and pains.

Source: <http://www.jinvaani.org/munishri-kshamasagar-ji.html>

<sup>1</sup> *Apart from these four passions, another important factor is the wrong identification with the body and the mind. We don't realize that we are the soul and not the body/mind, and this wrong perception extends to the people that we interact with. Once we realize that we as well as every living being on this earth is the soul, then karma will not be attached. However, this is beyond the scope of this article.*

## Book Reviews: Two Books on Karma Theory by Dr. Subhash C. Jain

By Dilip V. Shah. Philadelphia

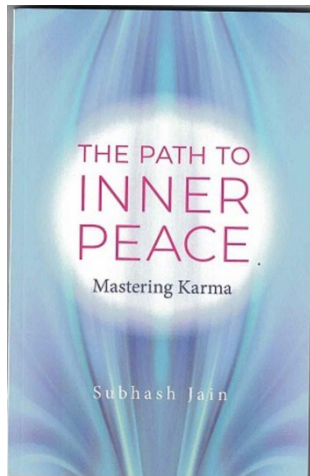


*Dilip V Shah of Philadelphia is the past president of JAINA. He is currently serving as chairman of JAINA's Overseas Relations Committee and a member of the Academic Liaison Committee. In addition to being an advisor for Jain Digest, he is also publisher and General Editor of Jain Avenue magazine –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

According to universally accepted wisdom, good actions give rise to the desirable consequences and that the evil actions result in undesirable consequences. That is the karmic law or theory of Karma. Different religions provide different explanations and the Jain teachings have produced many complex treatise on the subject. Unlike some other theories, Jains are taught that the producer of Karma alone bears its fruits, and no worldly or heavenly power can alter the outcome of that Karma. It does not recognize any external forces outside the realm of a person's Karma, that can punish or forgive. In other words, it does not assign a creator God any role in determining the fates of individuals. However, the individual does have the power to eliminate or soften the blow of some of the Karmas by steps described in the Shastras. Even after accepting these general statements, we are often confused by the application of these karmic laws in our daily life.

Dr. Subhash Jain, a Professor Emeritus in the departments of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Iowa, has attempted to explain Karma theory in his book titled **"The Path to Inner Peace – Mastering Karma"** (Mantra Books, Paperback, 133 Pages \$15.95).

To simplify complex metaphors, he has employed the often-used fictional account of the relationship between a Guru and his American student, Jason in a question-and-answer format. The locale is Yellowstone National Park and just two of them conversing in a quiet setting.



Simple? Not really. After all, the subject – "KARMA" is not for the faint of hearts. The Guru is patient and benevolent. The student is sharp, intelligent, and full of reverence for the Guru. His gasping powers will astonish the readers, but they will

at times, feel left behind. One is forced to go back often and reread the previous line, previous paragraph, or the previous page. Here is the plot:

Jason had just graduated from high school, and before joining college, spending his summer vacation camping alone. In solitude, he is seeking answers to why one is often preached to do good things. In the previous year, he read a book on Karma given to him by one of his best friends – Ajay Jain. The name of the book Jason read is not revealed to us, but he finds the book intriguing. He has learned that it is one of the main tenets of Jainism. Jason is on a journey to find his own path for spiritual transformation, and he feels that the Karma doctrine is the missing piece on that path. But he has many questions.

Jason believes the actions of a living being make that living being unique. But what may be the reason that everybody's actions are different from others? He has learned that for the Karma doctrine to be meaningful, the presupposition of rebirth is indispensable. That makes him wonder if the soul of a living being can liberate itself from the cycle of birth and death. Why are some people born healthy while others ill, some intelligent while others are mentally challenged, some compassionate while others are cruel, and so on? Why do terrible things happen to good people? He believes there must be a logical explanation for the suffering in the world. He would spend the summer seeking answers to his queries. Ajay had given him the phone number of a Guru that could answer his queries and lived not too far from where he was. So, Jason connects with the Guru.

We never learn the name of the Guru, but he undertakes to answer all of Jason's questions and more. They agree to meet five days a week for a couple of hours in the afternoon. He inquires of Jason if he will have time to learn, do research, and still enjoy his stay at Yellowstone. Satisfied by his answer the Guru begins.

The Guru starts with a question – what are the substances which living beings are made of as he introduces the concepts of six fundamental substances starting with "matter" and its properties.





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From that modest beginning, the Guru takes him to the constituents of living beings, consciousness, properties of matter and soul, and causality, and brings him to ponder on Actions and Consequences leading to the conclusion that the Karma doctrine must be a universal doctrine. But the consequences can be universal or environmental (time, place, or local regulations). This is where the first rule of Karma is revealed: **Only the universal consequences are governed by the Karma doctrine.** Wealth, poverty, prestige, and disgrace are environmental consequences that aren't governed by the Karma doctrine. The next phase of conversation gets into Karmic body, transmigration of the soul, dark matter, subtle matter and *moha* (impurity of the soul).

Interestingly, for a book on Karma doctrine, the author begins a chapter on Karma only halfway through the book. He discusses the applicability of laws of Karma, types of Karma, Karmic particles, and Karmic debt, etc. After that, there are topics of Karmic field, Mastering the Karma and a primer on life forms based on number of senses. The last three chapter are on Free will, Health, Wealth, and Happiness, and Steps towards Spiritual Growth.

The book ends on an emotional tone. Time for the student to depart. He has learned a lot and it is time to internalize the knowledge and internalize it in his daily actions. Happy endings but a blissful beginning.

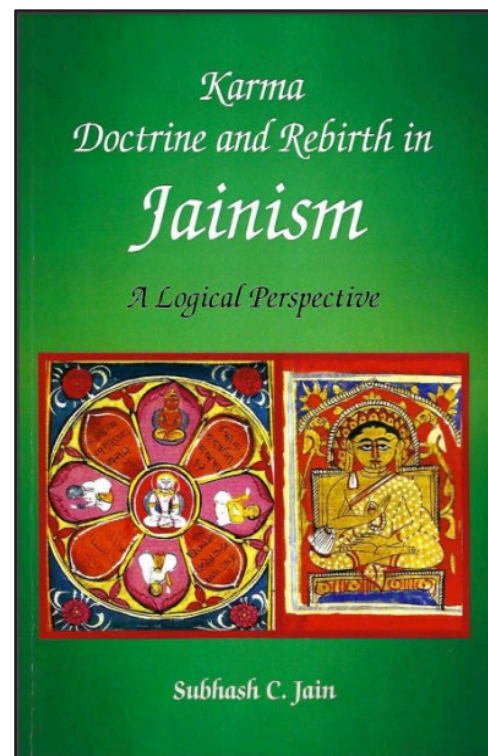
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The second book – **Karma Doctrine and Rebirth in Jainism – A Logical Perspective** (*Motilal Banarsidas Publishing House, New Delhi, Paperback, 235 Pages 500 Rs*) is in fact the published version of a Dr. Jain's thesis accepted for the award of the Ph. D. degree by the University of Madras. In fact, the first book is a derivative of this thesis. In just five chapters, the author has covered many sects of Jainism. Being an academic presentation, it has lots of footnotes, charts, figures, and mathematical formulas.

The book dwells on two issues – the consequences of actions and the causes of *karma-phala* (consequences of Karma). The author asks **are all consequences of actions and all causes of karma phala governed by the Karma doctrine?** He claims that a straightforward answer to this question is needed to avoid misinterpretation of the Karma doctrine, which in turn leads to controversies.

In attempting to answer, he proposes a conceptual scheme of transmigration of living beings from the least-developed to the most-developed life form and

the development of a mathematical model of the karmic load to predict one's *gati* (realm of existence). He states that answers can resolve issues around free will, good and evil actions, and *bhavyata* and *abhavyata* can be resolved. These are lofty goals of the thesis.



The author admits that the preliminary mathematical model of karmic load posed by him needs further development. He lists five future research topics that would be helpful in developing a comprehensive mathematical model of the Karmik load. He wishes that a team of dedicated experts would take upon themselves this task.

In one of the four appendixes to the book, an interesting topic of if “abhavyata implies predestination” is discussed. This is important because Jainism answers NO to the question if “all living beings eventually achieve liberation?” such an interpretation of the term *abhavya soul* that is innately predestined to forever transmigrate in the cycle of birth and death. Such an idea is inconsistent with the Karma doctrine. Sighting the writings of many sages, the author concludes that *abhavya jivas* do not achieve liberation due to lack of coordination of favorable conditions, not due to incapability of achieving liberation.

These two books deserves a shelf space in your home library because they will attain consultancy status for your study of Karma doctrine.

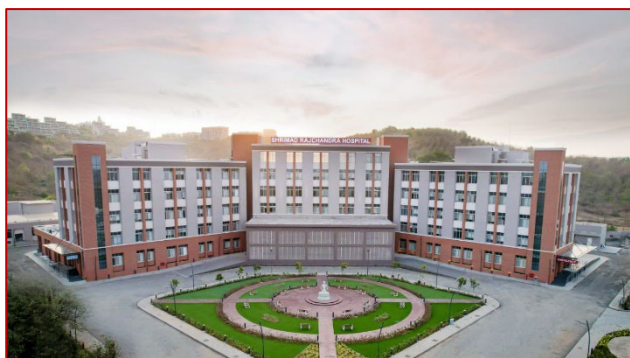
## Honorable Prime Minister Modi Inaugurates Multispecialty Charitable Shrimad Rajchandra Hospital - A revolution in rural healthcare

Envisioned by spiritual visionary and humanitarian leader Pujya Gurudevshri Rakeshji, **Shrimad Rajchandra Hospital** was inaugurated on August 4, 2022, at the hands of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi virtually. You can view Honorable PM's speech at the event at <https://www.srmd.org/en-US/srh-inauguration/>



The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Bhupendra Patel and Hon'ble President, BJP Gujarat State & Member of Parliament, Navsari Shri C.R. Patil graced the event at the international headquarters of Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur.

Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur carries an 18-year legacy of excellence in rural healthcare, having treated over 1.85 million patients since 2004. The newly inaugurated hospital aims to provide free support to underprivileged patients at every stage of recovery right from early diagnosis, treatment, preventative care to rehabilitation, by a team of 300+ highly qualified doctors and specialists. Bringing **over 16 specialties** to the doorstep of the tribal belt, Shrimad Rajchandra Hospital will provide end-to-end care in every department.



The 250-bed hospital makes world-class medical facilities accessible for underprivileged rural population in India. Enhanced treatment in each department will be delivered using state-of-the-art facilities. Here is a partial list:

- 6 Ultra-modern operation theatres
- 1.5 T MRI Machine
- 128 Slice CT scan with CT angiography
- Cardiac Catheterization Lab
- Dialysis unit
- 18-bed ICU and 26-bed NICU
- District Early Intervention Centre
- Aqua Therapy and Robotic Physiotherapy
- Sensory Garden for Developmental Disability

Moreover, through collaborations with leading international medical universities like Stanford, Shrimad Rajchandra Hospital will emerge as a global center of medical research, and actively train medical students and staff. Watch a brief video about the hospital at: <https://youtu.be/yuQNLyidiBc>



At the event, **Hon'ble PM Modi also laid the foundation stone for Shrimad Rajchandra Centre of Excellence for Women**. Built at a cost of approximately 40 crores, this facility will serve as a space of employment, empowerment, and skill-training for hundreds of rural women.

Recognizing all life as sacred, Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur also announced another medical initiative. **Hon'ble PM Modi laid the foundation stone for the 150-ward Shrimad Rajchandra Animal Hospital** as well. This facility spread across 40 acres will provide advanced treatment and rehabilitation to both large and small animals.

Commemorating the 75th year of Indian Independence, Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur has showcased its commitment to selfless service by undertaking 75 extensive social initiatives in collaboration with the Government of India so far.

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## Dr. Mahendra Kumar Pandya - A Legacy of Passion for Jain Dharma

By Dilip V. Shah. Philadelphia

Dr. Mahendra K. Pandya passed away on August 17, 2022, in New York at the age of 87. His departure to his heavenly abode ended a golden era for the Jains of New York and indeed, for all the Jains of North America. For he brought an air of dignity and moral leadership to every position he held. He led by acclamation and left his position of leadership with enhanced credentials while everyone clamored for him to continue for another term. He knew when to lead and when to leave. He was a humble and quiet man and saw public service as his Dharma and a privilege.



Dr. Mahendra Pandya arrived in the US in 1966 after completing his MD at Gwalior Medical University. He came to the US for further studies and practiced medicine, Cardiology, and Internal Medicine in NY from 1972 to 1997. Once settled, Asha Rani, his wife, and two sons Sanjay and Rajeev joined him.

During his medical residency, he, and Ashabehn started looking for other Jains in NY not just for companionship but for fulfillment of spiritual needs. Those were the years of no organized Jain activities in America and no place to assemble to pray or socialize. During the 1960s there was just a handful of Jain families in NY. They discovered two family friends from back home – Dr. Narendra K Sethi – professor of Management at St. John's University, Dr. Duli Chand Jain (publisher of Jain Study Circular) and his wife Sunita Jain. They also connected with Dr. Jagdish and Madhu Sheth - a research assistant at Columbia University, and Surendra and Sushila Singhvi – graduate students at Columbia University and Vinay Vakani. These families were eager to create a fraternity of Jains. Soon they connected with Dr. N. P. Jain, India's ambassador to the U. N. and some of the diamond merchants in NY such as Kamal Surana, Dr. Rajni Shah, Dharamchand Hirawat, and Vijay Tongya. During the 1960s and 70s, Dr Pandya and Asha behn's residence became a haven and source of support for many Jains who had newly arrived from India. Dr. Pandya also gave free medical assistance and counsel to many Jain families who had recently arrived and did not have medical insurance.

These Jain friends formed a Jain group under the leadership of Dr. Narendra Sethi and their first meeting was held at Columbia University. Dr. Pandya was nominated as the treasurer who paid for all the expenses of the group out of his own pocket. They began to hold monthly meetings at Columbia University student's hall. Dr. Pandya's wife Asha Rani and other ladies prepared vegetarian meals for the meetings that attracted lots of students and eventually many Jains from all the boroughs. The news of these monthly meetings was published in the New York Times as the formation of the first Jain Center in North America. In 1976, they formalized the group as The Jain Center of America (JCA) with Dr. Sethi as their President and Dr. Pandya as Vice President. They frequently held their meetings and celebration of Mahavir Jayanti and Diwali at the Indian Consulate in Manhattan under the Guidance of Dr. N. P. Jain. They also met and worshipped at Gurudev Shri Chitrabhanuji's Jain Meditation Center in Manhattan and other Secular Halls in New York.

After the retirement of Dr. Sethi, Dr. Pandya became the President of JCA. In 1981, with the blessings from Gurudev Shri Chitrabhanuji and Shri Sushil Muniji, and a major financial contribution from Dr. Pandya, JCA purchased a small house in Queens for their religious activities. This is the site where the present four-story modern Jain Temple with a replica of Ashtapad Tirth, beautiful artwork, and separate floors for a Digambar and a Svetambara Temple stands. All five traditions of Jains are represented in the four-story temple – celebrating Jain Unity with respect for Diversity. This world renowned unique and unified Jain Temple is a living testimony to Dr. Pandya's belief that all Jains should be united.

In the 1970's Dr. Pandya organized celebrations in New York and the Indian Consulate for the celebrations of Mahavir Bhagwan's 2,500 Nirvana Anniversary attended by many important dignitaries from India and the US.

All along, Dr. Pandya was the main supporter of Sushil Muni's ashram in Staten Island. In the early eighties, Dr. Pandya, and Dr. Tansukh Salgia collaborated in months long search for a larger place in Poconos for relocating Sushil Muni's Ashram. For their long days of search, Pandya ji would provide rides from Staten Island and home-cooked food. They finally settled for what is presently known as Siddhachalam. Here too, Dr. Pandya was a major contributor, fund raiser, and negotiator for purchasing of the property. Sushil Muni appointed Dr. Pandya a lifelong Trustee of Siddhachalam.

When Dr. Pandya retired as President of JCA, he began his participation in the newly formed national organization of Jains – Federation of Jain Associations in America - JAINA. To fortify the financial health of JAINA, Dr. Pandya conceived and formed the JAINA Charitable Trust. It was a timely call and as President of the Trust, he threw a lifeline to JAINA. In 1997, he became the First Vice President of JAINA and in 1999, he became the President of JAINA.

As President of JAINA, Dr. Pandya, in the very first meeting of the board of directors moved a resolution to make JAINA (not any Sangh) the convener of all the future JAINA conventions. He established the JAINA Calendar program and Mini Library initiative for Jain homes. His vision of producing a large wall calendar with the 12 most exquisite colorful photos of Jain Temples from all

over India complete with descriptions and many miniature photos of the artful interiors is now one of the most successful projects of JAINA. Over 14,000 calendars are mailed cost-free to JAINA members annually. His JAINA Mini Library consisted of three scholarly Jain books in English. He mailed out over 3,500 sets free to JAINA members who had donated to JAINA. He traveled to over 20 Jain Centers in US and Canada and convinced many Jain centers to follow a non-Sectarian approach to building their Jain Centers. He presided over the 2001 JAINA convention in Chicago as President as well as the 1999 JAINA Convention in Philadelphia as the Vice President.



In the year 2000, the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders was held in New York at the United Nations. The meeting recognized the importance of religion to world peace and faith leaders' commitment to peacekeeping, poverty relief, and environmental conservation. Dr. Pandya and others represented JAINA and the Jain faith. Mr. Bawa Jain was the Secretary-General of the Millennium World Peace Summit.

The most illustrious example of the moral leadership of Dr. Pandya is his accomplishment at the US Capitol. In a first-ever invitation by the House of Representatives to any religious leader from India, Gurudev Shri Chitrabhanuji was invited to deliver the opening prayer in May of 2001, in honor of the 2600<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary celebration of Bhagwan Mahavir. For American Jains, it was a history-making event. Over 140 Jain delegates from all over North America along with the representatives from the Indian Embassy, JAINA President Dr. Pandya, and several past JAINA



presidents and presidents of several Jain Centers in America attended this memorable event.



The biography of Dr. Pandya would be incomplete without mentioning his charitable activities outside JCA, JAINA, and Siddhachalam. He was the foundational supporter of ISJS – International School for Jain Studies, an innovative program designed by Dr. Sulekh Jain and Dr. Cromwell Crawford from the US, and Dr. Shugan Jain of Delhi. The program consisted of sending a group of American college students to India during the summer vacation for 3 or 4 weeks of full immersive Jain studies. The students were asked to pay just a small fraction of the cost of travel, lodging, and boarding thanks to the financial support provided by Dr. Pandya year after year.

Dr. Pandya quietly gave to many Jain causes such as:

- Support for Jain Center of America in New York
- Support for Siddhachalam Jain Tirth in New Jersey
- Donations to local Jain Temples in NY, NJ, & Washington DC
- Sponsoring of Ahimsa Award at Claremont Lincoln University Jain Studies program
- Financial support to Medical Camps in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra
- Donated funds, ambulance, and medical supplies to Bhagyodaya Tirth Hospital in MP

- Sponsored Jain Exhibit “The Victorious Ones” at the Rubin Museum of Arts in NY
- Contributed to building or renovating over 15 Jain Temples across India
- Built 4 Sant Niwas – temporary residences for Jain Monks
- Built 2 Tyagi Bhawan – temporary residences for elderly Jain Shrivaks
- Under the auspices of H.H. Muni Pranam Sagarji, - a large donor to Gunayatan at Shikharji
- Under the auspices of H.H. Muni Sudha Sagarji, - a large donor to Chandkeri in Rajasthan
- Supported Jain schools in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra
- Provided Scholarships for underprivileged Jain students in MP, RAJ, and MH
- Sponsored publications of many Jain books in India
- Sponsored Jain Study Circular – the first Jain quarterly publication in the US
- Participated in interfaith activities at the UN, Columbia University, and Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan (NY)

Dr. Pandya did not advertise his philanthropic activities. He spent most of his last 20 years of retirement in India along with his wife Ashaji pursuing a spiritual path with the blessings of Sadhus and Sadhvijs and working with Jain Samaj towards the construction and renovation of many Jain Temples across India. Their latest projects were the construction of a large temple in Tarangaji, Mehsana district, Gujarat, dedicated to Bhagwan Neminath as well as a large Tyagi Bhawan, and the renovation of the Chandkeri Temple near Kota, Rajasthan dedicated to Bhagwan Adinath, and a large Adinath Temple in his birthplace of Guna, MP.

His two sons Sanjay and Rajeev along with their wives Renu and Damyanti and 6 grandchildren have continued the legacy of their father. Sanjay is active in the JCA NY Temple as Benefactor Trustee and Vice Chairperson and Rajeev is active in JAINA as past Chairperson of the JAINA Calendar Committee, Past Regional VP Northeast, Board of JAINA 2019 & 2021 & 2023 Conventions, and Chairperson of JITO USA - New York. A blessed family that never tires of giving.

Dr. Mahendra Pandya leaves behind a rich legacy for Jains in North America and India and will be remembered for his generosity, kindness, and living the life of a true Jain Shrivak.



## Benefits of Fasting - Endorsed by Science

By Vijay Koul



*Vijay Koul is a scientist based in Canberra, Australia. He currently holds the position of Honorary Fellow for the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO). He grew up in Jammu and Kashmir, India. He is devoutly dedicated to writing and public seminars on human nutritional issues.*

I am a forestry scientist by profession. After my retirement a few years back, I wanted to pursue career in nutrition for the wellbeing of myself, my own family and community, unconditionally without intent on financial gain. I've done nutritional talks here in Australia and India. Upon completion of my courses at the International Sports Sciences Association (ISSA) USA and Food as Medicine, Monash University, Australia. What I learned brought me back to my basics where I understood, tried and experimented with Jainism during my school days.

I attended Dewan Badri Nath Vidya Mandir School in Jammu, which was mostly dominated by students from the Jain community. Jammu has a decent population of Jains. I often use to visit my friends' houses where interacting with their parents and grandparents gave me the first glimpse, insight and a feeling of Jainism.

Jainism is a faith of compassion, universal love and friendship. In fact, the most important thing I was influenced by at that time was teachings and set of beliefs of Lord Mahavira. His message of non-violence (Ahimsa), truth (Satya), no - stealing (acharya). All of that had a great impact on me. These sayings as a teenager cast my roots deep down. These dogmas have taken a profound commitment in the direction of my life and welfare. Even myself and my family have these values today.

I was also a keen observer when I use to find the eating habit of common Jain households. Like prolonged fasting, one meal a day, two meals a day or fasting from dawn to sunset. All of these observed fasts can be linked to the intermittent fasting of the modern age.

Nonvegetarian was forbidden. More and more I am learning about above two concepts of nutrition fasting and vegetarianism further I recognise what was taught in Jainism about 2620 years back is backed by science now.

Fasting has been a practice through human evolution. The former hunter-gatherers had no stores, supermarkets, fridges, or food available to them all year round. Our ancestors used to take two or three meals, due to the limited availability and selection of food. The convenience of cooking and a greater amount of food availability has significantly changed dietary habits to have 6-7 meals a day.

Due to health problems, especially obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol and coronary artery disease, intermittent fasting is gaining popularity now. There is a great deal of scientific evidence on the health benefits of fasting that can be verified through regular and daily media reports.

As per <https://trends.google.com/> fasting google search trends has increased almost 3-fold and particularly intermittent fast nearly 17-fold over the last two decades.

The belief in fasting is prevalent in the main religions such as Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Jainism in particular.

Fasting is an element of Hinduism. People observe various types of fasts depending on personal beliefs and local customs. Some Hindus fast on certain days of the month like Ekadasi, Ashtami and Purnima. Some days of the week are also set aside for fasting according to personal belief and preferred deity. Fasting is a practice in many Christian denominations and takes place collectively during certain periods of the liturgical calendar. In Islam, the observance of Ramadan is considered one of the five pillars of Islam. During the holy month of Ramadan, all Muslims are required to refrain from eating and drinking from sunrise to sunset for 30 days.

Fasting was a weapon used by Gandhi ji in his philosophy of Ahimsa (nonviolence) and Satyagraha.

INFORMATION

Jain saints usually perform fasts every now and then. Fasting is quite common amongst Jains. Jainism has 16 types of fast<sup>1</sup>.

Fasting and prayers are often methods of purification and rejuvenation of the soul. Based on a lot of literature research I found fasting from the Gospels of Jainism is the most well-matched for improvement for physical, mental, and spiritual development.

New concept of fasting, coined as intermittent fasting is gaining a lot of popularity. The oldest literature I got on modern intermittent fasting is a publication by Garfield published in 1964<sup>2</sup>.



A type of periodic intermittent fasting known as the 5:2 diet (allowing people to eat what they want 5 days a week and limiting calories on the other 2 days) was introduced by Michelle Harvie and Mark Mattson, popularized in the UK and Australia by Michael Mosley around 2012. It has also become popular here in Australia.

Dr. Jason Fung is a nephrologist from Canada. He is now a global expert on intermittent fasting and low-carbohydrate diet, particularly for the treatment of people with type 2 diabetes. He is the author of three successful health books on fasting. His 16/8 intermittent fasting is popular amongst celebrities and public. The practice of fasting 16/8 is to limit food consumption to a fixed window of 8 hours per day and stay off the food for the next 16 hours.

Some scientists suggest that intermittent fasting, or eating only for short periods of time is integrated into our physiology. It is an evolutionary adaptation and can trigger critical functions in cells, supporting general health. This results in Autophagy a vital process which eliminates and recycles undesirable or damaged molecules from your cells.<sup>3</sup>

According to a detailed review of the 2014 scientific literature, intermittent fasting can lead to weight loss of up to 8% within 3 to 24 weeks.

In human studies on intermittent fasting, fasting blood glucose was reduced by 6% over 8-12 weeks in pre-diabetes patients. Fasting insulin decreased from 20% to 31%<sup>4</sup> A couple of years back BBC reported fans of intermittent fasting claim it's a good way to lose weight. A summary of the studies on the method, published in the Annual Review of Nutrition in 2017, showed that 11 of the 16 trials reported weight loss.

Recently a report published in nature. Ayse L. Mindikoglu and his team in Huston confirms Intermittent fasting from dawn to sunset for four consecutive weeks induces an anticancer serum proteome response and improves metabolic syndrome<sup>5</sup>.

This write up was an attempt to present these studies with intermittent fasting have shown that it can be a potent tool for the welfare of modern civilization. What Lord Mahavira taught humanity 2620 years ago remains a profound and fundamental basis for fasting and intermittent fasting.

There is always a word of caution. Fasting or intermittent fasting is not safe for everyone, especially pregnant women, breastfeeding women, young children, people with certain illnesses and the elderly.

1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fasting\\_in\\_Jainism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fasting_in_Jainism)
2. Garfield G. Duncan, Fred C. Cristofori, James K. Yue, M.S.J. Murthy, *The Control of Obesity by Intermittent Fasts, Medical Clinics of North America*
3. Mohammad Bagherniya, Alexandra E. Butler, George E. Barreto, Amirhossein Sahebkar *The effect of fasting or calorie restriction on autophagy induction*
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# Nimo Patel – Planting Seeds of Inspiration

Compiled by Dilip Parekh

Even among the dark clouds we face in today's world such as climate crisis, senseless wars, and political upheavals; there are many souls who continue to give us hope with their acts of love, compassion, and generosity. However, rarely do we find one whose mission is to not only act from love but *inspire others* to be kind, spread love and live from a space of gratitude. And that not through lectures or writing books, but through music. Music that touches every heart. Music that he shares on his website and through various events he conducts across the world - free of charge.

Meet Nimesh Patel, better known as "Nimo" to friends and fans. A former MTV-featured rap star, Ivy League graduate and owner of a worldwide media production studio, Nimo now joyfully serves the poorest children in the slums of Ahmedabad, India, through an NGO "Manav Sadhna".



Nimo was drawn to music straight from childhood. His casual classroom raps evolved into full-blown songs and in college, along with a few friends he started the first-ever South Asian Hip Hop Group, *Karmacy*. Together they pioneered a bi-lingual form of rap and unleashed a phenomenon. 25 years later there are thousands of South Asian Hip Hop artists across the world. *Karmacy's* hip-hop rap, fused with thoughtful lyrics, struck a deep chord with audiences and their popularity spread like wildfire. Their hit single *Blood Brothers* would become a cult classic, particularly amongst the young South Asian diaspora. Spring-boarding off *Karmacy's* rapid rise, and leveraging his Wharton business degree, Nimo raised 7-digit funding to start a media production house.

## A 2 am Wakeup Call

Fame and fortune crowned this gifted artist early on. He rocketed to stardom barely into his twenties. But Nimo remembers the dark despair of a night that

found him lying awake at 2am with a searing question: "Is this it?" In the eyes of the world, he was living the dream. But "I was not at peace, not content and not in a daily space of joy and gratitude. I began wondering, where does this all lead to, when does it stop, where does this end?"

About his awakening Nimo says, "When I graduated from high school my dream was to become the CEO of Warner Bros. I always had a passion for media and entertainment. I chose Wharton Business School because I wanted to bridge business and entertainment; that was my vision. So, this animation studio was a dream for me. I had worked so far in my life for this career goal, and when I was finally in a space that resembled it, I realized how unhappy and unsatisfied I still was. I was suffering in my heart. I was not feeling any sense of fulfillment or purpose. So, either I could go with what the mind said, which was "You're successful, you're on a successful path", or I could follow this soft, quaint voice which was not really able to reveal itself because the mind and the ego were more deceiving. But I'm so happy that, somehow, the suffering in whatever form it was, was calling out to say, "Please listen." It was saying, "You need to start again."

## Listening to the Inner Calling

Listening to that inner calling was a pivotal moment in Nimo's life. He says, "I didn't know what that meant, to be honest, and that was the scary part of it. The vulnerability that came with the change – from a mindset of set a goal and reach it to the mindset of surrender, but you don't know where it's going to lead you – was scary, but I felt that was the only way I was going to realign myself at a stage in my life where I could still do it. I wanted to follow my heart instead of going with what seems to be right in everybody's mind or in the outside world, or from a material point of view."

Following his heart, Nimo chose to quit making music altogether and shut down his animation studio. He gave away nearly everything he owned in what he called a "simplicity experiment" and traveled to the Himalaya Mountains for a month, meditating 8 to 12 hours a day on what next to do with his life. He emerged with the awareness that he wanted to walk towards reducing suffering — first in his own life. "Until we remove our own suffering," he explains, "we can't really help others in a pure way. I wanted to commit to my own inner transformation by shifting the way I was living and interacting on this planet and with

INSPIRATION



my day to day life. Chapter One was over.” The year was 2008 and Nimo was 30.



Nimo likes to share a quote from Mahatma Gandhi, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” Nimo says that this quote really helped him. “I had felt lost in my own way because my heart was not connecting with the external elements of my life. So, basically, the next phase of the journey of my life became: What does it mean to serve? Not merely because I want to help others, but because I really need to understand myself. If service is the best medium to find myself, then what a win-win!

**Immersing in the Life of Slum Children**

His passion for children, music and the arts led him to connect with NGO Manav Sadhna and form a group of 16 kids, ages 8 to 11, from five different slum communities, to sing and dance in a musical he entitled “Ekatva.” (a Sanskrit word that means “Oneness”).



To him the focus of this project wasn't a performance or tour as much as it was a full immersion into the lives of these kids, a chance to learn from them, and to serve and support them. In his eyes, these children from the slums possessed a richness that far outstripped material wealth. With the right platform and nurturing they would not only be able to share

their gifts with the rest of the world, in a powerful and priceless blurring of our traditional notions of giver and recipient, but also nurture their own spirit and growth.

Over a nine-month period, Nimo dived deep into the slum community and slowly identified and built up a team of 16 committed children and families. He got to know all of them and their families intimately and began to build deep relationships with them. He laughed and played with them, while also modeling discipline, and steadily becoming an older brother to each one. He taught them to sing, dance and act -- often in 115 degree heat and gave them unconditional love. And the children channeled inspiration back to Nimo with their love, insight, and pay-it-forward spirit.

**Ekatva – Touring the World with the Ambassadors of Oneness, Love and Peace**

Nimo and the kids spent two years conceiving and perfecting a 90-minute show, Ekatva, celebrating humanity's fundamental interconnection. Oneness.



The show touched on the topics of unity in diversity (the Kite Story and Dance), removal of untouchability (through the powerful Chandaliika dance/drama), power of one person's intention to serve (through the Jagruti Drama), Gujarati folk dance and culture, and many other pieces including the oneness of humanity through the final "One World" song and dance.

In 2011 they performed several shows across India and then with the blessings of over 200 volunteers across the world and support of a higher power they were able to secure passports and visas for all the children, a large sum of warm-hearted donations and continue on a 2 month world tour – performing at some of the largest and most prestigious venues in the United States and Great Britain. It's not that these were the most gifted kids on the block. Their talent was real, but their draw far transcends individual skill and brings to life the power and beauty of our

collective possibilities. *“Inspire, not impress,”* Nimo eloquently quips. It’s a mindset that elevates the playing field entirely -- to one of compassion, community, and oneness. “These kids shined so bright,” Patel says. “People’s eyes changed from seeing them as slum children to ambassadors of Oneness, love and peace.”

### Steering Away from the Ego Trap

After Nimo and the children returned back to India from this improbable tour, many people asked Nimo if he was going to follow up with another show. “You know this was so big. You’ve touched tens of thousands of people’s lives. The children were amazing. Let’s do it again, let’s make it bigger.” Nimo’s old mind set agreed! Bigger. More Impact. More recognition. But once again a quaint voice spoke from his heart, that said “No Nimo. You’re not here for external impact. You’re actually here for your own inner transformation. You need to not do anything when you get back. You need to actually ground yourself in the small things again”. Nimo knew that his heart was speaking a truth that was far beyond the mind’s capacity to comprehend. And if he was going to make real change it would still need to be dedicated to the change from within. He knew that this was the only way to steer away from the ego’s trap and work on purifying his own intention in service. He used the year following the tour to do small things like cut vegetables and clean at the ashram, help support other volunteers that were coming in to serve and go deeper into his meditation practice.

### Empty Hands Music – A Tool to Serve Others

During the ‘quiet’ year following the Ekatva Tour, Nimo battled his ego quite often. The questions arose from within as well as from others: “What are you doing now? What project are you working on? What are your goals? Where do you see yourself going from here?” Nimo knew he would have grown the moment he would be okay and happy saying: “I’m just washing dishes. Just helping where I can. Not directing any project right now”. For doers and perfectionists that’s actually the most difficult thing to accept. And if he could embrace that, he knew he would have begun the life-long journey of shedding another layer of this ever-so-evasive ego. He fought against the many fleeting thoughts that would arise.

Nimo recalls 9 months into his ‘new’ experiment, he took time to attend a 10-day silent meditation retreat. “During the 10-day retreat, I remember my mind trying to conceive its next major project. The HeART Center.” An arts program and center that would be based in the Gandhi Ashram for underprivileged children. He started detailing out in his mind, all these marvelous plans and ideas for how this project would

unfold. “So much for the ‘silence’ in my meditation retreat”, Nimo laughs. After the 10-day meditation retreat, he realized that the mind was still seeking to *do*; To find comfort in identifying with impact-oriented projects. He knew he was still ‘seeking’. He decided to hold off on the plans, until he felt they came from a more effortless space and a more pure “bhav” or intention.

A few months later in the midst of his continued year of ‘emptiness’, Nimo, for the first time in over 5 years, developed an itch while watching MTV, to write music again. He had purposely closed the 13-year chapter of his music career in 2008 and felt very happy with it. But it was now the Summer of 2013 and Nimo decides to write a song. Motivated and inspired by his service journey up to that point, Nimo continued to write a few new songs thereafter on the messages of kindness and gratitude. With no goal in mind for the songs, and coming from a very pure-hearted space Nimo continued writing. Aligned with Nimo’s songs and messages, close friends joined forces as volunteers to help Nimo make music and music videos for his songs. The videos went viral on the internet and hundreds and thousands of people from around the world began commenting and emailing Nimo about the positive impact his songs and videos were having on their lives. Nimo mentions, “It was the first time I had ever realized that my music could be a humble instrument of service to humanity”.

With this new realization Nimo took the next few months to complete a full album called “Empty Hands” with songs like “Grateful”, “Being Kind”, “Keep Loving”, “Planting Seeds” and more. From this emerged his non-profit organization called **Empty Hands**.



Since 2014 Nimo has performed and shared his heart-felt message in over 20 countries from hundreds of schools, refugee camps and hospitals to international conferences, prisons and music festivals. His music, music videos and message, have traversed the world to over 100 million viewers through MTV, Youtube, Tony Robins Events, the BBC

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Channel and more. To this date, Nimo has not charged 1 penny for his music, his album or his performances.

Nimo says, "I didn't want to charge for it. I wanted it to be pure, from a space of offering and not from me as an artist. A lot of people started questioning me then, too. At one point, I was in Denver with my family, and my Dad was questioning the sustainability of what I was doing. I remember sharing with my father "Dad, when somebody is working for a company, he's adding value to the company, and for that he's getting compensated with a cheque every two weeks. That's the business world we're talking about. So, don't you think that when, from our heart of hearts, if we try to dedicate our time, energy and talent to whatever good we can do for the world, that the world wouldn't support us? Just as the boss supports his employee?" Nimo's Dad started to understand where Nimo was headed.

Nimo shares, "When our intention is pure, the world conspires to support us. In the past 12 years I have seen so many examples of 'magic' unfolding in how support is manifested to help those that have a pure intention. I have come to develop a deeper faith in this."

During his journey from fame and success to selfless service and stillness, Nimo discovered that we are deeply interconnected as one family, and he shares this spirit with the children he serves, the animals he plays with on the streets or the audience members at his events. "We arrive on to this planet empty-handed," he says. "We will all soon leave empty-handed. So, then, how do we want to spend the time in between?"

Nimo continues to work on more songs and music videos with a simple intention to help plant seeds of hope, love and inspiration through his work. During the Pandemic, he created "Prayer" and "Superhero" two new songs and music videos sending positive vibes and inspiring people to do whatever they could to help others.

**Planting Seeds – A Beautiful Metaphor for Surrender**

Back in 2014, Nimo had given a talk at TedEx in Bangalore, India. The summary of that talk as shown on the youtube video says, "We first come in this space (of service) with the idea that we are going to fix something (Ego-centric). As the ego melts and we are humbled by realities, we realize we can just serve. As we serve, we begin to realize that even the service is trivial, but we still do it. Our internal transformation

takes more of the focus and the external becomes just a by-product. This is when we surrender."

The first song Nimo co-wrote with his dear brother and musician Daniel Nahmod, after the 5-year musical break was "Planting Seeds":

*I spent a long time runnin'  
I never knew then what I know I know now  
That the fruits they always comin'  
But you can't go around just knockin' them down  
It takes a long time to showin'  
We plant the seeds then and we look at them now  
But the roots are always growin' no matter if I'm  
there Or never around  
Whatever grows will grow  
Whatever dies will die  
Whatever works will work  
Whatever flies will fly  
Whatever fails will fail  
What's meant to soar will soar  
I am planting seeds nothing more*

In his speech at TedEx, Nimo talks about the kids in Allegheny elementary school in New York Long Island. These kids were inspired by Nimo's "Being Kind" song and video and took a 21-day kindness challenge. They memorized the song and collectively did 1,300 acts of kindness in those 21 days. Nimo says, "For me it was such a blessing to see that committing to my own purification - who cares what comes out of it - led to some goodness in the world through these children." Like this hundreds of schools across the world and millions of children and people have been impacted by Nimo's music and message.

Nimo has seen the signs over and over again. "So, I'm convinced that this is the path for myself. As I continue, I have no clue what externally will emerge but as long as I keep purifying myself and keep working from within, it'll keep emerging; whatever it is. I like the example of the egg; you know when you crack an egg from the outside you get scrambled eggs, but when you let it emerge from the inside it's a new life. It's priceless."

Further in the "Planting Seeds" song, Nimo sings:

*We've been taught that what you touch will always  
turn to gold  
But now we're learnin' when we let it go, it overflows  
With no credit to take 'cause no credit is owned  
A higher power workin' deeper when the seeds are  
sowed  
And when the seeds are true then they're seeds of  
gold  
But the real gold is joy when life starts to flow  
And when it does you just smile 'cause now you know*

## Nimo's Purification Experiments

After reading about Nimo's personal practices, I wanted to know more about these experiments. Nimo shared some of his personal practice experiments that he continues to do or that he has done along the way.

- 1) Gratitude – Prayer before any food
- 2) Being conscious about resources – Not wasting food, Keeping track of expenses on daily basis
- 3) Empathy – Living blindfold for 24 hours at a blind school, No rickshaw for a month, No restaurant for a year, Cleaning human defecation from slum areas.
- 4) Equanimity – Meditation, Cold shower
- 5) Simplicity – Getting rid of almost all possessions during the transition phase
- 6) Self Control – No sweets 1 year, No TV 1 year
- 7) Ego – No mirror for 3 months, No cologne

## Jai Jagat – Seeing the World as a Family

In the Spring of 2017, Nimo wrote, directed, and organized another show with 17 new children from Manav Sadhna to commemorate the 150th year birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi called "Jai Jagat". The dance-music-drama production was presented by 17 children who immersed in an inspiring journey of transformation and shared a poignant and timely message about love and kindness. In 45 days across America and the UK, in the Spring of 2019, the children performed 11 major shows in front of sold-out audiences at major venues, leaving each theatre moved with tears of inspiration and hope. With One simple message: *Love as if the Earth is your one and only family.*



The show covered various stories of humanity, envisioning a world 50 years from now where there is more harmony and no violence and the story of how we got there! The stories included the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Malala, Martin Luther King Jr. Yusra Mardini (Syrian Refugee Olympic Swimmer), Jose Mujica (Uruguay President that donated his salary to the needy, who did not accept a Presidential home or armored car, but just served as president

from his farm home), Wangari Mathai (Nobel Peace Laureate from Kenya who inspired the movement of planting 1 Million trees and more). The children enacted these stories through dance, drama and singing in order to inspire the message, that we can all make a difference in our own way to making this world a better place.

Beyond the shows and the tours, Nimo shares "The journey of transformation that my kids go through is at the core of my work. If we were to perform and inspire the world, but not practice those values ourselves, these projects would be worthless in my heart". The life journeys of all these kids are in full motion. I've committed my life to supporting their life journeys in as many ways possible. 2 of our girls from the 2012 Ekatva group, recently finished their Masters in Sciences. 2 others Masters in Commerce. Most of the children have broken through the glass ceilings that society had placed upon them. We are all still so closely connected and supporting each other in as many ways as possible. Many of them find time in their busy schedules to give back to other kids when they can. So the circle of life continues."

Thanks Nimo, for what you are. May all of us get inspired by you to plant seeds of love, kindness, compassion and gratitude in ourselves and others.

### Sources:

- 1) "Finding Nimo: Rap Star's Journey with 16 Slum Kids" By Nipun Mehta  
<https://www.dailygood.org/view.php?sid=226>
- 2) Heartfulness Magazine Interview by Vanessa Patel Part 1 (July 2020) and Part 2 (August 2020)
- 3) "A Raper's Journey to Unity" by Kent Rautenstrauss Science of Mind Magazine December 2016
- 4) <https://manavsadhna.org/>
- 5) Nimo's TedEx talk  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0gmjRwimqY>

### Empty Hands Music

Nimo's nonprofit organization seeks to spread seeds of goodness" through music, events, and personal sharings around the world. Nimo's music is free to enjoy and download on his Website:  
<https://www.emptyhandsmusic.org/>

Youtube: EmptyHandsMusic

Instagram: NimoEmptyHands

Facebook: Nimesh Nimo Patel

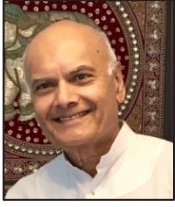
Free of charge. Why free? Nimo says, "The messages of compassion and gratitude are eternal and universal. How could I charge a penny for songs that share these messages?"

You can visit the grassroots NGO he serves at in India: [www.ManavSadhna.org](http://www.ManavSadhna.org) All are welcome to volunteer with him.

INSPIRATION

# Spiritual Introspection

By Ramesh 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 spiritual introspection?

In the previous "Introspection" article published in the February 2022 issue of Jain Digest, we discussed what Introspection was and elaborated on its need and its benefits from the perspective of material life. The main focus was on the external - how can we improve our social life; how can we improve our relationships with others and make our material life more meaningful by purifying ourselves.

In this article we will look into how we can use introspection to make progress on the spiritual path by focusing on our true self, the soul. The goal of this advanced level of introspection is making progress towards self-realization. Purifying ourselves is the first step and next step is to increase our awareness of "Who Am I" and being mindful of the state of our consciousness in all circumstances. We call this step as "Spiritual Introspection".

In Spiritual Introspection we examine not only our actions and reactions, but go deeper, down into our belief system, attitudes, and underlying motives. It helps us to look inwards for understanding our inclinations, inspirations, emotions and so forth. The objective is to focus on who we really are - eternal spiritual beings.

## Why Spiritual Introspection is important for a True Aspirant ?

One may wonder if I am doing introspection to purify myself and it is improving my life, what is the need for spiritual introspection? Purification of heart and improving material life are certainly a worthy goal. However, if the focus is not on spiritual development then it can lead to comparison with others, boosting of ego and we get more involved in the rat race. For a true aspirant interested in self-realization it is important to know who we really are.

From time immemorial, we have believed that body, mind, and senses are our true identity. All five senses are extroverts and take our attention to the outer world. Over a period of numerous birth and death cycles, we have developed a habit of like-dislikes, mine-thine, good-bad, etc. which becomes the cause of karmic bondage. It perpetuates the cycle of birth and death causing misery and suffering. The spiritual introspection helps change our focus and create a space to return to our original true nature of pure soul. It helps us to get rid of our wrong beliefs (*Mithyatva*), strengthen our belief in the teachings of Bhagwan Mahavir and moves us forward in the direction experiencing the soul.

## What prevents us from doing Spiritual Introspection?

In general, introspection is difficult for people. In our daily busy life, we are so much engrossed in the external that the thought of introspecting the events of the day does not even occur to us. When an unpleasant situation occurs, our ego tends to blame others and there is no inclination to see where we may be wrong.

When we meet a Sadguru and start going to satsang, we learn about the importance of introspection and are all pumped up to start working on it. But then after a few days we fall back into our daily routine and forget about it. Or sometimes we start doing introspection, realize our own faults and feel guilty or uneasy. This experience, which is not pleasant, then makes it difficult for us to continue the practice. However, with persistent, guidance from a compassionate Sadguru, we then realize the importance of looking at our own shortcomings and continue doing introspection. Slowly we start getting



rid of our faults, develop virtues such as compassion, acceptance, love, etc.

Eventually, our relationships start improving and we feel that we are making progress on the spiritual path. For many aspirants there is a feeling of having reached a 'balance' in material and spiritual life. There is some level of peace and contentment. We do not feel the need to find out "Who Am I" and hence there is no earnest desire for self-realization. Spiritual introspection efforts will only start when an aspirant is self-motivated to constantly remind himself or herself that *I am not the body, I am a pure, powerful, peaceful soul*. The need for such introspection starts only when a seeker wants to experience that blissful state. Thus, nothing or no one prevents us from doing spiritual introspection - other than ourselves!

### What should be the course of action?

Even though this article is about spiritual introspection, we need to understand that the previous step of self-purification is very important. Hence the discussion below will cover both in order to provide a complete picture.

#### 1) Acquire scriptural knowledge

Introspection of our actions, shortcomings needs to be based on a belief system. This is because the changes we will make in our behavior will be based on it. In order to build a strong belief system, we will need to understand the philosophy of our faith or religion. Reading the scriptures, attending satsang meetings and learning from a Spiritual Master or Sadguru is essential to understand the true nature of the universe and the true self. For example, by learning about the Jain teachings you will be able to develop the faith that you are a pure soul – not the body, you are responsible for your own happiness or sorrow, your suffering or pleasure is determined by your past karma, happiness is within you – not in the external things, etc.

By accepting the guidelines and direction given by sadguru and/or authentic scriptures we develop the 'inner sense', a kind of target mental state such as equanimity or witness attitude by which we learn about the mental aspect of ourselves. Then only, the introspection becomes the perceptual or self-detection process. By incorporating the enhanced correct responsive attitude, it gradually becomes self-

knowledge in future activities, and eventually becomes aligned with the attributes of 'pure self'.

#### 2) Prepare a list of shortcomings, values, and beliefs

To do this we will need to ask a few questions to ourselves. Some sample questions are: "What are my core values? What are the beliefs, guiding principles or ideas that I have learned from Sadguru and are deeply important to me? What are my priorities? Am I living true to myself? Taking anything for granted? What upsets me? Do I take other people's opinions seriously?" This will help us in getting to the root cause during introspection. We will be able to evaluate a particular situation and check our behavior by comparing it with the items in our list. For example, if someone insulted us that made us sad, the list will help to detect that we need to make the belief stronger that 'happiness is within me'. This will also help in getting out of the sad feelings faster.

#### 3) Develop Awareness

We can work on developing awareness by remaining focused on routine physical activities. This creates mental awakening. The mind stops wandering. This helps us with being in the present. While this type of awakening isn't as deep as say, a self-awareness, it is nonetheless still vital on the spiritual path. It will facilitate introspection with focused attention on past events or ongoing current situations.

We also need to develop awareness of our current attitudes and behavior from a spiritual perspective. We should examine all our activities with respect to our spiritual goal and begin to look for the deeper meaning of things. During adverse circumstances, introspection of the feelings and emotions is important. Our reaction to tough situations throws light on our attitude, beliefs, and habitual tendencies. We intensify the introspection of the internal thought streams to find out the hindrance to inner bliss and happiness. We must have a strong urge to vent off the inner negativity so that real happiness from within can be experienced.

#### How to do Spiritual Introspection?

To improve and maintain our physical health we need to do exercise of a regular basis. Similarly, to improve and maintain our mental, spiritual health there are various practices such as mindfulness,



respecting other's differences, be compassionate, extend generosity and grace, and never take others' behavior personally. I must watch my speech; speak kindly as I expect others to speak kindly to me; show understanding as I expect others to show understanding to me."

This kind of affirmative inner thought process will transform our bad habit into a virtue of calmness and friendly respectful speech. Keep doing this until it becomes a habit.

Similarly, we must transform all our bad habits into virtues like forgiveness, modesty, simplicity, gratitude, etc. Transformation of vice or bad habits into virtues will lead to right beliefs. The influence of delusive ignorance makes us imagine we have a separate existence apart from the soul and lose its sight. During spiritual introspection, we try to restore our perfect true nature.

**What do we achieve by doing Spiritual Introspection?**

**1) Alignment with the larger whole**

Spiritual introspection leads a transformation of the false self of fears, wrong beliefs, attachments, need for control to the true self. With the rebirth to our true nature, we are in alignment with a larger whole and truly support the inner freedom and well-being of all. We must recognize the change as an invitation to actualize the wisdom and compassion that make us both fully human and evident manifestations of the divine.

**2) Serving others to improve ourselves**

As we develop virtues with introspection; compassion and desire to serve others awakens in us.



Seva activities should be done without ego and expectation of recognition. Introspection helps in

achieving this if it is done with the thought of 'how can I improve myself through seva', A famous quote by Mahatma Gandhi is "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in service of others" Spiritual introspection helps us keep our focus on the fact that 'I am doing this to find my true self'.

**3) Attitude of acceptance during adverse conditions**

Spiritual introspection helps us develop the attitude of "Glad Acceptance". Belief that all external situations are fruition of our past karma gets stronger. Such acceptance zeroes out our previous wrongdoing without any new karmic bondage. Our witness attitude opens the door to reduce the intensity and duration of our dormant karma. This helps the true aspirant remain on a spiritual path even during adverse conditions.

**4) Detachment from the external**

As we do more and more spiritual introspection, we become less externally focused and begin to dive deeper into ourselves. We start to develop detachment from worldly pursuit. We gladly accept the circumstance without any reaction. Our obsession with material wealth and sensual pleasure diminishes. Our attention shifts from the outer world to the inner world of tranquil peace, serenity, and blissful joy springing from within. It encourages us to dive deeper into ourselves. By being in the present and by keeping awareness of the state of our consciousness, we learn to remain in meditative state all the time.

**Conclusion:**

Introspection increases a growing sense of responsibility and accountability for our thoughts, emotions, and actions. It helps develop virtues derived from right beliefs. Our thought process and behavior aligns with the attributes of our true identity-the pure soul. The conviction that 'I am pure, peaceful and powerful soul' eventually will be realized. It promotes the way for higher truth to be revealed. It develops virtues, such as desire to serve the community, glad acceptance of all happening, ability to endure adverse conditions, and transform chronic habitual tendencies into virtues needed to walk on a spiritual path. In summary, spiritual introspection helps find our faults and create a space to return to our true nature of pure soul.



## From an Iraq-war Veteran to a Jain Sadhvi

By Sadhvi Siddhali Shree

(This article is a transcript of Sadhvi Siddhali Shree's talk at the TEDxCUNYSalon June 27, 2022.)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KP5snZvw\\_QM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KP5snZvw_QM)

### Introductory note (partial) to the YouTube video by TED:

"If you want to change the world, you must first change yourself." It's a cliché and it's true! But changing yourself is no simple task in the face of death, divorce, depression, self-harm, and war. In 2002, Sadhvi Siddhali Shree enlisted in the California Army National Guard looking for discipline, and instead found herself training to shoot & kill strangers. Today, she's an Iraq-war combat veteran, Jain monk, and teacher of non-violence. In this talk, she'll teach you why and how to practice non-violence in your life.

As a medic in the Iraq war, part of our job was to go on civil affair missions, which meant helping local Iraqis medically. On my first mission, I was totally nervous. I didn't know what to expect. But then, an Iraqi woman, she approached me, took my hand and the translator said her daughter needed some medical help. So, she led me away from the group, we're holding hands, speaking in different languages, smiling, and she brought me behind this tall wall and introduced me to her daughter who was on the other side. Suddenly, I heard my sergeant scream and call me over. "You can't just disappear like that without security. You don't know who and what's behind these walls. You can't trust anyone at war."

He was right. They could have lured me in and blown me up. Everyone is a potential threat and compassion, the bait. As a combat medic, I was trained to save lives and I was trained to kill, to shoot for the chest and the head. Luckily, I didn't have to do that, but I had to be prepared for it.



Today, 16 years after I left Iraq, I'm a Jain monk and it's my life's mission to practice and spread the message of nonviolence. I realized that the violence I experienced in my life growing up and going to war was not the answer. In order to change the world, in order to make the world a better place, we must first change ourselves. In order to see less violence in the world, we must discover nonviolence within. You might be thinking, "Easy for you to say, you're a

monk." True, but only after years and years of learning the hard and painful way. When I was 13, my mother died of cancer. I was only 13. My beautiful role model, the one who taught me to be good, to serve, to help others was gone forever, vanished. My dad quickly sold our home. He kicked out my grandma and my half-brother and it seemed as if he didn't care about me or them at all. I was miserable, in so much pain, and so unhappy. I knew I needed to get away from my dad. So, I decided to enlist in the Army National Guard. Somehow, I thought that would bring some discipline and adventure into my life.

After my high school graduation, I started finding my way through spirituality. I discovered yoga and meditation. And even though I grew up Catholic, somehow, I felt closer to God and myself in this way. Once I was off to yoga class and my dad said, "You're joining a cult." I said, "I know that's not the truth." So, I decided to follow my heart anyways. Couple years later, I met my spiritual teacher, **Acharya Shree Yogeesh**. And I was super excited. By this time, I thought I'd finally discover the purpose in my life, to change the world by helping people overcome their pain. But when I asked for his advice, he simply stated, **"In order to change the world, you must first change yourself. In order to light people's hearts, your own heart must be lit. First, you need to learn about nonviolence."**



And I thought, "Seriously, nonviolence? That's the big answer to help me change the world? I'm not a violent

person. I'm not going to kill anybody." And then he continued, "Nonviolence means feeling oneness with all living beings, not just humans, all living beings, not to hurt, harm, or kill in your thoughts, actions and speech knowingly or unknowingly." Hmm, I had to reflect on that one. I used to cut myself and I wanted to kill myself, that's violence. I had chicken for lunch earlier, that's violence. While on my way to meet the spiritual master and I was stuck in traffic, I was cursing at everyone, that's violence. Killed a mosquito, that's violent. Wait a minute, I'm totally violent. I'm violent every day, all the time.

**The more I saw violence within myself, the more I saw violence in the world.** And then, four months later after meeting my spiritual teacher, I got deployed. I got deployed. Had I known about nonviolence in high school, I would've never enlisted in the military. But I had to go. And I entered a very dark period. I was smoking, I was drinking even though it wasn't allowed. I knew it was violence, I knew it wasn't spiritual, but I didn't care. I called my spiritual teacher for inspiration. "You know that military training is monk training, right?" The little dying flame inside of me was reignited.

**"As a soldier, you go wherever you need to go, you sleep wherever you need to sleep, you eat whatever's available, your life is full of discipline, you're awake, alert, and aware. These are the qualities of a monk. Maybe you'll become a monk one day."** And that was it. I knew I would pursue monkhood after deployment. And that's exactly what happened. I came back from war, I reconnected with my spiritual teacher, and I enrolled in college. The first class I signed up for was social movement communication. I wanted to understand the language of activism on how it unites and sparks change. We learned about Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi as examples of nonviolent leaders. And it turns out Gandhi's mother was a Jain and he was introduced to nonviolence by Jain female monks. But while they were being taught in class, it seemed incomplete. The way they presented nonviolence was more so focused on physical non-reaction and physical non-resistance.

But the violence was still alive in thoughts and speech. For example, I became a vegetarian as a way to practice nonviolence towards animals. My dad would say, "How are you going to become vegetarian, you hate vegetables?" And I said, "I'll find my way." And then, I discovered Indian food. But online, I'll come across a social media post where, like one recently, a vegan activist expressed how he wanted to kill animal farmers for the mistreatment done to animals. Do you see the contradiction? In extreme

nonviolence, there is violence. There's too much hate, too much anger, too much negativity, and it shows that there's a lack of understanding of what real nonviolence is. **How do you expect to bring peace to the world if there's no peace within you?**

And that's why it's so important to become nonviolent in your life. And when you do, you'll totally change. You'll become a better human, more compassionate, understanding, thoughtful, humble, sensitive, loving, and forgiving. People will begin to wonder, "Why are you so different? Why are you so happy? Why are you so free?" Nonviolence is as good for you as it is for them and the world. And it's a skill anyone can learn. And in my experience, it comes down to three simple things. **First is self-analysis.** At the end of each day, review your thoughts, actions, and speech. How have you been violent towards yourself and others? Only you know the truth about you. Ask yourself, "Have I hurt, harmed, or killed any living being through my thoughts, actions and speech knowingly or unknowingly today?"

Awareness is the first step to change. And that's why self-analysis is so critical. In my early days of practicing self-analysis or pratikraman when I first became a monk, most of what I had written down was based on anger. Anger is a poison. It kills you first before others. I would slam the door, react, and talk back if my spiritual teacher corrected me. I was disrespectful, not monk-like and holy. But I couldn't help it. It was as if everything that I had suppressed for so many years was bubbling up to the surface. I was ashamed and embarrassed. But it showed me what I needed to work on within myself, which is the point. I also realized that anybody that I'd encounter also has anger, ego, negativity, and violence inside. They might hide it well but it's in there, just like it's inside of me and just like it's inside of you.

But because of this practice, I'm not the same person I used to be. If I get angry, I won't hold onto it as much and I won't get consumed by it. I am much more balanced and peaceful, happier, and on really good days, blissed out.

**Second, act as if everyone and every living being is your friend.** Typically, we're friendly with the people and things we like and care about. But can you expand your love more beyond your immediate circle? What about expanding your love to people you don't know or dislike? What about expanding your love to all living beings? Try it, see how it goes. When you become friendly to the world, the world will become friendly to you. And finally, **act as if everyone has something to teach you even if you radically disagree.**

There's a teaching called anekantvad which states that everyone's point of view holds some truth. Try really listening to the other person when you get in an argument. Every opinion matters. Don't react, hear them out, don't need to be right. Because when you do, you'll actually learn something. I remember one time I was speaking on vegetarianism at our spiritual retreat center and one guest, she disagreed with me. She said, "I'm not going to become vegetarian. I eat meat that's humanely slaughtered. I pray over it and it's blessed." While I disagree, I realized that I can't change anyone, that if she decides to become vegetarian, that change must come from within her. So, the big lesson for me was that change comes from within and no one can change someone else. Since practicing nonviolence, my life has changed in many, many ways. Being more balanced has allowed me to do more in my spiritual and humanitarian work. I've directed and produced two documentaries on sex trafficking, I've interviewed many survivors internationally and worked with many advocates. If it weren't for nonviolence, I wouldn't be able to do it. If I want to rip somebody's head off for profiting off of rape, then I'm violent just as these traffickers are. How can I really help if I'm angry? To me, nonviolence is the highest form of unconditional love and transformation. As you become nonviolent in your own life, you'll inspire others to do the same. **Nonviolence spreads like a ripple. It only takes one person to change this world. Maybe that person is you.** Jai Siddhatma. Thank you.

## About Sadhvi Siddhali Shree & Siddhayatan Tirth

Sadhvi Siddhali Shree is the first North American Jain female-monk, a US Army Iraq-war combat veteran, a TEDx speaker, activist, author, and an award-winning filmmaker. Since taking Jain Sadhvi diksha in September 2008, under her guru HH Acharya Shree Yogeesh, she has served as the Spiritual Director of Siddhayatan Tirth - a 250-acre retreat, ashram, monastery, and meditation park based near Dallas, Texas and is the executive director of Stopping Traffic, a non-profit organization which supports survivors of sex trafficking. Sadhvi Siddhali Shree is passionate about social movements that focus on non-violence, human rights, animal rights, gender equality, and anti-trafficking.

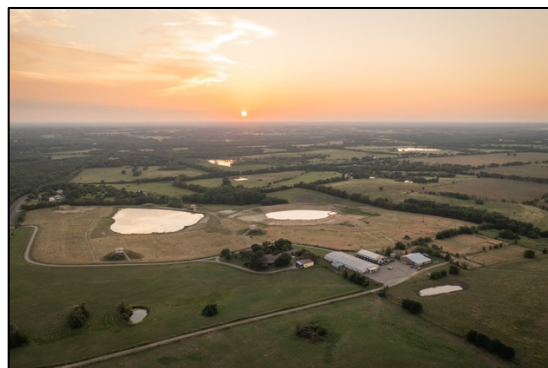
Determined to bring about positive change and to help those who have suffered, she directed and produced 2 award winning documentaries: *Stopping Traffic: The Movement to End Sex Trafficking (2017)* and *Surviving Sex Trafficking (2022)* both which have qualified for Academy Award consideration. Sadhvi Siddhali Shree and her spiritual and humanitarian work have been featured on CNN,

Good Morning America, Newsweek, the Associated Press, Deadline Hollywood, The Daily Beast, Los Angeles Times, The NY Post, NowThis, Cheddar News, India Abroad in addition to international publications such as Dainik Bhaskar.

Sadhvi Siddhali Shree is determined to bring the universal teachings of the Tirthankaras, Arihantas, and her guru to the world and inspire individuals to seek out the real spirituality that can only be realized within.

(The text below is from <https://siddhayatan.org/about/>)

*Siddhayatan Tirth is a place for you to blossom, to flourish, and be free. As an ashram, spiritual retreat center, monastery, meditation park and pilgrimage site, Siddhayatan Tirth is dedicated to helping souls awaken, improve themselves and totally transform. At heart, Siddhayatan Tirth offers so much, giving you a safe place to rejuvenate, rediscover, reconnect and experience the freedom to be who you really are – a freedom not often found in the world, at work, or even sometimes in your own home. By providing a spiritual, clean and simple atmosphere, the pressures of life that rest on your shoulders easily diminish and float away. Siddhayatan Tirth is a place where you can forget about the world and enter your own.*



*Siddhayatan Tirth is founded and based on the teachings of living enlightened master Acharya Shree Yogeesh, which are spiritual and not religious. We also share and bring to light many of the hidden Eastern teachings found in the ancient Samanic Tradition (Jain System) and Hindu culture.*

*Since the inception of the spiritual center in 2008, many guests have gone through amazing transformations, because they were ready. By the time they leave, whether it's after 3 days or 7 days, there is a new-found hope in their eyes, a glow of light surrounds them, their face completely relaxed and worry-free, with a feeling of empowerment and a deeply rooted knowing that they have found themselves. Maybe your time is now.*



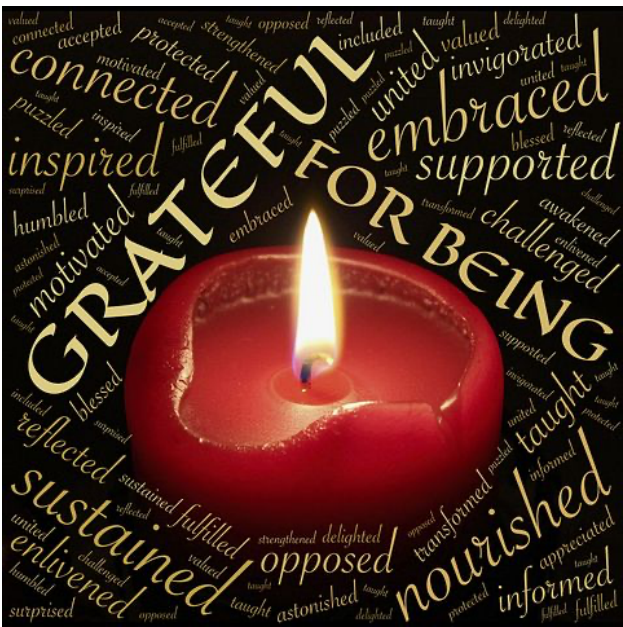
## Transformation begins with Gratitude

By Sanjay Bhandari



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

During the past couple of years all of us have experienced the mental, emotional, and psychological challenges of the pandemic. Many of us have realized importance of support by family and friends during these difficult times. Among all the worries there is also a feeling of gratefulness for the love and support we have received from many. And that feeling of gratitude changes our perspective. It transforms our minds from a state of despair to a state of hope and appreciation. Let us examine what gratitude is and how it can transform our lives.



### What Is Gratitude?

Gratitude is an affirmation of goodness in the world around us. We acknowledge that we are beneficiary of the goodness in other people as well as the higher powers. Gratitude is our emotion that relates to our ability to feel and express thankfulness and appreciation.

Thus, there are two parts to gratitude – one is *affirmation* and other is *expression*. Often people feel grateful but do not express it. As someone had said

“Having gratitude and not expressing it is like buying a gift for a loved one and not giving it to them!”

Gratitude is not just for the people in our lives but for everything that makes our life enjoyable. The abundant natural resources we have, the air we breathe, the food we eat, various things that we use daily, and the list goes on. We need to be thankful for all the good we experience.

“If the only prayer you said was thank you, that would be enough.” - Meister Eckhart

### Why Cultivate the Attitude of Gratitude?

Being grateful for everything requires us to cultivate the *attitude of gratitude*. It is not just a formality. It has to do with awareness of how interdependent we are. Once we develop this awareness, feeling grateful will be natural to us. When we are going through some challenging situations in life, the awareness of the goodness around us will help us appreciate what we have and will help us overcome the challenges. When interacting with people, our sincere appreciation will inspire and motivate them to continue doing good things for the society.

Expressing our appreciation for the help we have received from others is often ignored by us - especially when it comes to family members. Expressing gratitude makes the receiver feel good about themselves. It tells them that their help is not taken for granted and validates that it was valued. Knowing that their efforts have impacted someone's life in a positive way encourages them to continue doing so and thus the goodness spreads.

Even if our relationships with the people in our life are severed, it's important to exchange gratitude for all the good that happened between us. This helps keep a door open for reconciliation, because the good is appreciated. So, showing gratitude has dual benefits - while it gives a good feeling about the past and make others happy, it also makes the relations stronger for the future.

*“Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom. -Marcel Proust*

Over the past 15 years, hundreds of studies have documented the psychological, social, and physical, benefits of gratitude. The research suggests these benefits are available to all who practice gratitude, even in the midst of adversity. In addition to improving our relationships, here are some of the benefits as published in an article by Greater Good Science Center

(<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude/definition#why-practice-gratitude>)

- Gratitude brings us happiness. It brings us joy, optimism, pleasure, enthusiasm, and other positive feelings.
- It reduces anxiety and depression. Improves our immune system, lowers blood pressure, etc.
- Helps us sleep better; count blessings, not sheep!
- Makes us more resilient, forgiving, tolerant.
- Cultivating gratitude is good for the kids to have a more satisfactory and meaningful life.

### How to practice Gratitude

*“We must find time to stop and thank the people who made a difference in our life.”  
- John F. Kennedy*

Here are various ways you can practice gratitude:

1. When you wake up every morning and before going to sleep, be grateful that you are alive, be thankful for people in your lives – relatives, friends, co-workers, be thankful for all your blessing and grace that you experience. Make this a habit!
2. Write a daily gratitude journal listing 5 things you are grateful for and browse through this journal when you are feeling down.
3. Thank someone personally for the help they have offered, call them up or write a thank you note or an email.
4. Pay them back in some way, not necessarily monetary but by returning the favor when they need help.
5. Spread a good word about people to others by saying good things about them and the help they offered you.
6. Admire some good quality of the person who has helped you, in front of them and others.
7. Teach the benefits of gratitude to people in your social circle, family and work and discuss its benefits. Taking your children to an orphanage on their birthday is a wonderful way to make them aware of the good life they have and develop the feeling of gratitude. Giving gifts to the children in

the orphanage will also develop compassion and make them feel good about themselves.

8. Be well-behaved towards others and be a good listener when talking with others. Being a good listener is also a form of gratitude, because it shows people you care about what they have to say.



9. Try to observe the behavior of your loved ones by their mannerisms, expressions, and body language to see if they need any support which they might not ask directly.
10. Express gratitude to service workers, they don't often receive the thanks they deserve, even though they impact several lives every day.
11. You can return a favor to someone by giving a thoughtful gift to someone that matches with their passions or interests. It doesn't have to be expensive, anything that shows thoughtfulness reflects gratitude.
12. You can also return your favor to your friends and family by recommending their name to others for their skills.
13. Busy parents can show gratitude to their kids by spending quality family time with them, taking them out for a vacation or rewarding them in some form. Grown up kids can show the gratitude towards their parents by giving them some items as a gift which they could never afford while raising them. They can return the favor by regularly visiting their parents after marriage or calling them regularly and spend some quality time. *“Gratitude is a powerful catalyst for happiness. It is the spark that lights up a fire of joy in your soul. – Amy Collette”*
14. When you go to someone's place for dinner, verbally appreciate the delicious food and admire their hospitality.
15. You can show gratitude to your society or temple by volunteering or offering your leadership with certain positions over there. This might make you a better person and a lead.
16. When stuck in traffic, instead of getting upset, look around and think about laborers that built the highways, the workers that built the car you are driving, and the fact that you are able to drive!

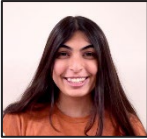
**Then and Now:**

**An In-depth look at Sangh Youth Participation**

By: Suryaraj Jain and Ashna Bhansali



*Suryaraj Jain has been involved with YJA since 2019 and had a chance to work with many amazing people on various projects in the committees he has been a part of. He currently lives in Northern Virginia, working as a Support Engineer at SAP Concur. He recently graduated with a degree in IT and Business and continues to be involved with YJA.*



*Ashna Bhansali is a sophomore at the University of Texas at Austin, studying business. She has been involved with the Jain Sangh of Greater Austin her entire life and is always excited to learn more about Jainism. Having attended Pathshala when she was younger, she was interested to see how the pandemic has affected youth involvement and what we can do to increase engagement.*

*(This article was originally published in July 2021 issue of the Young Minds magazine, a YJA publication.)*

Jain centers around the nation are continuously seeking involvement from younger folks to secure a strong future. This is often reflected in an effort to engage and instill strong foundational values in their youth. After talking to the Jain Society of Metropolitan Washington (JSMW) and Jain Sangh of Greater Austin (JSGA), we noticed patterns in their journeys which showed that despite their difference in size (JSMW is at about 2000 people, while JSGA nears 300), both centers have faced similar paths in growing youth participation since they were created. Today, we'll take a deeper dive into how these Jain centers have evolved, with a focus on youth programs and Pathshala participation.

**Growing a Pathshala**

At JSMW and JSGA, Pathshala programs were started with about 15-20 students. With few attendees, the programs consisted of just one class and students representing a wide range of ages and skill levels. However, as the number of students steadily increased over time, so did class divisions; both programs now have over 60 students. In fact, JSMW is nearing 160 Pathshala students.

How did these centers garner interest as the years went by, culminating in such high involvement? Surprisingly, there was no complicated marketing strategy, and many centers grew their Pathshala classes simply by word of mouth. As more families moved to the area and parents enrolled their children into Pathshala, others became interested in joining to

provide spiritual education to their families. Pathshala became a topic of discussion during Jain center functions, such as monthly Pujas and major occasions (Mahavir Jayanti, Paryushan/Das Lakshan, etc.), where kids would participate in programs, socialize, and parents would spread the word to their friends. Eventually, word of Pathshala reached beyond strictly Jain functions, leading JSGA to even gain a few non-Jain Pathshala students! It's certainly no surprise that major occasions increase participation, especially for the youth who can volunteer during these events. JSMW saw a youth-driven group (Jain Youth of the Capital) make a large difference in increasing motivation and leadership from the youth. By organizing socials, community service events, and smaller, youth-only religious events (such as Navkar Jaaps and open discussions about Jainism), this organization has significantly benefited the spirit of the youth in the D.C. area. Additionally, Vibha Mehta from JSGA believes that having youth leaders, especially as Pathshala teachers, is crucial for increasing engagement with younger generations because students are able to relate to leaders that are closer to their age.

**Challenges from the Pandemic**

Unfortunately, after the centers garnered all of this youth interest, COVID-19 threatened to undo much of their hard work due to a forced transition to a virtual environment. Pathshala classes in particular were heavily affected by the pandemic, as they transitioned to Zoom classes, like other educational institutions around the world.



However, these challenges were eventually overcome, and the pandemic even ended up strengthening the youth programs and Pathshala.



For example, JSGA saw more attendance in their Pathshala program after switching to a virtual setting, while JSMW was able to create more meaningful relationships within the youth group.

### Further Youth Involvement

Of course, none of this could be possible without support from parents and adult volunteers, who motivated their children to go to Pathshala and

held youth-focused events. While Jain centers have been promoting the value of Pathshala and youth programs to parents, they are now shifting to creating events that directly cater to the youth in hopes of enticing them to join pathshala by themselves. JSMW has successfully started multiple programs, such as wellness programs, women's groups, and career fairs for the youth.

These are just a few solutions they have implemented to encourage more participation by the youth, eventually leading to more youth involvement. Monica Shah from JSMW recommends having a candid conversation with the youth in order to increase engagement. To build reciprocal relationships in the community between different generations, it is important to ask what kinds of programs the youth wish to attend. In return, the youth attend events and volunteer at the Jain center. This ensures that events are appealing and increases attendance.

### Takeaways

All of this leads up to one point: What can an up-and-coming Jain center do to better engage their local youth? From our findings, there are few takeaways:

- Have current members get more involved by incentivizing them to send their kids to Pathshala.
- Start programs that engage specific demographics. It is often difficult to get older kids involved in Pathshala and the youth program, so it is important to adopt a curriculum that appeals to that age group.
- If students are intrinsically motivated to attend events and classes, it will create a healthier community in the long run because there will not be any external pressure to attend. Whether it be wellness events, networking opportunities, or any Jainism-related programs catered to the youth, they would benefit from giving back to the community and staying engaged with their respective centers.

A special thank you to Vibha Mehta from Austin, TX and Monica Shah from Washington D.C. for helping us with this article.



# Our Convention Journey: Sailing through the Islands

*Written by: Jainik Shroff, Riya Shah, Ria Trivedi*

*Edited and Designed by: Sheily Shah*

Welcome to the 2022 YJA Convention, where a vast array of connections, inspirations, and experiences are at your fingertips as we Navigate New Horizons together!

Convention may be over, but we haven't forgotten the magic of those four days. What better way to commemorate that weekend than to take you on a journey with us and give you a glimpse of this magical weekend. It all starts with the first day of Convention. As we walked in, we began COVID-testing, icebreaker games, and meeting friends, new and old. This is the moment it began. Let's recap our Convention experience by sailing through the oceans and stopping by our favorite islands along the way.



## inspiration island

*Let's start off by docking at Inspiration Island, anchored by our educational daytime experiences. We engaged in thought-provoking sessions led by passionate speakers, listened to a keynote that explored boundless compassion, participated in competitions that displayed outstanding teamwork, and had simple, but meaningful interactions through our "Crews" sessions.*

### DAYTIME SESSIONS

During the day, we attended multiple educational sessions run by our peers in the YJA community! We engaged in conversations about Jainism as we discussed paap and punya, choice vs chance, and understanding our ego. There were interfaith dialogues, and sessions on intersections of Jainism and politics, the criminal system, and healthcare. We understood the nuances in mental health and crisis counseling. We learned from those older than us in understanding the path to graduate school and attended a panel on college experiences. With over 100 sessions and 70 speakers, our creative sessions were one of the major highlights of this year's Convention.





“Designing my sessions was such a fruitful experience: the daytime programming team helped me shape my topic into something really high impact. And then the design thinking that went into making the presentation let me flex my creative muscles! I learned a lot about what I was capable of”

**Shikhar Shah, Chicago, IL**



## KEYNOTE SPEECH

A bowl of soup, a prepaid rickshaw fare, and a mass migration. Nipun Mehta, the founder of ServiceSpace, a “full time volunteer,” and returning Keynote speaker took attendees on a journey that explored the capabilities of small acts of unrestrained kindness. We particularly loved how he distinguished ‘Finite Games’ from ‘Infinite Games.’ In a ‘Finite Game,’ the winner is benefitting at the expense of others. An ‘Infinite Game,’ however, is one of solidarity and mutual benefit. At the end of his keynote, he spoke to attendees and even invited some on stage!

## XYZ SESSIONS

This year, we stepped into creativity with the first-ever XYZ sessions! Led by passionate and highly skilled speakers from our very own YJA community, the XYZ sessions were a way for us to get out of our comfort zones. With sessions like "Beatz n Barz" where we learned how to make a rap song and produce it, building a model temple out of recyclable materials, learning improv acting or writing poems, we came out of these sessions with new friends, pieces of art, and a more creative perspective!



## JAIN ACADEMIC BOWL (JAB)

2022 JAB finalist teams “Bahubali’s Buddies” and “JAB Now, Cry Later” dominated the stage as they decoded the answers of Jain quiz bowl questions. Audience members played along, watching from the edges of their seats. After over an hour of tense discussion, frantic writing, and critical whispering; “Bahubali’s Buddies” emerged triumphant, like the true warriors they are.

## JAINS IN ACTION

Jains in Action (JIA) is a YJA Project Team focused on creating opportunities for Jain youth to practice social entrepreneurship and problem solving. Teams were given mentors and resources to pitch their ideas to our selected judges. This year’s JIA finalists were Jain Meals On Wheels and Mera Mast Mann. Jain Meals on wheels is an organization that delivers leftover food from temples to homeless shelters. Mera Mast Mann is a mental health app that targets the unique needs of South Asian-American adolescents. The teams won over attendees’ hearts with their dynamic collaboration, and prepared to take their pitches to the big stage. Jain Meals On Wheels claimed first place, and received \$500 to further their project.







## experience island

*Next up, we land at Experience Island, where we participate in the scintillating social events of Convention. From magic and masti to a European adventure, our attendees went from educational activities to immersing themselves in, quite literally, a whole new world.*

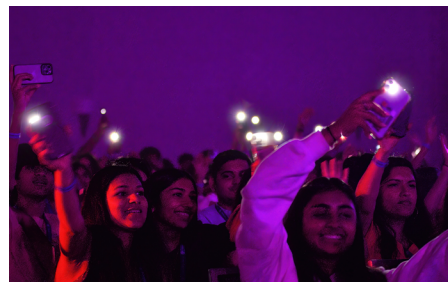
### SHOWDOWN IN THE SOUTH

The first event of the night, the Talent Show was one of the most hyped up events of the entire Convention. The "Showdown in the South" contained a total of eight acts which were primarily focused on dancing and singing. We could feel the energy in the room from the second we walked in. One would think that everybody would be tired after the long flights but it seemed to be the opposite. We heard an insane rendition of old Bollywood songs, took a tour of India through dance performances, and saw YJA members collaborate in large-scale performances, all with hilarious emcees!



### MAGICAL MASTI GARBA

We walked through Platform 9 and 3/4 to get to this Harry Potter themed Garba! Every inch of the room was covered with elaborate and colorful ornaments which made for some amazing photoshoots. What made the YJA Garba unique from others was how an effort was made to include everyone; even those who didn't know Garba. One of my fondest memories at YJA was when a random individual saw my friends and I struggling to learn the steps for Garba and without hesitation stopped what they were doing to teach us. .



### EUROPEAN ESCAPE

This is it. The last night. The best night. This night was rose-petal ridden and Eiffel towers everywhere. The formal started off with a delicious Italian dinner. An amazing DJ led to a dance floor that made attendees never want to stop, and so many people even stayed up later in their pajamas as that was last night of Convention, a time to get every last memory in.

"I really enjoyed working with my team to come up with the choreography and the song mashup for the talent show all over zoom. My favorite part was doing the Sadi Gali trend during the finale song, where there was so much energy from the team and I loved seeing the audience's reaction to me falling during the dance!"

**Sohail Daulat, California**



## MYSTERY ON THE SEINE

Our 22+ aged members had their own European mystery. Tables of ten surrounded the room as Jayanti Baa, a mystery character, and her team facilitated a dinner with a mystery, where each table had to solve the mystery. With arguing over who stole the necklace, eating delicious Italian food, and using fun props to act out the scenes, this was a dinner with an absolute entertainment treat.



## AN ELEGANT SOIREE

The pinks and oranges of the sunset on the rooftop of the hotel made for an amazing Parisian Sunset backdrop for our 22+ soiree event, with creative mocktail drinks. With everyone dressed to the nines, this Parisian event was the perfect moody precursor to a night full of mysteries and dancing.

## 22+ NETWORKING

From a FRIENDS themed friendship session, a professional networking session and a Roses & Relationships speed dating event, our 22+ members had the time of their lives meeting people all around them in various different paths of life. Whether it was the nervous energy from meeting a new person or the excitement in making a connection you'd never thought of, our 22+ attendees were in awe.



## impact island

*Lastly, we want to end on thinking about the Convention from behind-the-scenes and on a broader scale as we consider our impact. This year, we focused on Seva (service) and the end-to-end experience of every attendee, whether they were a speaker, first-timer, or adult volunteer. Here are some highlights of what was new this year.*

"As a volunteer that had never attended a YJA Convention in the past, I found it to be a truly incredible experience. "Uncle, did you eat? Do you need anything?" Such simple interactions with participants and fellow volunteers felt so touching."

**Raj Trivedi, Adult Volunteer, Chicago**

For the first time ever, there was a 100% Vegan Convention, with delicious Mexican, Mediterranean, Indian and Italian food, urging so many of us to think about food differently.

We attended the 22+ Keynote which had Chhavi Verg, a social media influencer and Miss USA Runner up, which allowed for Jainism to be more spoken about.

We went to New Member Orientation to get rid of the first-day jitters of Convention, and were able to participate in a virtual Packing Party before Convention!

We created educational videos for adults living with a disability and high school students entering the workforce, as well as making teddy bears for young patients at the Children's Medical Center Dallas.



# Witnessing the effects of Global Warming in Antarctica

By Shantha Jain



Shantha Jain lives in San Diego, California along with her husband and three children. She was born and brought up in Chennai, India, where after graduating with degrees in commerce and business administration, she worked at a Citibank for a few years before moving to the US to join her husband. Her interests are hiking and running half marathons for good causes. She also volunteers amongst her community.

After moving to San Diego, I developed a keen interest in hiking around the hills and lakes, running the trails and soon was running half marathons. I felt very much at peace when I was amongst nature and have always been fascinated with wildlife. I have tried to instill the same strong values in my children that are taught to us in Jainism; specially to respect Mother Nature, and to protect it. I work with elementary & middle schools to spread the word about the significance of sustainability and protecting the environment around us.

I consider myself as an avid traveler, a nature lover who loves the mountains, but never expected to visit Antarctica, but when a chance presented itself to join Sir Robert Swan for an expedition into the last continent, I had to go. In 1992, Sir Robert Swan founded the *2041 Foundation*, an initiative dedicated to the preservation of Antarctica. He aims to garner enough support to ensure Antarctica remains the last great wilderness on Earth as it is today, well before the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty — which bans mining activities in the region — is up for review in 2048.



The 2041 Foundation (<https://2041foundation.org/>) is doing a tremendous amount of work in raising awareness about climate change, its impact on Antarctica and its very fragile ecosystem, through various expeditions and scientific activities. The Foundation also aims to inspire definitive action to mitigate climate change and gather support to protect

the treaty while bringing attention to Antarctica's vulnerable situation.

When I first caught a glimpse of Antarctica, I wasn't sure how to describe it, it just left me in wonder and awe, and completely speechless. No writer, author or a poet can adequately describe the beauty of Antarctica, its infinite stillness and solitude.

We started the trip from Ushuaia, Argentina on March 20th, and during the course of the journey it rained quite heavily for an entire night, which is very unusual for Antarctica. Rain in Antarctica, in March, is especially disconcerting because most of the precipitation that Antarctica gets is typically in the form of snow. However, the rise of global temperatures over the past decades has led to occurrence of rains over the continent – a warning sign that can have huge ramifications on the global weather patterns. Recent studies project that such events are more likely in wake of global warming - a serious cause of concern which could hasten the melting of ice sheets and disrupt the ecosystem. We have all heard of the consequences of global warming and the resulting climate change which has caused havoc across the world, but I was witnessing a symptom firsthand and there was a sense of collective reckoning in me.

Sir David Attenborough, the greatest environmentalist of our generation once said "We know what the problems are, and we know how to solve them. All we lack is unified action".





Unified action is what I am hoping to inspire amongst the next generation by helping spread the word by creating awareness how our actions are going to affect our future generations. We are witnessing a huge rise in temperature around the world, and we are also seeing how weather patterns are changing throughout the world. We collectively need to act now and be responsible for our actions. We need to teach the next generation of kids how our actions are going to impact Antarctica and the world.

As part of our project in Antarctica, the team got into small zodiac boats to visit the massive floating ice packs. Even though temperatures were below freezing, and it was snowing, it was not as cold as I had expected it to be.



The rapid melting of ice has another dramatic, albeit invisible effect. A small shrimp-like creature, Krill, is among the most abundant marine species on the planet, and yet is facing a stark drop in population due to melting of ice. It forms the backbone of the food chain in Antarctica, and its plummeting numbers can

have cascading effects on the population of penguins, seals, whales, and the entire ecosystem. Ocean life is very important for our planet and eco-system. Preserving our ocean life is the responsibility of every individual.

The world is already warmer by over 1.2 degree Celsius over pre-industrial levels, and its impacts are already intense. It is this concern that Robert Swan and his 'Leadership on the edge' training program is tapping into to inspire action among people including students and professionals, who can spread the word to protect the great wilderness on earth.



"The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it" - says Robert Swan.

Seeing the Icebergs of Antarctica, and the repercussions of climate change, I found the purpose of my trip and my collective experiences so far. I was determined to come back home, spread the word, and raise the knowledge around our personal impact on our planet.

We can all take small steps, like turning vegetarian or eating plant-based food, avoid using plastics, and we can make sure that we recycle or the product meets its complete cycle or is reused. We can keep our community and surroundings clean. We should keep our oceans clean and perform community service to clean up public sites frequently.

We all need to rise up to address this issue - our hope lies with our generation. We need to believe that we are resourceful and privileged to have the life we have now. It is our collective responsibility that we give Earth back to the next generation safely and that we are very mindful about using our resources and what actions we take.





|| Shree Adinathay Namah ||

Let's participate

Shree Shatrunjay Mahatirth 99 Yatra project in 2023 / 24 Third time

Chharipalit Yatra from Songadh to Palitana Second time &

First time Shree Sammet Shikharji by Air & Bus (If funding available)

**"A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY OF YOUR LIFE TIME & THIRD 99 YATRA OF NORTH AMERICA"**

## SHREE SANGH INVITATION

(Tentative Information)

## FEDERATION OF JAIN ASSOCIATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

is planning to organize

## SHREE SHATRUNJAY MAHATIRTH 99 YATRA IN 2023 / 24

Jai Jinendra!

The ninety-nine yatra will be performed under the guidance of

PUJYA PRAVACHAN PRABHAVAK ACHARYA

**SHREE VIJAY MAHAPADMA SURISWARJI MAHARAJ SAHEB**

and

NAVKAR MANTRA AARADHAK, 25 VARSHITAP AARADHAK

**SHREE NARENDRABHAI NANDU & HIS TEAM**

### USA 99 YATRA COMMITTEE

Arvind R. Shah-Chairman, JAINA 99 Yatra : (248) 828-1736 (H) / (248) 835 7395 (C)

Arvin V. Shah : (248)-681-5233 (Vice Chairman, Jaina 99 Yatra) • Kayvan Nandu : 011-91-9819979968 (India)

Sharad R. Shah : (248)-879-6981 (H) • Praful L. Shah : (248)-910-6158 (C)

Starting Point -SHREE GAJBHAWAR Dharmashala-Palitana, India • Western Style (2 person occupancy)

### YATRA DURATION DATE

November, 27<sup>th</sup> 2023 through January, 26<sup>th</sup> 2024

99 YATRA Starts on  
Monday  
27<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2023  
Kartiki Poonam

MALAROPAN &  
99 YATRA CELEBRATION  
Sat.23<sup>rd</sup> & Sun.24<sup>th</sup>  
Dec. 2023

12 GAU  
CHHARIPALIT  
YATRA  
(Need to be Finalised)

SHRI SAMMET  
SHIKHARJI  
By Bus & Air  
(Need to be Finalised)

99 YATRA  
PURNAHUTI  
(Need to be Finalised)

**ESTIMATED COST : \$2000 PER YATRI (FOOD & LODGING ONLY)**

Please Register with : Arvind R. Shah (Chairman) - JAINA 99 Yatra 2023 Project  
(248) 828-1736 (H) • (248) 835-7395 (C) • E-mail: ashah\_1941@yahoo.com

**LAST DATE FOR REGISTRATION JULY 31<sup>ST</sup>, 2023**

This Yatra will be conducted by GIRIRAJ TOURS & ORGANISERS

Note :

Each Yatri has to comply  
Govt. & CDC Guidelines  
& Certificate of Vaccination.





# JAINA Convention 2023

Maximize Human Potential - The Jain Way

30th June - 3rd July, 2023 | Lakeland, Florida



**Jointly Hosted by Tampa, Orlando & Miami Jain Sanghs**



## Registration is Now Open



**Register Online**

<https://www.jainaconvention.org>

Registration Deadline	Adult (Age 18 and up)	Child/Youth (Age 6 to 17)
1st Oct, 2022 to 31st Dec, 2022	\$299	\$199
1st Jan, 2023 to 28th Feb, 2023	\$329	\$209

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Matrimony / Jain Connect
- Low Registration Fees
- Spiritual, Educational, and Inspirational Speakers
- Talented Performers at Cultural Show, Dandiya Raas
- Jain Academic Bowl (JAB) and Jains Got Talent (JGT)
- Exhibitor Booths
- Fun Location to Extend Your Vacation

### SESSIONS

- Sessions by Renowned Scholars and Spiritual Masters
- Parallel Tracks – Human Values, Wellness and Relationships  
Women and Youth Sessions
- Workshops on JWOL, Healthy Living
- Meditation and Yoga
- Ecology and Sustainability Sessions



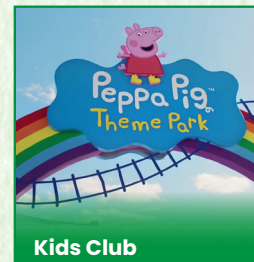
Theme Parks



Wellness



Entertainment Programs



Kids Club



Vacation Opportunities